

## Unsinkably Sunk

The *Titanic* sank in the chilling waters of the north Atlantic in 1912. It would take 73 years for Dr. Robert Ballard to discover the location of her ruins. Respecting the site as a watery cemetery to 1,500 passengers, no attempt has been made to raise anything more than a small panel of the ship. In today's Templates of Truth, we look at how the prophet Elisha approached another piece of sunken metal and some practical insights we can gain from the story.

In the movie, *Titanic*, designer Thomas Andrews is explaining to Captain Edward Smith and other senior crew members the details of the ship's fateful demise following her collision with the iceberg. Echoing the misguided perception of the boat, one insists, "But this ship can't sink!" to which Andrews asserts, "She is made of iron, sir! I assure you, she can...and she will." The weight and density of iron in water establishes the mathematical certainty.

One of the young students from Elisha's prophecy school learned this simple lesson. The prophet and his men were cutting timber near the Jordan River to enlarge their living quarters, *but as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water* (II Kings 6:5). This was not good for several reasons. One, *it was borrowed* (6:5). Tools of this nature were somewhat of a luxury in ancient times. Not everyone had them, especially poor prophecy students. They were also not well constructed, so axe heads flying off the handle were not uncommon. Then too, the waters of the Jordan were muddy & murky, so finding the axe head was certainly not to be a visual cinch. The work project was also negatively impacted because one of the needed tools was now gone.

Elisha responded to this crisis in a miraculous way – *the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And when he showed the place, (Elisha) cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float. And he said, "Take it up for yourself." So he put out his hand and took it* (6:6-7). Elisha identified the exact location of the mishap, and he instituted a measure of retrieval nothing else could match. He didn't "fish" the axe head out with the stick as most liberal interpreters want to insist (they just can't take a miracle). The stick was merely thrown into the river and was energized with a divine force that attracted the axe head like a magnet and caused it to supernaturally rise to the surface. Then, the workman recovered the tool and placed it back into productive service.

This story teems with practical insight and spiritual truth. In our Christian confidence, we often take for granted our vulnerability and like the arrogant perceptions about the *Titanic*, think certain things could never happen with us; that we are, in a sense, unsinkable! Paul cautions otherwise – *let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall* (I Corinthians 10:12). Any believer can fall, and he can sink deep into the muddy, murky waters of sin once again, if he is not careful to stay engaged in an intimate walk with God.

What happens when we do fall? The steps Elisha took with regard to the axe head gives us

further insight. We have to first of all, identify the place in life from which we departed from obedience to God's will and ways. Then we have to apply a measure that will attract us back into fellowship with Him once again. That measure is the truth and power of God's Word, which provides rebuke & correction, and retrains us in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16). God's Word imparts the grace & faith we need to confess, repent and return to a proper relationship with God; to get back to the place with Him from which we departed. Through the strength & power of the Word, we can rise above the depths of our faults and failures. As His discipline in our life brings growth & stability to our faith once again, God can eventually restore us into valuable and useful service in His Kingdom.

Is a sunken condition that which describes your life or someone you know and love? Do you know a fellow believer who has forgotten His God, lost his way and become buried in darkness? Pray that God will reach into the evil place where he is and reveal to him the unconditional, steadfast love that calls him back. Pray that God will recover, redeem and restore this wayward child to useful Kingdom service once again. History may never raise the *Titanic*, but God can raise His unfaithful servant from the darkest recesses of murk & mire, and use him once again for His glory.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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