

2 Kings 5-6:23 Chapter Study

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5. Naaman healed 5:1-19

¹Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.

[Background of Syria – confederacy of Aramean tribes, centered in Damascus]
Naaman a brilliant military commander, held in utmost respect by Syrian king.

He was courageous & extraordinarily skilled as a leader & strategist.

God's *blessing* was upon him!

His Story is important because it tells us a lot about God's concern for *all* people and HOW He reveals Himself to those who are truly looking for Him.

We'll come back to this later. For now note that in the middle of a career that seems to be all success & celebration, he comes down with the ultimate affliction – leprosy!

Today, just about the worst thing someone can come down with is cancer.

Leprosy was the cancer of the ancient world but worse because it was deemed to be highly contagious.

So lepers were isolated from others. They lived a shunned existence.

Naaman's leprosy was slight enough that he was able to keep it covered.

And his position as commander meant he fared somewhat better in the way he was treated.

But everyone knew as time progressed that would change as the lesions grew & could no longer be hidden.

His days of his great career as commander were numbered. There was NO CURE!

²And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife.

This raid had taken place some time before when Israel & Syria were at odds & border skirmishes like this were common.

But the two kingdoms worked out an uneasy truce.

³Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the

prophet who *is* in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.”

⁴And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, “Thus and thus said the girl who *is* from the land of Israel.”

The Jewish girl knew Elisha was a prophet of God with power to heal Naaman.

She'd grown to love her master & wanted the best for him so she suggested to Mrs. Naaman that help could be found in Israel.

Naaman took this news to his king from whom he'd need permission to go.

Naaman was a high official of a foreign power. He couldn't cross the border without official authorization.

⁵Then the king of Syria said, “Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So he departed and took with him 10 talents of silver, 6000 *shekels* of gold, and 10 changes of clothing. ⁶ Then he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which said, Now be advised, when this letter comes to you, that I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may heal him of his leprosy.

That letter from one king to another was an official request for help – which in diplomatic parlance wasn't something that could be turned down without serious ramifications.

Kings didn't send such requests to one another unless either desperate or looking for an excuse to go to war.

Along with the letter went a reward of over \$4 million & a wardrobe sufficient for a king.

Some of this would be given to Jehoram, the King of Israel, but the balance was for Elisha.

⁷And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me.”

Jehoram freaked out when he read the letter from the king of Syria.

He thought for sure it was nothing less than a clever means by which to justify an invasion by Syrian forces.

Actually, the Syrian king was being *generous*. He knew Jehoram had no power to heal Naaman; that was the prophet's task.

But by wording the request this way – it was making it look as though Jehoram was the ultimate cause of healing.

But Jehoram is so far from God, and has become such a creature of politics, he forgets all about Elisha, the prophet of God who's been doing some amazing things by the power of God.

This is what happens to people in politics – they become so immersed in getting, keeping & expanding power it's all they see. Politics consumes them.

It becomes the filter through which they see everything.

The Syrian king desired one thing – to help his friend Naaman, so he sent him out on what must have seemed to him like a long shot.

Because Jehoram is consumed by politics, he sees everything as political maneuvering & interprets Naaman's presence through that lens.

A word of caution as we head into a new election cycle –

Once again both political parties will try to seek to recruit voters by appealing to religion.

They feign interest in the issues that concern us as evangelicals & will often promise to represent our values when elected.

We get all excited because “one of ours” is running.

Then we get disappointed when they get elected and forget their promises.

There are a few people of integrity running for office. Find out who they are and vote for them.

But keep in mind that politicians usually see everything through the filter of politics – and they will do & say anything to get, grow, & hang on to power.

Tearing one’s clothes was the sign of utter grief.

And the higher you went in society, the more careful you needed to be about **when** you tore them because as a leader, your mood effected all those you led.

If the king tore HIS garment, it was front page news.

So when Jehoram rent his royal robe in distress at the King of Syria’s request, word spread quickly that a national calamity was imminent.

⁸So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, “Why have you torn your clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

Elisha rebuked Jehoram for his foolish reaction.

He ought to have remembered that there was a true prophet of the Living God nearby.

⁹Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan 7 times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”

Naaman traveled to Elisha’s house, but the prophet didn’t even come to the door; he sent his servant Gehazi with a message.

We’ve seen this kind of thing before with the rich woman in Shunem.

