

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday August 31, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## WHEN AXE HEADS FLOAT “Lessons from a Floating Axe Head” *2 Kings 6:1-7*

We have been in our study on the life of Elisha for a while now. We’ve been looking at this amazing prophet of God and how God used him to turn the hearts of His people back to God. I’ve been giving you these background talking points each week as kind of a review, and trying to change it up just a bit to keep it interesting. See if you can match the items listed on the left to the given information of the right by drawing a line to the correct answer.

### ELISHA MATCHING QUIZ

Match the item listed on the left to the information on the right by drawing a line that connects the two

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Elisha’s hometown                                 | Israel              |
| 2. Father of Elisha                                  | Molech              |
| 3. Early occupation of Elisha                        | Fire from Heaven    |
| 4. Elisha’s prophet predecessor                      | Abel-Meholah        |
| 5. God of Israel’s pagan worship                     | Syria and Phoenicia |
| 6. Area where Elisha’s ministry was focused          | God is Salvation    |
| 7. Key mark of Elisha’s ministry                     | Miracles            |
| 8. Meaning of Elisha’s name                          | Jehovah is God      |
| 9. Object of transfer of Elijah’s ministry to Elisha | Ezra                |
| 10. Name of Elisha’s servant/disciple                | Mantle              |
|  | Tishbe              |
|  | Shaphat             |
|  | Fisherman           |
|  | Elijah              |
|  | Baal                |
|  | Judah               |
|  | Gehazi              |
|  | God is Faithful     |
|  | Farming             |

### **Some Background Information on the Prophet Elisha:**

1. **Elisha was born and raised in the town of Abel-Meholah, located in Israel -** This town is where Elijah found Elisha plowing the fields. 1 Kings 19:16 tell us he was from Abel-Meholah, "...*And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.*" The name "Abel-Meholah" means "Meadow of Dancing" which some believe reflects something of Elisha's personality (*which was one of compassion, mercy and joy*) (v.19) Remember that Elijah had been more fiery and stern as a prophet, Elisha was characterized as being somewhat kinder, more joyful, full of compassion and mercy, which we shall see in our study of his life.
2. **Elisha was the son of a farmer in Abel-Meholah named Shaphat, and was himself a farmer when God called him** – This seems significant as a part of his calling. Much like Jesus's disciples were fishermen, called by Jesus to be "fishers of men," Elisha was called by God to not longer cultivate the ground, but now to cultivate the hearts of man to receive God's word... especially concerning salvation.
3. **Elisha was a disciple of the Prophet Elijah, and Elisha's prophetic ministry actually began at Elijah's Hill when his mantle fell to Elisha as Elijah was carried to heaven in a whirlwind** – You can read about this in 2 Kings 2. The prophet's mantle was a cloak or robe that Old Testament prophets of God were known and identified by wearing. Some theologians see the prophet's "mantle" as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and God's anointing on their life. When Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah it symbolized that Elijah's ministry has passed to him, further evidenced when Elisha struck the Jordan River with the mantle and parted the waters.
4. **Elisha's ministry was primarily to the northern divided kingdom of Israel at a time when God's people had turned from God to worship the pagan god Baal -**
5. **The name Elisha means "God is Salvation" and gives us an idea of the purpose of Elisha's ministry** – Elisha would go throughout the northern kingdom of Israel, drawing God's people back to Him and reminding them of His salvation. Known as a "prophet of miracles," each of his miracles were pictures of God's salvation.

*"<sup>1</sup>And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." <sup>4</sup> So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. <sup>5</sup> But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed." <sup>6</sup> So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. <sup>7</sup> Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it." -2 Kings 6:1-7 (NKJV)*

This may seem a frivolous story of no consequence. We may have tendency to read past it and consider it irrelevant to the story of Elisha's life and ministry. But remember, nothing is amiss in God's Word. Nothing in scripture is without relevance and importance for our lives, and thought this story may leave us scratching our heads and shrugging our shoulder with a "so what" kind of attitude... so what, so an iron axe head fell in the water and Elisha made it float... I mean, that's cool and everything but I can't see how that make much of a difference on a national level, or sparks revival and turn back to God of God's people, nor even how it makes a truly great deal of difference on a personal level to a bunch of prophets in training who could easily go purchase another axe head. Huh!

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapters 6 through 8 continue the story of the ministry of Elisha in the midst of times of national decay and turmoil for God's people, the northern kingdom of Israel. Chapter 6 falls into two main sections.

