

## **Week 13: God's Angelic Army Revealed – 2 Kings 6:1–23**

### **Hook**



**Main Point:** God commands a vast heavenly army that watches over and ministers to those who trust in Him.

**Q: What's a movie that makes you cry every time?**

**Q: What movie do you watch when you need a laugh?**

**Q: If you could have only one movie to watch for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

Have you ever watched behind-the-scenes footage of a movie you love? You see actors laughing between takes, green screens, cameras, and crew everywhere – and you realize that scene you watched was surrounded by a whole world you never saw. What you experienced was real, but it wasn't the full reality. That's a lot like our lives – we see our problems and fears and assume that's the whole picture, but what if there's more going on that we can't see? In today's passage, one man is terrified by what he sees until God pulls back the curtain and shows him what's been there all along.

**RECAP:** In the first lesson, we talked about the role of the Old Testament prophets as God's messengers calling His people to repent and how they pointed ahead to Jesus. In week 2, we saw God's provision for both Elijah and the widow of Zarephath during the drought, which was a consequence of Israel's idolatry. In lesson 3, God raised the widow's son from the dead, which not only showed His sovereign power but also His care for the vulnerable and His heart for all the nations. In lesson 4, we saw God's superiority over other "gods" as Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. In lesson 5, Elijah ran for his life from the wrath of Jezebel and found refuge in the Lord. God spoke to him not in the thunder and lightning but in the still, small voice.

In lesson 6, Elijah called Elisha to succeed him, and Elisha left his old life behind. Then Elijah prophesied the deaths of Jezebel and Ahab but delayed the end of Ahab's dynasty

because he repented. Ahab's first son died because he worshipped false gods, and his second son became king. In lesson 7, Elijah was taken up to heaven in the whirlwind, and Elisha took over his ministry with the same Holy Spirit upon him. In lesson 8, we explored exactly what it meant when Elisha asked Elijah for a "double portion" of his spirit. In lessons 9 and 10, God brought judgment on those who rejected His prophets and His message but brought life, healing and blessing to those who came to Him in faith. In lesson 11, God fed the hungry through two miracles, healing the poison in the stew and multiplying food as Jesus did in the New Testament. In lesson 12, Elisha healed a Gentile leper and refused to take his thank-you gift, but his servant took the money instead, and we saw how Elisha responded.

## **Week 13: *God's Angelic Army Revealed – 2 Kings 6:1–23***

### **Book**

**Main Point:** God commands a vast heavenly army that watches over and ministers to those who trust in Him.

**2 Kings 6:1–7 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** God cares about even our smallest needs and concerns.

**Q: Why were the prophets cutting down trees near the Jordan River?**

**Q: Why do you think God helped these prophets with something as simple as an axe head being lost?**

**Q: Where are other places in Scripture where we see God care for what on the surface seems like small needs and concerns?**

Scripture tells us this event happened with one of the prophetic schools Elisha mentored, but it doesn't specify which one. It was near the Jordan River, so this would indicate Jericho or Gilgal. The prophets of Gilgal were the ones Elisha had fed by healing their stew and multiplying bread. The prophets of Jericho were the ones who saw him part the Jordan at the beginning of his ministry.

The ESV Bible translation says, "the place where we dwell under your charge" while other translations just say, "the place you meet with us." The Hebrew is "the place we dwell with you." *Dwell* means more than just a meeting place; it means "live," "abide," or "stay." Though some prophets had their own homes with their families, scholars believe many of these prophets lived in the schools, especially those who were young and single. We know Elisha didn't live there all the time but visited them regularly. He had a house in Samaria (5:9), but he often stayed on Mount Carmel and with the Shunammite woman and her husband. "Dwell with you" is a reference to his staying with them when he came to town. "Under your charge" is a more of an interpretative translation referring to the fact that Elisha was a well-known prophet considered to be *the* man of God at the time who disciplined the prophets regularly. Other prophets in Judah may have also helped train these prophets, but as the successor of Elijah and in his own right, Elisha was considered the authority over these schools.<sup>1</sup>

The prophets thought their building was too small and wanted to build something bigger. The Jordan Valley, which was heavily forested, would have been a natural place to find the wood. They asked Elisha to come with them, and he agreed. This shows Elisha's humility and sense of community. He didn't think he was too important to join them in manual labor. God could have done a miracle and made a new building appear,

but He honored their commitment to hard work, and the miracle involved rescuing a tool they were using to build the place themselves.

