



BIBLE STUDY

2 KINGS 5:1-15

*Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. **2** Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. **3** She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." **4** So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. **5** And the king of Aram said, "Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."*

*He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. **6** He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease." **7** When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."*

8 But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” **9** So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. **10** Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.”

11 But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! **12** Are not Abana[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. **13** But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” **14** So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

15 Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2 Kings is the last book of the “former prophets” in the Hebrew Bible. It begins during the short reign of Ahziah, King of Israel and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Judeans to Babylon.

It is divided into 2 parts: the first (Ch.1-17) a continuation of the history of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, including stories of the prophet Elisha and his miracles. The second (ch. 18 - 25) focuses on the last part of the century until the Babylonian exile in 586.

2 Kings is the second part of a whole that includes 1 Kings and isn't, therefore, to be taken as a full and accurate history, but rather a theological account of the failure of both the northern and southern monarchies.'

CULTURAL CONTEXT

The area that Israel and Judah were united at one point under King Solomon who created the wealthiest and most powerful central government the Hebrews would ever see. Following the death of King Solomon (between 926 -922), his son Rehoboam became King, and the northern tribes revolted refusing to follow him. This divided the once rich and vast kingdom into 2 parts - the northern kingdom - Israel, and the southern kingdom - Judah. Both kingdoms were subsequently led by ineffective, disobedient, and corrupt kings.

This study focuses on events in the northern kingdom of Israel:

- <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-two-kingdoms-of-israel>

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

It is important to remember that at this time, the various kingdoms of the area were constantly raiding one another, and conflict was the norm. We pick up our story as Naaman, the commander of the kingdom of Aram, orchestrates a raid into the kingdom of Israel.

STUDY

Read 2 Kings 5.1-15

What does v. 1 tell us of the nature of God?

- God is Lord for more than just Israel
- God is Lord in the kingdom of Aram too

In v. 2-5, the young girl that was taken captive by the Armenians suggests that Naaman (the commander of the King of Aram's army who has leprosy) go to Samaria (back in Israel - her home kingdom) to see the prophet (Elisha) who could heal him. What do you think the King's reaction was to this suggestion?

- Reluctant - he just raided that kingdom
- Confident - he just raided that kingdom and won
- Distrustful - why would the captive girl tell the truth?
- Cautious - is the captive girl leading him into a trap?

What does the king of Aram decide to do with the information the captive girl offered him?

- He writes a letter to the king of Israel
- He sends the letter and a substantial gift (755 lbs/10 talents of silver, 150 lbs/6000 sheckles of gold and 10 sets of garments) to the king of Israel along with Naaman with a request to cure him.

What was the reaction of the king of Israel?

- He tore his clothing

Knowing that he had just lost the latest skirmish to the king of Aram, what do you think the King of Israel was thinking about this request?

- skeptical - is this a trick?
- Why should I help?
- How can you think I am God since you defeated me?
- What do you think I can do?

When Elisha hears of the king of Israel's reaction what does he do?

- He intercedes
- He writes the king and requests Naaman be sent to him

What do you think Elisha was thinking when he heard the news of the interaction with the King and Naaman?

- He is benevolent
- He steps in knowing that God will help him heal Naaman
- Reminds the king that there is a prophet in Israel
- Requests the opportunity to show Naaman and the kingdom of Aram that a prophet resides in Israel
- Maybe this would help to resolve the disputes between the 2 kingdoms if Aram knows that God's prophets are in Israel too.

Naaman arrives at Elisha's home and Elisha sends a messenger to him to tell him to wash 7 times in the Jordan. Naaman becomes angry. Why?

- He felt he deserved more/better attention
- He felt the request was silly - perhaps a plot to embarrass him
- He didn't believe this would work
- He was skeptical that this might have been a trap
- He thinks the waters of his country are better than the waters in enemy territory

Who convinces Naaman to wash in the Jordan and how?

- His servants point out that if he had been asked to do something hard, he would, what would doing something so simple hurt to do?

What happens when Naaman does as Elisha directed?

- He was cured
- He returned to Elisha and proclaimed the God of Israel the God of all.

When God asks us to do simple things, do we always do them with joy, or do we behave like Naaman? Share an example of one of these from your own life with your study group.

Consider the distrust of each other between Israel and Aram. Have you ever approached someone with whom you were in conflict? What was that like? What surprising things came out of those interactions?

Naaman thought that the waters of his kingdom were more important than the waters of another kingdom. How is that a false idea?

- Water is precious no matter where it is
- Water is needed for life in all places
- Water is important to everyone

How can we ensure that the waters of the world are all healthy, clean and will support life for all? Consider Lake Chad specifically.