

CHARIOTS OF FIRE ALL AROUND

The underlying theme in the stories of Elisha is the priority and superiority of the spiritual over the natural. This is emphasized in the story of the chariots of fire.

To understand life in that day, we must realize that the productivity was not very high. People preyed upon one another in a manner that we would consider savage. At the time Elisha lived, the king of Syria sent many marauding bands into Israel. In the story of Naaman, the leper, a little girl is mentioned who was taken captive by one of these bands and put into slavery under Naaman, the captain of the king of Syria's army (II Kings 5:1, 2). In those days there were no labor unions; and rather than hiring people to work for them, a nation would simply kidnap children and adults from some tribe of people which was their enemy. The captives would be put into servitude after a few beatings, to teach what it was to be a slave; they would spend the rest of their lifetimes serving someone else and belonging to someone else.

Think of the grieving that a mother would feel when her little child did not come home and she knew that he had been taken away to become a slave. One of the facts of life the Israelites lived with was the little bands and armies coming from Syria and constantly warring against them.

II Kings 6:8–23: Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." And the man of God sent word to the king of Israel saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." And the king of Israel sent to the place about

which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice. Now the heart of the king of Syria was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him." And it was told him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan." And he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. Imagine the soldiers planning their strategy, talking about how they will catch the old prophet now that they have him pinned in the city.

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, "Strike this people with blindness, I pray." So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Then Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, nor is this the city; follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he brought them to Samaria.

And it came about when they had come into Samaria, that Elisha said, "O Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold, they were in the

midst of Samaria. Then the king of Israel, when he saw them, said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" And he answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." So he prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Syria did not come again into the land of Israel.

There is a way of slaying our enemies with kindness; Jesus commanded: *do good to them which hate you.* Luke 6:27b. This technique seems to work, and in Elisha's case it was very effective. The Syrians became very discouraged about sending bands over to pilfer, to take slaves, and to destroy.

Elisha's revelation and understanding of the situation as God showed it to him enabled him to give valuable warnings. Even when the king of Syria came directly against him at Dothan, he was able, by the superiority of his authority, to smite the army with blindness and to completely frustrate all their plans.

As a people chosen of God, we must move into our authority, into the superiority of the spiritual over all the natural. We may be classed as fanatics on this point, but there is not much hope for the earth unless we begin to bind the things that must be bound, and loose the things that must be loosed (Matthew 16:19).

The voice of the people is not the voice of God. However, a perceptive minority can still do as the prophet Elisha, binding and frustrating the purposes of men who want to destroy the system

prematurely before we have the opportunity of seeing the gospel of the Kingdom preached to the ends of the earth.

This is a strategic time for us to stand in the gap with our prayers and faith; if we fail to do so, what God has purposed to do could be set back, as far as being accomplished in our lifetimes. His word would still be fulfilled, but we would not see the fullness of it in our day. Yet the Word says that God will do a quick work in the earth (Romans 9:28). The Scriptures also say if those days were not shortened, there would be no flesh saved alive (Matthew 24:22).

We know the time is short. Will we enter in, as Elisha, to stand in the gap in the time of transition and to see the change come? Satan's timetable must be reversed.

Satan always tries to get ahead of God. He moves in the religious realm; and as a result of the desperation of men, an Ishmael always comes before the true son Isaac. Before the realm of spirit was opened to God's people, spiritualism was introduced in the United States. Before God's people started moving in the gifts of healings and miracles, others came forth with a type of mystical healing that was not the scriptural thing God wanted. A generation before the gospel of the Kingdom really began to come as a revelation, a kingdom was preached that was not the Kingdom of God. Before every true thing of God has come the false.

The people who are moving in God today have inherited the mantle of reproach from the false things that preceded them. They have walked into the reproach of the faith healers and charlatans who raise thousands of dollars under the guise of spiritual gifts and in the name of spiritual ministries. The fact is that God is now raising up the

most beautiful body of ministries who are unmatched for personal sacrifice in the way they live and give themselves unreservedly.

