

- In those desperate days, supplies were so scarce that even foods such as “donkey’s head” & “dove’s droppings” were almost considered a delicacy! As distasteful as donkey’s head or dove’s droppings may be, these were nothing compared to the meal that two women shared. Even a man as wicked as the king of Israel was shocked when he heard what they had done. Mothers were so hungry that they ate their own children! Cannibalism became a means of survival (Deut 28:52-53). These terrors came upon Israel because they disobeyed, rejected God, and abandoned the covenant He made with them. The king did not seem to grasp or accept the fact that all of these were happening because of Israel’s sin.
- The king was horrified and incensed – he tore his clothes. Yet it certainly does not appear that the king was truly repentant. Instead of heeding God’s word and repenting, the king issued an order for Elisha to be killed. The king was deeply grieved and angry but not with himself, with Israel, or with their sins. The king was angry with the prophet of God. Either the king attributed these calamities to the prophet, or else he thought Elisha could remove them, and yet would not. We need to beware of blaming God or others for our bad situations. We should first look at ourselves. The king swore by God that Elisha must be killed. Why? Because Elisha was the one person in Samaria who represented God and Jehoram blamed God for the famine (v31).
- Elisha was sitting in his house, and all the elders were sitting with him, when the king sent his messenger to Elisha. Once more, Elisha’s supernatural knowledge allowed him to predict the coming of the king’s messenger. *This son of a murderer* - ie. of Ahab, the murderer, not only of Naboth, but also of all the prophets of the Lord, whom he allowed Jezebel to slay. Elisha instructed the elders to keep the messenger at the door until the king arrived, so Elisha could talk to the king. Apparently, Elisha had told the king to wait for the Lord’s deliverance, but the king believing the situation was beyond hope, saw no other option but to surrender to Syria. The king’s messenger spoke on behalf of the king:
 - *Behold, this evil is from the Lord.* The king had recognized that the situation they were facing was from God. The king lamented the calamity, but did not repent of the sin which caused it. Serious trouble ought to melt people’s hearts, but the heart of Jehoram was only hardened instead.
 - *Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?* Apparently the king believed the situation was beyond hope. But if he would not wait for the Lord, what could he do?
- God is in control, and He does care (Rom 8:28; Gen 50:20). If you are in great difficulty today, the Lord knows about it. If it has come about because you are in rebellion & sin, then simply repent. If not, then trust that He is going to use this for your good. Either way, the solution is to run to Him, not away from Him. It is to wait on Him, not become impatient or give up on Him (Isa 40:31).

2 Kings 6 – Divine Protection of Elisha

- Chapter 6 records the wondrous works or miracles of Elisha & the siege of Samaria by the Syrians.

1. The Recovery of the Axe Head (6:1-7)

- Like his mentor Elijah, the prophet Elisha visited the sons of the prophets in circuit. The mention of the Jordan (v2) suggests that these sons of the prophets dwelt near Jericho. The school of the prophets was growing and they needed more room. A building project was proposed. Every man would get his own log or beam, and together they’ll build a new and bigger place. Not only did Elisha give his permission for the project, but he was also willing to lend his support.
- One of the men was busy working to chop down a tree when the head of the axe he was using flew off its handle and into the water of the Jordan River. The axe head was lost and apparently irretrievable. This was a significant loss as implements of iron were few and expensive, and prophets were very poor. The man who lost the axe head was rightly sensitive to the fact that he lost something that belonged to someone else, making the loss more acute.
- Elisha asked the man where it fell, cut off a stick, threw it in the water, and the axe head floated to the surface. This is one of the outstanding miracles of the OT; a miracle which broke the law of gravity.
 - This is an obvious and unique miracle. There was no trickery in the way that Elisha put the stick in the water; it was simply an expression of his faith that God honoured. The stick was only a means; there was nothing magical about the stick (John 9:1-7)
 - The miracle must be accepted as is described in God’s Word. God is not required to follow the laws of nature that He sets down. Iron does not naturally swim but this “*iron did swim*”. Our God is the God of the miraculous (Job 42:2; Mt 19:26).
 - Elisha turned the loss of the axe head into an opportunity for God to demonstrate His power and His care for these prophets. God cares about the smaller details of our lives. God is in the habit of doing small miracles for individuals in distress and in need (Mt 10:29-31; 1 Pet 5:7).

2. God’s Protection of Elisha (6:8-33)

- War has broken out again between Syria and Israel. The Syrians had chosen for the camp where their troops would secretly lie in wait or ambush for Israel’s army. But God was on Israel’s side for God kept revealing to Elisha the secret plans that the king of Syria was making. God knows all things, including our private thoughts. He knows every thought and motive of every human heart! Nothing is hid from Him (Heb 4:13). He knows the schemes of our enemies and will do what is best for us (Ps 37:12-13). Every plan, every ambush, Elisha knew it! God told it to him and he saved Israel more than twice.

