

## 7. Unseen forces of Heaven

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The majority of people in the world do not know and don't care to understand the spiritual warfare that rages behind the unseen realm. It is more than real to compare to the short life time we are living in. It is not some silly fantasy, nor children's make-believe, nor a schizophrenic's figment of imagination.

This morning, we get to have a glimpse of what the servant of Elisha saw – the unseen forces of heaven.

### A. GOD WHO CARES EVEN A LITTLE THING

*2 Kings 6:1-7 And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. 2 Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell." So he answered, "Go." 3 Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." 4 So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. 5 But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed." 6 So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. 7 Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.*

Elisha was not only a traveling preacher and a miracle-working prophet, but he also was the overseer of several schools of the prophets where young men called to ministry were trained and encouraged.

Great evangelist D. L. Moody and British preacher of the 19th Century Charles Spurgeon were not privileged to have formal seminary training for ministry, but both of them started schools that are still training God's servants today. It's good to serve our own generation, but we should not forget the generations to come.

According to many biblical and archaeological scholars, the chronology of 2 Kings 6 is difficult to reconstruct. Because there were at least three Syrian Kings at Damascus named "Ben-Hadad" which was a title, not name.

By their calculated speculation, most likely Ben-Hadad II was the one who was responsible for invading Dothan area to capture Elisha. I know, I know. Some of you are thinking, "Who cares!"

This is important. Just because this chapter is behind chapter 5, western minds think that this event happened after the events of chapter 5. That is not the case. The story happened right after chapter 4. In Hebrew literary style, keeping all the event in chronological order is not important. We will see this kind of example more in later chapters.

During this time in Israel, they were in the process of changing from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. In other words, steel ax was very rare and expensive. The Jewish people didn't have Home Depot or Lowe's to go and shop. Not only were tools scarce, but they were not constructed with the strength and durability of our tools today.

You may remember that king Saul and his son Jonathan were only two who had iron swords in the entire Israel army according to 1 Samuel 13. When David whacked Goliath with his sling shot, he didn't even have a sword to cut off the giant's head, so he borrowed Goliath's sword.

That poor student would have to reimburse the lender for the lost ax head, and that would probably upset the budget for months to come. You can say that his cutting edge ministry was in serious jeopardy.

The problem was that the Jordan river was not the cleanest river in Israel. Actually, it is very muddy. Elisha was not fishing out the ax head, rather he threw a stick into the water at the place where he lost the ax head.

The miracle was that the iron ax head was floated on the top of water like a rubber ducky against all the law of physics. It was a quiet miracle from a powerful God who cared for the dilemma of the poor student.

G.Campbell Morgan, a great British pastor and expositor of 20th Century was asked by a woman in his church, "Can I bother God with my little prayer request?" With his distinctive British accent, the pastor asked her back, "Madam, is there anything too big for God?"

How true! Somehow we have a tendency to think that some of our prayer requests are bothersome to our God. Contrary to our notion, the Lord wants to hear everything in our lives. He wants us to depend on Him for every part of our lives, because He cares for us and loves us.

## **B. NOT SO SECRET TO GOD**

*2 Kings 6:8-12 Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp will be in such and such a place." 9 And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." 10 Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. 11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" 12 And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."*

Whenever the Syrians planned a border raid, the Lord gave Elisha the information and he warned the king. This is known as "Word of knowledge" and it is one of the spiritual gifts in the New Testament.

Here is another ignorant act of the Syrian king against Elisha the man of God. If Elisha was informed by God about the next move of the Syrian king, didn't he think that God also would inform Elisha that this king was trying to kill him? Some people just don't get it.

Whatever you are hiding from others, your secret pet sins are completely known to our God. If we understand this truth and apply it into our lives, just about all of our secret sins would be stopped. The problem is that we pretend that He doesn't know.

It is like playing a hide and seek with a little child. When my grandson was a lot younger, he hid his face in the corner with closed eyes. By the time I finished counting and turned around I could see his entire body with his face hidden. Since he couldn't see me, he thought that I couldn't see him. That is how we think about God's all knowing capability. Wrong, very wrong!

Our God not only knows what people do and think, but He also knows the motives of our actions and decisions.

*Psalms 139:2-4 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.*

*Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

### **C. THE UNSEEN FORCES OF HEAVEN**

*2 Kings 6:13-17 So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan." 14 Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. 15 And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" 16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

Dothan is located about 44 miles north of Jerusalem. The Bible mentions Dothan only twice. The first one was for Joseph thrown into a dry well to be killed by his own brothers, but later he was sold as a slave to the Ishmaelite slave traders according to Genesis 37.

You may wonder if this servant was Gehazi. We don't know if this servant was him or someone else before him. When the Bible is silent, what do we do? Be silent.

We also don't know what kind of promises from the Lord came to Elisha's mind. Because it is faith in God's Word that brings peace in the midst of the storm of life. If I were him, I would think about these verses:

*Deuteronomy 20:3-4 And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'*

*Psalms 27:3 Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident.*

While Elisha was depending on the Lord and His unchanging promises, his servant was relying on what he saw. It is no wonder why he said, "Alas" which is an old fashion way to say, "What a major bummer!" One thing he didn't know is that being with God is always better than anything we can face.