## **2 Main Sections of Elisha's Story in 2 Kings 6:**

- (1) **Elisha's Wondrous Works** – First, it continues the record of the wondrous works of Elisha: (a) he made iron swim (vss. 1-7), (b) he discloses the secret counsels of the king of Syria to the king of Israel (vss. 8-12), and (c) he delivers himself out of the hands of those who were sent to apprehend him (vss. 13-23).
- (2) **God's Wrath on His People** - Second, it records the besiege of Samaria by the Syrians and the terrible distress the city was reduced to (vss. 24-33). Its relief forms another of the wonders accomplished through the word of Elisha, an accomplishment recorded in the next chapter. Elisha is seen as a great blessing from God to both God's people and to the nation.

As we continue in our study, we must remember that these historical accounts of Elisha and Israel are not only true, but they are a part of God's word. Remember Paul's words in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**,

*"<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

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## **3 Things We Can Know About All Scripture:**

- (1) All of scripture (every word of it) is **important** because all scripture comes from **God** –
- (2) All scripture has **profit for your life (and mine)** because all scripture has you in **mind** –
- (3) All scripture is **applicable for your life (and mine)** because God desires for you to **know Him and live in relationship with Him lacking nothing** -

Let me go back to something I said a minute ago. We may have tendency to read a story like this one and think, what can this possibly have to do with me... this story seem interesting and even wonderful on some level... pretty could that Elisha made iron float, but it seem inconsequential to us really. Here is what you need to remember, especially in light of what we just read from 2 Timothy 3:16-17, being a part of God's God-breathed word, this story is 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.**

While God has varied the way He works in human history from one economy to another, certain spiritual principles never vary, but are eternal as they speak of God's character, care, providence, and man's need to walk in righteousness by faith in the love and provision of God. With that in view, let's begin to examine the condition and the character of the school of the prophets who were growing in numbers in these apostate days through the ministry of Elisha.

## **THE CONDITION AND CHARACTER OF THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS**

### **6 Initial Lessons from the Story of the Floating Axe Head:**

- (1) **Even in the worst of times we can always find those who have and will remain faithful to God and His work** - First, let's not miss the fact that this account stands in contrast with the story of Gehazi. In contrast to the materialism, the unfaithfulness, and the hypocrisy of Gehazi, **we are given a picture of a whole school of men who were faithful, sacrificial, and devoted to the spread of the Word of the God by working toward larger quarters to accommodate their growing numbers.** Among God's people, there are usually some Gehazi-like people, but we should never allow this to discourage us or cause us to become cynical, because if we will look around we can usually find those who are faithful. Our need, as the Lord exhorts us, is to pray to the Lord of the harvest to thrust these out into the fields (Luke 10:2). Or as in Elijah's day--to get them out of the caves

- (2) **Where the truth of God's Word and His message is taught and promoted there will be a hunger and growth in the Lord** - Second, we see that Elisha and the school of the prophets of God were growing. As in the ministry of our Lord and the disciples that followed him, the purpose of the ministry and miracles of both Elijah and Elisha was to authenticate the messenger as the one who was truly carrying the message of God. Though the miracles demonstrated God's love for His people, the primary purpose was to demonstrate the futility of Baal and any way of life that departed from the Lord. God had warned them of this earlier in Deuteronomy with the promises of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. Note what Samuel said in 1 Samuel 12:20-21, *"<sup>20</sup> Then Samuel said to the people, 'Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. <sup>21</sup> And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.'"*

These were men who were hungry to know the Lord and be used of Him. I am reminded of what God did for Saul in the beginning of his ministry as king before he acted in self-willed rebellion. We read in 1 Samuel 10:26, *"<sup>26</sup> And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched."* In 1 Chronicles 12:22, we are told of the men who *"day by day came to David to help him until there was a great army like the army of God."* Later, in verse 32, we read, *"And of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with the knowledge of what Israel should do, . . ."*

Undoubtedly, these prophets were men whose hearts God had touched, but they were also men who had an understanding of what Israel needed and what they should do--become effective heralds of the Word. The college or school of prophets here spoken of seems to be that at Gilgal, for there Elisha was (2 Kings 4:38), and it was near Jordan; and, probably, wherever Elisha resided as many as could of the sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. Every one would covet to dwell with him and be near him. Those that would be teachers should lay out themselves to get the best advantages for learning. The school could just as well have been located at Jericho (see ch. 2:4f).

