

General Church Education



Chariots of Fire

2 Kings 6:1-23; 8:1-24

Lesson 20

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 6: The Lord Is the Prophet and
Preserver

For ages 11-12 years

Chariots of Fire

2 Kings 6:1-23; 8:1-24

Teacher Background

The prophet Elisha performed many miracles for the Lord. For example, he used a stick to make an iron ax head float. Then, Elisha told the king of Israel that Syria would attack. When the king of Syria heard about it he surrounded Dothan, where Elisha was staying. But Elisha was unafraid because he saw a heavenly army on the mountains. The Lord blinded the Syrians and Elisha led them into Israel's army, and then ordered them to be sent home. Also, as Ben-Hadad besieged Samaria, the Syrians heard many chariots and horses and fled, leaving Israel to plunder their food. Then, when Ben-Hadad was sick, he sent for Elisha to ask if he would live. Elisha told the truth. Ben-Hadad cried when he saw what would happen.

This story dramatically illustrates the Lord's power and presence. The horses and chariots of fire picture the immense support the Lord provides, especially in times of trouble and temptation. These same forces also surround us and can help fight off thoughts, feelings or actions that might harm us or others. The spiritual meaning of the horses and chariots—goods and truths taught by the doctrine—give people great strength to live their lives.

Focus Points

- Elisha did many miracles that showed the Lord's power.
- Elisha helped Israel to fight Syria, a powerful country to the north.
- Ben-Hadad acknowledged the Lord's power by asking Elisha if he would live.

Readings from the Writings

“Since all historical details in the Word are representative of the celestial and spiritual things of the Lord's kingdom, so too are these. ‘The king of Syria’ represents people who possess cognitions of truth, though at this point in the contrary sense he represents those who possess cognitions which have no connection with truth. ‘Elisha’ represents the Word of the Lord. ‘Dothan’ means matters of doctrine drawn from the Word. ‘Chariots and horsemen and the large army which the king of Syria sent’ means falsities of doctrine. ‘The mountain full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha that were seen by his servant’ means goods and truths taught by doctrine drawn from the Word. ‘The blindness’ with which those were struck whom the king of Syria sent there means utter falsities. ‘Their being led by Elisha to Samaria’, where their eyes were opened, means instruction given through the Word. These are the kinds of things implied in the historical narrative here.”

Arcana Coelestia 4720.2

Teacher Activity Overview

The lesson offers students the following choices:

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” (2 Kings 6:16)

Projects and Activities (for answers, see back of lesson)

Complete the Quotations

Read the beginning of a quotation in a column on the left of the page and find the end of the quotation in the column on the right of the page. Draw a line from the beginning of the quotation to the end. Hint: The beginning of the quotations on the left are in the order in which they are given in the Word.

Natural and Spiritual Sight

Do an experiment that helps you think about natural and spiritual sight and the uses they serve in our lives.

Additional Project and Activity Choices for Parents and Teachers

Elisha and Syria

The prophet Elisha was involved in the connection between Israel and Syria. Read a list of stories in which this occurred and write down the actions Elisha took in these situations. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-elisha-and-syria-2-kings-5-8.pdf>

A Chart of the Kings of Israel and Judah

As you learn about the kings of Israel and Judah, complete a chart. As you fill in the spaces, think about whether the king is good or evil. Available at: <https://newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-a-chart-of-the-kings-of-israel-and-judah-1-kings-2-kings.pdf>

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2 Kings 6:1-23; 8:1-24

Vocabulary

fell—cut down

besiege—surround a place with armed forces to capture it or force it to surrender

fatal—lead to death

The Floating Ax Head

The Old Testament tells of many miracles. While the Lord did some of them, other miracles were done through people. Some happened quickly, others happened slowly. Some needed no preparation, while others required specific tasks to be done. This lesson tells of many different types of miracles. The first, like most miracles, seems impossible.

