

## 30 AMAZING BIBLE STORIES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

### #17 – The Swimming Axe Head | 2 Kings 6:1-7

#### A BIT ABOUT ELISHA

- We see the beginning of Elisha's ministry with the conclusion of Elijah's ministry – 2 Kings 2:9-15.
  - Verse 9 - Elisha asked his mentor, Elijah, for a **double portion** of Elijah's spirit.
  - Verse 10- Elijah required that Elisha see the departure in order to receive the blessing.
  - Verses 11-14 – Elisha *did* see the departure, and ended up dividing the waters of the Jordan river and crossing on dry land.
  - Verse 15 – the followers of Elijah recognize Elisha as the new prophetic leader.
- Elisha's ministry had 16 miracles, double the number of Elijah. Our miracle is the 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Elisha was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom, announcing God's disfavor with the rebel kings.

#### CRAMPED QUARTERS | 2 KINGS 6:1-3

- It was common for prophets and other religious leaders to have disciples. These disciples often lived with the prophet, learning from him daily.
- The "School of Elisha" must have been growing, for their living conditions had become **too strait** (v. 1), that is, too small.
- How many were there?
  - 2 Kings 2:16 – 50 men
  - 2 Kings 4:43 – 100 men
- What caused the growth?
  - Perhaps simply Elisha's notoriety.
  - Perhaps the removal of Gehazi, a self-serving "doorkeeper" who had been servant of Elisha in the previous chapter.
- Elisha and his followers had been living in Samaria (2 Kings 5:3), a large city, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. Now the men want to move **unto Jordan** (that is, the Jordan River valley).
- The reason for the move to Jordan can only be speculated:
  - Poverty – Life in the city is far more expensive. The students of the prophetic school were likely, as is typical of students, having a difficult time making ends meet. Less expensive rural life was appealing. (Note that several of the previous miracles center around poverty – 2 Kings 4:1, 39, for example).

- Ideology – the values of Elisha were at odds with Samaria. It would be a relief to be in more "friendly" territory.

#### THE SWIMMING AXE HEAD | 2 KINGS 6:4-7

- As the men were cutting wood, one of them lost the axe head into the water (vv. 4-5).
- The student seemed to be distraught, especially because **it was borrowed** (v. 5). This testifies to the student's poverty, and his concern over the "everyday" matters of life. He was not concerned about his retirement account, but matters much more close to home.
- There are some intriguing matters about the floating of the axe head:
  - Elisha asks to see the location. Why?
  - Elisha cuts a stick and places it in the water. Why?
- Several of Elisha's miracles have interesting parallels. For example:
  - Naaman's leprosy was transferred to Gehazi.
  - He gave sight to his servant and removed it from the enemy.
  - This "trading places" theme is evident a number of times in Elisha's ministry. It appears the stick was "trading places" with the axe head. That which should float sank, and that which should sink began to float.
  - There is also the theme of someone else "finishing" the work – v. 7.
    - The miracle of the oil – 1 Kings 4:7
    - The resurrection of the boy – 1 Kings 4:36-37

#### IS THERE ANY APPLICATION?

- This appears to be one of many miracles that display the power of the prophet.
  - Such power was available *only* to a prophet.
  - Any definition of "prophet" that does not include *prophetic power* is insufficient or ill-informed.
  - Because no such prophetic powers are seen today, we begin to research the lack thereof, and come to a dispensational answer.
- On a *spiritual* application (if one be needed), John Newton penned these words:

"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".