

# SECOND KINGS

## Chapter 5

### *Naaman Healed of Leprosy*

**Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. 2 Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 4 So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." 5 And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy." 7 And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me." 8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." 11 But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 But his servants came near and said to him, "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'?" 14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.**

**Ch 5** Longest of the miracle accounts. (TLSB)

**5:1** *king of Syria* Probably Ben-Hadad II. (CSB)

*was a great man.* The greatness of Naaman in the eyes of the world will be seen as the cause for opposition to God's means of salvation. Even though God is truly great, he chooses to bring salvation in humble and meek means. This meekness Naaman initially rejects. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

*the LORD had given victory to Syria.* Probably a reference to an otherwise undocumented Aramean victory over the Assyrians in the aftermath of the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C. (see note on 1Ki 22:1). In the narrator's theological perspective, this victory is attributable to the sovereignty of the God of Israel, who is seen as the ruler and controller of the destinies of all nations, not just that of Israel (see Eze 30:24; Am 2:1–3; 9:7). (CSB)

The God of Israel was the Ruler of all nations. The enemies of Syria whom Naaman defeated were probably the Assyrians. (TLSB)

*he was a leper* – Leprosy was a deadly disease. Not all of Naaman's power, wealth or popularity could obtain healing for him. Humanly speaking, he was doomed to a slow and painful death. (PBC)

Cf Lv 13–14 for rules in Israel regarding leprosy. (TLSB)

**5:2-3** A young Israelite girl spreads the good news to Naaman—there is salvation through the God of Elisha. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:2** *Syria.* Although Israel had concluded a peace treaty with the Arameans during the reign of Ahab (see 1Ki 20:34), minor border skirmishes continued between the two states in the aftermath of the battle for control of Ramoth Gilead, in which Ahab had been killed. (CSB)

*little girl...of Israel.* In sharp contrast to the Israelite king in Samaria, this young girl held captive in Damascus was very much aware of God's saving presence with his people through his servant Elisha, and she selflessly shared that knowledge with her Aramean captors. (CSB)

1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

*service.* Taken captive on some Syrian raid in Israel, this slave girl became a foreign missionary. (TLSB)

**5:3** *prophet who is in Samaria.* Elisha, who maintained a residence in Samaria (see v. 9; 2:25; 6:19). (CSB)

**5:4-6** Naaman leaves to secure his salvation, carrying many impressive items: a letter from the king and vast riches for payment. However, Naaman's salvation cannot be bought; it will be free. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:5** *I will send a letter to the king of Israel.* The border skirmishes had not nullified the official peace between the two nations as established by treaty. The king of Israel was Joram (see 1:17; 3:1; 9:24). (CSB)

*ten talents of silver.* An idea of the relative value of this amount of silver can be seen by comparing it with the price Omri paid for the hill of Samaria (see 1Ki 16:24). (CSB)

Massive gift to the king of Israel, to secure his cooperation. (TLSB)

**5:6** *that you may cure him of his leprosy.* Ben-Hadad assumed that the prophet described by the Israelite slave girl was subject to the authority of the king and that his services could be bought with a sufficiently large gift. He thought he could buy with worldly wealth one of the chief blessings of God's saving presence among his people. (CSB)

Apparently, the king of Syria thought that his commander would be cured by a prophet (v 3) who was attached to the court in Samaria. (TLSB)

**5:7** *he is seeking a quarrel with me!* Joram concluded that the entire incident was an attempt by Ben-Hadad to create a pretext for a declaration of war. So blind was the king to God's saving presence through Elisha that he could think only of international intrigue. (CSB)

*tore his clothes.* In grief or possibly in anger (cf Mt 26:65). (TLSB)

*Am I God.* Wording and request placed the Israelite king in an awkward position. He feared that the Syrian king would hold him responsible if Naaman was not healed. (TLSB)

*to kill and to make alive.* God's role, physically and spiritually. The king perhaps hesitated to get Elisha involved because Israelite kings rarely had positive relations with true prophets. (TLSB)

The king of Israel tears his robes because he believes the king of Syria is laying an impossible task before any human. Wars have started over lesser things. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:8** *Why have you torn your clothes?* Elisha chided Joram for his fear (see note on 1Sa 17:11) and for his failure to consult the Lord's prophet (see 3:13–14 for evidence of the tension that existed between Joram and Elisha). (CSB)

*a prophet in Israel.* A shaming word to the doubting king, but a word of promise to Naaman. (TLSB)

**5:9-10** Naaman arrives at Elisha's house with a rich entourage, all unnecessary for salvation. The simplicity of salvation is further seen in Elisha's unwillingness even to

come out and meet Naaman. Instead, the prophet sends out a servant to greet the great commander of a country's army. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:9** *with his horses and chariots.* This proud pagan would command the healing by his lordly presence. (CSB)