Some of the prophets that followed Elisha wanted to build a larger home. To do so they would need lumber, which was scarce. So, after gaining Elisha's permission and his agreement to accompany them, they went to the Jordan to fell trees. As they worked, an ax head fell off its handle and sank into the deep river. The prophet was very distressed because the ax was borrowed.

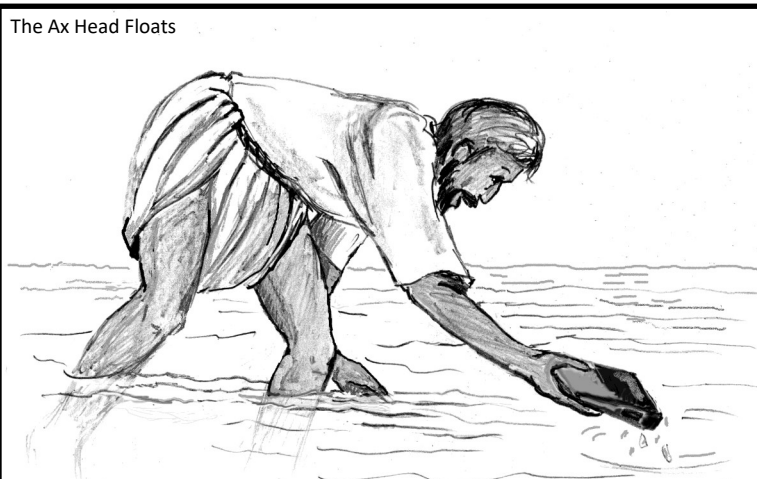
While he could have hidden the problem, he immediately told Elisha what had happened, showing confidence in Elisha's ability to help him. Elisha cut off a stick and put it into the water causing the ax head to rise. Rather than pick it up, Elisha directed the prophet to do this.

Syria Makes War Against Israel

As the king of Syria made plans to attack Israel, Elisha knew immediately about the plans. He sent a message to the king of Israel and told him where the Syrian army was gathering. So the king sent an observer. Knowing Syria's plans saved the king and his army from ambush and capture.

The king of Syria thought there must be a spy in his own army. So he asked his servants, "Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" (2 Kings 6:11)

A servant knew that it was Elisha, and told the king of Syria. Upon hearing this, the king gathered his army to surround and attack the city of Dothan where Elisha was staying. This was foolish because



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the king of Syria had just learned that Elisha could tell the king of Israel the Syrian battle plans.

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Elisha was not afraid to see the Syrian army. He knew the Lord was with him and would protect not just him, but Samaria as well. However, his servant was terrified. So Elisha said,

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” (2 Kings 6:16)

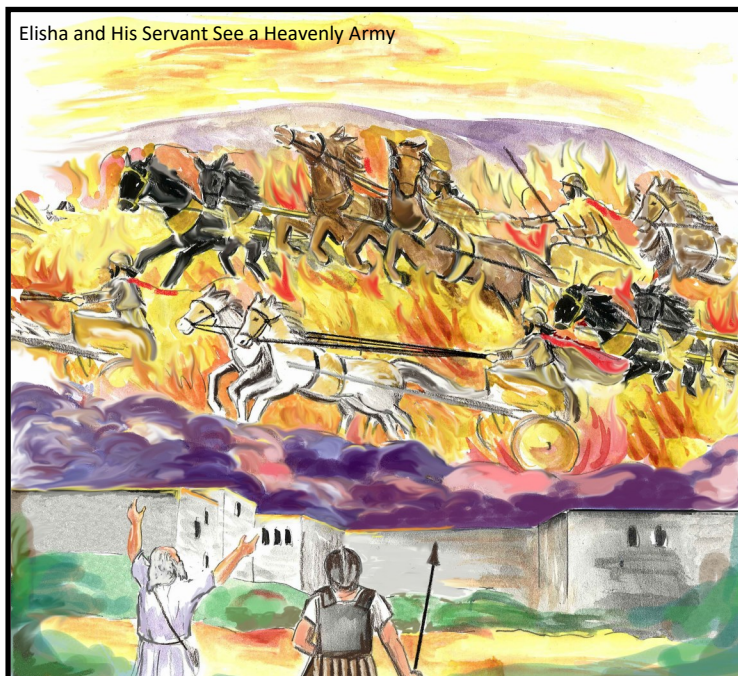
Elisha also asked the Lord to let the servant see the heavenly army with horses and chariots of fire filling the mountains that he could see. It must have been an amazing and reassuring sight. The Lord opened Elisha and his servant’s spiritual eyes so they could see the power of the Lord, always ready to protect them.

