

2 Kings 6:8-23

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Date: 11 July 2022

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[0:00] Paul's already prayed for us so we're getting stuck in and I think that's probably a mercy on a hot evening. It's a joy to be here. I should have said that this morning. It's been great to be among you today.

This morning we looked at Elijah and this evening. Elijah has been taken out of the picture in chapter 2 and we're in chapter 6 and it's Elisha now, not Elijah.

He's a prophet of God from the Old Testament and he's literally taken up the mantle in chapter 2.

He's picked up his cloak and worn it. So he is the new prophet in town.

Let's get stuck in turn to verse 8 here. 2 Kings chapter 6 verse 8. Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel he took counsel with his servants.

That's what the verse says and we're not introduced to who this person is. We don't know this enemy by name. We don't know whose servants are.

[1:11] I think that's partly to communicate. This is nothing remarkable. This is just an enemy. It's to be expected that kings would conspire together with their advisors.

But I say he's taken counsel against the Lord and against his prophet. Saying let him encamp against them. This is an ordinary fact of life for Israel and for us.

Actually the world's always known in conflict and power hungry nations and men. And it always will, won't it? It is an experience of that now.

The king of Syria, he doesn't seem to really hate Israel with a passion. He doesn't want to exterminate them off the face of the earth. He just wants land and money. He's just kind of your average king in this time in some ways.

They're in his way. I don't think that's as far as he goes. His borders are pushing up against theirs. He just has no regard for Israel, the God of Israel.

[2:17] Well, God's people are about to have a lesson in how to deal with hostility. And this is useful for us too. I think this is the kind of opposition that the church often finds today.

People don't really care about the church until she gets in their way. They're kind of a bit different to her. They're like, that's nice for you. Until her borders are right next to theirs.

Until you stand in the way of something that they want to push. Until your territory is there and you say, no, I don't think this is right. And they say, no, it is. We want to take that.

In this world, simply being a Christian on your own capture ground is often enough to provoke criticism and hostility. So how do we deal with hostility? And how do these followers of the true God in the Old Testament deal with it?

First point. God sees all. Remember that God sees all. That's my first point. I have three as opposed to two this morning. So if you prefer a more standard 3.7, here you go.

[3:25] Remember that God sees all. The nations rage and the people plot in vain, but the Lord holds them in derision. He who sits in the heavens laughs at the king of Syria, doesn't he?

God sees all. And this king is kind of pushing his chess pieces around the board. And Yahweh is ten moves ahead. That's what we see. And God sends word to his man, the man of God, so the people of God will be saved from harm.

Let us read verses 9 and 10. But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel. Beware that you do not pass this place. The Syrians are going down there.

And the king of Israel sent to the place of that which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him so that he saved himself there. More than once or twice. Several times the people of God have saved from death.

Saved from rage. Saved from attack. The point is this. A Christian, not a hair can fall from your head unless God wills it.

[4 : 31] This is part of what it means for God to see all and to have power over all. I haven't introduced these characters much.

Partly because they can't. We don't know who the king of Aram is or of Israel. That is, we're not told. We don't know who the man of God is until we're then told.

We don't know who his servant is. The only name that we're given of a human being in here is Elisha. In this passage. The man of God. That is Elisha.

In fact, it's kind of interesting, isn't it? We're really not given much detail about the places as well. But such and such a place shall be my camp. Beware that you do not pass this place.

This is kind of devoid of detail. I think it's a little odd. Bible scholars will tell you some answers. Some of them might agree with one another. They can tell you a few answers.

[5 : 32] This might be Ben Haydab, the second. This is probably Gehazi. He was his servant before. But that doesn't matter. It actually obscures the point.

The story is written in black and white here for a reason. God's people are shown that ultimately there are only the people who attack them.

And there's God's people. God's people. And then there's her enemies. There's the servants of Syria. A nation that wants to attack and raid.

And then there's the servants of the prophet. The way that this is written actually messes perfectly with what is written, as with the whole Bible. The Lord, in the very style of the story, lets his people know only what they need to know.

