

**2 Kings 5.1-14****Elisha: The cleansing of Naaman the Syrian****Read 2 Kings 5.1-14****I / MAKING THE CONNECTION**

1. Here is what has happened in Israel since our last lessons from the ministry of Elijah
  - a. Elijah has anointed Elisha to be his successor / **1 Kings 19.19-21**
  - b. Elijah has been taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind and chariots of fire / **2 Kings 2.1-18**
  - c. Elisha asked for and received a ‘double portion of your spirit’ that had rested on Elijah / **2 Kings 2.9-14**
  - d. Elisha proceeds to perform a number of miracles – again to show to Israel that Yahweh was their God and to display His Glory / **2 Kings, chapters 2-4**
2. That brings us to this lesson’s story – yet another miraculous healing/cleansing of the leprosy of Naaman, the Syrian commander...

**II / JESUS’ INTERPRETATION AND COMMENTARY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STORY / LUKE 4.16-30**

1. But before we even get into unfolding this story from **2 Kings 5**, let’s fast-forward to how Jesus interpreted and commented on the significance of it – because Jesus is going to draw some distinct parallels between Israel of His day and how they treated Him ... and the Israel of Elisha’s day and how they were treating Yahweh in their day.
2. **AND – be sure you get this – Jesus will also reveal to us Yahweh’s purpose in ministering His healing power to Naaman through Elisha ... and that is, to show His compassion to Gentiles and His purpose to save Gentiles as well as Israelites.**
3. So, what is happening in **Luke 4.16-30**? Jesus had gone back to His hometown, Nazareth, where He had grown up.
4. When He stood up in the synagogue that Sabbath and read from **Isaiah 61**, He announced **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” “I AM your Messiah!”**
5. At first, everyone **spoke well of Him and marveled at His gracious words**. But that was because they just thought of Him as one of their peers: **“And they said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’”**
6. But then Jesus unmasked the hypocrisy, superficiality, and unbelief of their hearts toward Him. **And He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.”** What Jesus was unmasking in their heart was that they were not believing in Him and receiving Him as their Savior. They were not accepting Him as the Son of God. To them, he was just their famous ‘homeboy.’
7. The key is found, I think, in that Jesus specifically pinpointed their accusation against Him: **“What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well” / Luke 4.23**. So what specifically did He do at Capernaum that they were taking such offense at?
8. Keep in mind that just a short time before this **Luke 4** return visit to Nazareth, His boyhood hometown, He had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum [see **Matthew 4.12-16**]. He performed many miracles in Capernaum and the surrounding regions. *One such notable miracle was the healing of the son of a Gentile royal official [see John 4.46-54].*
9. Whether this specific act was in the minds of his hometown people, we don’t know. What we can be sure of is that His former hometown neighbors were expecting Him to bestow on them the same kinds of preferential treatment and special favors that He had performed at Capernaum.
10. So we can identify the sinful attitudes they had toward Him under at least these three categories:
  - a. **pride / privilege / entitlement**: in their merely human relationships with Him based on religious tradition, ethnic and provincial kinship

- b. **maybe even resentment:** that He had performed acts of mercy and healing at Capernaum – and they were expecting special favors for themselves [like, *‘we owned You first!’* ... or something like that]. Or maybe even resentment because they had heard He had ministered to Samaritans and even a Roman official – surely *they* would take priority preference over *them!* *Was there maybe even some prejudicial bigotry in their hearts here?*
  - c. **unbelief toward His claim to be The Christ:** Matthew and Mark both highlight that “**...He could do no mighty work there ... because of their unbelief ... And He marveled because of their unbelief!**” / see **Matthew 13.58 & Mark 6.5-6**
11. When the hometown folks at Nazareth were offended at His claims to Deity and Messiahship, they violently attacked Him and even tried to push Him over a cliff to His death / **Luke 4.28-30.**
  12. Jesus scolded them for their unbelief and proclaimed to them that since they would not believe on Him, then He would go and save those who would – even among the Gentiles.
  13. **IT WAS THEN** that He reminded them how Yahweh had bypassed the unbelieving Israelites during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha AND MINISTERED HIS SAVING GRACE TO GENTILES: **And He said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. <sup>25</sup> But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, <sup>26</sup> and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. <sup>27</sup> And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”** / **Luke 4.24-27**
  14. So ... in those two Old Testament illustrations, Yahweh was demonstrating His passing over unbelieving Israelites to show compassion for Gentiles ... and His ultimate Gospel purpose to call His people from among the Gentile nations! / see **Acts 13.46-48; 14.27; 15.13-17; many others**
  15. That is what Yahweh is doing here prophetically in **2 Kings 5** by providentially extending His healing mercy and saving grace to this Gentile, Naaman the Syrian!

