



## ELISHA FOLLOWS IN ELIJAH'S FOOTSTEPS

### NAAMAN HEALED OF LEPROSY

**2 Kings 5:1-3** Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. <sup>2</sup> Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. <sup>3</sup> She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

1.) Imagine you were that captured, enslaved Israelite girl. What conflicting thoughts and emotions could have gone on in her heart between her sinful nature and the spirit?

**2 Kings 5:4-13** Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. <sup>5</sup> "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. <sup>6</sup> The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

<sup>7</sup> As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" <sup>8</sup> When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."

<sup>9</sup> So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." <sup>11</sup> But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. <sup>13</sup> Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!"

1.) What were some of Naaman's expectations going into this venture?

2.) Once again, a no-name servant is God's instrument to bring clarity and redirection. Summarize his argument. What is the irony here?

**Hebrews 11:1** Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

**Acts 16:14** The Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to respond to Paul's message.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

**2 Kings 5:14-19a** So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. <sup>15</sup> Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant." <sup>16</sup> The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

<sup>17</sup> "If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. <sup>18</sup> But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this." <sup>19</sup> "Go in peace," Elisha said.

1.) There were many ceremonial washings in the Old Testament (e.g. of the priests and Levites ministering before the Lord, for purifications from various unclean acts). What did this cleansing also do for Naaman, that in a way prefigured the washing of baptism and bringing the Gentiles into the New Testament church?

2.) Naaman had arrived with all these riches. How was his attitude toward them now changed? What lessons can this teach us about our Christian stewardship?

**2 Corinthians 9:7** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

3.) Why would Elisha refuse Naaman's gifts, freely given? What principles does God give us in the New Testament regarding "compensation" for gospel ministry?

**Matthew 10:7-10** As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. <sup>9</sup> Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; <sup>10</sup> take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

**1 Timothy 5:17-18** The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

**1 Corinthians 9:13-14** Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? <sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

4.) What's the deal with carting Israelite dirt back to Damascus?

**2 Kings 5:19b-27** After Naaman had traveled some distance, <sup>20</sup> Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him."

<sup>21</sup> So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked. <sup>22</sup> "Everything is all right," Gehazi answered. "My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.' " <sup>23</sup> "By all means, take two talents," said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. <sup>24</sup> When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

<sup>25</sup> Then he went in and stood before his master Elisha. "Where have you been, Gehazi?" Elisha asked. "Your servant didn't go anywhere," Gehazi answered. <sup>26</sup> But Elisha said to him, "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants? <sup>27</sup> Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever." Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.

1.) What string of commandments did Gehazi break? What is the irony here?

### NT CONNECTION AND REFLECTION

Now that we've examined both the account of the widow of Zarephath (cf. 1 Kings 17:7-24) and Naaman, let's see how Jesus incorporates these two examples into his preaching to his countrymen at Nazareth.

**Luke 4:22-30** All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' "

<sup>24</sup> "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. <sup>25</sup> I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. <sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. <sup>27</sup> And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

<sup>28</sup> All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. <sup>29</sup> They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. <sup>30</sup> But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

1.) What positive and negative similarities and differences do you see among these three accounts?

2.) What was Jesus' warning? Why did this make his countrymen so furious? What's the warning for us?

### PRAYER