The Syrian Army is Captured

Elisha’s servant might have expected the angel army to rush down the mountains and conquer the Syrians. But Elisha knew differently. When the Syrians began to attack, he asked the Lord to blind the soldiers. The Lord did so, and Elisha led the Syrians into the middle of the army of Israel. Then he asked the Lord to return their sight so that they could see where they were. You can imagine their fear. But when the king of Israel wanted to kill them, Elisha would not let him do so. He told the king to feed them and send them back to Syria.

Syria Besieges Samaria During a Famine

After the miracle, Ben-Hadad, the Syrian king, besieged Samaria. It caused great hardship because there was a famine. The king of Israel was sure the Lord caused it through Elisha, so he commanded that Elisha’s head be brought to him.



Elisha was not afraid. He told the king’s man that things would change, but that the servant would not benefit. And so the Lord delivered Israel by still another miracle. The Syrians heard many chariots and horses, causing them to believe that Israel had gathered the armies of the Egyptians and the Hittites to attack them. They fled, leaving their things and their food behind. The Samaritans plundered them. However, as Elisha had prophesied, the servant was trampled as people rushed to get food.

The Shunammite Woman and the Famine

The plunder gave only a brief break from the famine. Elisha warned the Shunammite woman that it would continue for seven years. So she went to Philistia and stayed until it ended.

When she returned, she appealed to the king of Israel for her house and land. She must have told the king what had happened to her through Elisha, because he looked for Gehazi and asked him to describe what Elisha had done. Gehazi told the king of how Elisha had restored the woman's son to life and the king gave her back her home.

Ben-Hadad Dies, Hazael Is King

As king Ben-Hadad lay ill, someone told him that Elisha was in Damascus. Having seen the power Elisha had from the Lord a number of times, Ben-Hadad asked Hazael, his servant, to bring a present to Elisha and ask if the illness was fatal. Hazael did as his king asked, taking Elisha an incredible gift of forty camel-loads of good things. When he reached the prophet, Hazael asked if the king would recover.

Elisha told the servant that Ben-Hadad would die, but that he should tell the king that he would live. Then Elisha wept, for the Lord revealed what would happen to Ben-Hadad. The king might have survived, but Elisha saw that Hazael was an ambitious man and would take Ben-Hadad's life, and then the throne of Syria. He could also see the evil that Hazael would do to Israel.

Hazael tried to deny Elisha's claim, but when he returned to his king, he fulfilled Elisha's prophecy. First, he told Ben-Hadad that he would live, and the next day he smothered him and seized the throne. As Elisha had foretold, Hazael caused Israel great sadness.

Elisha's Sight

Throughout these stories, Elisha's ability to "see" plays a big part in the events that occur. This kind of sight was not natural but spiritual. It was a gift Elisha received from the Lord. Many times Elisha was able to help others due to his "sight". At other times he could only watch and see his prophecies come true. The incredible vision of the chariots of fire and the angel army, which Elisha shared with his servant, showed them both the immense power of the Lord and His angels, who are continually with us in times of need.

In general, we cannot have the kind of spiritual sight that Elisha had—it was a miracle. But we can have spiritual sight from the Word. When we read the Word, we can "see" how the Lord wants us to treat others and serve our neighbor. We can "see" what might happen if we make certain choices because we read about similar situations in the Word.