Instead of coming personally to deal with Naaman, he sent his servant. Why? Probably for humility’s sake.

Some great miracles are attributed to Elisha.

When such things happen, it’s easy for people to get real excited and start showing way too much attention to the agent the miracle comes by.

Maybe Elisha saw something within himself that **dug** that attention too much, so he stayed out of sight.

He didn’t want to be in the place where Naaman would fawn all over him as some great man of power because Elisha might start to think it was true.

He knew enough to know that when you take any of the glory that belongs to God, it’s the beginning of the end of being used by God, so he tried to stay out of the way.

But Elisha also knew that it wasn't his power that would heal Naaman, it was God's power.

So he sent his servant with the *announcement* of healing, not to **DO** it. The same is true with us. God still heals when it serves His purpose to do so, & *sometimes* the healing is as dramatic as Naaman's here in 2 Kings.

What we need to remember is that it's God's power that heals, not ours.

We are nothing more than *servants* whose task is to *ask* God to heal. Be cautious of those who go the *exact opposite direction* of Elisha here & instead of staying in the background so God's power can abound to His glory, they step in & present themselves as great healers & miracle workers with tremendous power.

The instructions were simple – go dunk in the Jordan River 7 times, and the leprosy will be gone!

Simple enough – but Naaman's ticked!

¹¹But Naaman became furious, and went away [stormed off] and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ ¹² Are not the Abanah and the 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.

As Naaman approached Elisha's door, he had it all figured out how it would go down.

Being the important person he was, Elisha would meet him, then with some highfalutin religious mumbo-jumbo he'd wave his hands over the leprous lesions, a single shaft of sunlight would break through the clouds shining on the spot, a chorus of angels would be heard singing in heaven, and he'd been healed.

After all, leprosy was a big deal, Naaman was an important guy, and this was an official state visit.

Besides, there's a massive reward waiting; certainly Elisha would have the courtesy to meet him.

It was enough to be neglected like this but then to add insult to injury – to say that healing would be found in dipping in the Jordan?!? That was outrageous!

They'd seen it on their way south from Syria; it was nothing more than a muddy stream, barely worthy of the title 'river.' By *our* standards, some would call it a big *creek*.

Naaman balked & said if healing was to be obtained by dipping in a river he could think of 2 bac home that were far better than the Jordan.

All of this combined to infuriate him, so he stormed off.

Naaman was learning a common lesson about walking with God – things rare turn out the way we expect.

God just does not tend to follow our plans or jump through the hoops we set for Him.

He's not the cosmic wish-fulfiller we hope for.

He has a plan & future for us that's way, way better than the puny, petty, vain,

silly things we make for ourselves.
He's not concerned with our agendas nor bound to our schedules.
Over & over through the years I've faced things God needed to work in.
I pray & ask for His intervention, then my analytical little mind begins to chart
a perfectly logical, solid course that God can work through to get done
what needs doing.
I've learned, that **He rarely if ever** follows my plan.
Sometimes – I'll think of several ways He can & ought to work - & He
complies with NONE of them!
I just cannot forecast His route.
I've come to see that God does things that way to show me His way truly are
NOT my ways & that His ways truly are past finding out.
I need to know that He is **bigger** than my problems – so He keeps showing me
how wise & powerful He is by bringing His blessing in totally unforeseen
ways.

Naaman's had it! He's done with Elisha & turns to head home in a furious huff!
13And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

This is sharp counsel on their part. Their minds are not tweaked by the emotion of anger so they reason with Naaman.
Hey – If Elisha had said healing would be obtained by performing some great task, Naaman would have accepted that because in his mind the healing of leprosy was a big deal.
What if it's not like that? What if it's something simple, something Naaman finds humiliating?
Yeah – humbling one's self **is** hard – what if that's what's being called for here?
Naaman shows he **is** a humble guy in that he **both** listens to the counsel of his servants, in the midst of being pretty hot!, **then** he consents & goes to the Jordan.

14So he went down and dipped 7 times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

Many years ago Pastor Chuck preached a sermon on this story & titled it, "7 Ducks in Muddy Water."

This was such a simple thing, Naaman almost missed it because he thought something as big as being healed of leprosy would require a major labor on his part.

All it took was that he humble himself & receive what was offered.

In the same way, many people miss out on the Gospel because they think something as important as eternal life can only be obtained through some arduous means.

