

THE LOST AXE HEAD

TEXT: II KINGS 6:1-7

INTRODUCTION:

1. The story of the lost axe head, recorded here in II Kings 6, is a story with deep spiritual and practical lessons.
2. First of all, it illustrates how God helps us in our small, every day troubles, as well as in the great trials and difficulties we face.
3. J. Vernon McGee said, "There is something here that is quite interesting. It reveals that God is concerned about the small events in our lives. You remember that Paul said to the Philippians, Pray about everything,' and he did not mean to leave anything out" (*Thru the Bible*).
4. Furthermore, the axe head represents the keen cutting edge of a life that is equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit. Losing that cutting edge is no small matter!
5. Sadly many Christians have lost their cutting edge. The cares of this world, and the allure of worldly pleasures have made them dull to the things of God.
6. Sadly many pastors, and Sunday School teachers, and other Christian workers have lost their cutting edge. They are spiritually dull!
7. May God help us to get our cutting edge back!
8. Here in this story we see the axe head was loaned; the axe head was lost, but thank God the axe head was located.
9. Let me emphasize that if you happen to lose your axe head, you can get it back.
10. A Christian can never lose the person of the Holy Spirit, though he may lose the power of the Holy Spirit.
11. In John 14:16, our Lord said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."
12. And then in John 14:17, our Lord said the Holy Spirit "dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."
13. A genuine born again child of God will never lose the person of the Holy Spirit, though he may lose His presence.

I. THE LOANING OF THE AXE HEAD (II KINGS 6:1-5).

1. As our story begins, we see that Elisha was with the sons of the prophets.
2. Elisha the prophet devoted much of his time training the sons of the prophets. They were his "Bible college students."

3. In the days of Elijah and Elisha, the nation of Israel was caught up in idolatrous Baal worship. Therefore, there was a great need to train young men for the ministry.
4. Today our country is becoming increasingly wicked, and so today there is also a great need to train men for the ministry.
5. Elisha himself was trained by Elijah the prophet, and the school of the prophets was likely established by Elijah the prophet.
6. Second Kings 2 indicates there were schools to train young prophets in Gilgal, in Bethel, and in Jericho.
7. The apostle Paul told Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2).
8. Right before he ascended into heaven in the chariot of fire, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (II Kings 2:9).
9. Elisha received that double portion, and interestingly Elisha performed twice as many miracles as Elijah. The last miracle of Elisha took place after he died (II Kings 13:20, 21)!
10. In II Kings 6:1, the sons of the prophets said to Elisha the prophet, "Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait (small) for us." They needed more space!
11. They probably needed to build a bigger building because the school of prophets was growing under Elisha's ministry.
12. Elisha agreed they needed to build a bigger place, and he agreed they should go to the Jordan River, with each man getting a beam (log) there, and there they would make a place for them to dwell.
13. So they all went to the Jordan River and started cutting down trees (6:2-4).
14. One of the young prophets was busy cutting down a tree when his axe head flew off and fell into the water (6:5).
15. "And he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed" (6:5b). This young Bible school student probably had very little money. Undoubtedly he felt bad because the ax was borrowed and he needed to return it to its owner.
16. Some Bible readers have questioned why the student had to borrow the axe. There was no Lowe's or hardware store nearby. And the student was probably poor and couldn't afford to buy one anyway.
17. So first there was the loaning of the axe head, then the losing of the axe head.

II. THE LOSING OF THE AXE HEAD (II KINGS 6:5)

1. Some have accused this young prophet of being careless, but I do not think so. I agree with J. Vernon McGee, who said, "This man revealed his carefulness by cutting the wood so that there was nobody out in front of him. He was standing so that if the axe head came off it would go into the Jordan River. He was aiming it in a safe direction" (*Thru the Bible*).
2. I do not think this young prophet was careless, because the Bible does not say that he was careless. Furthermore, Elisha did not rebuke him for being careless.
3. Losing an axe head was a common occurrence in those days. Tools were not made with the same durability of our tools today.
4. Deuteronomy 19:5 says, that "when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities { *cities of refuge* }, and live."
5. This Scripture indicates this sort of thing happened frequently.
6. This young prophet was obviously a man of faith. He expected Elisha to do something (6:5). He knew he would get immediate help from Elisha the prophet.
7. This is the way in which all believers should react when trouble comes. But oftentimes we worry and fret instead!
8. The young prophet did not consider this problem too insignificant to bring before the great prophet Elisha. The message here for us is we are to take all our problems, big and small, to the Lord.
9. We should call on the Lord because He is the One who can help; He is the One who will help; and He is the One who wants us to call on Him.
10. Psalm 50:15 says, "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."
11. John Newton, the poet and hymnwriter, said:
*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.*

III. THE LOCATING OF THE AXE HEAD (6:6, 7).

1. Elisha asked the young prophet where the axe head fell, and he showed him the place (6:6).
2. Elisha then cut down a stick, and cast it into the river, "and the iron did swim," i.e., it floated to the surface (6:6).
3. Elisha did not have to throw the stick into the water. He did it to show those standing by that the floating axe head was a miracle from God.
4. We see this principle often in Scripture. For example, when Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, came early to the sepulchre on that first Resurrection Sunday morning, "they saw that the stone was rolled away" (Mark 16:4).
5. Our Lord did not need to roll away the stone in order to get out of the sepulchre. He did it so others could see that He rose from the dead.
6. There are similarities in the various miracles of Elisha the prophet.
7. In II Kings 2:21, Elisha "went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land."
8. II Kings 2:21 says, "So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."
9. In II Kings 4, we read that one of the sons of the prophets "went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not" (4:39).
10. The sons of the prophets did not know those wild gourds were poisonous until they started eating the pottage, and then they cried out, and said, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot" (4:40).
11. Second Kings 4:41 says Elisha said, "Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot."
12. This was Elisha's method. He wanted the sons of the prophets to know that God was in control.
13. There are many spiritual lessons behind these miracles.

CONCLUSION:

1. The lost axe head sunk to the bottom of the muddy Jordan River.
2. But God miraculously made the iron swim (6:6).
3. Then Elisha said to the young prophet, "Take it up to thee" (6:7).
4. "And he put out his hand, and took it" (6:7b).

5. Stephen Olford said, "We have seen how God can take a life that is lost in the muddy waters of defilement and death and raise it to new life and power. Remember, your ax head is loaned. It can be lost but, thank God, it can be located and recovered. Although a believer can never lose the person of the Spirit, he can lose his presence and power."