When one prophet's axe head fell into the water, he panicked because the axe was borrowed. This point in history was well into the Iron Age (almost 350 years), but iron was still expensive and valuable.<sup>2</sup> Elisha threw a stick into the Jordan and made the iron axe head float. Again, like the flour, salt and water, Elisha used a basic thing, just a stick. He didn't use a magic wand or even his staff. This shows us it wasn't the wood that caused the axe head to float but God's power.

It may seem somewhat insignificant for Elisha to take the time and energy to perform a miracle to solve this problem. This wasn't a war, a national emergency, or a life-and-death situation. But it shows us God cares about the little things of our everyday lives, too. Though it may seem like a small thing to us, iron was expensive. Replacing it would have been costly, and these prophets were not wealthy; that's why it was borrowed in the first place. It wasn't a huge thing, but it wasn't a tiny thing either. This story shows us no concern is too small to bring to God. Our concerns matter to Him because we matter to Him. It is also significant that the prophet was concerned because the axe was borrowed. It wasn't just about the cost or the inconvenience. It was about his sense of obligation to the person he had borrowed it from. God cares about honesty, stewardship, and doing right by others, even in seemingly small matters. This small miracle happened right before a huge war, famine and siege against the capital city (6:8–7:20). The contrast shows us that the same God who intervenes in wars also intervenes in small problems like lost tools.

This miracle didn't happen in a big public way. It was small and simple and occurred in front of just a few of God's prophets. Elisha used very simple means, nothing flashy. This reminds us that God also works through small acts of obedience, not only dramatic displays. And God is present among small, faithful communities, not just big crowds. Just as God can speak in both thunder and a still, small voice, He can work in a big public display of His power and a small, private, quiet moment. What may seem small to us isn't small to God. If you have a concern, no matter how insignificant you think it is, bring it before the God who loves you, cares for you, and knows every hair on your head and every concern in your heart.

**Q: What concerns do you have right now that might seem small to others but matter a lot to you? How can you bring them to the Lord?**

**Q: How does it affect our prayer lives to know God cares about all our concerns?**

**2 Kings 6:8–17 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** Our battles belong to the Lord; He will fight for us; He has the power.

**Q: Why was Ben-Hadad mad at Elisha? Why was Elisha's servant scared?**

**Q: How did God reassure him that God was protecting him?**

The accounts in 2 Kings 6:8–7:16, which we'll cover here and in lesson 14, are about Israel's ongoing battles with Syria (a.k.a. Aram). During the reign of King Jehoram (Ahab's second son, a.k.a. Joram) of Israel (N), there was a period marked by political instability and frequent conflicts between Israel and its neighboring states, particularly Syria. Eventually, the Arameans, under King Ben-Hadad II, laid siege to Samaria, the capital of Israel (N), cutting off all supplies to the city, which led to a severe famine in the city. We'll cover that in the next lesson. This was the beginning of ongoing conflicts between Syria and Israel. Jehoram reigned for 12 years in Israel (N), ~852–841 BC. After Ahab's death, his oldest son, Ahaziah, reigned for just two years, then Jehoram took over because Ahaziah didn't have sons. Unlike his parents and older brother, Jehoram did not worship Baal and removed those altars, but he still worshipped the golden calves at Dan and Bethel that Jeroboam had built.