Please note how Elisha prayed. He didn't pray that God would change anything in the situation. He only asked the Lord to allow his servant to see the unseen forces of heaven. It was literally an eye opening experience to the servant.

When a person is blind to spiritual reality, only God can open their eyes. God may do it through the words someone speaks, but the work of opening spiritual eyes is God's work and belongs to Him alone.

The previous lack of spiritual perception on the part of Elisha's servant did not make the reality of the heavenly forces any less real. If there are 50 people who do not see something, it doesn't invalidate the perception of one who does see.

There was a man who committed a murder in front of four people who later testified against him. This murderer tried to upset the witnesses' testimonies by providing 40 people who didn't see him murdering the victim. Nobody with a right mind would accept that, except the twisted ACLU attorneys.

Faith is not an imagination of unreal things. It is the spiritual grip of things which cannot be demonstrated in the physical senses, but it is very real. The chariots of horses and fire were actually there. By the way, when God's servants are in His will and doing His work, they are immortal until their work is done.

#### ***D. AN EXTENDED THOUGHT***

In light of believing unseen thing by faith, the Bible is a case in point. Today there survives more than 24,000 partial and complete, ancient handwritten manuscript copies of the New Testament alone, not to mention hundreds of Old Testament manuscripts that survive today dating back to as early as the third century B.C.

Some tried to ignore the Hebrew version of the OT manuscripts because of the stunning accuracies of the prophetic messages from the OT. They insisted that they had to be written after the events were fulfilled. They were completely shut down when the Greek version of the OT manuscript, also known as Septuagint which was written 285 B.C. It includes the Book of Daniel to show the authenticity of the Bible's prophecies.

These hand written manuscripts have allowed scholars and textual critics to go back and verify that the Bible we have in our possession today is the same Bible that the early church possessed 2,000 years ago. You can view these manuscripts yourself at places like the British Museum, the Cambridge University Library, the Smithsonian Institute, Oxford University, the National Library at Paris and Israel Museum.

Even if we did not have any manuscripts, we have the writings of the church fathers. By church fathers we are referring to those leaders in the church like Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Tertullian, Polycarp, of the first three centuries A.D., that followed the original disciples. These men in their writings and correspondence with other believers and other churches quote the Scriptures over and over again. In fact, the early church fathers refer to the New Testament alone more than 86,000 times.

There are enough quotations from the early church fathers that even if we did not have a single manuscript copy of the Bible, scholars could still reconstruct 99.86% of the New Testament that we have today.

You cannot find any ancient manuscript that contains this high accuracy in human history with the exception of the Bible. Not only can we count on the authenticity and accuracy of the manuscripts, but also it has a complete set of accuracies in the areas of geographic, prophetic and scientific aspects that are mentioned in the Bible. The Bible has a track record of accuracy and we can put our faith in God's Word.

*Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."*

*Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

Dr. Billy Graham calls angels as God's Secret Agents. They are ministering spirits. They do not understand the meaning of salvation and redemption, because they do not have flesh and blood like us. I believe that the Lord assigns an angel to every single believer of Jesus Christ to minister and protect.

*Psalm 91:11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.*

That means that there are many heavenly angels in this auditorium right now. They are not here to glorify themselves, rather for the glory of the Father in heaven.

Some of us probably wear out those angels more frequently than others. I would be one of them. Whenever I drive any long distance, I have a tendency to fall asleep behind the wheel. I have to wonder how many times my angel had to protect me from causing car accidents. When Bob Lehman found it out, he told me that he would be my chauffeur to drive any long distance for me. So I am the only Calvary Chapel pastor who has a personal chauffeur. Cool, huh?

Now that I am getting older, I really don't care what others think about me. When I am sleepy while I drive, I just pull over and take a quick nap in my truck. So if you see my truck on the side of Nogales Hwy, you would know that I am taking a nap.

Speaking of vehicles, if you have a friend who tells you that he or she saw me in the back cage of a Sheriff's car near La Cholla and River, I was not arrested for a wrong doing. I was getting a ride to the station from the triple car accident a heavy footed woman caused. I am just setting a record straight.

## **E. MERCY TO THE ENEMY**

*2 Kings 6:18-23 So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. 19 Now Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria. 20 So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria! 21 Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" 22 But he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." 23 Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.*

Elisha didn't ask the Lord to command the angelic army to destroy Ben Hadad's feeble troops. As with nations today, defeat only promotes retaliation, and Ben Hadad would have sent another company of soldiers. God gave Elisha a much better plan. He had just prayed that the Lord would open his servant's eyes, but now he prayed that God would blind the eyes of the Syrian soldiers.

Both the power and mercy of Israel's God, as represented by Elisha, must have really shaken the Syrian king. He abandoned his war against Israel. However, at a later date Ben-hadad changed his mind and besieged Samaria as we shall see in the next study.

### **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) The unseen spiritual warfare is real and we must be aware of it. But we don't have to be afraid of our enemy satan, because the war has been won by our Savior Jesus Christ.
- 2) Somehow we have a tendency to think that some of our prayer requests are bothersome to our God. Contrary to our notion, the Lord wants to hear everything in our lives. He wants us to depend on Him for every part of our lives, because He cares for us and loves us.
- 3) We must realize that our God not only knows what people do and think, but He also knows the motives of our actions and decisions.
- 4) It is faith in God's Word that brings peace in the midst of the storm of life.