

“BETTER THAN DONKEY HEADS & DOVE'S DUNG”

I. 2 Kings 6:24-33 & 2 Kings 7:1-20

A. Here's a little background before we wade into the text...

- 1) The original twelve tribes of Israel had split into two nations... (*The northern kingdom, Israel, was comprised of ten tribes with Samaria their capital; Judah & Benjamin represented the southern kingdom where the capital was Jerusalem...*)
- 2) Today's story takes place in Samaria, Israel, under Syrian siege...
- 3) The king of Israel is Joram, a bad king, presently in dire straights...
- 4) The prophet of God is Elisha who succeeded Elijah... He's Iron Man!

B. 2 Kings 6:24-33 & 2 Kings 7:1-20 is a horrific, gruesome, and victorious story...

- 1) Under Syrian siege and in the midst of famine, Israel is holed up in the capital city of Samaria... People have resorted to eating donkey heads and dove's dung.
- 2) One woman begs King Joram to intervene in a sickening tale of cannibalism which involved her own child. Absolutely abominable and repulsive!
- 3) Joram is destitute. But he fails to see his nation's sin has brought this on; rebellion, disobedience, and idolatry. He blames God though Israel is responsible...
- 4) Joram hates God's man Elisha. Elisha refers to the king as a murderer. Joram sends a messenger to Elisha and Elisha prophesies that within a day the famine will end. The king's captain mocks Elisha's word (God's word) prompting Elisha to say: *“You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.”* (Disputing God's Word can have serious consequences!)

C. Meanwhile at the city gate are 4 Lepers... Considered unclean outcasts, their situation may be more destitute than the people inside the city. But these lepers are wise.

- 1) They conclude that seeking refuge in the city will mean death; remaining where they are will mean death; but perhaps going over to the Syrian camp may or may not mean death--it may mean life... (*Die, Die, or maybe Live: ever faced such a trilemma?*)
- 2) At dusk the lepers arrive at an empty enemy camp, the Syrians have fled in fear as God had caused them to hear the sound of enemy chariots & horses... Syrian horses were still tethered, tents waiting to be plundered, ribs cooking on the grill...
- 3) The lepers have-at-it. They start chowing down and looting valuables (silver & gold) hoarding whatever they can get their hands on... It's too good to be true!
- 4) But then it hits them: *“We are not doing right. This is a day of good news...”* (Back in Samaria they're still eating donkey brains and dove's dung!)
- 5) So they go back to Samaria to spread the good news. After sending out scouts, the whole city races towards the Syrian camp, trampling the captain to death who the day before had disputed God's Word, spoken through Elisha...

D. We always must be careful with God's Word. it's never a good idea to interpret it allegorically. But sometimes obvious metaphors emerge...

- 1) How many do we know who are living a *“Die, Die, or Live”* existence? Who are the lepers? The starving? Who are eating donkey heads & dove's dung?
- 2) And we all have come from a *“Die, Die, or Live”* existence until we met Jesus Christ. Once you meet Jesus (Once the Gospel comes alive for us) it seems to be too good to be true. We may be tempted to loot and hoard whatever we can...
- 3) But at some point it should hit us: *“We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news.”* We are stewards of a Message, called to be heralds of Good News! We can't sit on this news. With great privilege comes great responsibility...
- 4) 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Quotes by CH Spurgeon, Matt Chandler, & John Piper...
- 5) Close with Romans 10:14-15 and Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

2 Kings 6:24-33 (ESV)

24 Afterward Ben-hadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria. **25** And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver. **26** Now as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!” **27** And he said, “If the Lord will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?” **28** And the king asked her, “What is your trouble?”

She answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' **29** So we boiled my son and ate him. And on the next day I said to her, 'Give your son, that we may eat him.' But she has hidden her son." **30** When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes—now he was passing by on the wall—and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body— **31** and he said, "May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today." **32** Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. Now the king had dispatched a man from his presence, but before the messenger arrived Elisha said to the elders, "Do you see how this murderer has sent to take off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door fast against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" **33** And while he was still speaking with them, the messenger came down to him and said, "This trouble is from the Lord! Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

2 Kings 7:1-20 (ESV)

1 But Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria." **2** Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned said to the man of God, "If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" But he said, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." **3** Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? **4** If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die." **5** So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there. **6** For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against us." **7** So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. **8** And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. **9** Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household." **10** So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied and the donkeys tied and the tents as they were." **11** Then the gatekeepers called out, and it was told within the king's household. **12** And the king rose in the night and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry. Therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.'" **13** And one of his servants said, "Let some men take five of the remaining horses, seeing that those who are left here will fare like the whole multitude of Israel who have already perished. Let us send and see." **14** So they took two horsemen, and the king sent them after the army of the Syrians, saying, "Go and see." **15** So they went after them as far as the Jordan, and behold, all the way was littered with garments and equipment that the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. And the messengers returned and told the king. **16** Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. **17** Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. And the people trampled him in the gate, so that he died, as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. **18** For when the man of God had said to the king, "Two seahs of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria," **19** the captain had answered the man of God, "If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he had said, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." **20** And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate and he died.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (ESV)

1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"Never lose heart in the power of the gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the gospel is not fitted."

Quote by Matt Chandler

"The place the Gospel holds out for us is where God's kindness and severity meet. This place is called the Cross, and it is where grace and wrath intersect. It is this place of shame and victory that God, in the form of the man Jesus of Nazareth, the long-expected Messiah, offered in His death the blood atonement necessary to satisfy God's justice and secure our salvation."

Quote by John Piper

"The difference between Uncle Sam and Jesus Christ is that Uncle Sam won't enlist you in his service unless you are healthy and Jesus won't enlist you unless you are sick."

Romans 10:14-15 (NLT)

14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? **15** And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

Some Excellent Video Clips

What Makes The Gospel Good News? - John Piper

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OhpqfLfoz0>

God is Enough - Matt Chandler (Sermon Jam)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zklq2b_4l_I

Theism: We Are Good And Have Great Hats - Mark Driscoll

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spMYzsLeJog>

"Sweet Sweet Song of Salvation" by Larry Norman

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M64lzj7na0E>

Bonus Stuff

Isaiah 52:7 (NASB)

How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"The hearing of the gospel involves the hearer in responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel. You may smile and think there is nothing very great in it. The damned in hell know. Oh, what would they give if they could hear the gospel now? If they could come back and entertain but the shadow of a hope that they might escape from the wrath to come? The saved in heaven estimate this privilege at a high rate, for, having obtained salvation through the preaching of this gospel, they can never cease to bless their God for calling them by his word of truth. O that you knew it! On your dying beds the listening to a gospel sermon will seem another thing than it seems now."

Quote by Jerry Noble

"Religion is man-made; the Gospel is God-given. Religion is what man does for God; the Gospel is what God does for man. Religion is good views; the Gospel is good news. Religion ends in outer reformation; the Gospel ends in inner transformation. Religion often becomes a farce; the Gospel is always a force--the power of God unto salvation."
- Evangel, June 27, 1977, p13.

Mary Reed - Ministry to Lepers

Almost every age has had its social outcasts, people barred from normal society whether through physical illness or national origin. One person who stepped across these barriers in India was pioneer missionary Mary Reed. Already working in India, Mary visited a leper colony and was deeply moved by the people's plight. Later Mary contracted leprosy herself and went to work with the lepers, eager to tell them that she knew firsthand their pain and trauma. She became head of the leper colony she had visited, and in the years following many were saved and a church built. Mary retired at the age of eighty-four after many years of faithful service to these social outcasts.

- Today in the Word, January, 1990, p. 24.