In the past, Satan's manifestation came first, and then came the things of God. If the remnant does not reverse this, and if Satan's plan is completed first, no flesh will be saved alive. Right now, Satan's plans for world destruction are more complete within governments than we realize. Wake up, O remnant of the Lord! God has called us to be the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). He has called us to be the delivering factor.

John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield changed the history of England in their prayer meetings. Martin Luther spent an average of six hours a day crying out before God. The Apostle Paul wrote of how day and night he cried unto the Lord (I Thessalonians 3:10). These men knew how to pray. Now, in this soft, arrogant age, we are mistaken if we do not believe that we are called to pray and to stand in the gap.

God's prophets saw the days of terror and brought a word from the Lord: "I looked for an intercessor, for one to stand in the gap and could not find one" (Isaiah 59:16, Ezekiel 22:30). God wants to show mercy to us; but unless there are human channels who are willing to be used of God to divert the course of human events, we will face more disasters than we can cope with.

From this time on, we must have enough faith to hold back the Red Sea and to walk through on dry ground. Our transition from the bondage of an old age into the freedom of a new age must be by a miracle walk sustained by the miracle power of God. We must believe God's word and act on it. If we expect this transaction to happen

automatically and look at what is happening in the natural, our faith will be shaken and God's words will lose their meaning to us. The transition will come only when we begin to pray.

We must pray about many of the leaders and situations in this country. It is disturbing that we seem to have no way to defend ourselves against what some of our leaders are doing. The American people are not consulted on anything. They are allowed to vote on issues that are so clouded over by politics and speeches that they do not see the truth. Even the politicians seem to be at a loss to solve the economic problems in the world today. Anyone who does come up with any answers is immediately demeaned and his advice is ignored. The result is that the confidence and credibility in the United States has disappeared. What are we to do? We can go into our closets and die of fright, or we can believe we were brought forth by God for a purpose and believe for this government that God has raised up.

When we read the Bill of Rights or the Declaration of Independence, we are deeply stirred. Under our flag glorious things have happened. America's aid programs have kept many people in the world alive. But the greatest credit of America is the sacrifice that the Christians have made to send the gospel to all the world.

Since God has made real to us the need to be intercessors, unrelenting spiritual warfare has come against us. As Elisha was hemmed in by the army of Syria, so we are ringed in by devil power. God will open our eyes to see that they who are with us are more than they who are with them.

In the natural, the world picture looks very grim; that is the way the situation looked to the young man when he saw the armies of Syria

surrounding the city. The prophet prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord." God is moving to open the eyes of His people and to blind the eyes of the enemy's servants, and to release the people of the Lord into understanding.

By Satan's design, many destructive forces are at work in this country. Joshua made the sun stand still (Joshua 10:12), and the spirit of Joshua on the remnant today can hold back the tide of destruction so that we have the opportunity of doing the job God set before us to do. Our hearts must sense the urgency to become God's instruments in the earth.

God brings us into a walk with Himself not so that we can be blessed, but so that we can become a chosen instrument in His hand. One of the most effective and destructive lies Satan can tell us is that there is no purpose for our life, that we are not of any value, that there is no meaning in our serving God. We are called of God; most of our problems come because we have not begun to move into our position in God.

We must not be at ease in Zion; there is not much time left for leisure. We must pray, believe, fast, and seek the face of the Lord. We must seek for help, for strength, for finances to be loosed, for the superiority of the spiritual over the natural to be manifested.

Someone must make the breakthrough into the dominion over finances, over the physical, over demon power, and over every situation and circumstance. We are assaulted at Dothan, but God will smite with confusion the enemies that besiege us and make them helpless, so that God's word can have free course through us. At some point we must stop being the pursued and become the pursuers; at

some point we must take the initiative. If we would take authority and specifically bind the moves of the enemy, we would prevail with unbelievable force. We can be the instruments in the hand of God to loose a new age.