

the officer who was trampled in the gate

2 Kings 6:30-7:2

6:30 And it came to pass, when the king [*Jehoram, Ahab's son*] heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. **6:31** Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

6:32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? **6:33** And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer? **7:1** Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. **7:2** Then a lord [*officer*] on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

2 Kings 7:17-20

7:17 And the king appointed the lord [*officer*] on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. **7:18** And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: **7:19** And that lord [*officer*] answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. **7:20** And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

not just an accident

If we were to read just the first half of verse 17 above, we would feel sorry for the royal officer who was trampled to death while trying to maintain order at the city gate. He died trying to do an important job.

When we read the entire story, however, we soon realize that his death was not just sad. He died because he opposed Elisha and God by rejecting the prophet's prediction. (See 7:1-2 and 7:17-19.)

positives

Since the officer who was trampled to death in the gate did not set a good example for us, the order of the worksheets in this study is reversed. We will, with difficulty, focus on some positive points first and emphasize the more obvious negative ones on the next page.

It is not difficult to find positive points about what God did regarding the situation and the royal officer (B points). However, the few positive things that can be said about King Jeroham's helper (A lines) are more questionable and general in nature. The king may have been pleased with him, but God was not.

There are two simple but profound truths that should be central to rightly understanding the officer in this study. These are 1.) that the thing which matters most in life is pleasing God and 2.) that pleasing the king or the boss by doing a job well is secondary.

The officer died trying to control the traffic through and the commerce at the gate of Samaria (7:17). His assigned task was, obviously, too much for him. In fact, it was too much for anyone at that point in time. The hunger of the people after the long siege was explosive. Was the officer's death then just an accident? No, it was not.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A	() A few positive things can rightly be said about the officer.
A-1	() The king trusted him (7:2, 17).
A-2	() He did as the king commanded (7:17).
A-3	() He was not afraid to say what he thought (7:2).
A-4	() He understood how supply and demand affect prices.
A-5	() He was probably the one who made the suggestion in 7:13.
A-6	() He is an important part of the chapter seven account.
B	() Many positive things should be said about what God did.
B-1	() God did what He said He would do (7:1, 17-20).
B-2	() God protected Elisha, his spokesman (6:31-7:20).
B-3	() The siege and the famine were ended (17:1, 6-7, 16).
B-4	() King Jehoram was killed for trying to kill Elisha (6:31-33, 7:17).
B-5	() The officer's sinful disbelief was appropriately judged (7:2, 19).
B-6	() Elisha's prophecy and the officer's death became well known.

negatives

One of the officer's biggest problems was that his boss was an evil, murderous king (See 6:32 and the C lines below.) If he instead served under a godly king, the points in the A section on the previous page could be truly positive. Sadly, they are not, even though most of the A lines are correct.

To be fair, sometimes there are godly servants who serve under an ungodly master. Obadiah who held an important position under wicked King Ahab is an example of this. (See 1 Kings 18:2-16.) The unnamed officer in Second Kings chapter seven, however, seems to be as wicked as his boss.

When the officer rejected Elisha's bold prediction, he showed his unbelief, but he also thereby reinforced the king's threat against Elisha's life if the siege and famine did not soon end. (See 6:31-33.) The king and his officer wanted some relief, but they probably did not expect a total transformation.

Did the king's servant believe in miracles? (See line D-1.) A bigger and better question along that line is on how and in what way the king and his officer believed in the Lord. (See line C-4.) They did not speak like atheists (6:33, 7:2). Yet, they did not speak like true believers either.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

C	() The officer served a bad king (6:31-7:2).
C-1	() He served evil King Jehoram.
C-2	() He was one of the king's top officials.
C-3	() He joined the king in seeking to kill Elisha.
C-4	() The king did not believe in the Lord (6:30-33).
C-5	() The officer acted like he was the king's spokesman.
C-6	() The officer's death was caused by the king (6:31, 7:2, 17).
D	() The officer's response to Elisha's message was bad (7:2).
D-1	() He did not seem to believe in miracles (7:2).
D-2	() His words revealed his heart (Mat. 12:34, 15:18).
D-3	() He was judged because of what he said (7:2, 18-19).
D-4	() He was sceptical because the siege had lasted so long.
D-5	() He was a scoffer like those in the last days (2 Pet. 3:3-4).
D-6	() It is ok to have doubts IF you do not voice them in public (7:2).

conclusions

worksheet answers

Most lines are correct, but there is at least one line in each section that is incorrect or partly so.

In the A section, it is wrong to assume that the hopeful suggestion in 7:13 was made by the pessimistic officer we are studying (A-5). It was probably someone else. In the B section, line B-4 is incorrect because Jehoram was not killed, even though he was as skeptical (7:12) and wicked as his leading officer (7:2).

In the C section, lines C-4 and C-6 are only partly correct. The king believed in the Lord in a superficial way (C-4). The same is true of his helper. The king did not cause his officer's death in an absolute sense (C-6). Notice that the passage stresses that the king's servant died because of what he said to Elisha.

In the D section, line D-4 is only partly correct. Part of the officer's scepticism was probably because of the terrible conditions that existed in the land after the long siege. (See 6:24-30.) On the other hand, his disbelief probably ran deeper than that. To some degree, he was a scoffer like those around us in these last days. (Line D-5 is either correct or partly correct.) Finally, line D-6 is interesting but incorrect. It is not good to hide doubts and outwardly pretend to believe.

So what?

Watch what you say, especially to or about the Lord and his servants! Attitude AND words are important.

The forty-two youths who were killed by two bears in 2:23-25 learned this lesson the hard way. So too did the officer who died here in chapter seven. Perhaps all of these realized their sin at the end of their lives, but it was too late to do them any good. The record of their deaths are left as warnings for us.

Interestingly, King Jehoram was not judged despite his evil words in 6:31-33. Perhaps that is because the death of his officer impacted him greatly. He lost his top man, not just one of his low-level officials. It sounds like the arrogant king thought he could force Elisha to do what he wanted. It did not turn out that way.

The siege and famine came to an end, but the great miracle (7:3-16), Elisha's prophecies, and the death of the king's leading officer show that it was God's doing. King Jehoram did not get any credit for a partly happy ending. In fact, his officer being trampled by the people figuratively shows that the king and the doubters who worked for him had only been a hinderance. The four lepers (7:3-11) enjoyed the Lord's blessing, but the king's leading man did not (B-5).

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
