

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for June 27: Life viewed through eyes of faith brings clarity_61404

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Life viewed through eyes of faith brings clarity

2 Kings 6:8-22

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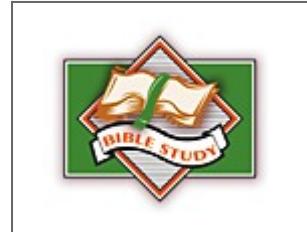
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“God is at work in the world. God takes the initiative to involve me in his work. God must take the initiative to open my spiritual eyes, so I can see what he is doing. When I see the Father at work around me, that is my invitation to adjust my life to him and join him in that work. God's revelation is my invitation to join him” (Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, “Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God,” p. 67).

These statements summarize the Christian's walk with God. They also summarize Elisha's viewing life with eyes of faith.

See God at work

Aram (Syria) and Israel waged war regularly during Elisha's prophetic ministry. The young maiden who told Naaman about the prophet that could cure him had been captured in one of these sporadic border raids (2 Kings 5).



2 Kings 6 begins with Syria's king planning with his staff officers to attack Israel. They plotted strategy and made plans to attack. God revealed these plans to "the man of God." Elisha then revealed the plans to Israel's king. Elisha's advance notice allowed the king to avoid an ambush set by the Arameans on several occasions.

An old saying warns: "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." Ben-hadad, the Syrian king, could not believe Israel could have guessed correctly at his moves more than once or twice. He angrily confronted his staff, suspecting one of them was a traitor. He summoned his aides to interrogate them to discover who was feeding this intelligence to the Israelites.

The staff proclaimed their innocence. One of them informed the king the spy was not one of them. He identified Elisha, Israel's prophet, as the informant.

See God's presence

Ben-hadad responded quickly. He ordered his staff to locate Elisha's whereabouts. One lieutenant reported the prophet lived in Dothan. Dothan

was located about 12 miles from Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom. The city's location in a valley made it highly vulnerable to attack.

The king launched a major assault against this one prophet. It was a case of overkill, unlike the response of the Texas Rangers, whose motto is "one riot, one ranger." The king mobilized a great army of horses and chariots which surrounded Dothan during the night.

This excessive show of force greeted Elisha's servant early the next morning as he left the house. The attendant reported to Elisha what he had seen. Despair and hopelessness overwhelmed him. What chance did an unarmed prophet and his servant have before these soldiers? But God had forces only eyes of faith could see.

Elisha told the servant, "Don't be afraid." God had already positioned forces to defend them. "Don't be afraid" is a standard response in the Old Testament to someone who is terrified. Specific words of assurance usually follow this command. God was ready to help his servants. The prophet informed the servant that God's forces and strength exceeded those of the Arameans. Although unseen, God's armies were real.

Elisha prayed for God to open the servant's eyes and reveal divine armies to him. Note the prophet did not pray for God to send deliverers. They were present. He prayed the servant would see God's protective legions. He asked God to give the servant eyes of faith.

God answered Elisha's prayer. The servant then saw God's horses and chariots of fire surrounded the enemy. At Elijah's earthly departure, Elisha encountered the "chariots and horsemen of Israel" when Elijah was taken (2 Kings 2:12). The words "all around Elisha" suggest the horses and chariots stood between him and his enemies, much as the pillar of cloud kept Pharaoh's armies from reaching the fleeing Hebrews at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19, 24). God's protective army had already taken its place.

God's forces were poised to defend the prophet.

See God's mercy

The Syrian army approached Elisha to seize him. The prophet prayed, and God blinded the soldiers. Elisha then led them to Samaria. After arriving and in answer to another prayer of Elisha, God restored their sight.

Israel's king asked Elisha, whom he referred to as "my father," if he should kill the enemy. "No," said the prophet, "prepare a feast for them." The king had not captured them. They were the prophet's captives. Elisha would determine their fate. The day would not be one of killing but one of celebration and feasting. The king obeyed and prepared a feast for his enemies.

Many people want to counter hostility with more hostility. Nations lift up weapons against other nations, and war persists. Hostilities escalate as violence begets more violence.

God's approach to hostility differs. God brought the armies of Israel and Aram to the table for food and conversation. And although the results were not permanent, the narrator reported "the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory."

God works to accomplish the divine plan and to bring nations and peoples together. God's people need to look with eyes of faith at the resources available for their deliverance and reconciliation with others.

Questions for discussion

- ◆ What hampers our ability to see through eyes of faith?
- ◆ Is it easier to see God's working, his presence or his mercy?

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