

“He Made the Iron float”

2 Kings 6:1-7

Tonight, I want to talk about another event that occurred in Israel. This is a lesser known event, yet it is there and thus there must be lessons for us to learn from it.

I. Background

- a. Israel during a time of great wickedness – as this event unfolds, Jehoram, the son of Ahab is king in Israel. He is described in 2 Kings 3:1-2 as evil king, but not to degree of his father and mother because he removed the sacred pillars of Baal that Ahab had erected in Samaria.
It is a time of wars against Syria and others. Just like in the time of Ahab, God is continuing to send prophets WITH miracles to try and bring them back to Him. But they persist in their evil.
- b. Around that time we begin to see the works of Elisha, who continued the work of Elijah after he was taken to heaven. We have recorded in 2 Kings 2-7 a number of miracles he performed. An interesting observation about Elisha is that he received a double portion to that of Elijah (2 Kings 2:9-10) and that accords with the various miracles that are recorded when you compare them to Elijah. More on this later in this lesson.
- c. The account – Read 2 Kings 6:1-7.
In the midst of Elisha’s work, we find he is with a group of prophets, likely teaching them he is obviously a leader. They observe that the place they are living is too small for them and thus they seek to build something more suitable.
They INQUIRE of Elisha to do what needs to be done. He permits it. They also ask him to go with them and he agrees to go. They come to the Jordan river where they are cutting down trees. But as one was felling a beam (which means a large tree), the axe head flies off into the water. The man cries out and says, “Alas, my master! For it was borrowed”.
Consider that it is likely these men were not well off – remember that Israel is governed by an evil king. Also consider that a large axe would likely have been costly. The servant knows this, BUT he also knows that he is liable for it – he borrowed it and was thus obligated to return it to its owner in good working order. But now its lost and he is in debt. Thus his cries out, “Alas, my master...”
Elisha, “the man of God” ask where the axe head landed in the water. Knowing the place, he cuts off a stick and throws it at that location. The iron axe head floated – a miracle.
THEN, he told the servant, “Reach out and take it” and he did.

II. Lessons to consider

- a. What led to this incident? The prophets were working together, doing God’s work (1-2).
We know that we are to be busy doing the work of the Lord – Titus 2:14, we are to be a people “zealous for good works”. We find churches in the book of Acts busy and growing in many places. The church at Philadelphia was described as having an open door that no one could shut – Revelation 3:8. **If we are acting properly, we will be growing and increasing** – Ephesians 4:16
- b. They wanted God with them – they wanted to expand but to do that they needed God’s approval. And thus they sought it through Elisha, “the man of God”
Such should always be our goal - Colossians 3:17 – let all be done “in the name of the Lord.”
We have a pattern in the New Testament that governs the local church – its organization, work,

worship, terms of entrance, etc. It is as important that we follow that pattern as it is to grow. When we grow because we are doing things our own way, it is usually filled with compromise and self-serving motives which is why we must always ask, What says the Lord?

