

Elisha - Week 3

The blind Army

Drawing from **2 Kings 6:8–23**, the story of Elisha and the blinded army offers powerful lessons on spiritual sight, divine protection, and responding with compassion toward enemies.

Scripture reference

- **2 Kings 6:8–14:**

- The Syrian king is frustrated because Elisha keeps revealing his battle plans to the king of Israel. He sends a large army with horses and chariots to capture Elisha, who is staying in Dothan.

8 Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.”

9 The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” 10 So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

11 This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?”

12 “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.”

13 “Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” 14 Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

- **2 Kings 6:15–17:**

- Elisha's terrified servant wakes up to see the city surrounded by the Syrian army and cries, "What shall we do?" Elisha calmly replies, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." At Elisha's prayer, the Lord opens the servant's eyes to see the hills filled with the heavenly army of horses and chariots of fire.

15 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked.

16 “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

17 And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- **2 Kings 6:18–23:**

- As the Syrian army approaches, Elisha prays for them to be struck with blindness, and God answers. Elisha then leads the disoriented army to Samaria, the capital city of Israel. There, he prays for their eyes to be opened. When the king of Israel asks if he should kill them, Elisha tells him to show mercy instead. A great feast is prepared for the Syrians, and they are sent home in peace.

18 As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, “Strike this army with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

19 Elisha told them, “This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.” And he led them to Samaria.

20 After they entered the city, Elisha said, “Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see.” Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

21 When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, “Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?”

22 “Do not kill them,” he answered. “Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.” 23 So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.

Main themes and sermon points

1. There is an unseen, spiritual reality.

- **Seeing beyond the visible:**
 - The contrast between Elisha and his servant highlights the difference between physical sight and spiritual vision. The servant saw only the overwhelming enemy army, but Elisha saw the powerful, heavenly hosts ready to protect them.
- **A prayer for spiritual sight:**

- Elisha's prayer, "O Lord, open his eyes, that he may see," is a model for believers who feel overwhelmed by their circumstances. We can pray for a clear vision of God's presence and power at work on our behalf.

- **God's army is larger than our enemies:**

- The story reminds us that no matter how great the worldly or spiritual opposition may seem, God's forces are far greater. As Elisha promised, "those who are with us are more than those who are with them".

2. God's power is shown in surprising ways.

- **The power of a prayer:**

- The entire conflict is resolved not through military might but through Elisha's three simple prayers: to open his servant's eyes, to strike the enemy with blindness, and to restore their sight.

- **The enemy's blindness:**

- The "blindness" God uses is not necessarily a complete loss of vision but a form of confusion and delusion that prevents the Syrian army from recognizing Elisha or their location. This shows God's power to manipulate events in ways the world cannot comprehend.

- **Mercy, not massacre:**

- Instead of destruction, Elisha's victory culminates in an act of compassion. Feeding a captured enemy demonstrates a higher kind of power and leads to a lasting peace, at least for a time.

3. Victory is found in compassion, not revenge.

- **Responding with grace:**

- When the king of Israel asks if he should execute the captives, Elisha's merciful command to feed them goes against conventional warfare. This reflects the divine nature of not repaying evil with evil.

- **Winning over enemies:**

- The act of feeding the soldiers softens their hearts. The raids on Israel stop "for a while," showing that kindness can be a more effective weapon than the sword.

- **A reflection of Christ:**

- Elisha's compassionate response foreshadows Jesus's teachings on loving one's enemies and His prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".
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Application for believers

- **Acknowledge your spiritual blindness:**
 - Like the servant, we can become so focused on our problems that we forget God's presence. Recognize your limitations and ask God to open your eyes to the spiritual realities around you.
- **Trust God's unseen power:**
 - When you feel surrounded by worldly opposition, remember that God has unseen forces fighting for you. Your ultimate hope is not in your own strength or resources but in God's provision.
- **Respond to enemies with love:**
 - The story challenges us to re-examine how we treat those who oppose us. Are we seeking retribution, or are we showing grace? Following Elisha's example of compassion can bring about an unexpected and profound victory.