

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Please turn with me to 2 Kings 6

We are continuing our study through the book of 2 Kings.

We have been studying the ministry of the prophet Elisha – the prophet of grace.

And as I have pointed out – all of the miracles that God performs through him, point to Jesus Christ.

I was counting the number of miracles that we have seen so far in our study – and I counted 11 up to this point.

The miracle that we are going to go over today according to my count is number 12 – and I it is probably the most impactful and significant one that he performs.

But he cured Namman of leprosy – this is greater

But he revived the son of the Shunemite women – this is greater.

Now, yesterday – I did tell you guys to read verses 1-7

Let's pray...

Read 1-7

A full disclosure before we start.

We are going to be talking a lot axes today.

I have never owned an axe.

I have never attempted to chop down a tree down with an axe.

I am not an axe expert or claim to be one.

However, I have gone axe throwing. So I know a little about axes.

[2Ki 6:1-7 NKJV] 1 And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.

I believe that the key to fully understanding this miracle is based on this first verse.

The sons of the prophets were a group of men that dedicated themselves to studying God's word and serving the Lord – and in the process, they also served the prophet, Elisha.

This was like the bible college or the seminary school of this time.

Not only where they disciple by the prophet Elisha there, they also lived there.

And as the Word of God was poured into them, they would then be equipped to do the work that God had called them to do –

Now, the problem that they were facing at the beginning of the chapter is that there appeared to have been a period of spiritual revival among some of the men in the area – and therefore this school was becoming a bit overcrowded.

The dorm rooms were all full / all the bunkbeds were taken.

And so, some of the men begin to contemplate ways they can expand the facility and in the process, expand the ministry – make it more effective by having more rooms for those that God had called to serve.

So, there was a need – and God met that need by stirring the heart of a few individuals.

And so here, we kind of see the blueprint that God has uses when it comes to ministry – he stirs the hearts of individuals, who see a need – and then God gives them the burden to act to meet the need.

This doesn't mean that God will force someone to do it or guilt someone to do it.

Barnabas in the book of Acts is a perfect example of this –

Believers in the early church were coming to Jerusalem, many of them with no place to live – and Barnabas was one of those individuals that God used to meet that need by selling land that he owned and laying it at the apostle's feet.

And the scriptures tell us that no one lacked – because the early church met the needs of the ministry as they were all of heart and one soul.

2 "Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell." So he answered, "Go."

So, not only did God stir the hearts of the sons of the prophet – He also gave them discernment on how to meet that need.

They needed to get building materials for the expansion.

And because all the lumber at the local Home Depot is usually warped – they realized that they can get lumber from the many trees that grow along the Jordan River.

And so Elisha upon hearing the request – he says, What? **Go**

By telling them to “go” – Elisha, the prophet of grace, commissioned them.

They didn't simply go on their own – they didn't act upon their own authority.

They had to be sent out by their Master.

Church – Jesus, our Master and Lord commissioned each and every one of us to do one thing.

It is an order – it is not a suggestion.

He didn't say, “if you feel like” or “if you have extra time in your busy schedule”

[Mat 28:19-20 NKJV] 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age." Amen.

3 Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." 4 So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

After being commissioned, the sons of the prophet realized their dependence upon their Master.

They want Elisha to go with them.

They were unprepared to go down to the Jordan by themselves – "we need you Elisha, we can't do it without you"

[Jhn 15:5 NKJV] 5 "I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

5 But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron [ax head] fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed."

The sons of the prophets start chopping down trees, and as one of them is chopping down one of the trees, he takes a swing and the iron axe head becomes dislodged from the wooden handle and it falls into the Jordan River.

Notice that it doesn't say that axe slipped from the hands of one of the sons of the prophets – only the iron axe head came off the handle.

We can also safely assume that the axe head didn't simply fall at the edge of the Jordan River – or else this individual would have simply been able to retrieve it.

It falls in the deepest part of the muddy river. (Remember our story from last week how Naaman didn't want to dip in the Jordan because it was a dumpy river compared to the rivers in Jordan)

And because the axe was borrowed and because it was made of iron (highly valuable during this time) this individual finds himself in a bad situation.

He doesn't want to go back to the owner of the axe and tell him that he lost his prized possession.

Now, here is where we begin to see the application.

What were the sons of the prophets doing at the Jordan?

They were doing the work of the ministry. They were serving.

They were chopping down trees to make room additions.

The axe head here in verse 5 is a symbol or a picture of the cutting edge of the Holy Spirit's power.

Church - the effectiveness of ministry / serving is the cutting edge power of the Holy Spirit.

The only way we will ever build anything that is long lasting and spiritually successful – whether it is our home, our marriage, our family, our careers, the ministry we have been called to – it must be by the power of the Holy Spirit

Everything that we do for Christ must be led by the Holy Spirit – it isn't us, it is not our talents, it is not our energy, it is not our strength and it is not our efforts.

Yes, God uses our talents, he uses our strengths – but we need the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When we begin to think that it is all about us – when the success of my marriage or the success of my ministry is because of who we are and how smart we are and how hard we work – one day, we will wake up just like Samson and realize how weak we are apart from the Holy Spirit.