If they'd stop to think about it they'd realize that a good & loving God would make salvation utterly simple for us – because even the **simplest** need it. Salvation can't be dependent on our strength, or smarts, our beauty, our

goodness, our *anything*.

It has to be dependent on what God has done and the means of obtaining it has to be available to ALL – it is = FAITH!

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, “Indeed, now I know that *there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant.*”

Naaman becomes a believer & follower of Yahweh.

16 But he said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.” And he urged him to take *it*, but he refused.

There was nothing in the Law of God that prohibited Elisha’s acceptance of this gift but the prophet sensed it was not something God wanted him to do so he declined.

All that had happened had been so that Naaman would come to faith in God. God didn’t want anything to cloud the picture there, so Elisha flatly refused Naaman’s generous gift.

Keep that in mind & we’ll come back to it.

17 So Naaman said, “Then, if not, please let your servant be given 2 mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD. ¹⁸Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing.”

19 Then he said to him, “Go in peace.” So he departed from him a short distance.

Naaman was quick to realize worshipping Yahweh meant forsaking idols.

He asked for some soil so he could take it home and make his own altar to the Lord.

Then he asked Elisha for some counsel –

As a high official of the Syrian court, there would be times when he’d have to enter the temple of the Syrian chief deity & participate in state functions that included religious worship.

While everyone else would be bowing to honor Rimmon, he’d be bowing before Yahweh.

Is that okay? Elisha consented & sent him on his way with a word of blessing.

There are a number of ways we can use this to provide insight for how to conduct ourselves in this fallen world.

If you’re at a civic event and some ecumenical minister offers an innocuous prayer to an unidentifiable higher power – you don’t have to jump to your feet & shout out, “BLASPHEMY!!!”

You can simply use that time to offer a sincere prayer to Jesus.

This story of Naaman’s healing teaches us that God doesn’t just love & care for Israel – He loves all nations.

And He’s intimately aware of what’s going on all over the planet.

Though Naaman was Syrian & a potential enemy of the Jews, he was a man who lived by the light he'd received & realized truth was bigger than what his life in Syria had taught him.

So God blessed him & gave him success in all he set his hand to so that he came to the attention & favor of the Syrian king.

Once he was in that position, he contracted leprosy – a seeming career & life ending threat.

But it was still a part of God's directing his life; a great blessing wrapped in the package of hardship.

Because you see, Naaman needed to get to Israel so he could learn about the real God.

So God had even allowed one of His own people, a little Jewish girl, to be taken in a raid so she could tell Naaman where healing could be found.

Once healed, Naaman couldn't do what was expected & reward Elisha because it would have short-circuited the *full lesson* he needed to learn - that Yahweh is a God of grace, of unearned, unmerited favor; His blessing cannot be bought! It can only be received by humble faith.

Next time some critic or skeptic asks you about the poor pygmy in Africa that's never heard the Gospel, remember the story of Naaman.

God knows how to reveal Himself to those who *genuinely* seek Him.

6. Elisha's servant's greed 5:20-27

²⁰But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him." **²¹So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw *him* running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, "Is all well?"** **²²And he said, "All *is* well. My master has sent me, [liar!] saying, 'Indeed, just now 2 young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. [deceitful schemer!] Please give them a talent of silver and 2 changes of garments.'** **²³So Naaman said, "Please, take 2 talents."** **And he urged him, and bound 2 talents of silver in 2 bags, with 2 changes of garments, and handed *them* to 2 of his servants; and they carried *them* on ahead of him.** **²⁴When he came to the citadel, he took *them* from their hand, and stored *them* away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed.** **²⁵Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where *did you go*, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere." [Liar!!]** **²⁶Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go *with you* when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? *Is it* time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?"** **²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as *white* as snow.**

While the exchange between Elisha & Naaman was going on, Gehazi was standing there looking at all the goodies loaded up on the mules, just waiting for the exchange to take place.

He couldn't believe his ears when his master refused the reward.

So he immediately set to scheming. Maybe Elisha didn't want it, but Gehazi did!

Not long after Elisha went back inside he took off after them & soon caught up.

With this made up little story he wangled over \$40K in silver & 2 sets of clothes out of Naaman.

The silver & garments would weigh close to 200 lbs, so a couple servants with their mules were dispatched to help Gehazi carry it back.

