

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 5

2 KINGS 5:1-5 - NAAMAN, CAPTAIN OF ARMY OF ARAM (SYRIA)

LEPER: THIS TERM, DESCRIBING SOMEONE WITH A SERIOUS SKIN DISEASE, APPEARS THROUGHOUT THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. IT IS NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME "LEPROSY" WHICH IS KNOWN IN OUR WORLD TODAY BUT WAS A SEVERE SKIN DISEASE WHICH WOULD LEAD TO SOMEONE IN THE ISRAELITE COMMUNITY TO BE EXCLUDED AND SENT OUTSIDE OF THEIR CITY. THIS SPEAKS TO THE CONTAGIOUS NATURE OF SUCH A SKIN DISEASE. ALONG WITH THE EXCLUSION WOULD BRING GREAT SHAME UPON THE INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR FAMILY.

V. 2-3 - A LITTLE GIRL, IN SLAVERY TO NAAMAN'S WIFE, IS THE VEHICLE GOD USES TO GET THE INFORMATION TO NAAMAN. SHE KNOWS OF THE POWER OF GOD WORKING THROUGH ELISHA. (MORE ON HER LATER)

V. 5 - THE KING OF ARAM SENDS A LETTER TO THE KING OF ISRAEL (REMEMBER HIM?) ALONG WITH NAAMAN AND A LARGE GIFT.

NLT: "SO NAAMAN STARTED OUT, CARRYING AS GIFTS 750 POUNDS OF SILVER, 150 LBS OF GOLD, & 10 SETS OF CLOTHING."

2 KINGS 5:6-7 - NAAMAN VISITS THE KING OF ISRAEL

IT APPEARS THAT THE KING OF ARAM AND NAAMAN AS WELL ASSUME THAT THE KING OF ISRAEL, WHOSE PALACE IS IN SAMARIA IS THE ONE WHO HAS THE ABILITY TO CURE THE LEPROSY. THE LETTER IS NOT ADDRESSED SPECIFICALLY TO ELISHA. WHEN THE KING RECEIVES THE LETTER, HIS RESPONSE IS A LITTLE OVER THE TOP. HE VIEWS THIS REQUEST AS A TAUNT OF SOME SORT. HE FEARS THAT IF HE CANNOT CURE NAAMAN, ARAM WILL ATTACK ISRAEL. AND SO THE KING OF ISRAEL, "FREAKS OUT".

2 KINGS 5:8-12 - NAAMAN FINDS ELISHA

V. 8 - COINCIDENTALLY, ELISHA HEARS ABOUT THE KING'S REQUEST AND RESPONSE. HE TELLS THE KING TO SEND NAAMAN TO HIM.

V. 9-10 - NAAMAN APPROACHES ELISHA'S HOUSE ONLY TO BE GREETED BY A MESSENGER (RATHER THAN ELISHA HIMSELF). THIS MESSENGER INSTRUCTS NAAMAN TO WASH IN THE JORDAN RIVER SEVEN TIMES, AND HE WILL BE "CLEAN" (AKA CURED).

V. 11-12 - SHOCKINGLY, NAAMAN IS FURIOUS ABOUT THIS INCIDENT AND INSTRUCTIONS. IT SEEMS LIKE HE WAS EXPECTING SOMETHING MUCH MORE "MYSTICAL" TO HAPPEN TO BRING ABOUT HIS HEALING. HE ALSO MOCKS THE WORD OF ELISHA BECAUSE HE ESSENTIALLY MAKES FUN OF THE JORDAN RIVER IN COMPARISON TO THE GREAT RIVERS OF ARAM.

NOTICE NAAMAN SAID "I THOUGHT..." (V. 11) - NAAMAN HAD ALREADY PRE-DETERMINED HOW THE HEALING WOULD COME FROM THE PROPHET. HE DIMINISHES AND NEAR IGNORES THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE PROPHET OF THE LORD BECAUSE HE THINKS THOSE INSTRUCTIONS ARE TOO BASIC, TOO SIMPLE AND DID NOT INCLUDE THE "DRAMATIC FLAIR" OF THE PROPHET COMING OUT TO WAVE HIS HANDS.

NAAMAN SEEMS SILLY TO IGNORE THE GREAT ELISHA'S WORD. AFTER ALL, DOESN'T HE KNOW ABOUT THE GREAT AND SMALL MIRACLES PERFORMED BY ELISHA'S HAND IN CHAPTER 4? (PROBABLY NOT). BUT, BEFORE WE CHUCKLE AT NAAMAN'S FOOLISHNESS, WE WOULD DO

WELL TO BE CAREFUL HERE CHRISTIAN. DO WE BELIEVE GOD WORKS IN THE UN-DRAMATIC? DO WE HEAR GOD'S WORD IN THE SIMPLE AND SEEMINGLY OBVIOUS COMMAND?