If you notice that. What do they need to know? They don't need to know who's attacking. They don't really need to know any details except for what they need to know.

[6 : 37] How do we be safe from their enemies? What they're learning is they need to trust him. They need to listen to that word that comes through the prophet Elisha and just do that thing.

Why trust him? Because he sees all. They're trusting in a God who sees all, even when we do not. Who reveals to us what we need to know, but knows everything. Christian, this passage here has shown that we cannot be harbored in that child, is it?

It's a kind of extended commentary. We know the passage in Luke chapter 21 that says this. You'll be hated by all for my name's sake, but not a head of your hair will perish.

For by your endurance you will gain your lives. That's what Jesus says. And this is a kind of commentary on how to. How does that happen? Through God, who sees all things.

Trust him. And trust the word that he gives you through his prophet. Now, Israel is protected here because they listen to every word. There's these military maneuvers. The king of Syria attacks there and they move around.

[7 : 45] And they just dodge and weave. It's like a sort of a box if you can't land a punch. It's no accident that the only name in this passage is Elisha.

It means God is my salvation. And it is. God sees all. And God's enemies are troubled by this, aren't they? The king of Syria is kind of angry about this.

Verse 11. The mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing. And he called his servants and said to them, Will you not show me who of us is for? The king of Israel. And there's another way of reading this, which is, Are any of you actually against the king of Israel?

Which I just quite like. But it's just like, Which one of you is for him and not for me? There's this opposition, you see.

There's the servants of Syria. The servants of Elisha and the prophets. The man of God. And one of his servants knows what's happened. I don't know. In verse 12.

[8 : 47] Have a look at verse 12. One of his servants said, None of my laws are not king. It's not me. It's this guy who's betraying you. But Elisha, the prophet, who's in Israel, Tells the king of Israel a word to speak in your bedroom.

The mind of the king is greatly troubled. As perhaps it should be. Even the words that he says in his bedroom.

His own servants telling him this. And we often hear, What business of dogs is it? What I do in my bedroom. Right? You've probably heard this.

There's a book called, Does God belong in the bedroom? This passage answers the question, doesn't it? He's already there. He's already there. God sees all.

He can bypass your plans. He is all-powerful. Whether you ascend to the heights, Or go down to the depths, God is there. Whether you let the light in and open your windows, Or put yourself in

darkness, You can't escape him.

[9 : 53] And the question is this. Do you find this comforting? Or slightly troubling? Well, for those of us hearing this, We've been given, If you're hearing this now, A glimpse of the saving power of the true God.

He saves these, This band of people here, From the Syrians. We've been given a little bit, Of a glimpse of that. We've seen Israel, We depend on his word, We've seen the Syrians, The Aramaeans, In old translations, Which one of those.

Who follow their instincts, They want land. You know, They're normal. People in the system, They just want a nice house, A decent position in the Aramaean government. They have reasonable ambitions. Only they don't mind grading God's people together.

And one of these captures troubled. How does Israel, Doss the Syrian raids? Verse 9, The man of God sent word. The way to not be troubled, Is to abide by the word of God, Isn't it?

It's to do the thing, That God tells us to do. When we cannot, To repent, To live our lives, Before his face. Because we already are. So, God sees all, Second point, God has the power, To destroy his enemies.

[11 : 20] The king of Syria, Doesn't think much of Israel, Does he? He kind of just, Just goes on some, Some raids, Doesn't think much for the God of Israel. But now, Thanks to St. Elisha's military maneuvers, He's got a bit of a stone in his shoe.

He's perturbed. He's put out. And as we see, This stone kind of just hardens his soul, Doesn't it? As he sees God's sovereign power, His resolve against him, Is quickened.

And he wants to seize, The prophet. That's what happens next. Verse 13 and 14. And he said, Go and see where he is, That I may send, And seize him. And it was told, Behold, And he's adopted. So he sent there, Waters and chariots, Great on it, And came like night, And surrounded the city. That's what happens. He wants to seize the prophet of God. If you were here this morning, You know, There's a pattern.