That was Samson's problem – he was too strong to be used by God – and in the end, he didn't even realize that the Holy Spirit had left him.

Paul warned the early church about this -

[Gal 3:3 NKJV] 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

So the sons of the prophets were doing the work of ministry / serving when the axe head falls off.

Now, what are some of the reasons that an axe head may become dislodged from its handle?

Because if I go to Home Depot to buy an axe – I shouldn't expect the axe handle to fly off when I take my first swing.

Use – over time, I should expect my axe head to loosen up.

Poor maintenance – maybe the axe head was not sharpened regularly, it had become very dull – therefore it would require more work to chop down a tree. Dull axe means more use -

A sharp axe is going to chop down a tree faster than a dull one right?

Many of us when we became Christians, we started off with sharp axes, we maintained the sharpness by being in the Word – reading our bibles, by having devotional time with Him - by spending time with Lord day after day.

But over time, we stopped doing some if not all of those things – and the tip of the axes we swing are now dull.

And then we can't figure out why no spiritual growth.

Neglect – maybe it had been a while since the owner had used the axe – and he left it outside in the elements. And the sun got to wooden handle, the termites got to it, the rain got to the wooden handle and it started to rot and weaken.

Wood in scripture is a symbol of the flesh –

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3

[1Co 3:11-13 NKJV] 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation [with] gold, silver, precious stones, **wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

There are people in ministry / serving, swinging an axe handle with no axe head.

Doing it for ulterior motives – for recognition.

All of that is led by the flesh and not by the Spirit.

The son of the prophet who lost the axe head, didn't continue to chop without the axe head – he went straight to Elisha for help.

6 So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place.

Elisha asks one simple question – where did you lose it?

Where exactly did the axe head fall into the river?

And the son of the prophet showed Elisha where it went in.

Turn with me to Revelation 2.

I am going to show you another place where this question is asked.

[Rev 2:1-5 NKJV] 1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 "Nevertheless I have [this] against you, that you have left your first love. 5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

As a young believer, there was a time in my life where I stopped doing the things that I did as a young believer.

I stopped praying

I stopped reading my bible

I stopped fellowshipping outside church

I stopped serving in the church

I was simply going through the motions – still going to church every other week on Sunday.

It was a time where I left my first love

And the only way we can repent from this is by telling the Lord exactly what we are repenting of – we need to tell Him where we lost it.

Where the axe handle flew off.

Where we fell.

And Jesus says here in verse 5 – go back to doing the things you were doing before the fall and do them.

Do those things you were doing when you had a sharp axe head.

Let's continue in the verse – let's see what Elisha does.

So **he cut off a stick**, and threw [it] in there; and he made **the iron float**.

When the son of the prophet shows Elisha where the axe head fell –

Elisha could have said, let's send in our best swimmer to see whether or not he can retrieve the axe head. We will tie a rope around his ankle just in case.

Or let's make a human chain and take baby steps along the river to see if we accidentally kick the axe head.

Or he could have ordered someone – “go get a fish net”

Or he could have said – “let's all take a collection and buy the owner of the borrowed axe a new one – maybe we will buy him a newer model”

No, Elisha gets a stick and throws it in the river.

And then the iron axe comes to the surface of the river – it floats.

Why did Elisha throw a stick?

First of all, the stick had no magical properties whatsoever – it wasn't a magic stick.

What Elisha is doing here –

He is giving an object lesson.

Now, a quick physics lesson.

We all know that iron doesn't float – ships float because they are buoyant – but an axe head isn't buoyant.

Sticks however will float.

So by throwing the stick into the Jordan -

Elisha is pointing the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Because it was Jesus who had to come down to the earth – to take on human flesh (the stick),

He had to live a sinless life in order to be an acceptable sacrifice,

and then die for us (Jordan / baptism)

And in doing so, the properties of the stick (Jesus' righteousness) get transferred to the iron.

Therefore the iron floats.

Remember, we can have fellowship with our Heavenly Father because of Jesus' righteousness – not our righteousness – because our righteousness are like filthy rags to God.

So we will stand before Him

Turn with me to 1 Peter 2 -

[1Pe 2:24 NKJV] 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree (the stick), that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

7 Therefore he said, "Pick [it] up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

God, through Elisha, could have easily made the iron axe float up in the air and fall before the feet of the sons of the prophet.

Or better yet, the axe head could have instantaneously reattached itself to the end of the wooden handle that the son of the prophet was still holding.

The reason that Elisha tells the son of the prophet to pick it up is because he wanted to make sure that he grasped what he had just seen.

You see, it is necessary for all of us to appropriate by faith the provision that the Lord has made for our salvation and our victory through Christ.

He shows us the way – He causes it to come up to the surface – and then He tells us to grasp it.

To act in faith in this way was a humbling experience for the son of the prophet, and probably others were watching as he bent down very low, put out his hand and took back that which he had lost.

Church, God did the part only He could do, but He left to man the part that man could do.

He gave us free will – to either grasp or to reject His work of salvation.

His greatest miracle.

Amen

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

