

# Unbelievable

## Episode 4: From Danger to Defente

### INTRODUCTION - Mid-East tension has long roots!

(So does Jesus' commitment to non-violent response to conflict)

Gen 16:11-12; Gen 17:18-20; Matt 5:39-48

### THE STORY - a Recipe for Disaster (or a party?) 2 Kings 6:8-23

- Solomon's legacy: a divided kingdom, and neighbouring nations who began to attempt take-overs and dominate the trade routes
- King of Aram: of the Syrians, a Semitic people, going back to Shem (Noah's son) and related to Jacob's offspring through marriage to Rebecca as well
- Spies: Frustration of invasion plans leads to intelligence reports
- The start of things to come: this story is followed by repeated attempts at conquest
- Archeological digs in recent decades reveal a robust society in the area at this time, including a very strong Samarian fortress and kingdom, into which Elisha brought this advancing force
- Elisha: the original protégé of the prophet Elijah, this prophet is respected, powerful in his own right, and often consulted by kings. His "chariots of fire" revelation to his servant provides a type of mirroring experience to Elijah's dramatic departure.
- Unbelievable! That Elisha operated so calmly in the face of such large opposition, that an army could be led into the heart of enemy territory, that two small people could be aware of spiritual beings and act upon it so boldly, that animosity and imminent military conflict between peoples could be turned into a party!

### LOOKING DEEPER - Reading between the lines of the Daily Planet

#### Take-out #1 - Superheroes care - generosity today provides credibility

##### tomorrow

Generosity \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ deeply reassures people, and generates trust

1 Peter 2:12; Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Tim 6:17-19

#### Take-out#2 - Superheroes react differently to threats & danger

A God-centred calm in the face of danger creates \_\_\_\_\_ in those who play hardball; " \_\_\_\_\_" often enables people a positive and simple way to side-step violence

Luke 4:24-30; John 8:59; John 10:39

#### Take-out#3 - Superheroes have special vision - and they help others share it

The power of faith is in its opening of our eyes to \_\_\_\_\_ - Jesus-followers do the unbelievable as they \_\_\_\_\_ others to see this larger reality and act upon it with them

Eph 6:10ff; Heb 11:1-2; 2 Cor 4:18; Heb 11:27; John 20:29

#### Take-out #4 - Superheroes kill with kindness - they boldly lead others to unexpected places

There is little so profoundly moving as to find the one you sought to harm inviting you to their table - others are more likely to be impacted by our parties, than by our preaching

Prov 25:21; Rom 12:20-21

### CONCLUSION - Planning Surprise Parties

Matthew 9:9-19; Luke 19:2-9

### HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

#### Warming Up ...

1. After briefly reviewing this week's message, share one new thing you learned, or one thing that most challenged, convicted, or encouraged you.
2. Share any instances where you were expecting the worst from someone, only to encounter the opposite. How did this affect you?

#### Look to the Book ...

3. Read the passage again, to refresh on the story - 2 Kings 6:8-23. How did Israel's recent past open them to increased danger of invasion? The Arameans came from similar ethnic origins - see Gen 16:11-12, 17:18-20; 22:21-23. How would you characterize God's view of them and their future as Hagar was sent away? How might this inform our understanding of God's care and plans for those from different cultures? Consider John 4:1-29, Luke 24:46-47, Mark 7:24-29 and comment on how Jesus handled these kinds of issues. Any thoughts on how these issues intersect with current world events in the mid-east?
4. Read Proverbs 25:21; Rom 12:20-21 and discuss the way in which hospitality, meeting basic needs, or providing friendship and "a place at the table" can affect those who may be struggling with each other relationally. How can it also add to tension? How might this affect the nature of our care for others in our families or community?
5. With this week's story in mind, how might the following passages amplify or intersect with our understanding of "what spiritual superheroes see?" Eph. 6:10ff; Heb 11:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:27; John 20:29. How realistic does it seem to speak of "larger realities" when facing real physical danger or other big threats - is it "unbelievable"?

#### So what?

6. Reflect on and perhaps share with each other those whom God may be prompting you to "kill with kindness", or disarm with grace. Are there also ways you are feeling called to be generous without any agenda beyond caring and helping? Any 'surprise parties' you need to be throwing? Pray for each other.

Ken Styles @ The Meeting House - Sunday, July 30/August 7, 2006