

UNSEEN HELP

October 29, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

Throughout the Sunday morning teachings in this series Pastor Randy and Pastor Keith received some feedback. The next couple of sermons will attempt to clarify the two most prominent questions:

Today we consider the good guys, the angels of God, those who work on our behalf. Next week we will also dig a little deeper into how we know the difference between an attack of the enemy and just life; between the spiritual and the physical.

As we read our passage we know that these events took place in modern day Syria. The time period is during the time of the Prophet Elisha..

Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, "Strike this army with blindness." So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the Lord opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?" "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master." So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory." (2 Kings 6:8-23)

King Aram is becoming angry; the King of Israel is aware of every move he makes. He begins to look for a "mole", but he is told about Elisha. He sends troops to Dothan where Elisha was staying.

Elisha's servant is terrified as he saw the surrounding armies. Elisha asked God to open his eyes. God opens his eyes and he realizes that actually there more with them than against them.

"This is a passage about seeing and not seeing"

Seeing not only into the physical but also the spiritual. It is the ability to see from God's vantage point...what is really going on! It will not only change your perspective; it will change everything in your life.

Looking closely at the Hebrew word, many scholars do not believe this is a literal blindness, but a delusion or a distortion.

Elisha will lead this army on about a 3 to 4 hour walk, right into the teeth of the army of Israel. The King of Israel asked the prophet if he should kill the prisoners. Elisha basically say's these are not your prisoners, they are God's. This story is about spiritual blindness in believers (Elisha's servant) and unbelievers (the enemy army) and God's intervention in both.

1. Believers who can't see

This servant and believers today are blind to God's presence and that he is fighting on their behalf. Like the servant, we feel like we've been abandoned by God; in reality this is lack of faith in God's goodness.

"Believers show unbelief through consistent worry and fear about their lives, or about their futures"

We are being challenged to live by God's sight, not always what is in front of us.:

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him." (Psalm 34:7-8)

A quick note about the city of Dothan: This is also the location that Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. You may wonder what the connection is to our story. It's all about seeing; God opened the eyes of the servant to see the reality of what the situation was. Joseph didn't see any angels, nor could he see God's plan and goodness to send him ahead to save his family in Egypt.

This acronym may help us with our understanding of angels and their God given purpose and how they relate to us:

ANGEL:

A - Aware

N - Numbered

G - God Made

E - Execute God's Plan

L - Limited

A - Aware

Angels are very aware of you and what is really going on. They have a view of heaven and earth, into the physical world and the spiritual realm. I'm sure there are times when they are thinking, "why aren't they trusting God?" Peter gives us some further insight into angels;"

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

They saw Jesus, the almighty God and creator, and they also saw him humble himself and come to earth to sacrifice his life.

"See to it that you don't look down on these little ones. Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

Angels are aware and in-tune, not only with the events of heaven and earth, but very aware of God's redemption of humanity. When people come to faith, heaven stops...how are we "seeing" this?

Luke 15 = Angels rejoice in a sinner's salvation.

N - Numbered

Angels are not omnipresent or omniscience, they are created beings that have a divine purpose. Scripture shows us many ways angels minister to the Lord, serve us and more. There are over 300 direct references to angels in scripture.

"You've come to the city of God, to Thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly" (Hebrews 12:22)

"Thousands upon thousands, ten thousand times ten thousands of angels worshipping" (Revelation 5:11).

G - God Made

Angels are created beings that will live forever. There are those who rebelled against God with Lucifer, there are the majority who love and worship God.

“Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created, 6 and he established them for ever and ever—he issued a decree that will never pass away.” (Psalm 148:1-5)

E - Execute God's Plan

Angels execute God's plans and purposes. They do this in many ways; delivering messages, protecting us from danger and other ways that we're probably not even aware of.

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” (Psalm 91:11-12)

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14)

An example of two specific angels in scripture are the “Seraphim” and Cherubim”. The name “seraphim” means “fiery” or “burning ones”. We see them the prophet Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple when God called him to his prophetic ministry:

“Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the door posts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.” (Isaiah 6:1-7)

We also see the “Cherubim” which are angelic beings involved in the worship and praise of God. They serve the purpose of magnifying the holiness and power of God. This is one of their main responsibilities throughout the Bible. In addition to singing God's praises, they also serve as a visible reminder of the majesty and glory of God and His abiding presence with His people. The cherubim are first mentioned here:

“After He drove the man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”(Genesis 3:3:24)

Prior to his rebellion, Satan was a cherub as seen in Ezekiel 28:12-15.

L - Limited

Television, movies, and paintings have given us some distorted views on angels. The truth of the matter is, usually when humans come in contact with angelic beings, it can be intimidating, even terrifying.

It is also very clear in scripture that we are not to worship angelic beings, only God.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

When we think about all we have learned about angels, it is wise that we don't become obsessed with them. We live among them, they worship and serve God just like we do.

Jesus could have called legions of angels to save him. I'm sure they were just waiting for his command. When evil encamps around you, we need to see and realize it's not about angels, but about God's goodness toward us.

2. Unbelievers who can't see Unbelievers show their unbelief by walking away from God

Like unbelievers today, the Aram army was blind. Once their “eyes were opened” they realized that they had walked into

captivity and possible destruction. But instead of slavery or death, the Prophet of God told Israel to feed them and send them home. Verse 23 tells us; ***“So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.”***

Paul tells us in his second letter to the Corinthians; ***“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”.***

Many around us are blind and held captive by the evil one. Jesus invites them to freedom and relationship with him.

Your greatest joy is not in finding what your searching for physically, it’s in having your eyes opened, the blinders lifted and finding Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Although this lesson is about our eyes being opened and seeing, what were your thoughts about “angels” before this sermon?
2. As you read our passage in 2 Kings did you identify with Elisha’s servant? When his eyes were opened to see beyond his limited perspective he was seeing not only into the physical but also the spiritual. Although you may have not been able to see an angelic army, share a time when God opened your eyes to something beyond what you could see in the physical.
3. Have you ever felt like Elisha’s servant to the point where you believed you had been abandoned by God? What are your thoughts about the idea that this servant and believers today can be blind to God’s presence and that he is fighting on their behalf and that in reality this is lack of faith in God’s goodness?
4. Look at, “Believers who can’t see” and discuss your observations and thoughts on this section. “Believers show unbelief through consistent worry and fear about their lives, or about their futures” Do you identify with this quote, if so feel free to share and pray for one another.
5. Discuss the word ANGEL below. What do we learn about angels from this acronym?
 - A - Aware
 - N - Numbered
 - G - God Made
 - E - Execute God’s Plan
 - L - Limited
6. Finally, discuss our last point “Unbelievers who can’t see” and this last thought...Many around us are blind and held captive by the evil one. Jesus invites them to freedom and relationship with him.