### III / vv 1-4 / NAAMAN’S LEPROSY ... AND HOW YAHWEH PROVIDENTIALLY ARRANGES TO CURE & CLEANSE HIM

1. **vv 1-2** / Naaman was a high-ranking military commander of the king of Syria’s army – but he had a major defect!
  - a. **commander of the army of the king of Syria:** supreme commander, Syrian army’s highest-ranking officer
  - b. **a great man with his master:** high social standing, respect, and prominence
  - c. **in high favor:** highly regarded by his king because of his military victories and conquests
  - d. **because by him Yahweh had given victory to Syria:** THIS statement tells us that Yahweh is the Lord and King over all the nations, their armies, and the courses they all take – and Yahweh is going to use the armies of Syria to win military victories even over Israel AND use those victories to bring His message of grace to this Gentile general... ***YAHWEH is exercising His sovereignty and providentially arranging for Naaman to meet His prophet Elisha, come to know Him, and receive His mercy and grace!***
  - e. **a mighty man of valor:** a man of great wealth and a courageous warrior
  - f. **BUT he was a leper:** meaning he had a serious, disfiguring skin disease which according to Levitical law rendered him ceremonially ‘unclean’ ... and under the same Levitical law would have excluded him from society / see **Leviticus 13 & 14**
2. **v 2** / During one of Naaman’s guerilla strikes into Israel, he had taken hostage one of their young girls, and she had been brought back to his house to be their maidservant to Naaman’s wife.
3. **v 3** / You would have thought that this young girl would harbor hatred and resentment toward her captor and master – but, No! She had only compassion for him and his disease ... much like Yahweh’s mercy and compassion He had for the lost among the Gentile nations that were attacking

Israel. She only wishes that her master knew about Yahweh's prophet Elisha ... **Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.**

4. **v 4** / Naaman trusts the heart of this young Israelite girl. She must have demonstrated and proven herself to be a young girl of character, sincerity, and believability.

#### **IV / vv 5-7 / THE KING OF SYRIA MAKES AN OVERTURE AND APPEAL TO THE KING OF ISRAEL**

1. **vv 5** / The king of Syria writes a letter of request to the king of Israel to fulfill this request for his beloved general's cure ... and accompanies his letter of request with a gift and peace-offering of 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold [a sizeable and rich monetary gift] and ten outfits of fine clothing.
2. **v 6** / The king of Israel was Jehoram [see **ch 1.17**]. But more importantly, this Jehoram was the son of Ahab and Jezebel [**ch 3.1**] – which means that...
  - a. this Jehoram would have witnessed the ministry of Elijah during his father's reign
  - b. and he was carrying on his wicked father's and evil mother's abominations in Israel.
  - c. The king of Syria is just assuming that the king of Israel would have a working relationship with and be a channel to the prophet Elisha.
  - d. But, Jehoram knew nothing of Yahweh [by personal faith] and couldn't have cared less ... except to save his own skin!
3. **v 7** / **Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?** However, Jehoram did know that only God [Yahweh] had the necessary power to cure this Syrian general's leprosy. The curing of Naaman's leprosy was comparable to the power of resurrecting the dead – something that Elisha had performed in raising the Shunammite's son [**ch 4.18-37**]. Surely Jehoram had heard of that!
4. This demand threw Jehoram into a panic and rage. **He tore his clothes** which was a demonstration of utter frustration and consternation, mourning and grief. He could only conclude that the king of Syria was placing this impossible demand on him in order to pick a fight with him and start a war!