- c. Sometimes we face setbacks – just as they were busy working, something happened – the ax head flew off and that could have affected everyone and slowed the work down. BUT, they acknowledged the problem and it was addressed. We have examples in scripture of those who were faced with problems and they let that completely stop them – Ezra records the building of the temple after the decree of Cyrus. As they were building they received opposition (Ezra 4). As a result they stopped building and didn't resume for 20 years, until Haggai and Zechariah rebuked them. Then they got back to work.
- WHEN we are doing the work of God, we are going to face setbacks. We can let them keep us from moving forward, or we can work on overcoming those things and move ahead.
- Consider our current situation, we did not let this pandemic keep us from studying God's word together and we have continually been looking toward ways to resume that is proper in every way.
- d. The one who lost the axe head was concerned. It was borrowed and that came with responsibility. You borrow something, take care of it and return it when done. There was a realization of accountability (Exodus 22:14)
- NOTICE there was no blaming others, but he took responsibility and realized he needed to make things right.
- How many today would blame others? *"Why did he loan me a defective axe?"; "Oh well, accidents happen, it's his (the owner's loss) loss"; "It's not my fault, so I'm not responsible"*
- There is a lesson here in simple responsibility** – be a person of integrity and dependability. 1 Peter 2:12 speaks of conduct that is honorable, "even among the Gentiles."
- e. The axe head floated – **this is the miracle.** Shows the hand of God at work.
- In miracles, even small ones, God is accomplishing His will – strengthening the faith of believers, showing that He is God (remember this was in an ungodly world), validating His message (which so often accompanied miracles), etc.
- We must live with this trust.** We may not see miracles as we find recorded in scripture today, but know that God can STILL do His part. He is still in control of all things.
- He can help us overcome whatever setbacks we are facing - Sometime in unusual ways.
- This also shows that God cares – even about the little things. (1 Peter 5:7).
- f. Elisha has faith in carrying out this miracle - he trusts in God to be able to do what is necessary. We find so many remarkable examples of faith in scripture – people that trusted God, even in difficult and uncertain circumstances. That is where real faith is found.
- BUT, it is not blind – Elisha had every reason to believe in God concerning these things. He had seen so much. Is our faith in God greater now than it was before?
- g. When it floated, Elisha instructed the worker to pick it up – the worker had a part in this. One final lesson we must never forget, God does His part, and we must do our part (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9) – faith is your part, even where salvation is concerned. And, as we have emphasized, it is an obedient and active faith. Nothing less will do. IN fact, anything less is NOT genuine faith (James 2:17)
- h. **Possible spiritual application:** Many make a messianic/spiritual application with this event. Consider the following:
- i. Elisha is believed to be a type of Christ as there are many comparisons between the two of them. His name actually means, "God is salvation".
 1. Both had a predecessor – Elijah and John the Baptist (consider that Jesus said that John the Baptist was Elijah prophesied as coming – Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6)
 2. Both had more disciples than their predecessor

3. Both worked many different types of miracles – healing lepers and the sick, defying gravity (Elisha our event, Jesus walking on water), feeding a large group with an inadequate amount of food, both helped desperate widows
 4. Both raised the dead sons and restored them to their mothers (2 Kings 4:8ff, Luke 7:11ff)
 5. Both led captives – 2 Kings 6:18-20, Ephesians 4:7-8
 6. Both had a covetous disciple - Gehazi and Judas
 7. This things do not PROVE indisputably Elisha was a type, but it is worthy of observation the recorded miracles he actually performs, and it is very coincidental. And there are lessons to learn from this.
- ii. We owe a debt to God because of our sins – just as the axe head was lost and made that worker a debtor, so when we sin we are lost – Romans 6:23
 - iii. Elisha was a prophet of God (his name means, God is YHWH or God is Salvation) who would remedy the dilemma – Just as God provides our remedy for sin by sending Jesus (Romans 5:6-8) , he takes the actions that we cannot take.
 - iv. The “stick” that was cast into the water WHERE the ax-head was lost – an implement that was used to solve the issue.
Some say this could be Jesus crucified (some even say the stick is representative of the wooden cross) for us – Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21 – He paid the price needed.
 - v. The miracle occurs – God does His part for us. Ephesians 2:8 – it is by His grace we are saved.
 - vi. The floating axe head is compared to the resurrection. Just as Elisha could raise that ax head, so God could raise Jesus.
 - vii. ***WHETHER this was an intended message, or the event simply shows another miracle that shows God can do whatever He wants to do, we can take confidence in how God carried out His plans for us.***

Skeptics mock this miracle as silly or trivial (but most do so with all of them), but I don't. I believe that God's word is true and He can do whatever He needs to do to accomplish His will, regardless of how trivial we might think it is. What we view as trivial might be a big deal to someone else. We must simply accept that it happened because of our great God who can do all things. He has done great things. Will we believe Him? Think about it!