There's a pattern throughout kings. There's the people who listen, And do the word of God, And then there's the people who, As soon as they hear it, They want to seize the prophet, And shut him up.

[12 : 19] People either listen, Or they want to kill him. It's the same reaction, Only intensified, When we come to Jesus, Isn't it? How they listen to the word of God, Incarnate, Or they want to kill him.

That's ultimately what it will come down to. So, And, Elisha's servant goes out in the morning, And I don't know what he's doing, But, Running some errands maybe, He's kind of picking up the milk from the doorstep, And he sees this huge army, Of horses and jammies, This is kind of tanks in the Old Testament, This is heavy artillery, This is kind of, You know, You know you're doomed at this point.

What shall we do, master? Elisha tells him, Do not be afraid, For those who are with us, Are more than those who are against us. Telling someone, Don't be afraid, Is nice, Isn't it?

It's something, Not enough. Why not be afraid, Is the next question. That's lovely, I'm glad that you want me not to be afraid, But, When there's an army, Coming in my door, Even the smaller things, When I've got a job interview tomorrow, Don't be afraid about it.

Why not? Do I have any reason for confidence? Elisha doesn't just tell me, He's just a bit of show and tell. Elisha prays, To God, To open his servant's eyes, Verse 17, And Elisha prays, And said, Oh Lord, Please open the eyes, Open his eyes, That he may see.

[13 : 51] And all over the eyes, And he saw, Behold, The mountain, Was full of horses, And chariots of fire, All around Elisha. The passage is kind of, Radiant black and white, Not much detail, But suddenly we get a splash of color, We've colored, We see the kind of, Oranges and reds, We see the blue flames, And the white horses, The legions of angels, Ready to attack, Waiting to engage, On the enemies of God, And, What this is, Is not a kind of, Mirror, And, Do you notice what, What Elisha prays, Oh Lord, Please open his eyes, That he may see.

We tend to think that God, The kind of reality of God's existence, Is secondary to art. We know this stuff exists, I know for certain, That this world is here, And that this pulpit is here, And this church is here, But I can see it with my eyes, But I'm not certain that God exists, Is what we think, right? We think that this is reality, And that's the kind of shadow, Realm, Things may or may not be true, But we get this actually, The wrong way around, In some way actually, God is reality, And we are

dependent, We are the shadows, In one sense, It's not that they're not real, We are real, But we get our reality, From God, The way we think it, Is the exact opposite, We know with certainty, All that happens in heaven, That is revealed to us, God's word, Is actually surer, Than our senses, Christian, When God speaks, And the Holy Spirit, Testifies to that reality, In the heart of the believer, When we read God's word, And we understand it rightly, We know, We know, At that point, It is certain, God's word, God's word, Tells us of angels, It tells us, That that day, There was, An angelic host, On the hillside, And God's reality, Is true reality, It doesn't go against, What we see, It adds, To our sin, Because, God, Remember, Sees all, And we only see, What is revealed by him, Even in nature, The things that are spiritual, Are not open to our eyes, Except, In these rare cases, And, And this God has the power, To destroy his enemies, And, God's word, Tells us of angelic realities, Angels minister to Christ, In the wilderness, Psalm 91, Speaks of angelic protection, Over him, Over God's people, And his knowledge of king, Hebrews, Chapter 1, Ministering spirits, Sent out to serve, The sake of those, Who have to inherit salvation, That's angels, Revelation 5, Tells us that, That the angels are praising, And worshiping God in heaven, And that we join them, Psalm 4, 8, There's a ton of stuff, About angels, And then, We have to just skip over those passages, This stuff is certain, And the stuff of this world, Is dependent, It's created, By the true being, By the one who gives being, To everything, And, Elisha, By the rubber hits the road here, Has guardian angels, Right, That's what he has, Just like Elijah did, When in chapter 2, Chariots of fire came between him, And Elisha, And he was brought up to heaven, And brothers and sisters, If we could see this spiritual reality, The angels ministering to the saints, And to the churches, What confidence would we have, We'd have the confidence of Elijah, And his servant here, Wouldn't we?