- (3) **The success of any work of God (ministry) is not buildings, bucks and bodies, but faithfulness to the Word of God and the deep worship of Him** - Third, we are told that the prophets told Elisha, "the place before you where we are living is too limited for us" (vs. 1). With growth we always experience growing pains, particularly the need for more space and resources to continue the growth of reaching, teaching, and building people in the Lord. Growth is always exciting and a desired commodity in ministry. It can be a sign of a spiritually-healthy church, but in our consumer-oriented society that so often depends on Madison Avenue tactics for growth, we must guard against evaluating success or the work of God by names, nickels, and noses. The strength and value of any school or church is never its methods or its facilities or its nickels (financial resources) or names (who belongs to our church). What counts with the Lord is the message being proclaimed and the biblical change taking place in the character of the people as measured by the Word of God, our index for faith and practice. Bill Hull writes, *"The all-too-common measure of greatness is the number of people gathered for worship. If 3,000 people gather, some may make the snap judgment 'this is a great church.'"* *What is wrong with this? What is wrong with measuring the strength, value, success of ministry by building, bucks and bodies... in other words the size of the ministry, the number of people present, the glitter of its programing? What may be right about it?*

Measuring greatness this way has two important flaws.

#### **Some Flaws in Measuring a Ministry's Greatness by Building, Bucks and Bodies:**

1. **Jesus' ministry would have been considered a failure if measured by these standards** – 12 disciples who struggled most of the times, one betrayed him all together, one of his closest denied

him on the most important night of his earthly life, the others all fled to hide behind locked doors when Jesus went to the cross. His ministry was loved by sinners, outcasts, prostitutes, and street people. Religion rejected him altogether! Not exactly successful by the world's standards. Jesus never had a building or a church of his own, his certainly wasn't a money making venture, and again, the bodies he had seemed to desert him at his big moment.

2. **Numbers themselves can be deceiving and fickle** - Large groups can gather for any number of events, such as lynchings, mob riots, or Tupperware parties. Numbers tend to be attracted to show, entertainment, glitz and glamor more than what is real, and deep and life changing. The more accurate observation concerning a large church gathering might be "the number of people gathered here indicates that those leading the church--pastor and the music leader--must be highly talented." The problem with this is that often we are more enamored with man and what man can do, than with God and what He can do. Large numbers in religious movements are usually more attracted to charismatic leadership, putting a man on a pedestal from which he (or she) usually falls hard taking much of that large number with him (or her).
3. **Program driven churches often find themselves competing with the world for entertainment value and end up compromising with the world to keep what they have** – We have seen this many times in our day and often it is what drives "Seeker Friendly" churches and ministries who become gimmicky, and a bit cheesy in their attempts to woo crowds and keep them. Who is putting on the best program quickly becomes the driving factor from one ministry to another. And there is a shallowness and lack of spiritual depth to those raised up in this kind of ministry. Often this give way to a certain level of "church hopping" from one church and ministry to the next, depending on what is most popular at the time and current trends of movement from ministry to ministry.

- (4) **We should never be discouraged by what we don't have, but encouraged by what God is able to do, and be willing to use what He provides to His glory** - Fourth, their approach to solving their problem of space shows us a lot about the character of these men, which also speaks highly of the quality and nature of their training. Though without much by way of financial resources (the lost axe head had to be borrowed), they were industrious and hard working. Their lack of resources did not stop them. Each man was willing to do his part to help meet the need. Yet they undoubtedly were ultimately resting in the resources God would supply.

➡ As John White has said, "It is not seeing the difficulties that prevents action, but failing to see the resources." *What do you think he means by that? Do you agree or disagree? How does this play out in the church and ministry?*

They weren't expecting someone else to do it for them. Further, their humility is seen in that what they were seeking to build was rather simple and rustic. They weren't expecting or thinking they needed a marble palace. They simply wanted facilities that would meet their needs. "When they wanted room they did not speak of sending for cedars, and marble stones, and curious artificers, but only of getting every man a beam, to run up a plain hut or cottage with."

