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**JOURNEY  
INTO THE  
SUPERNATURAL**

## **The Chariots of Israel: More than Meets the Eye**

Once, when the king of Syria was at war against Israel, his secretly devised plans were repeatedly frustrated because the king of Israel always seemed to know exactly what they were. The Syrian king suspected a spy in his own camp, but one of his servants told him, "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber."

Elisha was in a city called Dothan, the servant said.

So the king sent "horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city." An army was sent to seize one man.

"When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was round about the city." Elisha was encircled and trapped.

"And the servant said, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?'" And Elisha answered, "'Fear not, for those that are with us are more than those who are with them.'"

That seemed an odd declaration, because *no* soldiers were with Elisha.

And Elisha prayed and said, "'Lord, I pray Thee, *open his eyes that he may see.*'" So 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" (2 Kings 6:8-23, RSV).

In this account—and at many other points in the Bible—the Scrip-

tures tell of forces and events in the physical and natural realm and of forces and concurrent events in the spiritual and supernatural realm. There was something visible going on and something invisible going on in the same place at the same time, and both had a bearing on the event. Here, for a brief moment, the unseen veil that separates the two was drawn back, so the young man who at first had seen only the army of Syria saw another army camped in that place, the army of the Lord.

What he saw was not a vision but reality. He saw real horses and real chariots on that mountain, but they existed on a different plane of reality than the physical. They could come into the natural order and affect it, but they were not a part of the natural order. They exist in an order beyond or above that of the natural, called the supernatural. They are not less real because they are normally invisible to man.

The peaceful outcome of this confrontation between natural and supernatural forces hints that the prophet—and most probably the Lord—had a sense of humor in it.

Elisha was not seized or harmed, nor were any of the invading Syrian soldiers killed. The prophet asked the Lord to strike the aliens with temporary blindness, and when the Syrians could not see, Elisha had some sport with them. He told them that they were in the wrong place.

“Follow me,” said the man they were after, “and I will lead you to the man whom you seek.” Elisha thus offered to lead them straight to Elisha. But he led them like sheep into the center of the stronghold of Israel, where the army of Israel could quickly have cut them all down. Instead, Elisha asked the Lord to take their blindness away, and a bit later he set them all down to “a great feast.”

He fed them well, left them with wonderful stories to tell to their grandchildren later in life, and sent them home, baffled but wiser. The last word on it is that “the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel.”

They had learned their lesson in regard to raids, but the Syrian king later “mustered his entire army” for an all-out attack on Israel. It was abruptly cut off when the Lord, acting according to a prophecy spoken by Elisha, “made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots, and of horses, the sound of a great army” (2 Kings 7:6). The troops fell into a panic—it sounded to them as if Israel had got the Egyptian army to help them in a counterattack. The Syrians abandoned their camp in haste, leaving all their horses and supplies behind as a spoil for Israel.

This time the Syrians “heard” chariots that were not there. We do not know just how it worked, but what happened in their hearing was entirely supernatural. Yet its effects in the natural-physical realm were direct, immediate, and conclusive.

There had been one previous occasion on which Elisha had seen a sight like the one he saw on the morning when the Syrians tried to seize him. It came while he was serving as a young man under the Prophet Elijah.

Elijah was one of the holiest and mightiest prophets in the history of Israel. He is one of two men in Old Testament times who were taken into heaven without suffering physical death. The other is Enoch.

Elisha had been servant to Elijah. When the day came for Elijah to be taken from the earth, Elisha knew what was going to happen. He followed the older man's steps closely that day, refusing suggestions that he linger behind.

At the end, the old prophet turned to the younger man and said, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He was asking that the power of God that had made Elijah a prophet and a worker of miracles rest upon him—in double measure.

Elijah said, "You have asked a hard thing. Yet, *if you see me* as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."

"As they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire, separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

"And Elisha saw it and he cried, 'My father, my father! The *chariots of Israel and its horsemen!*' And he saw him no more" (2 Kings 2:1-12, rsv).

The condition had been fulfilled. For a moment Elisha had seen hidden things, and that made him call out in astonishment and awe. He saw forces assigned as protectors of Israel—real, powerful, efficient forces that the human eye cannot see, because they are not physical but spiritual, not natural but supernatural.

Because they are on a different plane than that of the natural and the physical, in their comings and goings they are, with rare exceptions, unseen and unheard by man.

While this is true of the supernatural forces of God, it is equally true of the supernatural forces of evil. Both are invisible and both affect events on earth to a degree unsuspected by most men.

Once, when King David was tempted in a certain matter and disobeyed the will of God, the Bible says that "God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but when he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, and He repented of the evil, and He said to the destroying angel, 'It is enough; now stay your hand.'

"And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite"—notice that it was a very specific angel standing at

a very specific place. "And David lifted his eyes and *saw the angel of the Lord* standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. . . .

"Now Ornan was threshing wheat; he turned and *saw the angel*, and his four sons who were with him hid themselves" (1 Chronicles 21:15-16, 20, RSV).

It was given to David and to Ornan to see beyond the natural into the supernatural and to see, taking place in the supernatural, an event that had the most immediate and momentous bearing on the safety of the city of Jerusalem.

