

2 Kings 6

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 08 September 2016 13:37

Elisha received immediate and direct help from God on many occasions. He was the prime prophet amongst other prophets, and the Lord wanted to show that Elisha was speaking from Him, a representative of the One True God.

This is not necessarily all in the past. We may not be called like Elisha, and will not have the extraordinary power he displayed from God, but every one of us can know God's help. We do not see it much today because of our sins. We call upon Him as we should, but our hearts are slow and our minds dimmed. We at once call to Him for help, yet still sin and refuse to live holy lives. And so the great things for us are not seen or experienced. Instead, cultic people such as charismatics lay claim to great miracles and direct words from God, when they are deceived and lying.

Though their words and actions are false, the things they refer to are ours, but in a real way. While charismatics and others pretend to know God and display power, the 'real thing' is meant to be part of our lives. Not the flamboyant nonsense of the actors in the churches, but the quiet truth found in those who are loyal to the Lord and obedient. Instead of saying God will not answer you, try praising Him, repenting, and changing your life to comply with His will. Then you will see and hear a very different solution, direct from God.

Verses 1-4

1.

And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2.

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.

3.

And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4.

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So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

Being the prime prophet of Israel, the school of prophets approached Elisha, complaining that their accommodation was now too small for them. They wanted to build another place close to the river Jordan, and this could be accomplished if each prophet cut down a large beam of wood. Elisha agreed to the idea. He was asked to go with the prophets, so he went with them to the riverside, where the prophets began to chop down trees, ready for construction.

Verses 5-7

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

I often tell students that 'God doesn't perform party tricks', so this incident is interesting. While cutting down a tree next to the river, an axe-head came off its handle and landed in the river. The prophet exclaimed to Elisha that it was only borrowed. Elisha asked where the axe-head had landed and the prophet pointed to the location. Elisha then cut a stick (as a *helve*, or handle?) from a tree and threw it into the river... and the iron axe-head floated to the top and stayed there. Elisha told the prophet to recover it, which he did.

Why would such a man of God do this? It was only an axe-head. It is my opinion (for no indication is otherwise given) that God allowed this so as to continue to prove Elisha's miraculous power (it was a miracle because a heavy iron axe-head cannot float!), which, in turn,

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reminded Israel that God was with them as the only true God.

Very often, 'smaller' miracles and other acts of God pass us by in our modern age of disbelief. This is because though we acknowledge the great miracles of old, we nowadays tend not to expect anything from God... so we miss what He gives.

Verses 8-14

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

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?

5.

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.

6.

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.

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7.

Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

The king of Syria again decided to go to war against Israel, and drew up his battle plans. Elisha, having been told by the Holy Spirit of Syria's plans, sent a message to the king of Israel, warning him not to go to the place where the Syrian army was camped. The king listened and was saved from attack on two occasions.

It seems the king of Syria did not realise Elisha was responsible for the warnings, and thought there must have been an Israeli-sympathiser amongst his top staff who was secretly sending the king of Israel warnings. He asked his generals and aides if any of them was a sympathiser, but they all answered that none of them was responsible. Rather, Elisha was the one who warned Israel, even words uttered by the king of Syria in his own bedroom! That is, *God* told Elisha what the king of Syria planned.

The king ordered his men to spy the land, to see where Elisha was staying. A spy came back to say Elisha was at Dothan, his own home town, just 12 miles north of Samaria. The king commanded his army and chariots to surround Dothan at night.

Verses 15-17

1.

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?

2.

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

3.

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the

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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's new servant got up early and then he saw an army outside the walls. He awakened Elisha and asked what they should do. Elisha was calm and told him not to be afraid, for those who protected them were of far greater number than those who were against them. The servant must have been perplexed, for where were the protectors?

Elisha spoke to God and asked him to 'open the eyes' of his servant, so he could see a vast army ready to protect him and the town of Dothan. It was then that the young servant saw the Syrian army in the plain below the mountain on which Dothan stood – but, he also saw a far greater number of soldiers, horses and chariots, around the town walls, standing between Dothan and the enemy. It was an angelic host. Do you only see horrors and not God's protection? If you do not ask for protection and do not see it, then the enemy against you will indeed win. But, believing totally in God's protection will give you the desired help.

Verses 18-22

1.

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.

2.

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.

3.

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.

4.

And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I

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smite them?

5.

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.

It was then that Elisha gave an imprecatory prayer, that God should blind all the enemy soldiers. And so it happened, and the enemy was in a panic. It was not a gradual blindness, but sudden, *canver*

. An imprecatory prayer need not always be of death – we may also call for some other appropriate judgment that will stop enemies in their tracks. How many Christians pray like this? How many, in the time of great wickedness and attacks foolishly call on God to ‘save’ those who hate and attack us, when the immediate response should be to get rid of the enemy or at least get rid of his wrath? Christians are as much afraid of their own hearts as they are of the enemy, so they refuse to utter imprecatory prayers! What foolishness... a foolishness that allows wicked men to proliferate and get worse.

Elisha then told the soldiers that they were surrounding the wrong city, so he would guide them to the correct city and person. However, he led them to Samaria, where a garrison of Israelite soldiers were. When the Syrians had collected before Samaria, Elisha asked God to open their eyes, which He did – and the Syrians were shocked to find themselves in the midst of their enemy.