- Elisha did not support the corrupt monarchs of Israel, but he knew that it was even worse for Israel to be conquered and subjugated under Syria. God was by no means showing His approval of Jehoram by giving him this information, for Jehoram was not approved by God (3:14). But God rather showed the king of Syria that Israel was God's nation, and He would protect them in spite of their bad kings.
- The king of Syria was naturally mystified by the way the king of Israel knew all of Syria's plans beforehand. He thought there must be a traitor in his own court until one servant revealed that Elisha, the prophet who was in Israel, knew and revealed these things. The Syrian king's solution was to attempt to capture Elisha. The prophet was in the city of Dothan, about 12 miles north of Samaria, and so Ben-Hadad sent a large part of his army including men, horses, and chariots down to that city by night and surrounded it. The king was not very wise! He did not really understand with whom he was dealing. It was not only Elisha that his armies would confront! It was God almighty!
- The next morning, Elisha's servant was horrified to see the massive Syrian army encircling the city: *Alas, my master! How shall we do?* Elisha's servant was naturally afraid. He knew that there was little chance of surviving an attack from so many. Through the eyes of fear & unbelief, the situation looked hopeless. Elisha, facing the identical situation, saw things differently.
 - Elisha's answer is not a call to fight but a calm response of "*fear not*". It is a profound faith that understands the resources that God can bring to bear in our lives as we face opposition and crisis. There is an obvious contrast between the *panic* of Elisha's servant and the *peace* of Elisha. The difference is accounted for by Elisha's intimate knowledge and communion with God.
 - *For they that be with us are more than they that be with them ...* This seemed unbelievable to Elisha's servant. But Elisha was talking about the angels of God protecting them. God's angels - an innumerable host - are ever guarding those who love Him (Ps 34:7; Heb 1:14; Rev 12:4). God has got a bigger army! But not just bigger, better too (1 John 4:4)! When God is on your side, you are never outnumbered (Rom 8:31).
- Elisha's servant lacked the faith of his master. Elisha therefore prayed that his servant might be given a vision of the spiritual world and see the reality of the situation. God answered Elisha's prayer. When God opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, he saw the reality that he could not see before. Elisha's servant saw that the hill was full of horses and chariots of fire, and that these angelic warriors were surrounding Elisha and waiting to do God's bidding. He saw that there really were more with him and Elisha than those assembled against them.
- We must see things from God's perspective, with spiritual insight, with faith. Through the eyes of fear and unbelief, the situation at Dothan looked hopeless.

But Elisha viewed the situation through the eyes of faith. Through the eyes of faith, the horses and chariots of divine protection were clearly visible. When we run into difficulties in our life, do we see them from God's perspective, or do we just see the difficulties? Elisha's servant personifies the despair and fear that come when we depend on human judgment and common sense. But Elisha personifies the confidence that comes from faith, when we depend on God's power. Elisha did not pray that God would send help; it was already there. He simply prayed for eyes to see it. Trusting God even when we cannot see the chariots of fire on the hill is spiritual sight (2 Cor 5:7). The lack of vision shows the need for regular communion with God (Eph 1:15-19).

- The Syrians, who had been encamped on higher ground opposite the city of Dothan, now descended and drew near to the city. But just as he previously prayed that God would give sight to his servant, Elisha then asked God to *smite this people . . . with blindness*. God answered Elisha's prayer and the Syrian soldiers lost their eyesight. The blindness with which the Syrians were smitten was not real blindness - or actual loss of sight - but a state of confused vision. God prevented the Syrian army sent to capture Elisha from recognizing him when they met him. They willingly trusted him when he offered to guide them to "*the man whom ye seek*". Furthermore, they were miraculously prevented from recognizing the walled city of Samaria until they were already inside, surrounded by the Israelites. Once inside Samaria, Elisha prayed that their eyes would be opened, and another miracle took place. The Syrian army found that instead of taking Elisha captive, they were prisoners of Jehoram.
- God is not just one who gives sight, but also takes it away. God can both make the blind to see and those who see to be blind. God chose to let Elisha's servant "see" the angelic army, and yet He blinded the Syrians. God seems to have wanted to teach the people of Israel an important lesson, and so He had Elisha bring the Syrian army to Samaria. The Israelite king was eager to rid himself of the Syrians who had so easily fallen into his grasp. Instead of killing these enemy soldiers, however, Elisha commanded the king of Israel to treat them with kindness and generosity. In obedience to Elisha's command, the entire Syrian army was fed. Because of this incident, the Syrians stopped raiding the Israelites for a time. Soon they would be back to their old tricks. Elisha probably knew they would return and cause more grief. Yet he spared them (Luke 23:34; cf Rom 12:14-21).

3. The Siege of Samaria (6:24-33)

- Though the kindness of Elisha changed the heart of the Syrian raiders, it did not change the heart of the king of Syria. He launched a large, full-scale attack against Israel and laid a siege over Samaria which is situated above a hill. The siege strategy successfully starved Samaria and situation became desperate.