As soon as he had it safely deposited in his quarters they returned to Naaman & Gehazi went to check on Elisha, who preceded to bust him for his greed.

Gehazi is the perfect picture of those who see the power & blessing of God as a great way to make a living, instead of changing lives.

Judas was cut from the same cloth as Gehazi.

These guys hover round the edge of things, always alert to those God's blessing is on.

Then they come near & present themselves as assistants, claiming they just want to help administrate & serve.

But the fact is, they're angling for position so they can line their pockets off the generosity of those whose lives are being changed.

One of the most obvious ways this is happening today is in the Christian music *industry*.

Elisha acknowledged to Gehazi that sometimes it's good & right to receive a gift, but that was not one of them; the Prophet had made that quite clear so he had no excuse.

The leprosy that came on his body was simply an outward manifestation of the spiritual leprosy of greed that was consuming his soul.

He's a practical man - well qualified to run a business but too carnal to ever be sued by God

7. The floating ax-head 6:1-7

¹And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. ²Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell." So he answered, "Go." ³Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go."

Under Elisha's tenure as the lead prophet in Israel, there's a minor revival that results in more & more people returning to the Lord.

The community of prophets in training grows and they need to expand so they ask for & receive permission to build some new quarters.

The timber they need for construction is located eastward by the Jordan and they ask Elisha to go with them.

⁴So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut

down trees. ⁵But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed."

As they were chopping away, one guy's borrowed axe-head came off and flew into the river.

Now- iron tools were hard to come by so this was a major loss.

The guys would be on the hook to replace it since it was borrowed.

⁶So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw *it* in there; and he made the iron float. ⁷Therefore he said, "Pick *it* up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

This is no *David Copperfield/Criss Angel* slight of hand illusion.

Very simply, iron doesn't float!

And the stick Elisha threw in didn't "do" something that caused the axe-head to come to the surface.

This was a miracle!

And the reason Elisha threw the stick in was to make sure those watching would realize that when God performs a miracle, He uses an agent to do so.

It's God's power, but that power travels thru the faith of His people.

That stick was nothing but Elisha's way to demonstrate his dependence on God.

Then, when the axe-head surfaced, he told the man to go get it.

He could have just made the axe-head appear back on the end of the axe-handle, or in the man's hand.

That would have been no greater miracle than making it float.

But God did it this way to teach us when it comes to the walk of faith, God does what only He can do, and looks to us to do what we can & ought to do.

8. The Syrians blinded 6:8-23

⁸Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp *will be* in such and such a place." ⁹And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." ¹⁰Then the king of Israel sent *someone* to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. ¹¹ Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us *is* for the king of Israel?"

Relations between Syria & Israel have deteriorated and they are again at war. Problem is, whatever plans the Syrians make, God tells Elisha, who warns the king of Israel.

After a while, the Syrians king concludes he must have a leak.

¹²And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the

prophet who *is* in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” ¹³So he said, “Go and see where he *is*, that I may send and get him.” And it was told him, saying, “Surely *he is* in Dothan.” ¹⁴Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” ¹⁶So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them.” ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Elisha wasn't worried about the Syrians because he knew he was protected by the host of heaven.

Don't you just love the confidence & peace Elisha has here?

We can have it too because we have this promise in 1 John 4:4 we read –

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

¹⁸So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, “Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.” And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

Interesting – he prayed his servant's eyes would be opened while the eyes of the enemy would be shut.

¹⁹Now Elisha said to them, “This *is* not the way, nor *is* this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” But he led them to Samaria. ²⁰So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these *men*, that they may see.” And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there *they were*, inside Samaria!

The capital & heart of Israel – filled with thousands of Jewish troops.

²¹Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill *them*? Shall I kill *them*?” ²² But he answered, “You shall not kill *them*. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.” ²³ Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian *raiders* came no more into the land of Israel.

One man, favored by God, took captive an entire army.

Elisha wasn't even a soldier. He was an older man who walked in complete dependence on God.

Then, instead of doing what might seem like the militarily right thing to do – wipe them out – he said treat them like prisoners of war, feed them then send them

home.

The Syrians went home so blown away by both the power & love of a single guy, they ended their conflict with Israel.

I have a proposal for a brand new strategy for the USA & the War on Terror – or let's call it what it really is – The War with Radical Islam.

Here it is → Let's return with all our hearts to the Lord and overwhelm them with the power & love of God. [Explain]