Listen to this, "Once upon a time there were four men named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about it, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody and Nobody did the job that Anybody could have done in the first place." (anonymous) *What do you think that is about? How does it relate to the church? To us? How do you see this relating to this story and these men? What are the lessons for us?*



- (5) **We should always, as believers, be teachable and willing to humbly accept the wisdom and counsel of those who have gone before us** - Fifth, in their request for Elisha's presence to accompany them, we see their wisdom and humility. Though they too were prophets, they realized their need of the wisdom and support of their mentor and teacher.
- (6) **The integrity, thoughtfulness, and honesty (blamelessness) of believers is always a powerful witness and testimony** - Finally, in the consternation of the man over the loss of his axe head, we see a refreshing picture of honesty, respect for the property of others, and trustworthiness. The lost axe head could have been ignored or blamed on chance or covered up in some way, but the words of the prophet, "Alas, my master! For it was borrowed," not only show his deep concern, but it demonstrates his integrity. This is a picture of "going the extra mile," of "respect for the property of others," of "loving others well."

Giftedness can never replace integrity, for spiritual character is what is needed to authenticate our message. It shows that the message has impacted the messenger. Note, we ought to be as careful of that which is borrowed as of that which is our own, that it receives no damage, because we must love our neighbour as ourselves and do as we would be done by. It is likely this prophet was poor, and had not wherewithal to pay for the axe, which made the loss of it so much the greater trouble. To those that have an honest mind the sorest grievance of poverty is not so much their own want or disgrace as their being by it rendered unable to pay their just debts.

**Observation:** *One more observation and note that may be an important take away for our lives from this story. God cares about the small things... the small things that bother and concern us. This story, as stated earlier, may seem like a small things to us... like a small matter of little or not consequence, but it wasn't so to the man who had borrowed the axe head, and lost it. It matter much to him and therefore matter much to God. I love this for it reminds me that what matters to me matter to God, that the little annoyances and concerns of my heart also concern God because they concern me. He cares! He longs to help us and come to our aid, especially so when the desire of our heart is to honor and live for Him... glorifying His name.*

*How does this make you feel right now? Knowing that God cares about even the small matters that concern you, how does this affect your relationship with care for others and their concerns? How can can this help us to minister well to those around us?*

## **THE CONCERN AND CHARACTER OF ELISHA**

Let's look at Elisha's part in this story. Let's go back to our passage again, and look at it one more time...

*"<sup>1</sup>And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." <sup>4</sup> So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. <sup>5</sup> But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed." <sup>6</sup> So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. <sup>7</sup> Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it." -2 Kings 6:1-7 (NKJV)*

Notice at least two things in this story that show us something of Elisha heart and minister

## **2 Things to Notice from the Story that Indicate Elisha's Character:**

**(1) Elisha demonstrated his support and encouragement by accompanying them in their project -** Notice that not only did Elisha give his permission for the project, but he was also willing to go with them in order to lend his support and encouragement.

- It was an opportunity for on-the-job training for these future prophets.
- And it was an opportunity to study these men in their work... for Elisha to see their faith and work and practice
- It would aid his own ability to minister more effectively to his students.
- Pastors and teachers alike need opportunities to get to know their flock and to let their flock know them.
- Elisha was willing to invest more than just his words and directions. He invested of his time, his hands, and his presence in their lives.

***Why is this so important? What does this tell us concerning the role of the church and believers in the lives of others especially in helping them in the development of their Christian lives and walk? What does this say to us about discipleship and what it looks like?***

**(2) Elisha demonstrated his involvement and concern even in the smallest of matters -** Not only did Elisha show interest and concern for the project as a whole, but he demonstrated his involvement even in the smallest of matters as in the loss of the axe head. Of course this incident was no small matter to the man who lost it, but in the final analysis it was a small thing. Rather than write it off as trivial, Elisha reached out to this simple need. When Elisha stepped forward, inquired concerning the place where the axe head went into the water, and made the iron swim with the stick he cut, he was giving this entire school of prophets a wonderful illustration of the sovereign care and providence of God.

***How might this story be demonstrating to these young prophets and to us today God interest and care about every detail of our lives and what concerns us?***

Listen to Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:5-7... "<sup>5</sup> Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' <sup>6</sup> Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

***How does this passage and what it is saying perhaps apply to our story and the floating axe head?***

### **3 Ways We See 1 Peter 5:5-7 in 2 Kings 6:1-7:**

- (1) They submitted to their elder, Elisha**
- (2) They humbled themselves and admitted their need**
- (3) God graciously met their simple need because of their humility and submissive dependence on Him through Elisha**

Here it is... God is interested and cares about even the small and trivial incidents in our lives. He tells us to pray about everything and to cast all our cares on Him. Why? Because Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 5:7, "He cares for us." This statement is given as part of the reason and motivation for submitting ourselves under God's providential hand by casting all our cares, every single one on the Lord. 1 Peter 5:7, "<sup>7</sup> Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

We might note two things about this statement as it is given in 1 Peter.

