

Blinders

Rev. George M. Schwab, Ph.D.

Apr 26, 2021

2 Kings 6:18

(BHS)

וַיֵּרְדוּ אֵלָיו
וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
הִדְבֵּר נָא אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם הַזֶּה בְּסַנְוֵרִים
וַיִּכֶם בְּסַנְוֵרִים
כַּדְבַּר אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ:

(NASB)

When they came down to him,
Elisha prayed to the LORD and said,
“Strike this people with **blindness**.”
So He struck them with **blindness**
according to the word of Elisha.

You may see “Jordan” in the verb “to go down.” In line 2 you will see Elisha and Yahweh. NASB glosses “people” from *goy*. You may remember *goyim*, “the nations.” “Blindness” (*sanwerim*) is very rare, but found here twice. With merely normal sight you can see it in red. “Elisha” ends the verse.

2 Kings 6:8 – 23 begins with the Aramean King vexed because his plans were thwarted by Elisha. So he sent his people to capture the prophet. Using ordinary vision the Aramean army soon located and surrounded Elisha—scaring the dickens out of his young servant. Elisha prayed for him, “Oh Yahweh, open his eyes that he may see!” The boy’s eyes were opened to see fiery chariots and horses protecting Elisha. This is an elevated level of perception, a vision of cosmic reality more real than ordinary sight. Elisha then prayed our verse, “Smite them with blindness!” Blinded, the Aramean army haplessly followed Elisha into Israel’s stronghold, where they peacefully surrendered.

But there is a problem with this story. The Arameans were not even aware that they were blind! They continued to believe they were pursuing Elisha like normal, even while being led by him into enemy territory. But the text says that they were blind. This is a contradiction. Right?

Take a look again at the Hebrew text. In the whole Bible, *sanwerim* is found elsewhere only in Gen 19:11, where angels struck the men of Sodom “blind.” But the Sodomites didn’t realize they couldn’t see and continued looking for Lot’s door. Similarly, the Arameans’ impaired vision also prevented them from seeing the world as it was. They continued to pursue their agenda, unaware that they have been judged with confusion so as to never reach their goal, no matter how hard they tried. This is a third level of perception, being impaired so as not to perceive even earthly things clearly. The Sodomites were blind to that fact and they finally perished in fire. The Arameans were kept from their desire and finally gave it up.

When Jesus was rejected, James and John said, “Should we call fire from heaven to come down and consume them?” (Luke 9:54). But instead of destroying his enemies like the Sodomites, calling on legions of angels—commanding horses and chariots of fire—Jesus let the Jews arrest him, abuse him, and murder him on a cross. That is an example of how his coming has changed things. The age of grace has come, and salvation is offered to all rather than dreadful punishment in this life.

After his resurrection, the Savior joined some disciples as they walked along, but they didn’t know it was Jesus until he vanished. When Stephen was being stoned, instead of fiery horses he saw Jesus standing. It isn’t fiery horses that those with extraordinary vision see today—it is the risen Christ who is ever present to save sinners.

Like the Aramean king, we are called to set aside our agendas, our plans, our expectations. Christians are exhorted to seek first the kingdom of God, to make Jesus our highest goal in life.

Today we wait for Jesus to return, not seeing him now, but believing that he is there. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John 20:29).

Someday, this spiritual sight will be made manifest to all. On that Day, everyone will have the same experience as those Arameans, who suddenly realized their predicament. “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him” (Rev 1:7). Someday, everyone will see; someday, our faith which is mocked today will be vindicated. Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind” (John 9:39).

So keep looking up, Christian people. Don't be surprised when unbelieving family and friends can't “see” it. Practice framing the issues of your life in the light of the gospel—in the light of where you are going and what is coming. Amen, Come Lord Jesus, our Chariots and Horses!