

2 Kings 6:8-23

Aim of lesson

To show that God's power surrounds those who trust in him, and to show how God's people should treat their enemies.

Background study

1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 2:11-12; Psalm 34:7; Matthew 26:53; Romans 12:20-21.

Suggested outline of lesson

Ask the children what they know about angels - from the angels at creation to the angel that rolled away the stone from Christ's tomb. They may remember the angel that shut the lions' mouths for Daniel, or the angel who woke Peter and led him out of prison. This lesson shows how God's angels are always ready to help his servants, even though they may not be visible.

The king of Syria

Begin the story by pointing out that Israel had a number of enemies who attacked their cities from time to time. One of the most powerful of these was the Syrian (some modern versions have 'Aramean') army, led by their king, Ben-Hadad. The Syrians had experienced a crushing defeat by Israel during the time of Elijah and now, with renewed forces, they moved in to attack again. This time they planned to capture the king of Israel in an ambush, but he was saved from capture because he was prepared to obey the words of God's prophet. As before, the Syrians failed to appreciate the power of Israel's God, and their plans were thwarted by Elisha. This happened so often that the king of Syria suspected that there must be an Israelite spy in his camp, who was forewarning the Israelites of his plans. Learning that Elisha was responsible for the undermining of his strategy, the king of Syria decided that further attacks on the king must take second place to the capture of Elisha.

Searching for Elisha

Describe the means by which Ben-Hadad set about capturing Elisha, the search to discover his whereabouts, and the hasty but stealthy movement of troops as under the cover of darkness they closed in around the city of Dothan. An alarming situation revealed itself to the city's inhabitants when they awoke in the morning; they were completely surrounded by enemy forces, and there was no means of escape.

Alas, my master! What shall we do?

Elisha's new young servant reacted by running, panic-stricken, to his master. By contrast, Elisha was calm, confident and untroubled, inspired by his constant awareness of the presence and power of God. Quote the words of Elisha to his servant (verse 16) and

the ensuing prayer, uttered aloud for the young man's sake (verse 17). The answer was immediate.

Horses and chariots of fire

The young man was shown something not normally visible to the human eye. It was a manifestation of the angelic forces at God's command. Try to help the children appreciate the wonder and magnitude of this revelation, which brought home to the servant the power and presence of God in a way which no words could have conveyed.

If your enemy hungers. feed him

Once again Elisha took the initiative and called upon God to intervene and protect him, and once again his prayer was answered. Elisha was able to lead his would-be captors into captivity in the capital city. Now it was the turn of the Syrians to be afraid, when they found themselves at the mercy of the king of Israel. They would expect to receive harsh punishment. How surprised then, and puzzled, they must have been to be entertained on such a grand scale and afterwards set free, and with what confused thoughts they must have returned to their own camp. We are not told what reports they gave to their king, but the outcome was that the whole army abandoned their siege and returned to Syria, humiliated and demoralized.

Relevance to the children's lives

Do you think that there are still angels? Can you see them? Why not? Are they still able to help us?

Do you think Elisha was right in not taking revenge on his enemies when they were in his power? If we try to get our own back on someone who has hurt or threatened us, what usually happens? If we forgive them and are kind to them instead, what is often the result?

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we thank you that we have learned about angels. Help us to believe that your power is still around us and that your angels are still able to protect and help us. When people try to hurt us, help us to overcome the desire to get our own back, and instead be brave enough to forgive and to be kind. Amen.

Memory verse

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:7).