Although we cannot see into heaven while we live on earth, we can imagine the horses and chariots of fire surrounding us when we are unsure of what we should do. Like Elisha, we can develop a deep confidence in the presence of the Lord and His angels as we read His Word and apply it to our lives.

Activity Overview

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16)

Projects and Activities (answers at back of lesson)

Choose one or two.

Complete the Quotations

Read the beginning of a quotation in a column on the left of the page and find the end of the quotation in the column on the right of the page. Draw a line from the beginning of the quotation to the end. Hint: The beginning of the quotations on the left are in the order in which they are given in the Word.

Natural and Spiritual Sight

Do an experiment that helps you think about natural and spiritual sight and the uses they serve in our lives.

Complete the Quotations

2 Kings 6:1-22; 8:1-15

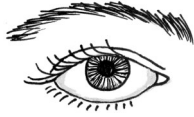
Read the beginning of a quotation on the left and find the end of it on the right. Draw a line from one to the other. Hint: The beginning of the quotations on the left are in the order in which they are given in the Word.

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|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | “Please let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there...” | A | ...tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” |
| 2 | “So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there...” | B | ...and the Lord opened their eyes and they saw.” |
| 3 | None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel... | C | ...for the Lord has called for a famine...” |
| 4 | “Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw...” | D | ...and let us make there a place where we may dwell.” |
| 5 | “Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see...” | E | ...and Elisha answered, ‘The Lord has shown me that you will become king...’” |
| 6 | “Arise and go, you and your household, and sojourn wherever you can sojourn...” | F | ...and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire...” |
| 7 | “My Lord, O king, this is the woman...” | G | ...and this is the son whom Elisha restored to life.” |
| 8 | “Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God...” | H | ...and he made the iron float.” |
| 9 | “”But what is your servant—a dog, that he should do this gross thing...” | I | ...and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, ‘Shall I recover?’” |

Look at the full quotations above. Which one do you think best reflects the power of the Lord? Why?

Natural and Spiritual Sight

2 Kings 6:1-23; 8:1-24



Sight plays a big role in the story of Elisha and the Syrians. Choose an experiment that helps you think about natural and spiritual sight and the uses they

each serve in our lives.

Experiment 1: Blind Journey

For this experiment, you will need a willing volunteer and something to use as a blindfold. Start by thinking of a safe place indoors or outside where you could lead someone who is blindfolded, but where they might not know where you were going. Blindfold your volunteer and carefully lead them along your route. When you reach your destination, ask them if they know where they are. Switch roles, and let them lead you blindfolded. Was it hard to tell where you were going? Imagine how much harder it would be if you were to try this experiment in an unfamiliar place.

We can imagine what it might be like not to see because we can see. What is like for us to have spiritual sight? One way to think of this is to have knowledge that lets us know things we cannot actually see. Elisha had miraculous knowledge of where and when the Syrians were going to attack Israel, even though he had not seen them. He knew because the Lord gave him the knowledge. Although this kind of knowledge is only rarely revealed to people by the Lord, there are circumstances when what we know is more important than what we actually can see.

Experiment 2: Natural Evidence

For this experiment, look at a tree or plant. List all the parts you can see (e.g. leaves, bark). Did you see the whole picture? What other parts are essential to any plant, even though we can't see them most of the time? Can you think of some other examples where the appearances—what we see with our natural eyes—can blind us to the truth?

The Writings state, “Thought from the eye closes the understanding, while thought from the understanding opens the eye” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 46). This may sound confusing, but it is saying that the things we see with our natural eyes sometimes deceive us, unless we are thinking about what we know to be true, not just what we see physically.

We know about roots because we have learned about them or seen them. If we had never seen roots or been told about them, just looking wouldn't tell us that they were there. The same is true of spiritual things. We cannot know about them unless someone teaches us or unless we learn about them by reading the Lord's Word.

Answers

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Complete the Quotations

1. D; 2. H; 3. A; 4. F; 5. B; 6. C; 7. G; 8. I; 9. E.