*stood at the door.* He did not invite in the unclean Gentile (Lv 13:46), which would have appeared rude to a foreign dignitary. (TLSB)

**5:10** *a messenger.* Continued distance toward Naaman, which could provoke further insult. (TLSB)

*wash in the Jordan seven times.* The instruction is designed to demonstrate to Naaman that healing would come by the power of the God of Israel, but only if he obeyed the word of the Lord's prophet. The prophet himself was not a healer. Ritual washings were practiced among Eastern religions as a purification rite, and the number seven was generally known as a symbol of completeness. Naaman was to wash in the muddy waters of the Jordan River, demonstrating that there was no natural connection between the washing and the desired healing. Perhaps it also suggested that one needed to pass through the Jordan, as Israel had done (Jos 3–4), in order to obtain healing from the God of Israel. (CSB)

**5:11-12** Naaman leaves Elisha's house because he thinks it ridiculous to be dipped in water for salvation. Naaman wanted the great prophet himself to come out and cure him in dramatic manner. He did not want the manner God provided. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:11** *his God.* Naaman knows of the Lord but does not confess Him. (TLSB)

*the place.* Infection was apparently limited to one area of Naaman's body. (TLSB)

*wave his hand over the place and cure the leprosy.* Naaman expected to be healed by the magical technique of the prophet rather than by the power of God operative in connection with his own obedient response to God's word. (CSB)

**5:12** *Abana and Pharpar.* The Abana was termed the Golden River by the Greeks. It is usually identified with the Barada River of today, rising in the Anti-Lebanon mountains and flowing through the city of Damascus. The Pharpar River flows east from Mount Hermon just to the south of Damascus. (CSB)

They watered fertile fields along their banks. The murky waters of the Jordan, rushing in a low, deeply eroded riverbed to the Salt Sea, had little irrigation value. (TLSB)

**5:13-14** Naaman's servants are levelheaded to bring Naaman to his senses. They help Naaman realize the important thing: he wants to be saved. Whether that salvation comes in dramatic or simple fashion does not matter. The point is, simple washing will bring

him salvation from death. The means should not be overlooked just because they appear simplistic. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

**5:13** *a great word*. Overlooking the perceived insults from Elisha, the servants focused properly on the word of promise. (TLSB)

**5:14** *dipped himself*. Verb typically describes dipping a portion of something in a liquid, rather than total immersion (cf Jsh 3:15). Naaman would likely have immersed the portion of his body that was leprous. (TLSB)

*according to the word*. Iren: “As we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes” (ANF 1:574). (TLSB)

*his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child*. † Physically he was reborn. As he obeyed God’s word, Naaman received the gift of God’s grace. Naaman is here a sign to disobedient Israel that God’s blessing is found only in the path of faith in God’s promises and trustful obedience. When his own people turn away from covenant faithfulness, God will raise up those who will follow his word from outside the covenant nation). (CSB)

Ambr: “Being forthwith cleansed, [Naaman] understood that it is not of the waters but of grace that a man is cleansed” (NPNF 2 10:319); “Naaman the Syrian thought that his leprosy could not be cleansed by water. But that which was impossible God made to be possible, Who gave us so great grace” (NPNF 2 10:346). (TLSB)

Just as God attached healing to the waters of the Jordan River by means of his word, so God by his promise has attached the forgiveness of sins to the water of baptism. Just as Naaman received God’s blessings when he believed God’s word and actually dipped himself into the Jordan River, so we receive the blessings of baptism by faith. Faith is a receiving hand. Those who believe God’s words have the blessing they offer. (PBC)

Psalm 51:2 “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

Psalm 51:10 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

**5:1–14** The Syrian commander Naaman is convinced that the Lord can heal him of leprosy, according to the Lord’s Word. The Lord cleanses us too by water and the Word, for His Word gives life and salvation. • Wash me, O Lord, and I shall be clean. Give me life according to Your Word. Amen. (TLSB)

*Gehazi's Greed and Punishment*

**15 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." 16 But he said, "As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17 Then Naaman said, "If not, please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD. 18 In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter." 19 He said to him, "Go in peace." But when Naaman had gone from him a short distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him." 21 So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" 22 And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" 23 And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. 24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed. 25 He went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." 26 But he said to him, "Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper, like snow.**

**5:15** *no God in all the earth but in Israel.* Naaman's confession put to shame the Israelites who continued to waver in their opinion on whether Baal and the Lord (Yahweh) were both gods, or whether Yahweh alone was God. (CSB)

God's Word and act of mercy have turned Naaman's heart. He now understands that all the gods of the nations are not genuine. (TLSB)

**5:16** *I will not accept a thing.* Elisha did not seek monetary gain for proclaiming the word of the Lord (see Mt 10:8). Naaman was healed solely by divine grace, not by the power of Elisha. (CSB)