The king of Syria at this time was Ben-Hadad II (a.k.a. Hadadezer). He had attacked Samaria earlier during Ahab's reign. An unnamed prophet of the Lord came to Ahab and told him the Lord would give him victory, even though Ahab was the most idolatrous king Israel (N) had ever had, because the Arameans thought Yahweh was just a god of the hills, not of the valleys (1 Kings 20:23-28). He would show Aram and Israel that He is the Lord, the only God over all the earth. Ahab was supposed to kill Ben-Hadad II, but he didn't, so the Lord cursed him; Ahab would lose his life instead (1 Kings 20). If Ahab had killed Ben-Hadad as he was supposed to, Aram may not have still been attacking Israel.

In this attack, Elisha sent word to Jehoram to warn him exactly where the Arameans were. "Time and time again" Elisha warned him so he was able to defend himself in every place Aram tried to attack. Ben-Hadad was furious and accused his officers of being traitors and telling Jehoram their plans. The officers told him it was Elisha, so Ben-Hadad sent horses and chariots to capture him. Elisha's servant<sup>3</sup> panicked, but Elisha assured him that he had no cause to worry because "those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and his servant's eyes were opened to see the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around them.

In the New Testament, John used similar language to talk about our spiritual victory in Christ: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). The Church is fighting spiritual battles against the "cosmic powers over this present darkness" and the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10–18). It can feel scary at times, and we can feel overwhelmed by the power of him "who is in the world" (Satan), roaming the earth like a lion looking for people to devour (1 Peter 5:8). His demonic army is strong and numerous. But we can always trust that God is stronger and that we have an even bigger army of angels behind us, even if we can't physically see them. Even more, we have the power of God inside us, not just in a heavenly army around us. The Holy Spirit dwells within us and is with us all the time. We can feel fully protected and confident to win our battles. The reality of God's presence does not depend on our ability to see it. He is there always.

Ephesians 6 tells us when we are facing spiritual battles, to put on the full armor of God – faith, righteousness, truth, the Gospel of peace, salvation, and the Word of God – and to pray at all times in the Spirit. Prayer is a powerful tool of spiritual warfare. When Elisha prayed, the eyes of his servant were opened to see the army around them. When Elijah prayed, the drought ended. We can remember that our prayers are powerful and effective (James 5:16) not because of how great we are but because of how great our God is. When we face battles of any kind, we can pray with confidence that God will give us the victory in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).

**Q: Describe a time when you felt overwhelmed by a spiritual battle, but God came through for you. How did you see God's great power through that situation?**

**Q: How does prayer help when we are feeling overwhelmed? How can prayer open our eyes?**

**Q: Who can you pray for today that you know is in the midst of a spiritual battle? Take a minute to privately lift them up to the Lord right now.**

## **2 Kings 6:18–23 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** God protects His people and shows grace to His enemies.

**Q: Why did the king of Israel want to kill the Aramean army? What did Elisha say?**

**Q: What does it tell us that he not only gave them basic food but a feast?**

God had just shown Elisha's servant the great heavenly army that was behind them. Now we will see how that army can work to fight for God's people. Elisha prayed again, asking God to strike the opposing army with blindness. The same God who opened the eyes of Elisha's servant now closed the eyes of the opposing army. The army was searching for Elisha because he had been telling the king of Israel where they camped. They wanted to capture and, likely, kill him. But Elisha was not afraid. He knew God was in control, and God's army was stronger than the Aramean army. The heavenly army of angels, not the human army of Israel, was protecting God's prophet.

God struck the army with blindness and Elisha led them into Samaria. When God opened their eyes, they saw they were trapped inside the walls of their enemy's city. The king of Israel wanted to kill them, but Elisha said to feed them and send them home. And not just a bit of bread and some water, but he prepared a great feast for them.

The presence of God's heavenly army led to mercy and peace, not to slaughter. Jehoram could have easily destroyed them, and by ancient standards of war, he would have been completely justified in doing so, especially if he thought the Lord had delivered them into his hands. And many ancient kings would have done just that. But the man of God chose to show them grace. This is the heart of God. The text tells us the result was that

the Arameans stopped raiding Israel's territory. God achieved victory and peace without violence or bloodshed.

