

## Why did Naaman Resist Elisha Cure?

### 1. Insulted by Elisha's messenger: Pride offended

<sup>10</sup> 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."

### 2. Simplicity of the cure offends: Not mysterious enough.

<sup>11</sup> 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."

### 3. The "Zero Cost" of the cure offends: No Transaction/Negotiation

So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. <sup>6</sup> And he brought the letter to the king of Israel,

### 4. Exclusivity/Narrowness of the cure - Jordan River

<sup>12</sup> 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.

## Signs of Naaman's Transformation

### 1. No longer a polytheist - profession of faith

<sup>5</sup> 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;

<sup>17b</sup> ...now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD.

### 2. Becomes generous toward Elisha; no longer a consumer

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." <sup>16</sup> 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.

### 3. Sees himself as a servant of Elisha not an elite customer

<sup>18</sup> In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant:

### 4. He intends to go home and be a devoted, professing, worshiper

<sup>17</sup> 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.

### 5. Concerned about bowing to Rimmon: heart sensitivity.

<sup>18</sup> 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."

<sup>19</sup> He said to him, "Go in peace."



## 2 Kings 5

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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." <sup>4</sup> So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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

**Naaman:** A commander of Syria and highly esteemed by his King for his military success and his trustworthiness. Known as a great man, he had wealth, access to power, and respect.

**the LORD had given victory to Syria:** Who gave victory to commander Naaman and Syria over Israel? Many think that this is the battle in which Israel's King Ahab received his mortal wound (1Kings 22:30). The Midrash indicates that it's Naaman who "drew the bow" on Ahab.

**leper:** This was not necessarily Hansen's disease, i.e., modern leprosy, but may have been some form of psoriasis or scabies or other skin disease. This seems to be the case with Naaman, for when Gehazi received Naaman's 'leprosy' he was 'as snow' (v. 27) and the lesions of Hansen's disease are generally, not white.

**carried off a little girl from...Israel:** The whole story hangs on this little girl and yet we don't even know her name. We can only imagine the trauma she experienced being carried off from her family by Syrian marauders. As she goes about her work one day she mentioned how she wished her master could see a prophet of Israel and be cured. She knew there was a prophet in Israel who could bring healing (v. 3)!

**ten talents of silver:** Naaman took a lot of money with him, along with a letter from the king to the king of Israel, all with the goal of obtaining a healing from a prophet.

him of his leprosy.”<sup>7</sup> 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.”

<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup> So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha’s house.<sup>10</sup> 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.”<sup>11</sup> 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.”<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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?’”<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and

**Am I God... to cure a man of his leprosy?:** The unnamed king of Israel can be ordered to act by the Syrian King. He knows he has no power to heal Naaman, and he fears that Syria is seeking some advantage over him by starting a quarrel.

**that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel:** Elisha wants Naaman to come to him.

Note: Elisha does not refer to himself as a miracle worker, healer; instead, he is a voice of God, a preacher, a prophet of Israel's God. He wants to have an impact on this prominent man's soul.

**So Naaman came:** Look at how Naaman arrived at Elisha's home. He came with money, his prestige as military commander, his letter from the King and his force of horses, men and chariots.

**Elisha sent a messenger to him:** Why didn't Elisha come to the door, but instead sent a servant? Was this an intentional snub? What was Elisha's intention?

**Go and wash in the Jordan seven times:** This is something anybody could do. It does not require prowess, power, money, moral merit, influence or the completion of an ordeal. This does not sound right to Naaman; is he being mocked?

**But Naaman was angry:** Why is Naaman angry and departing in a rage? Answer: He expected something different from this healer. He expected that the healer would come out, stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God and wave his hand over the place to conjure a cure. He expected a mysterious and complex incantation. Maybe he expected a financial negotiation. Maybe Naaman wanted “vending machine grace”—put your money in and take your blessing. He expected this prophet to appear, accept the pay, and wave his hand over the spot and cure his leprosy.

**But his servants came near:** His servants see Naaman's anger at Elisha's unexpected and insulting treatment. They want him to focus on the promise in the message: ‘Wash and be clean.’

**So he went down... and his flesh was restored:** Naaman concedes, follows the instructions of Elisha, dips himself seven times and his skin disease is healed - miraculously. But look to see what happens to his mind and heart. He returns to Elisha as a new, dedicated believer in the LORD.

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.”<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup>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.”<sup>18</sup> 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.”

<sup>19</sup> He said to him, “Go in peace.”

**there is no God in all the earth but in Israel:** He has moved from his Syrian beliefs in multiple gods to the exclusive belief that there is but one God and he is the LORD God of Israel. He has resolved to never worship or sacrifice to any god but the LORD.

**accept now a present:** Why is Naaman offering a present? It's a natural instinct of gratitude but Elisha refuses it. Why refuse a gift? Could it be that Elisha sees a man early in his faith and does not want Naaman to ever think healing or God's grace comes through a purchase or financial transaction, but is a free gift from God. It was important to Elisha for Naaman to know that none of this healing occurred because of mercenary motives common to other pagan priests. Instead Naaman would leave not confused about Elisha's motives and knowing his money did not move the LORD to act.

**two mule loads of earth:** This ancient concept is hard for us to understand today. Whether he thought that a) God could be acceptably worshiped only on his own soil; or b) whether he wished, when far away from the Jordan, to have the earth of Palestine to rub himself with, which the Orientals use as a substitute for water; or c) whether, by making such a request of Elisha, he thought the prophet's grant of it would impart some virtue; or d) whether, like the modern Jews and Mohammedans, he resolved to have a portion of this holy earth for his nightly pillow—it is not easy to say. But the sense is that the soil he wanted to take was a symbolic, material tie to Israel.

**pardon your servant:** Naaman has a request of the LORD through Elisha. He knows his position of leadership in Syria will require him to accompany the king into pagan worship of “Rimmon”. He asks for pardon for doing the acts of bowing before Rimmon but insists that he will not be worshipping. Elisha said to him, “Go in peace.”

*Commentary and Sermons used in the preparation of this outline and message:*

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