2 KINGS 5:13-14 - NAAMAN OBEYS. NAAMAN IS HEALED.

WHAT A GREAT PERSPECTIVE.

2 KINGS 5:15-17 - NAAMAN RETURNS, GIVES PRAISE TO GOD

THROUGH THE GREAT MIRACLE THAT TAKES PLACE, NAAMAN IS CONVINCED THAT THE GOD IN ISRAEL IS THE ONE TRUE GOD. HE GIVES PRAISE TO THE LORD AND WANTS TO THANK AND HONOR ELISHA WITH A GIFT. ELISHA SHOWS HIS INTEGRITY BY REFRAINING FROM A GIFT WHICH WOULD BE MISCONSTRUED AS "PAYMENT". THIS HAS GOT TO IMPRESS NAAMAN EVEN MORE.

IN ARAM ONE WOULD IMAGINE THERE WERE FALSE PROPHETS REPRESENTING FALSE GODS. LACKING A LIVING GOD THAT WOULD SHOW THEMSELVES STRONG, THESE PROPHETS WOULD RELY ON TRICKERY AND DECEPTION TO STAY RELEVANT AND IN BUSINESS. SO PAYMENT, BRIBES, AND SUCH WERE LIKELY A BIG PART OF THAT ARENA. ELISHA ON THE OTHER HAND IS A REAL PROPHET, OF A LIVING GOD. HE TAKES NO PAYMENT BECAUSE HE IS NOT THE ONE WHO POSSESSES THE POWER!

GOD IS THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE HONORED WHEN GREAT THINGS HAPPEN, NOT THE MEN OR WOMEN WHO ARE HIS SERVANTS!

2 KINGS 5:18-19 - NAAMAN'S REQUEST

NAAMAN IS A NEW CONVERT TO THE WORSHIP OF YAHWEH. BUT HE IS RETURNING TO HIS HOMELAND WHICH IS A LAND OF IDOLS, MOST NOTABLY THE GOD CALLED "RIMMON". HE ASKS ELISHA FOR A PREEMPTIVE PARDON. HE RECOGNIZES HIS NEEDS TO HONOR HIS "MASTER" (THE KING) AND COMPLETE HIS DUTY AS COMMANDER, BUT HE KNOWS THAT RIMMON IS AN IDOL. IN THIS CASE HE IS NOT CONVERTING TO JUDAISM (AND THUS BOUND TO THE MOSAIC LAWS), BUT RATHER CONVERTING TO A TRUE WORSHIPPER OF THE TRUE GOD. HE IS A GENTILE BELIEVER WHO WILL RETURN TO HIS HOME TO WORSHIP THE LORD THE REST OF HIS LIFE, THOUGH HIS NATION AND HOMELAND WILL NOT.

SOME COULD LOOK AT THIS AS A COP-OUT. NAAMAN SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO GRATEFUL TO THE LORD THAT HE FORSOOK HIS OLD LIFE AND MOVED TO ISRAEL. THIS MIGHT BE A REASONABLE SUGGESTION. HOWEVER, IT ALSO SEEMS REASONABLE TO RETURN HOME TO SHARE THE NEWS OF HIS HEALING, AND AT WHOSE HAND THE HEALING CAME. IN THIS SCENARIO, HE WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DECLARE THE NAME AND GREATNESS OF THE LORD, WHILE FIGHTING TO STAY FAITHFUL, RATHER THAN JUST MOVE HIS LIFE TO A SAFE ZONE WHERE EVERYONE ALREADY KNOWS THE TRUTH. IT SEEMS LIKE ELISHA ENDORSES HIS REQUEST AND RETURN HOME ("GO IN PEACE" V. 19)

EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT. SPIRITUAL WISDOM IS NEEDED.

2 KINGS 5:20-25 - GEHAZI PULLS A JUDAS

GEHAZI, THE CHIEF SERVANT OF ELISHA HAS A WICKED HEART AND IS TEMPTED BY THE CHANCE TO GET SOMETHING OUT OF THE GREAT TREASURE NAAMAN HAD OFFERED. THOUGH HIS PORTION IS SMALL, IT WAS GAINED THROUGH DECEIT AND BETRAYAL. PERHAPS HE THOUGHT HIS MASTER WAS FOOLISH TO REJECT THE MONEY. PERHAPS HE HANDLED THE FINANCES AND SAW THAT THINGS WERE "TIGHT." PERHAPS HE WAS JUST GREEDY. WHATEVER HIS MOTIVATION, WE SEE THE WICKEDNESS OF GEHAZI.

