

## 2 Kings 5-6

### The Story of Naaman

This is one of my favorite stories from the Old Testament. It is a story that demonstrates the power of the Lord through his prophet and the impotence of ungodly kings. It highlights the difference between God's way of humility and integrity over power and strength. It is also an important example of cultural differences and miscommunication that arises from incorrect cultural assumptions. Naaman is a great general of the Syrians (Aram) to the north of Israel. Their capital city is Damascus and they have been the rival regional power to Israel since the time of King David. The weakness of Joram, king of Israel, is seen by the constant raiding parties of Arameans that have been harassing the land. Naaman is the right hand man to the king of Aram and the leader of the army, but he has leprosy. Naaman's wife has a young slave that was taken from Israel and she informs Naaman that there is a prophet in Samaria who could cure him. Naaman, goes to the king of Aram and gets permission to seek a cure from this prophet. In order to do this he must go through the King of Israel. So a lavish gift is prepared for the king and Naaman sets off for Samaria. When he arrives in the king's presence, he presents the letter from the king of Aram requesting the cure from the prophet. The king of Israel is filled with fear and believes that the king of Aram is trying to incite a war. He believes this because Aram assumes that the king of Israel controls the prophets and that he employees them like all of the prophets of Baal that ate daily at the table of Jezebel. But that is not the case with the true Prophets of the LORD. They operate independently of the king and stand many times in opposition to the king when they are not following the LORD. Naaman finally goes to meet the prophet and the prophet sends a servant to meet him. Naaman is offended because of his cultural rank. He is told to go and dip 7 times in the Jordan River and he will be cleansed of his leprosy. He is outraged because the "Rivers in Damascus" are cleaner than the rivers of Israel. This is clear egocentrism. Finally his servants speak the truth to him and he does what the prophet said and is cleansed. He almost missed the blessing that God had for him because of cultural miscommunication and pride.

The second half of the story is the attempt by Naaman to pay for the miracle by giving gifts to Elisha. Elisha refuses because it is not his power or will but that of the LORD that determined to heal him. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha decided to run after Naaman and lied to get the gifts for himself. Elisha knew what happened through the Spirit and cursed the servant and he got the leprosy of Naaman.

### Chapter 6 Begins with the floating ax head

This is a brief story of Elisha, again acting as the protector and provider for the company of prophets that are under his authority. While building a larger meeting place for the prophets, one of the prophets was cutting down a tree close to the water and the ax head flew off of the handle and into the water. The prophet panicked because it was borrowed and he could not pay for it. So Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at roughly the same place and the iron ax head floated and was retrieved. This is a simple miracle that demonstrates how God enables Elisha to carry out the calling he was given to lead the prophets.

## The Blinded Arameans.

Aram (Syria – the nation from which came Naaman) was at war with Israel. Elisha is given supernatural knowledge of the troop movements of the Arameans and he passes it on to the king so that he will be prepared. The Aramean king believes that there is a spy or traitor among his men, but one says that it is the Prophet Elisha that is informing the king of Israel. So the Arameans surround Dothan, the city where Elisha was, and planned to capture or kill him. Elisha's servant got up early and sees the army surrounding the town and he runs back in to tell his master. Verse 16 – the prophet said don't be afraid those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” The prophet is confused... so Elisha asked God to open his eyes and he sees the armies of the LORD encamped on the hillsides. This is an important glimpse into the spirit world. Elisha has faith that God is there and he is more powerful than his enemies. He did not need to see, but the servant, and the rest of us, benefit by the vision that is given. When we think that we are outnumbered and that there is no way for our lives to be saved, we must believe that God is active and prepared for the spiritual confrontation. When the army charges in to take Elisha he prays for blindness and the Arameans lost their sight. He then goes to the army and leads them single-handedly into the stronghold of Samaria, the capital of Israel. Then he pays again for their sight to be restored. When it is they see that they are all surrounded and are forced to surrender. The king asked if he should kill them all but Elisha instructs him to treat them like prisoners of war and feed them and send them home. By doing this he creates an end to the border war with Aram.

Oh, that we would live our lives with the faith that God is ever-present to fight for us. When we do, we are able to be merciful because we are confident in the superior force that stands behind us.