[17 : 48] We're called to live, As we've just said, By faith, And not by sight, With confidence in things unseen, That's our calling, We're called to understand, That God sees all, And that we only see, What he reveals to us, But I want to say, Brothers and sisters, We believe in, In things unseen, But not undocumented, We don't believe, Without any evidence, We believe in the surest, The surest evidence, Of God's word, And it's not wrong, By the way, To ask, To see with heavenly sight, As Bartimaeus prays, And Jesus says, What would you have, Me do to you, Do for you, To this man, The blind, And Bartimaeus says, Rabbi, That I may receive my sight, Praise to receive his sight, And we may as well, But in the meantime, We do not believe, These things without reason, But only without vision, All the time, So this seems to be, A mundane, Sparring match, Between the two kings,

But just when it seems, That they'll be overwhelmed, God shows his power, To defeat his enemies, To his servants, And one of the, The other things, Before I conclude this point is, This, It might, Kind of, Seem like, The scraps, And the contests, The arguments you get into, When someone attacks, With a fallen prize, They might seem, Pretty mundane, As well, They might seem, Kind of run on the mill, And, In some ways, They are, Maybe, It may feel as though, The enemy can just, Kind of roll their tanks, Onto your lawn, At any moment, And take everything from you, But God can win the battle, He can win the battle, Just not, Today, In this, Passage, Third point, God sees all, God has the power, To defeat his enemies, Why doesn't he, God do justice by people, We're kind of, You know, Waiting for this, This, Battle to commence,

Just, You know, The angels beat the Syrians, And that's it, My third point is this, God opens the eyes, Of his enemies, And he leads them, To himself, The Syrians have been, Raiding Israel, They've been looting, Killing, And they have no regard, For the law, And the interesting thing is, That he blinds them, Before he opens their eyes, And this is a kind of, A party trick or anything, It's not a cruel trick, To kind of, Show that then he's good again, When God opens their eyes, And, No, Elijah prays that God would blind them, In verse 18, And it exposes, The Syrians, For who they are already, These, This army is just seeing, The things of this world, That they want the next, They want the battle, They want the land, They want whatever they want, But they're just seeing, Those things, In this world, And now their eyes, Have been closed, Even to those, Their eyes have been closed, And match the state, Of their hearts, And their minds, They seek, To pursue the one, Who gives, The life-giving word, To death, The scene, Set for a quarter, And the Syrian army, Pursues at a mountain, Falls at a flaming chariots, And then, In verse 18, The Syrians, Come down against him, But Elisha, Christ-like, Does not call, On his angels, Neither, Does he kind of, Let the Syrians, Run through the city, He leads them, That's what he does, He leads them, This is not the way, And this is not the city, Instead he takes them, To another city, To Samaria, Before

God's, Anointed king, And the king of Israel, Is giddy, Isn't he?

Verse 21, As soon as the king of Israel, Saw them, He said to Elisha, My father, Shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down? He says it twice, I think for effect here, He really wants to strike them down, It's the obvious, Thing that we get from that, And, Why not, Why not, Why not do this?

[22 : 03] There's only one answer, Which is, That what happens, In this story, Is the answer, To the troubles, Of this world, What happens next, Is actually the answer, To the problems in this world, That we be blinded, Taken captive, And have our eyes, Opened, Armies, Rape and ruin, Princes and peoples, Plot in vain, All for the things, Of this world, And not just out there, In the world, But here too, In the church, We too, Set our eyes, On the things that are below, House, Job, Husband, It was the same, In these days, It was the same, In the last 3,000 years, In most cases, The only thing, We can hope for, Is this, Is God, To stop, Our old desires, To take us captive,

To open our eyes, And bring us, To himself, God, We were saying this morning, God interrupts, Don't fear, Interrupting, A conversation, With, With, With words of grace, Words of Christ, To what God does, He, He breaks, The Syrians' desires, He blinds them, He stops them, From achieving that, And, Gives them, Someone to, To follow, And ultimately, He leads them, In just a small, Picture of a way, To himself, If you're, Here tonight, You don't believe in God, Sorry, If you're here tonight, You do believe in God, This isn't because, You made a moral choice, Is it?

