

Elisha

The Prophet of God

Lesson 10 – Swimming Axe Head
2Kings 6:1-7
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Keathley states, “As we continue in our study, we must remember that these historical accounts of Elisha and Israel are not only true, but being a part of God’s God-breathed record, they are also profitable for doctrine or teaching, for reproof or exposure, for correction or restoration, and for training in righteousness that God’s people may be fitted out, equipped for every good work (ministry) in a hurting world (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This means these stories illustrate eternal truths that are relevant for today or any time in history.” J. Hampton Keathley III

1. Cramped Quarters, v.1

- a. The sons of the prophets had increased in number during Elisha’s ministry and their lodging quarters were crowded. Growth in the Lord’s work is always exciting and desired. While growth can be a sign of a spiritually healthy church, we must be careful not to evaluate success by numbers alone. Bill Hall states, “The right question is ‘What are these people like?’ What kind of families do they have, are they honest in business, are they trained to witness, do they know the Bible, are they penetrating their workplaces, their neighbourhoods, reaching friends and associates for Christ?” Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Pastor*, Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan, NJ, 1988, pp. 12-13.
- b. Elisha dwelt with the prophets. This may have been his main lodging place. It was near Jordan, perhaps at Jericho but probably at Gilgal (north of Jericho and about 7kms west of Jordan).
- c. There is no indication that the sons of the prophets were covetous as Gehazi had been (2Ki 6:20-27). They did not seek nicer lodging, just larger.

2. Suggested Solution, v.2

- a. “Let us go.” They did not expect Elisha to provide it, they were willing to cut logs for the roof and build the structure themselves.
- b. They planned that each man would cut a beam to use in the roof of their new lodging. In the book *Manners and Customs in Bible Lands*, we learn that house walls were generally made of sun-dried mud bricks or rough limestone. Beams were laid across the walls covered by a matt of reeds or thorn bushes then a layer of clay that they rolled flat so water would run off. Fred Wight
- c. Elisha realised that their request was legitimate, approved their plan and

said, “Go ye.”

3. Elisha’s Participation, v.3

- a. One of the students asked Elisha to go with them. This shows the good relationship that Elisha shared with his students. When employees, students, or children do not like to have their boss, teacher or parents around, that is an indication of a relationship problem.
- b. Elisha, being a humble prophet, agreed to go along with the eager workers.

4. Jordan Woodland, v.4

- a. They found trees growing along the banks of the Jordan River.
- b. If you Google maps of that area, there are not many trees except right near the water. It was there that they cut down wood.

5. The Lost Axe Head, v.5

- a. These poor student prophets had borrowed axes to chop down the trees. An axe in those days was a valuable tool. Not everyone owned one of his own. The word literally means “iron”. Axe heads either slid over a handle or were tied to it with thongs. Neither was solidly secure.
- b. While chopping down a tree, one of the axe heads came loose and fell into the Jordan. The student cried to Elisha his master for help.
- c. Keathley points out that we see in the worker’s response a refreshing picture of honesty, respect for the property of others, trustworthiness, and deep concern, which demonstrates his integrity. If we borrow something and it breaks, it is our duty to replace it.

6. Elisha’s Response, v.6-7

- a. Elisha asked where the axe head fell into the river.
- b. He cut down a stick, cast it into the river, and the axe head floated to the top. He then told the young man to reach out and take it.
- c. Overall, the loss of the axe head was a relatively small matter, yet God cared enough to defy nature and cause it to swim.
- d. God cares about your small burdens as well as your large ones. (1 Peter 5:7) “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
- e. John Newton wrote, “Not one concern of ours is small if we belong to Him, to teach us this, the Lord of all once made the iron to swim.”
- f. Arthur Pink, “Is anything too hard for Him who made the iron to swim?”
- g. Wiersbe, “If we lose our ‘cutting edge,’ He [God] can restore us and make us efficient in His service. The important thing is to know that you have lost it, and when and where you have lost it, and honestly confess it to Him. Then get back to work again.” *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, p.527