

The Mistakes Of Naaman

Introduction. The Bible is full of fascinating, verifiable history. But its greatest history is how it relates to the kingdom of God. This is the history we will study today.

The latter days of the reign of Israel's king Jehoram were marked by hostilities with the Syrian king Ben-Hadad II. The Syrians continually raided the northern kingdom (2 Kings 6:8). During the course of one such raid, an Israelite girl had fallen into the hands of Ben-Hadad's field marshal, Naaman. Naaman was a brilliant commanding officer, but he suffered from leprosy, an incurable skin disease (2 Kings 5:1-14).

Under the Old Law, lepers had to remain outside the camp until they were clean (Leviticus 13:45-46; Numbers 5:1-3). In the spiritual realm, sin defiles us (Titus 1:15). It defiles the "inner man." Isaiah 1:5-6 says that the sinner is "sick." There are many "honorable" people, but if they are sinners, it spoils it all. The Bible commands a spiritual cleansing (2 Timothy 2:21; James 4:8). The only way we can be saved from sin and death is by obeying Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:10-13; 13:15; Luke 5:29-32).

The road that Naaman took to cleanse himself is a road fraught with mistakes, but a road that enlightens our path and that of our neighbors.

I. He Went To The Wrong Party

- A. The Jewish maid in Naaman's home told her mistress that there was a "prophet" in Israel who could heal Naaman (vs. 3). However, at the suggestion of the king of Syria, Naaman went to the king of Israel (vs. 5). This may have been customary, but the maid said nothing about the king being able to heal anyone.
- B. Sinners still go to the wrong party. Some may go to a "priest" and be given penance. Some want to go back to the thief on the cross to be saved now (Luke 23:43). However, the answer is not in the Old Law (Hebrews 9:15-17).
- C. God is the one to whom we go for salvation. His Son Christ is our only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Jesus is now the author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:5-10). Acts 2:38 tells us that we should be baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ. This gives us the forgiveness of sins, thereby saving us.

II. He Wanted To Buy The Blessing

- A. Naaman brought an enormous reward for the one who could heal him (vs. 5). But God is not interested in money. Simon the Sorcerer tried to gain the gift of God by bribing the apostles (Acts 8:13-19).
- B. We cannot substitute money for personal purity and holiness to God (2 Corinthians 7:1). No one can hire another person to live godly for

them; it is a life that can be sustained only by you (John 14:23; 1 John 3:24).

- C. While Naaman could not buy a cure for leprosy, he could dip seven times in the Jordan River and be cured by God. Ultimately, Naaman was cured because of his obedience, not because of his gifts or position.

III. He Thought The Power Was In The Water

- A. Naaman wanted to go to the rivers of Damascus because he thought they were better (vs. 12). He thought the power was in the water. God does “wash away our sins” (Acts 22:16), but does that mean the power is in the water?
- B. The effectiveness of baptism is not in the water, but in the gospel (Romans 1:16), and the manifestation of faith and obedience which baptism implies (Romans 6:17). Therefore, the New Testament authorizes us to only baptize those who are old enough to believe and repent (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 16:31-33).
- C. We do not baptize infants, which is evidence that we do not teach water salvation. If there is any effectiveness in infant baptism, it must be in the water. One fact is certain — it cannot be in the condition of the child’s heart, because the child does not even know what is taking place.

IV. He Wanted To Substitute The Rivers

- A. Naaman wanted to substitute the Abanah and Pharpar Rivers, but God told him to go to the Jordan River (vs. 12). To dip in other waters would not be obedience. God accepts no substitutes. The Bible says there is only one faith or way to follow God (Ephesians 4:5).
- B. We do not want a church that is “close” or “just about like” the church of the New Testament; we are looking for the church itself. To have God’s approval, Christians have to conform to those particular qualities that characterized the church under the guidance of the inspired leaders of the first century. That guidance revealed several characteristics:
 1. It must wear the proper name: the Bible gives the proper names for the church (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Hebrews 12:23).
 2. It must embrace the proper birthplace: Jerusalem was the birthplace of the church (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 1:16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:12-14; 2:1).
 3. It must embody the proper age: the age of the church is reckoned from its establishment on Pentecost (Matthew 16:18; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:47).

4. It must contain the proper founder: Jesus Christ is the one who built the church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23).
5. It must incorporate the proper law: the law governing the church is the Bible, the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
6. It must support the proper organization: the Lord's church is overseen by elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) with deacons aiding in the physical work.
7. It must encourage the proper form of worship: disciples engaged in prayer (Acts 2:42), singing (Ephesians 5:19), partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), studying the scriptures (Acts 20:7), and contributing of their means (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
8. It must allow the proper terms of entrance: once one has manifested faith (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confession of Jesus (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10), and been baptized for their sins (John 3:3, 5; 1 Peter 3:21), God says they are added to the church (Acts 2:47).

V. He Thought Dipping Was Too Simple

- A. Naaman had a fixed opinion as to how he would be healed by Elisha. He felt God's plan was too simple. But Naaman was a very lucky man to have such genuinely interested servants. They gently rebuked him for his rejection of dipping in the Jordan (vs. 13).
- B. A lot of people cannot believe the gospel plan because of its simplicity. They feel there is not enough noise and show, not enough mystery or mysticism. The simple command of the gospel to "wash and be clean" is still a "stumbling block" and "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23).
- C. Whatever mystery there is in the Lord's plan is on His end, and man should simply "trust and obey." Faith takes God at His word, regardless of how simple the conditions may be (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Conclusion. Naaman was not healed until he corrected all his mistakes. Naaman was not cleansed after he dipped six times. God said seven times. Obedience is the essential element (Deuteronomy 5:29; James 1:25; 2:14, 20-26; Revelation 22:14). God gives us the gospel plan, but He does not accept anything but His plan (Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3).

Do not make the mistakes of Naaman. God's word is sure. In Ezekiel 12:25, the people were growing skeptical at Ezekiel's message because none of the prophesied events had happened, but God assured him that the calamity would occur. Trust God at His word, for it will never pass away (Luke 21:33).