It's because, God did the same for you, That he does, Here, When he pacifies, Those who were, God's enemies, Blinding them, Even as they were, Pursuing, God's own man, To death, The only way, To become a Christian, Is for God, To arrest us, In our tracks, To capture us, As we go about, Seeking the things, Of this world, And to make us, Follow him, The king wants to kill them, But the man of God, Has been sent to show mercy, And praise, So what does he do, With those, Safe and captive, And verse 23, So he prepared, For them a great feast, And one day, They had eaten them drunk, And sent them away, And they went to their master, And the syrianes had not come again, On rage, It's the land of Israel, They treat us as captives, Aren't they?

that Acts 22 says this. You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those who you've taken captive with your sword and your bow? He's saying that you've enslaved these people, yourself, by your might, or as it were.

You know that God has done that for you. They're taken captive. I want to bring us to one of the only other names in the passage just to understand what this means. Dothan is the only other one that I mentioned.

[25 : 09] Dothan is mentioned only one other time in the Bible. This is the place that this is happening, by the way. Dothan. You can see that in verse 13. It's where Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers.

That's the other time. Here, what this is communicating to us, this is the answer to the problems of this world, that we'd be blinded, taken captive, and have our eyes opened.

Assyrians have hoped to capture Elisha at Dothan, just like the Egyptians have captured Joseph there, and taken him into slavery. But the pattern of slavery is broken by the man of God.

This prophet reverses the pattern. He captures the Syrians with a word, and what does he do with that? It doesn't lead them to some sort of country to make them work.

He opens their arms and shows them grace, and he leads them to a beast. This is the only way to last in peace, isn't it? That God, in his mercy, opens the eyes of the blind and draws those who were his enemies to himself.

[26 : 18] It's the reason any of us are here. The man of God brings even such as you and I, who once set up camp against him, saying, there we will strike him.

He brings us into his royal seat and gives us a feast. I'll finish with just one thought. We thought a little tiny bit about Gethsemane this morning, the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus allowed himself to be taken by armed men, even people who approached the word of God with their spears out.

He was gracious. Both passages have links here. Jesus was encircled by enemies in the garden on the night he was betrayed. And he too had an army of angels.

Do you not think, he said, that I can appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?

Why did he not call upon them? It's the same reason that Elijah didn't do so. He had come to show grace to those who'd been God's enemies. Jesus must go to the cross, let the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so.

[27 : 34] So then, we who were God's enemies could be reconciled to God by the death of his son. This is one of the scriptures that's brought to fulfillment on that day, by the way. It's Jesus' death that enabled the Syrians to feast and be free.

When the soldier cut Jesus' side on the cross, this wound made a way wide enough, as it were, for all the nations to enter in. Therefore, you, he had tied to part of his body in the church.

At the last supper, the night before, his 12 disciples, representing the tribes of Israel, feasted with him, and the next day, this feast was opened up to all, wasn't it? And we celebrate it in our churches.

The feast of bread and water that Elisha gives out is a foretaste of that grace that's going to be found on Christ. Verse 19, he says, follow me, Elisha says, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.

And I'll pray this in Sunday school and answer, that man is Christ. He's bringing them into the capital to see the king. This king of Israel is a little bit of a rubbish king.

[28 : 46] Amen. I'm afraid if you've read anything more about him, he's a pretty poor type. But nonetheless, we need to be brought into the presence of the king.

Follow me, Elisha says, and I'll bring you to the man whom you seek.