Scripture does not explain Elisha's refusal. (TLSB)

**5:17** *let there be given to your servant two mules load.* In the ancient world it was commonly thought that a deity could be worshiped only on the soil of the nation to which

he was bound (see v. 15). For this reason Naaman wanted to take Israelite soil with him in order to have a place in Damascus for the worship of the Lord. (CSB)

*load of earth.* Only recently converted to the God of Israel (v 15), Naaman thought that he needed to worship God on Israelite soil if his offerings were to be acceptable. The notion prevailed in his day that the domain of a god was determined by national borders. (TLSB)

**5:18** *my master.* Ben-Hadad, king of Aram. (CSB)

*pardon.* Hbr *salach*, “to forbear,” as in responding with patience. He realized the fellowship and worship issues that naturally arose for one who believed in and worshiped the one true God. He repeated this request for emphasis. (TLSB)

*leaning.* Likely describing a function of his office, by which he literally and symbolically supported the king. (TLSB)

*Rimmon.* Also known as Hadad (and in Canaan and Phoenicia as Baal), this Aramean deity was the god of storm (“Rimmon” means “thunderer”) and war. The two names were sometimes combined (see note on Zec 12:11). (CSB)

Syrian storm god Hadad. (TLSB)

*I bow myself in the house of Rimmon.* Has become proverbial to describe those who compromise their principles when under stress. (TLSB)

**5:19** *Go in peace.* Elisha did not directly address Naaman’s problem of conscience (v. 18), but commended him to the leading and grace of God as he returned to his pagan environment and official responsibilities. (CSB)

Instead of upbraiding the new convert for visiting the house of Rimmon, Elisha dismissed him “in peace.” However, of the Israelites, fully taught by God, Elijah demanded that they stop “limping between two different opinions” (1Ki 18:21). Jesus likewise required uncompromising commitment (Lk 11:23; 16:13). (TLSB)

**5:20** *spared.* Gehazi decided the Syrian owed them. (TLSB)

*As surely as the LORD lives.* An oath formula. (CSB)

**5:22** *sent me.* A lie. (TLSB)

*Ephraim.* Such centers of the “sons of the prophets” as Gilgal and Bethel were situated in Ephraim, north of Jerusalem (2:1–3). (TLSB)

*urged him and tied up two of talents of silver and two changes of clothing.* Gehazi deceived Naaman in order to satisfy his desire for material gain. The evil of his lie was

compounded in that it obscured the gracious character of the Lord's work in Naaman's healing and blurred the distinction between Elisha's function as a true prophet of the Lord and the self-serving actions of false prophets and pagan soothsayers. (CSB)

Not your everyday change of clothes. Given the wealth Naaman brought with him (v 5), Gehazi's request is fairly modest. (TLSB)

**5:24** *the hill*. Hbr is transliterated Ophel in 2Ch 27:3; 33:14. Not the usual noun for "hill." Except in this instance, Ophel is used exclusively of the Jerusalem temple hill. The definite article indicates that in this case too, a well-known Samaritan elevation is meant. (TLSB)

*house*. Of Elisha. (CSB)

The Hbr word can also describe a temple. (TLSB)

**5:25** *nowhere*. As in the case of Joseph's brothers, lies beget lies in an attempt to cover up fraud (cf v 22; Gn 37:31–32). However, dishonesty is only one of the noxious growths that spring from the love of money, "a root of all kinds of evils" (1Tm 6:10). (TLSB)

**5:26** *Did not my heart*. In a vision, Elisha witnessed what had happened. *a time to accept*. Elisha seems to probe Gehazi's intentions, which were fixed on gaining material goods. ((TLSB)

*was it a time accept money and garments... ?* Gehazi sought to use the grace of God granted to another individual for his own material advantage. This was equivalent to making merchandise of God's grace (see note on 2Co 2:17). "Money" here and elsewhere in 2 Kings refers to gold or silver in various weights, not to coins, which were a later invention. (CSB)

**5:27** *cling to you and your descendants forever*. Leprosy is not genetic but is spread by persistent exposure to the sick. (TLSB)

*like snow*. See Ex 4:6. (CSB)

*a leper*. According to 8:1–6, Gehazi was not absolutely isolated from people. However, his intercession for the widow of Shunem in ch 8 may have taken place some time before the healing of Naaman. (TLSB)

**5:15–27** Elisha's servant Gehazi pursues Naaman's riches, hoping for great wealth; then he lies to Elisha about what he has done. When you are caught in sin, do not hesitate to acknowledge your deeds before the Lord. He is rich in mercy toward the brokenhearted and all who confess their needs to Him. • Lord, grant me a steadfast heart and sincere repentance, that I may inherit the wealth of Your grace in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)