There is a lot of bloodshed in the Old Testament. Those who read it without understanding the historical context and God's big picture of redemption sometimes conclude that God is some kind of angry judge shooting down fire and brimstone any chance He gets.<sup>4</sup> But the more we study the Old Testament, the more we can see the true heart of God. The Lord desires repentance. He wanted to turn people back to Him, both Israel/Judah and other nations. The more we study the world of the Old Testament and understand the story, the more we see the same God of grace, mercy and love in the Old Testament that we find in the New Testament.

There is a profound theological contrast here. The king of Israel, who did not know God, saw power as the ability to kill his enemies. Elisha, the man of God, revealed that true power is the ability to spare them. In a time when God's people had forgotten His covenant and the prophets had been sent to remind them, Elisha reflected God's character. God described Himself to Moses from the beginning, and repeated often throughout the Old Testament, that He is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6–7). This act of mercy points ahead to the New Testament teachings about loving our enemies, turning the other cheek, and overcoming evil with good (Matthew 5:38–48; Romans 12:14–21).

This passage reminds us of the power of prayer. We so often use prayer as a last resort – "I've tried everything else. All I can do now is pray." But God wants us to use prayer as our first line of defense, not our last resort. As with our physical health, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Daily regular prayer may not feel like doing much in the moment, but it is preventative care for our souls. We can cry out to God in moments of crisis when we need Him, and He will hear us. But we will find constant strength and power from regular communion with God in prayer.

This story also shows us God's care for all people, including those we may see as enemies. Other human beings are not really our enemies; they are trapped in the snare of the Devil (2 Timothy 2:26). They need a rescue. Thinking of our enemies as those in need of God's grace completely changes the way we interact with them. This is how we learn to overcome evil with good (Proverbs 25:21–22; Romans 12:21). This is how we are able to love our enemies and pray for them as God commands us to do (Matthew 5:43–48). Not only to pray for God to open their eyes and hearts to follow Him and do what is good, but also to pray for God's best for them.

**Q: Share any times when you have changed your way of thinking about an "enemy" and tried to help them instead of fight against them. How did God use that situation?**

**Q: How could loving our enemy with God's love transform the world around us that is so often defined by hate?**

**Q: When have you cried out to God for help? How can you carve out time for regular prayer or deepen the regular prayer life you already have?**

## **Week 13: God's Angelic Army Revealed – 2 Kings 6:1–23**

### **Took**

**Main Point:** God commands a vast heavenly army that watches over and ministers to those who trust in Him.

As Elisha's servant stood terrified, Elisha intervened. But the situation didn't change – *Elisha's servant's perspective did*. When Elisha prayed, God opened his eyes to see reality as it truly was, and everything shifted.

That's what God desires for us, too – changed vision. We often live reacting to what we can see: problems, pressure, fear. But that's only part of reality. God wants us to understand more fully, to be transformed. This happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, who transforms the way we think and see the world. As it says in Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." As our minds are renewed, our perspective begins to shift – what matters changes; how we use our resources changes; how we see people changes; even how we face challenges and suffering changes.

God is not just working *around* you – He's working *in* you, helping you see reality more clearly so you can live with confidence and wisdom, and trust in Him.

**Q: What helps you better align your perspective with the truth?**

**Q: How would seeing people the way God sees them change the way you treat or respond to them this week?**

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** Think about the battles you or those you love are facing right now. What strength, power or wisdom do you need from God? How can you find it? How can you calm your anxiety, fear or worries and trust Him? What else does this story tell you about bringing your battles to the Lord? How might you need to reach out to other believers, friends or family for help, too?

**PRAY:** Pray about your own battles and for those around you who are facing difficult battles you can see. Pray also for the unseen battles people are facing that you know nothing about. Pray for them to find strength in the Lord and to find loved ones to stand next to them in battle and fight with them.

**ACT:** Love your enemies. Pray for your enemies. As a first step to reconciling your differences, extend a small act of kindness to an enemy this week.

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<sup>1</sup> John Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Intervarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> John Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Intervarsity Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> This was no longer Gehazi, since he had been struck with leprosy, but this servant is unnamed.

<sup>4</sup> A book discussing these issues is: Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker Books, 2011).