#### **V / vv 8-10 / ELISHA INTERVENES TO DELIVER YAHWEH'S GRACE, HEALING, AND CLEANSING**

1. **v 8** / When Elisha sends word to King Jehoram, it is not just to bail him out of his distress ... but Yahweh's intention is to show Jehoram and Israel that He alone is God, and that Elisha is His prophet. And Yahweh is also going to show unbelieving Israel that He will receive glory – even by showing mercy to a Gentile!
2. **v 9** / When Naaman responds to Elisha's invitation to come to him, he assumes that Elisha will personally honor him because of his personal standing, importance, and prominence ... and come himself to meet him – and maybe even perform a miraculous show of healing on the spot [see **v 11**].
3. **v 10** / But instead, Elisha sends one of his own messengers out to Naaman with simple instructions from Yahweh: **Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.**
  - a. NOTE: Naaman would also receive a lesson about how Yahweh treated leprosy in Israel – it was a symbol of our moral and spiritual 'uncleanness' before God; in other words, a type for our sin that requires 'cleansing' by being 'washed.' In Levitical law, the 'cleansing' of leprosy was also accompanied by sacrifices that pointed to the 'washing' by regeneration and by the blood of Christ.
  - b. ALSO this action would require Naaman to exercise humble faith in Israel's God, Yahweh, And the **seven times** would require him to believe and find out that the healing/cleansing was a miraculous act from Yahweh.

## VI / vv 11-13 / “HELP MY UNBELIEF”

1. v 11 / Now it is Naaman’s turn to fly into a rage...and he actually starts to leave and go back home without receiving the cure he had come to receive. *“You’ve got to be kidding me! Is this any way to treat a man of my caliber and standing?”* This is not what he expected. He was sure that Elisha would honor *him* by making a big fuss over him – and he would be the star of this performance. *But when God extends mercy to us – only He will be glorified, recognized, and receive the credit!*
2. v 12 / And, Naaman is right – the rivers in his native Damascus were more beautiful and would have served better than this muddy rivulet Jordan *if his cure was to be found just in the physical element of the water. But the cure and cleansing was not in the physical ‘washing’ in physical river water, but in the word and power of Yahweh that would make the cleansing effective. Naaman would have to trust in Yahweh’s message of grace delivered through His prophet.*
3. v 13 / Naaman’s own servants now approach him to reason with him ... notice how they address him as **“My father...”** which shows the warm, mutual relationship of affection between them, more than just mere servile subservience ... **“My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’”**
  - a. “Isn’t this what you have come all the way here for? Isn’t he telling you how to be clean?”
  - b. Also, the word for **“‘great’ word”** is the same word for **“‘great man with his master’** that was applied to Naaman in **verse 1** – as if to say, *“This word from Yahweh through His prophet is a fitting word for you and your need ... it is what you wanted and asked for, isn’t it?”*

## VII / vv 14 / “ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH BE IT DONE TO YOU”

1. Naaman humbled himself and did what Yahweh’s prophet had told him to do: **So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God...**
  - a. We do have to admire this demonstration of humility and faith in the word of Yahweh, Elisha’s God, by this great Syrian general: to make the additional journey of 25 miles to the Jordan River ... go down into the muddy water in the presence of all his servants and attendants ... dunk himself under the water one time, two times, three times, four times [and after each dunking inspect himself to see if there was any change], five times, six times, and then the seventh time!
2. ...and when he obeyed the word of Yahweh through His prophet, **...and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean!**
3. NOTE: it was a **‘little’** Israelite girl who had first told him about Yahweh’s prophet ... and when he trusted and obeyed, **his flesh was restored like the flesh of a ‘little’ child** [same word]. Didn’t Jesus tell us that we must humble ourselves and trust Him like ‘little’ children to receive His mercies and be **‘great’** in His sight [Matthew 18.1-4]?
  - a. “The Hebrew is *na‘ar qaton*, and there is evidently a play on the phrase *na‘arah qetannah* [“little girl”] in v. 2. The “great man” [v. 1] had a problem, to which the “little girl” had the solution; but the solution involved Naaman’s becoming, like her, “a little child” – someone under prophetic authority, humbly acknowledging his new faith.” [ESV Study Bible]
4. But Yahweh is the One who receives all the glory, praise, honor, and yes – even the new-found worship of this former worshiper of idols! / **see vv 15-18**
  - a. “He had looked to the prophet himself for a cure, in line with the words of his Israelite informant [v. 3]; but the way in which the cure has been wrought has made it clear to him the Elisha’s God [Yahweh] is a living Person, not simply a convenient metaphor for unnatural [supernatural] prophetic powers.” [ESV Study Bible]

**“TAKE HEART ... YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL!” [Matthew 9.22]**