

THE IRON MADE TO SWIM

BIBLE TEXT : II Kings 6:1-7.

LESSON 314 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: : "Godliness with contentment is great gain"(I Timothy 6:6).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Kings 6:1-7

¹ And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

² Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

³ And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

⁴ So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

⁵ But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

⁶ And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast *it* in thither; and the iron did swim.

⁷ Therefore said he, Take *it* up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Strait and Narrow Way

1. The sons of the prophets ask for more freedom, II Kings 6:1, 2; Matthew 7:13, 14; Luke 13:23, 24.
2. Their request is granted, II Kings 6:2, 3; Psalm 106:15.

II The Lost Axe Head

1. Trouble is encountered on the broad way, II Kings 6:4, 5; Ecclesiastes 11:9.
2. "It was borrowed," II Kings 6:5; I Corinthians 4:7; Matthew 25:14-30.
3. The axe head is miraculously recovered, II Kings 6:6, 7.

NOTES:

The Strait Gate

"The place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us." The word "strait" here means narrow or confined. Although the sons of the prophets had reference to the buildings or living space, how often do we find men and women of today with the same complaint about the Gospel. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

Restitution

"The place . . . is too strait for us." This has been the cry of many who have come in contact with the truth of the Gospel. Some men hear the Gospel and desire to reap its benefits, but when they hear the testimony of those who have gone back over their lives and paid back stolen money or paid outlawed debts, they go away sorrowful, exclaiming, "The place . . . is too strait for us."

Adultery

Others come seeking pardon, and God reveals to them that they are living in adultery — that is, one of them has been married and divorced and then married to another while his first companion still lives. Jesus plainly tells us: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11, 12). For many people this doctrine is too strait. They leave the narrow way and seek for a wider gate and broader way where they can continue to live with their second companion and still hold to a profession of Christianity — in spite of the fact that John the Baptist held this doctrine and told Herod it was unlawful for him to have his brother's wife. All hope to get to Heaven, although Paul says that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:20, 21).

Worldly Fashions

Women have been known to turn Christianity aside because of their love for bobbed hair. The Bible teaches that it is a "shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven" and that "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (I Corinthians 11:6, 15). It would seem as though

cutting the hair so as to conform to the popular hairdos is a very small thing when compared with eternal life, yet there are those who leave the narrow way rather than give up the fashions of this world.

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed" (Romans 12:2). The world often points the finger of scorn at those who refuse to conform to its fashions and fancies. Those who enter at the strait gate are taught to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

Worldly Pleasures and Treasures

"The way is too strait," is the cry of many sinners when they learn the Christian standard of keeping unspotted from worldly lusts — theatre-going, dancing, smoking, and drinking. A rich young ruler came to Jesus asking the way of eternal life, but when told that he should give his possessions to the poor and leave his friends and follow Christ, he went away sorrowful. Jesus loved him. The young man was offered treasures in Heaven, but the way was too strait for him.

A Sinless Life

Some people think the gate is too strait when told that a Christian lives a life above sin. Yet what could be plainer than the words, "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (I John 3:8). The gate is strait, and the way is narrow, but they lead to Heaven. Many people are on the broad way thinking they are getting by easier, that it is not necessary to be so strait-laced and old-fashioned; but the end of that way is destruction. Would it not be better to be narrow and have ample room to go through the gate, than in the end to find that you are so broad that you hit the posts on both sides and cannot enter the strait gate?

Trends

Toleration of sin, lowering of standards, and a "broadened" viewpoint toward worldliness have brought spiritual death to many religious movements. Revivals have been started by leaders who held the standard high; but after their departure, too often the church followed the pattern of Israel, who "served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Judges 2:7), and then departed into a form of idolatry. Let the young people beware lest their cry for less restraint and more liberty find them heading toward the broad way!

A Granted Request

When the sons of the prophets complained of the straitness of the place in which they dwelt and asked to go to a broader place, Elisha answered, "Go ye." The Psalmist tells that Israel lusted in the wilderness and God "gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:15). They wanted flesh to eat, and God gave them flesh; but how much better off they would have been had they been content to eat "angels' food."

Often men insist on having their own way, and God lets them have it but sends leanness into their soul. It was not long after the sons of the prophets went over into a broad place, until one of them lost his axe head. That is typical of one who leaves the narrow way. He may continue to beat around with an axe handle, but the cutting edge is gone, and his words fall flat. He may swing hard; but without the keen edge of the Spirit it is but a dull thud.

Borrowed Axe Heads

"Alas, master! For it was borrowed," was the cry of the son of the prophet when he saw the axe head slip from him and sink

beneath the waters of the Jordan. This man knew that this instrument was but a loan to him and that he was accountable for it. Many there are who think they are free to do as they please with their time, talent, and substance; but in reality man is but a steward of the things God has given him. This is borne out in the Parable of the pounds. Christ, the Nobleman, said to the servant who hid his Lord's money: "Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" (Luke 19:23). The Lord will return one of these days. Will you have a good report to give of those things with which God has entrusted you? Will you be able to say, "Thy pound hath gained ten pounds"? or will there be a wail, "Alas, Master, I lost it"?

Finale

When one stands before God on that final reckoning day, to give an account of the deeds he has done, there will be no Elisha to restore the lost axe head, nor will there be time then to recall the opportunities that have sunk beneath the waters of time. He who has left the strait and narrow way will find that when he lost the axe head, he lost also the key to life eternal.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the word "strait"?
2. Trace the history of the "sons of the prophets" in the Scriptures.
3. What did Jesus say about the way that leads to life?
4. What was Jesus' reply to the question, "Are there few that be saved?"
5. Compare the broad and narrow ways.
6. How does the consent of Elisha, to the request of the sons of the prophets to move, compare with God's dealings with men?
7. What spiritual lesson is there in the losing of the axe head?
8. What do we have that we might call "borrowed"?