

2 Kings 6:1-33

The 'Sons of the Prophets' Expand

As Elisha's fame spread, more people joined the "sons of the prophets" as his disciples. This was a remarkable community or band, numbering up to 100 by Elisha's time (**2 Kings 4:43**). It originated with Samuel. The Spirit was so strong among them at times that those approaching the group as they worshipped were immediately overcome and began prophesying too (King Saul in **1 Samuel 10:10** and **19:18-24**). This was usually accompanied by music (**2 Kings 3:15**). Separate groups gathered in different places, Mount Carmel, Ramah, Gilgal, Bethel and elsewhere, and Elijah and Elisha would travel in a circuit to teach and encourage them.

They ate a common meal (**2 Kings 4:38-41**) and they shared in offerings brought by the people. Some probably lived together while those with wives maintained separate housing ("a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets" - **1 Kings 4:1**)

But now they had outgrown their lodging.

2 Kings 6:1-2 - "And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye."

Apparently they were going to build their new building in Jericho.

2 Kings 6:3-4 - "And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood."

The Floating Axe Head

2 Kings 6:5 - "But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed."

Iron wasn't cheap, and since the axe head was borrowed it made the loss worse.

2 Kings 6:6-7 - "And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it."

This is another miracle that required participation. Elisha made the iron float, but the man had to reach out and grasp it in his hand. It was not transported into his hand.

Jesus performed a similar but greater miracle when He walked on water and then beckoned Peter to do the same. Peter's participation in the miracle collapsed when he began to be afraid (**Matthew 14 22-33**).

- **Matthew 14 31** - "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

God wants us to participate in His mighty acts, if only to say "Amen." It's the same way with salvation. Jesus has opened the jail cell door, but we need to walk out into freedom.

A Syrian Plot to Capture Elisha

2 Kings 6:8-10 - "Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice."

King Jerhoram of Israel is more inclined toward Elisha, although he is still an idolater. And the king welcomes Elisha's counsel and acts on it to defeat the Syrian attack.

2 Kings 6:11 - "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?"

He thinks there is a traitor among his court advisors who tipped off Jehoram. But one of them who had contacts in Israel explains that it came from the prophet.

2 Kings 6:12 - "And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

Elisha was known to the Syrians, maybe because of Namaan. This servant may have heard of how Elisha knew when Gehazi tried to accept the payment for Namaan's healing.

A Trap is Sprung

2 Kings 6:14 - "And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about."

Chariots of Fire

2 Kings 6:15-16 - "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

Compare the New Testament quote: "Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world" (**1 John 4:4**)

2 Kings 6:17 - "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Elisha and his servant were alone and surrounded by a large Syrian force. The situation was hopeless. But Elisha saw something else. God wants us to see this, too, when we feel like the evil in the world is overwhelming.

2 Kings 6:18 - "And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha."

"when they came down to him" - i.e. the Syrians

The last time we heard about chariots of fire was when Elijah was taken up. Here they are again. In fact, they're always there, protecting us and watching over God's church. But we can only see them with the eyes of faith.

Are there troubles or conflicts in your life that seem overwhelming? Pray that God would open your eyes to his protecting hosts.

- **1 John 4:4** - "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

'These Aren't the 'Druids You're Looking For'

2 Kings 6:19 - "And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria."

New Rules of Warfare

2 Kings 6:21-23 - "And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

...At least not as raiding bands. But later they would come as an invading army.

All aspects of what we call human rights make their first appearance in the Bible. Not to harm prisoners of war but to treat them with kindness is clearly stated here. It is contrary to the laws of nature and the Golden Rule:

- **Matthew 7:12** - "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you: do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"

- **Proverbs 25:21** - "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink."

- **Matthew 5:44-46** - "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

- **Romans 12:21** - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

But this act of mercy did not affect the heart of the king of Syria.

The Siege of Samaria

2 Kings 6:25 - "And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver."

While Elisha's exhortation of mercy on the Syrian soldiers expressed the best of human kindness, the siege brings out the worst instincts of the human heart.

A Desperate Act

2 Kings 6:26-29 - "And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son."

This was a hint of the similar conditions that would engulf the people of Jerusalem during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians later and by the Romans. Predicted in the Torah:

- **Deuteronomy 28:52-53** - "They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall

besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you. You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you."

Elisha Becomes a Scapegoat

2 Kings 6:30-31 - "And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day."

At first, the king vents his anger at the prophet. Elisha could have intervened to stop it, he thinks. But finally realizes that this is judgment from God, maybe recalling the passage from Deuteronomy..

2 Kings 6:32-33 - "But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?"

or "The king said, 'What more can I hope for from the Lord?'"

The king was the son of a murderer because his mother, Jezebel, killed Naboth and the prophets of the Lord.

This recognition that "this evil is of the LORD" proves to be Israel's saving grace.

NEXT WEEK: God Confuses the Syrians and they flee