

Elisha ~ Part 16

In my last post, we continued to explore the ministry of **Elisha** by looking at **2 Kings 5:19b-27** where we learned that **Geichazi Lies to Himself, Na'aman and Elisha**. In this post, we continue with **2 Kings 6:1-7** where we learn that **Elisha Restores a Student Ministry**.

"¹ The guild prophets said to Elisha, "As you can see, the place where we are living in order to be with you is too small for us. ² Please allow us to go to the Yarden; each of us will collect a log there, and we'll build a place there for us to live." He answered, "Go ahead."³ But one of them said, "Please, won't you come with your servants?" He answered, "All right, I will"; ⁴ so he went with them. When they arrived at the Yarden, they cut down trees; ⁵ but as one was felling a tree trunk, the head of his ax fell in the water. "Oh, no!" he cried. "My master, it was a borrowed one!" ⁶ The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" He showed him the place. Then Elisha cut a stick, threw it in there, and the iron ax-head floated to the surface. ⁷ "Lift it out," he said. So, he put out his hand and took it." ~ 2 Kings 6:1-7 (CJB)

Elisha Saves the Day and Restores a Student Ministry

Elisha wasn't only a traveling preacher and a miracle-working prophet, but he was also the overseer of several schools of guild prophets where young men called to ministry were trained and encouraged. We know there were schools in Gilgal, Beit-el, and Yericho (2 Kings 2:1-5) and in Samuel's hometown of Ramah (1 Samuel 19:22-24). Both **Eliyahu** and **Elisha** were concerned that the next generation knows the Lord and understand His Word, and this is our commission today (2 Timothy 2:2).

Our passage today picks up the story from 2 Kings 4:44. God had blessed the school at Yericho, and it was necessary to enlarge their quarters. The students studied together when the prophet visited them and ate together (2 Kings 4:38-44). Likewise, we need to ensure that when God is raising a new generation of servants, we as veteran ministers of God take time to teach them.

But new growth brings new obligations, and the facilities at Jordan had to be enlarged. Schools today would do fund-raising and hire architects and contractors, but in **Elisha's** day, the students did the work. Not only that, but the leader of the school went with them and encouraged the work. **Elisha** had a shepherd's heart and was willing to go with his flock and share their burdens.

Iron tools were precious and scarce, which explains why the student had to borrow an ax so he could help prepare the timber. Not only were tools scarce, but they weren't constructed with the strength and durability of our tools today. Moshe gave a special law relating to damage that might result when an ax head flew off the handle (Deuteronomy 19:4-5), so it must have happened frequently. If the law of borrowed animals also applied to borrowed tools (Exodus 22:14-15), then that poor student would have to reimburse the lender for the lost ax head, and that would probably upset the budget for weeks to come. Without the ax head, the student couldn't work and that would add to somebody else's burdens. All in all, the sunken axe head caused a great deal of trouble.

The student was quick enough to see where it fell and honest enough to report the accident to **Elisha**. The Yarden isn't the cleanest river in the Holy Land (5:12), and it would be very difficult for anybody to see the ax head lying at the bottom. The prophet didn't "fish out" the ax head with a pole. He threw a stick into the water at the place where the ax head sank, and the Lord raised the iron ax head so that it floated on the surface of the river and could be picked up. It was a quiet miracle from a powerful God through a compassionate servant.

There are some spiritual applications that we can learn from this incident, and perhaps the first is that *whatever we have has been "borrowed."* Paul asked, "And what do you have that you did not receive as a gift?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). Whatever gifts, abilities, possessions, and opportunities we have are from God, and we will have to give an account of them when we see the Lord.

This student lost his valuable tool *while he was serving the Lord.* Faithful service is important, but it can also be threatening, for we might lose something valuable even as we do our work. **Moshe** lost his patience and meekness while providing water for the people (Numbers 20:1-13), and **David** lost his self-control while being kind to his neighbor (1 Samuel 25:13). God's servants must walk carefully before the Lord and take inventory of their "tools" lest they lose something they desperately need.

The good news is that *the Lord can recover what we have lost and put us back to work.* He 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!

In my next post, we continue to explore the life of **Elisha**. In this post, we will pick up the story of **Elisha** in **2 Kings 6:15-23** where we learn about the **God Who Shows Mercy**.