There are events occurring on the earth in our time that are affected not only by what men do and say in the natural realm but by invisible forces operating in the supernatural realm. The Bible reveals that the primary initiative in certain events of history does not proceed from the will of man but from the will of powers beyond man in the supernatural. Since some of the powers are evil, and since their desire is to increase the sum of strife and suffering and death among mankind, it is urgent for Christians to know something about them.

## **The Door That Can Never Be Opened Again**

Supernaturalism in many forms has come flooding in upon the American and Canadian culture in our time, creating a widespread interest in clairvoyance, psychicism, occultism, witchcraft, out-of-body travel, transcendental meditation, extrasensory perception, precognition, and various forms of mysticism or spiritism. New as they may seem, they are ancient supernatural practices that have found expressions in many cultures at various times in history.

For many people they have, it must be acknowledged, the magnetism of fascination, but these things should not be entered into out of uninformed curiosity, without some knowledge of the possible consequences of even a limited amount of experimentation with them or exposure to them.

If you would not thrust your hand into a snake pit, you should not permit yourself to be drawn into an involvement with one or another form of occultism, even in a tentative and purely experimental way,

without knowing that it is possible for you to step over a threshold and past a door that may slam shut behind you as soon as you stand on the far side of it—slam shut so tight that nothing you can do can pry that door open again so that you can get back out.

That does happen. I have seen it happen. Young people have told me that something like this was happening to them but that before the door completely closed somehow they got out of it in time. I have heard from the lips of still others that they wish that they had never become involved in what they are in, but they say that they are helpless to do anything about it now. For them there seems to be *no exit*.

There is no knowing how quickly entrapment in the supernatural may occur. For some the process is slow. They can go for months, perhaps for years, without feeling or observing effects which they regard as damaging. For others a single experiment, entered into even in a casual or ignorant way, may carry them past a point of no return.

The supernatural is a tremendously potent realm. A person may pull what looks to be a small trigger and find that he has set off what for him proves to be a kind of nuclear fission of the human psyche. The powers are far, far beyond the capacity of man to handle. Yet, within clear biblical guidelines, born-again believers in Christ have no cause for unreasoning fear of the supernatural at all. Knowing what to avoid confers safety; and supernatural realities that have their source in God, in the Lord Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit, can be for them a source of joy, comfort, protection, godly power, liberation, perhaps at times even healing.

The author was initially moved to investigate the supernatural and to write about it after a series of encounters with individuals who had been terribly damaged by their involvement in it. (My work as a newspaper reporter in New York City constantly threw me into contact with a great variety of people in many dissimilar circumstances of life.)

Quite a few of these victimized individuals were Jewish, and that is a biblically significant fact. The Old Testament warnings against certain supernatural practices strongly forbid Jews to have anything to do with them. Such practices are a direct traffic with the spiritual enemies of the living God—the God who revealed Himself first to Abraham and the Jews. Ignorance of this fact supplies no exemption from the effects of going against it—any more than a person who idly picks up a live wire is protected by ignorance of the laws of electricity.

Though there is plenty about it on the wrong side that is weird, the supernatural realm is not at all something merely vague or ethereal, as fleeting as an airplane's shadow on the terrain. It is reality, and its effects are often startlingly real.

I watched in close-up the disintegration of a young Jew who went out of his mind as the direct and traceable result of having watched an Indian yogi on television. That gave him a mild taste of the occult. He took a deep dive into it, read widely in some of its literature, and began doing and saying strangely irrational things. He smoked marijuana. He lost his hold on reality, and the unreality that seized his mind was of an especially preposterous kind.

In six months he was changed from a rational, effective human being of more than ordinary capacity and initiative to a futile and oddly warped individual. When he spoke, half the time he sounded about 80 percent rational, the rest of the time he sounded 100 percent out of his mind. He was taken unawares. I knew another young Jew, twenty-four years old, who believed that a certain notorious, self-proclaimed Christ-figure in India was the Messiah, and who became absorbed in that conviction to the exclusion of almost everything else. He got into it to the point of mental aberration. He frankly said that when the idea concerning the Indian came over him, he knew it was wrong and he tried to resist, but he could not. In both of these cases, drugs taken in small amounts served as avenues into the supernatural for these young men and helped undermine their self-control and loose them from their senses.

I knew a man who, at age forty-five, had spent four wasted years in a mental institution, away from his family and away from the good job he had ably held for twenty years, because he dipped into supernaturalism, out of fascination, and got in over his head. Most of his trouble came because he met an elderly "prophetess" whose words and visions got hold of him. He went to her for advice on several occasions and submitted to her magic religious formulas for sickness. Some of it came through reading about the supernatural exploits of medieval so-called saints and some of it came through the use of religious medals. At one key point he had a "sign" that he took as evidence of God's favor on his course. It was a sign all right—a sweet yet perverse small miracle—but it was *not* from God. I warned him repeatedly and strongly against these things—until the time when his wife had him committed to a mental hospital, and he was put through a series of electroshock treatments, which did not help him. The last time I saw him he appeared to be hopelessly insane.

These things do not happen merely by chance. There are active, intelligent, invisible spiritual forces at work today that select particular or susceptible individuals and seek to get them interested in, and then into, the supernatural. These forces have an entire program or path of spiritual ruination laid out for an individual, including events that seem