HOW SAD IT IS TO SEE THAT THE NOTABLE SERVANT OF THE GREAT MAN OF GOD (ELISHA) HAD MISSED THE WHOLE POINT OF ALL WE HAVE READ. HE HAS SEEN AND BEEN INVOLVED IN MIRACLES, GREAT AND SMALL (FROM RESURRECTION TO CORRECTED STEW RECIPES) AND NOW NAAMAN'S INCURABLE DISEASE IS CURED. AND GEHAZI JUST WANTS A CHANGE OF CLOTHES AND A COUPLE OF BUCKS.

V. 25 - "YOUR SERVANT WENT NOWHERE" - CAN'T YOU JUST HEAR THESE WORDS COMING OUT OF THE MOUTH OF A FOOLISH TEENAGER OR CHILD WHO HAS JUST BEEN CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING THEY SHOULDN'T?

2 KINGS 5:26-27 - GEHAZI CONFRONTED. GEHAZI CURSED.

YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR THE HEART-BREAK IN ELISHA'S VOICE AS HE CONFRONTS HIS SERVANT. "DID NOT MY HEART GO WITH YOU... (V. 26)." GEHAZI (AND HIS DESCENDANTS) WILL ALL BE LEPEERS FROM THIS MOMENT ON.

3 LESSONS FOR US:

NAAMAN'S SERVANT GIRL: WHATEVER MY LOT, THOU HAS TAUGHT ME TO SAY, "IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL:"

A LITTLE GIRL, IN SLAVERY TO NAAMAN'S WIFE, IS THE VEHICLE GOD USES TO GET THE INFORMATION TO NAAMAN. WHAT A CONCEPT! IMAGINE THE YOUNG GIRL'S DESPAIR UPON BEING REMOVED FROM HER FAMILY, AND YET GOD USES HER, IN HER EXILE AND SLAVERY TO BE GLORIFIED TO GENTILES!

ELISHA & NAAMAN: GOD USES SIMPLE THINGS TO CONFOUND THE WISE

THE INSTRUCTIONS OF ELISHA TO WASH IN THE JORDAN RIVER SEEMED "DUMB" TO NAAMAN. HE HAD AN EXPECTATION THAT THERE WOULD BE SOMETHING MUCH GREATER THAT HE HAD TO "DO" OR SOMETHING MORE DRAMATIC THAT WOULD BE DONE BY ELISHA IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE BLESSING OF THE CURE. WHAT ARE OUR EXPECTATIONS OF HOW GOD IS GOING TO WORK IN OUR LIVES? HAVE WE ALREADY DETERMINED THE TERMS OR ARE WE OPEN TO RECEIVE THE LORD'S BLESSING, INSTRUCTION OR WISDOM - HOWEVER IT MAY COME? IT'S EASY TO SAY WE ARE OPEN TO THE LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES OF HOW GOD CAN WORK, BUT HAS HE ALREADY NOT SAID WHAT WE CAN/SHOULD/MUST DO TO RECEIVE FROM HIM, AND YET WE FIND OURSELVES OFTEN WITHOUT THE THINGS HE HAS PROMISED?

JAMES 4:28-3 - YOU DO NOT HAVE BECAUSE YOU DO NOT ASK. 3 YOU ASK AND DO NOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE YOU ASK WITH WRONG MOTIVES, SO THAT YOU MAY SPEND IT ON YOUR PLEASURES.

GEHAZI: IT'S THE INSIDE THAT COUNTS

OUR CLOSENESS TO THOSE SERVING GOD FAITHFULLY AND OUR OWN DEVOTION TO RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IS NOT A GUARANTEE FOR GENUINE FAITH. GEHAZI HAD AN OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF "GODLINESS" AND EVEN A TITLE ("SERVANT OF ELISHA"). BUT HE WAS ROTTEN INSIDE. JESUS SPOKE OFTEN OF THIS. IT SEEMS TO BE AN IMPORTANT LESSON FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TO REMEMBER. THE OUTSIDE APPEARANCE IS NEEDED, BUT ONLY WHEN IT FLOWS FROM THE INSIDE HEART OF THOSE WHO ARE IN LOVE WITH AND IN AWE OF GOD. THE TIME SPENT ON MAKING ONESELF LOOK GOOD TO OTHERS AND GOING THROUGH THE MOTION OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE EVENTUALLY WILL LEAD TO CRACKS AND LEAKS. YOU MAY FOOL OTHERS, BUT YOU DON'T FOOL GOD. AND IN THIS LIFE (AND CERTAINLY ON THE LAST DAY) THE LORD WILL DEAL WITH YOU.