## 2 Important Notes Concerning 1 Peter 5:7:

- (1) **God always and continuously cares about us** – First in 1 Peter 5:7 (*“<sup>7</sup> Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”*), the verb, “cares,” is in the present continuous tense, which here undoubtedly looks at a general truth about God. It reminds us that God always and constantly cares about us. It serves to remind us of God’s unchanging faithfulness and love. Life changes and seems terribly fickle, but God’s care is steadfast and unfailing. Indeed, it is new every morning. I love Lamentations 3:21-23... it is a favorite, *“<sup>21</sup> Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. <sup>22</sup> Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. <sup>23</sup> They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”*(NIV) Look at it... what gives him/her (you) hope?
- (2) **God personally cares about the whole of what we care about** – Here it is again in 1 Peter 5:7, *“<sup>7</sup> Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”* The Greek text is a little more emphatic than the English translation. Literally, the Greek text reads this way, “Cast all care to Him, for to Him, it is a care concerning you.” In other words, He cares because it is a care concerning you... because you care about it. This not only says that He cares for us as His children, but that the whole of our care, which He wants us to cast on Him, is very much His personal concern. He cares about what we care about. That’s pretty powerful, folks!

## READ: Matthew 6:25-34

*“<sup>25</sup> Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? <sup>28</sup> So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

**What does this passage really teach us concerning God’s care? How does He demonstrate His care? What does this say to us concerning our daily walk with Him as we serve and minister to others in His name?**

In this passage the Lord Jesus used basically the same argument to counter anxiety and wrong priorities because of our proneness to anxiety and self-trust. There Jesus reminds us that if God so looks after the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, how much more will He not care for us as our Heavenly Father. The issue then is to put first things first, to seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness, to rest in His loving care, and not worry about tomorrow. That’s in God hands--even an axe head.

**Key Take Away:** *The miracle of the axe head illustrates how God uses our everyday circumstances to teach us about Himself and His providential purpose to work all things for our growth if we will only trust Him, and in that trust, have the vision to see Him at work.*

## CONCLUSION

Though the lessons from this story of the floating axe head are many, the primary lesson in the lost axe head that was made to float is its message concerning God’s relationship to us, especially as His people in the minutia or the small things of life. Let me give you three concluding things for us to ponder about this primary lesson...



### **3 Concluding Lessons from the Floating Axe Head: (...and God's relationship to us)**

- (1) **God knows us intimately** - No detail of our lives, no matter how small, escapes his loving and omniscient eyes. This is clear from Psalm 139. But this is not just a matter of information. It is a matter of an intimate knowing that stems from an intimate and personal love that has promised to never leave nor to forsake us.
- (2) **God cares about us** - No matter what we may be facing, not only does He know it, but He cares and wants to use it to draw us to Himself, build our faith, and change our lives. The problem is, too often we only want God the Rewarder and not God the Reward; we want a solution, not a Savior or His solution. We must never divorce the responsibility of casting our cares on Him and the promise that He cares for us from the preceding verse, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God . . ." "Humble yourselves" is not perhaps the best translation of the Greek text. Though this is a command and points to our responsibility to obey and respond, the verb in the Greek text is in the passive voice and would be better understood as "be humbled" or "allow yourselves to be humbled." It is somewhat equivalent to "submit yourself to the humbling process of God." But what exactly does it mean to allow yourself to be humbled? Remember that God wants to bring us to the place of humility, which is the place of God dependence rather than arrogant independence where we seek to run our own lives. Dependence on the Lord honors God because it recognizes our need of Him and His authority, His sovereignty, and His right to direct our lives.
- (3) **God is gracious** - Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work." And in Ephesians 3:20 Paul says, "<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." In the miracle of the axe head, we are reminded again of how God is not only able to do super abundantly above all we are able to ask or think no matter how small or how large the problem, but He is available in His loving care to reach out to us in our need. This is not to suggest that He always will remove the problem or the pain, but it does stress that He is with us through the problem to comfort and give us strength to bear it.

☞ **There is a secondary, but still an important lesson to be learned in this story. It shows us the divine approval and value for God's people to work hard and do things for themselves when they can. We always need to work in the strength which He supplies, but we must put our hands to axe and even reach into the water to pull out the floating axe head when God does work above the natural order of creation.**