Interestingly, the king of Israel asked Elisha if he should attack the Syrians, calling him his ‘father’ (being the father of the Judaistic religion). More interestingly, Elisha denied the king this opportunity, saying that he could not kill those who were effectively his captives. Instead, he said, give them food and water, and then let them go free.

Did Elisha lie when he told the Syrians he would lead them to the one they wanted, when the one they wanted was himself? And then led them to Samaria? Or, was it acceptable because it averted war, so was defensive? And what about the way he let the Syrians go? Was it foolish, or right? Given that God guided Elisha, it must have been right. Modern day terrorists must be put to death because they are murderers. But, those who wish to repent and come out of them

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should be shown mercy... though, even then, if they had murdered freely, they must be put to death anyway. There are killers who kill out of fear for their own lives. In such cases mercy should be shown and the penalty softened. God knows when to put to death.

Verses 23-25

1.

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.

2.

And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

3.

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.

A large amount of food was given to the Syrian army and they were sent back home. In verse 23 we are told the "bands of Syria came no more..." and yet in the very next verse we read that "Benhadad... gathered all his host... and besieged Samaria." How can these texts be reconciled. Well, the 'bands', *gěduwd*, refers to marauding raiding groups of Syrians, but, 'all his host', *mac haneh*, refers to the whole army. The raiders were sent to capture Elisha; the army was sent to fight the Israelites. The 'great host' sent to find Elisha was not the whole army, the remainder of which stayed with the king in the camp.

In this case the king of Syria brought "all his host" and set siege to Samaria. Even so, it was the king who sent the smaller party, so his attack now did not reflect his appreciation that the king of Israel had allowed his raiding party to go free.

The siege lasted a long time, coinciding with a famine. It became so serious that people traded

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in animal parts not normally eaten – such as ass’s heads sold for 80 pieces of silver (if a man could afford it), even though such an animal was ceremonially unclean and had very little (bad tasting) meat. The ‘dove’s dung’ was not dung, but lentils... just a quarter of a ‘cab’ (about 0.37 of a litre) sold for five pieces of silver. So, the situation was desperate.

Note that whilst God helped Israel at times, as He helps us today, such help is not always instant. God will often allow a bad time to be extended so that believers will appreciate what God does for them, and call out for his help, praising Him all the while until help arrives... sometimes NOT in the form expected.

Verses 26-30

1.

And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

2.

And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

3.

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.

4.

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.

5.

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.

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The king of Israel was walking along the outer wall of Samaria looking upon the besieging army. A woman called to him for help from her house by the wall. The king asked how he could possibly help when God Himself did not help her? Could he somehow conjure up food from the barn, or drink from the winepress, when both were utterly empty?

The king approached reluctantly and asked what was wrong. She said she agreed with another woman to eat her son, and they would eat the other woman's son next time. The woman boiled her son and the two families ate him. But, when the next meal was needed, the other women hid her son and refused to hand him over.

The king was agitated by this information... Samaria had come down to eating human flesh! He tore at his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes in mourning. The whole city saw him. Do we show remorse for days of evil, and for not repenting soon enough? Do we only repent after we have deliberately committed sin?

Verses 31-33

1.

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.

2.

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?

3.

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?

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The king then shouted out that God could kill him, if *he* did not kill Elisha and put his head on a spike that very day. But, why blame Elisha for this situation, when he and Israel had lived sinful lives to that point, thus bringing distress upon themselves? This is the kind of injustice and hatred shown by all who despise God's will and live in sinfulness. Today, Christians are blamed for the woes of the world, so we are punished and despised for no reason.

On a number of occasions, I have been blamed for this or that situation in others, after I have counselled them. When they refuse to make amends or continue in their sin, and their problem erupts, they do not blame their own selves, but they 'shoot the messenger'! Frankly, it leads me to avoid giving counsel at times, because I know the possible outcome if things do not work out (usually because the listener will not repent or change).

Elisha was in his house, sitting with the elders of Samaria. Before a messenger from the king reached Elisha, ready to behead him, Elisha said, 'See how this wicked king, whose father was a murderer, wants to kill me?' He already knew who was coming, and why. Those believers who are close to God will indeed have this kind of divine knowledge in advance, to help them.

Elisha instructed his guests to shut the door after taking hold of the messenger, who was not far in front of the king. The messenger came, but the king who then arrived stopped him from applying the penalty to Elisha. He recognised that what was happening was from God, a punishment on him and the nation for their refusal to obey the Lord. And yet, in his continuing wrath he reversed his sense and said 'Why should I wait for God any longer?' Sin causes men to bluster, even when they have a glimpse into their own sinful nature and actions, and they try to do something they expected God to do. Impatience with God is NOT a virtue!

If you call upon God for help in any situation, do not fling your arms up in despair when an answer seems slow. God works in His own time for His own purposes. He will answer when He deems it fit. Very often a plea answered quickly will soon lose the proper thankfulness, and people forget to maintain praise. But, a much longer time spent waiting and hoping will remain in the mind and heart for a lifetime. There are such times when we must suffer privation and even hurt, before the Lord will answer. He is 'late' not because of a whim, but because He is right on time, it being His intention to cause you to wait. In waiting we often learn deep truths.

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