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Things were not looking good! The servant of Elisha “the man of God”, got up early, went outside, and saw a host of the Syrian army encompassing the city. What was worse, they had come for his boss, Elisha, so no wonder he cried out, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (II Kings 6.13-15, AV).

Elisha calmly replied, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (v 16). In response to Elisha’s prayer, “the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (v 17). Elisha the man of God knew the great spiritual realities that exist beyond mere physical sight, hence his unruffled peace and steady faith; and we, in Christ, are to know the same.

Our Concordances list over 250 references in the Old Testament to “the Lord of hosts”! The Lord is not just the Lord, though that is abundantly more than enough in itself, He is also at the head of a great heavenly host. We read of them here in the II Kings 6 passage, surrounding and protecting Elisha, in far greater numbers and power than the opposition. Jacob came across a group of them (Genesis 32.1-2), and those shepherds outside Bethlehem were blessed with the sight and song of “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” as the birth of the Messiah was announced (Luke 2.8-14). In those evil hours in Gethsemane, Jesus had already been comforted by an angel in His anguish (Luke 22.43), and then spoke of the “twelve legions of angels” He could ask His Father to send to deliver Him (Matthew 26.51-54). Thanks be to God, Jesus never asked for that deliverance, in loving obedience to His Father’s will (eg., Matthew 26.39).

We must also remain aware of the other sort of hosts in the “heavenlies”, those satanic forces in constant conflict with the Lord of hosts, trying anything that will replace God Himself with the created, rebellious, fallen figure of Satan. Stephen speaks of how God gave up Israel “to worship the host of heaven”, this being an idolatrous worship of both actual stars in the night sky and the idolatrous “gods” associated with them, such as Moloch and Rephan (Acts 7.42-43).

In the great “whole armour of God” passage of Ephesians 6, the Holy Spirit tells us through Paul of the wiles of the devil, of our wrestling, of the foe being principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. This passage is always a stark reminder that this “spiritual warfare” is no game (see also for example Romans 13.12 / II Corinthians 10.3-6 / I Thessalonians 5.8), and we, as Christ-serving participants in it, are to be fully aware and properly equipped for this battlefield.

These unseen but very real conflicts in the spiritual realms explain much about the extraordinary and apparently inexplicable wickedness of today – of which examples abound. This wickedness results from God’s sovereignty and ways being set aside, allowing His enemies, both seen and unseen, to make some progress against “the Lord of hosts”.

On a wholly different scale yet no less spiritually significant are the “Brexit negotiations”. Because Britain is the only major world power which constitutionally still upholds the Protestant Reformation, while what is now the European Union is steeped in Roman Catholicism, there is a profound spiritual clash at the heart of the Britain-EU relationship, (which must partly explain why Britain is so often out of step with the EU). Behind all these talks is a straightforward spiritual struggle regarding the soul of this country – in essence, Reformation or Rome? Whatever our own preferences may be in these negotiations, how we need to pray for the Lord’s mercy, for as we all know, this country has for many years wilfully “journeyed into a far country” in terms of the living God and His Word (Luke 15.13).

Elisha saw the spiritual beyond the physical, and so too, in Christ, do we. That spiritual seeing is a great spur to our fervent prayers and bold discipleship (egs., Colossians 4.2 / I Thessalonians 5.16-24 / James 5.16 / Hebrews 12.1-2).

Not for us is that servant’s fearful cry of “Alas!”, but rather, in Christ, we cry “Rejoice!” – (Philippians 4.4). For Jesus saw “Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10.17-18 / see also Revelation 19.11-14 & 20.1-3 and 10). The angel of God still encamps around those who fear Him (Psalm 34.7). Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8.35-39). Jesus has overcome the world (John 16.33). And, “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ!” – (I Corinthians 15.57).

Praise God, the Lord is still the Lord of hosts.

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