

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-30 God Is a Healer

God chose Israel to be his people because he loved them. Not because Israel was more numerous than other peoples, and not because the Israelite people deserved his love (Deut 7:7-8). You may remember that this was one of the elements of God's design. God promised, "You will be my people and I will be your God" (Ex 6:7). God intended Israel to become a nation based on love of him and love of one another.

But God also intended to bless other nations through the people of Israel. He promised Abraham, "I will bless you...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through your descendants" (Gen 12:3). So God always intended to bless other peoples and nations through the ministry of Israel. One story about Elisha clearly shows the far-reaching love of God.

You have learned that God was using foreign armies to punish the kingdom of Israel for its pagan ways. One of these nations was Aram, also known as Syria. The commander of the Syrian army was named Naaman. His king placed great trust in him, and the people respected him. Sadly, he developed leprosy, a terrifying disease in both ancient and modern times.

On one of the Syrian military raids into Israel, they captured an Israelite girl. She became a servant in Naaman's house. One day she said to Naaman's wife, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." Notice that this unnamed girl knew about Elisha. She knew he was a worker of miracles. She knew he spent time in the capital city. And she believed that through Elisha, God would heal a non-Israelite such as her master, Naaman.

Naaman's wife told her husband about Elisha, and Naaman told the king. "By all means, go," the king responded. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel with you." So Naaman traveled to Samaria with the letter in hand, and with many gifts for the king and Elisha. This must have been a period of time when there was no active fighting between Syria and Israel.

As soon as the king read the letter, he tore his robes in frustration. "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? He must be trying to pick a fight with me" (2Kings 5:1-7).

Elisha heard that the king was frustrated and had torn his robes. He sent a message, "Why are you so upset? Send the man to me, and he will find out that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman drove to Elisha's house in Samaria, with his chariots and horses—a big company. Elisha didn't meet him face to face, but sent a messenger to say to Naaman, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River, and you will be healed."

Naaman was surprised and angry. "I thought he would come out, stand before me, call on the name of Yahweh his God. He would wave his hand and cure me of leprosy! We have better rivers in Syria than the Jordan. Couldn't I wash in them and be healed?" He and his men rode away in a rage.

His servants had more sense than he did. They said to him, "If the prophet had told you some great thing to do, wouldn't you have done it? Why won't you do this little thing: 'Wash in the Jordan?'" He listened to them, stopped at the river, and dipped himself seven times as Elisha had said. Suddenly his flesh became as smooth and clean as a young boy's. He was healed immediately!

He and his company hurried back to Samaria and Elisha's house. Naaman stood before Elisha and exclaimed, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from me."

Elisha refused the gifts. "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing. God has healed you, not I" (2Kings 5:8-16).

Naaman then asked permission to take some soil from Israel back to his home in Syria. He wanted to make an altar in his house for sacrifices and prayers to the God of Israel. "I won't pray to any God but Yahweh any longer," he promised. "May Yahweh forgive me when I accompany my king in his prayers to another god. It's only my official duty."

"Go in peace," said Elisha.

Elisha's servant, Gehazi, thought that Elisha should have accepted some of Naaman's gifts. He decided to run after Naaman and get some of the gifts for himself. This was selfish of him, and dishonoring to God. Naaman stopped when he saw him and asked, "Is everything all right?"

Gehazi lied and said that his master, Elisha, wanted a few of Naaman's gifts to give to some needy prophets. "By all means, take some money and clothes for them," said Naaman. He sent two servants to carry the gifts back with Gehazi. Before they reached Elisha's house, Gehazi took the gifts, hid them in the house, and sent the servants back to Naaman. Elisha knew nothing of this.

But God revealed the lie to Elisha. "Where have you been, Gehazi?" Elisha asked.

"I didn't go anywhere," he answered.

But Elisha was upset. "Didn't my spirit go with you when Naaman stopped to talk with you? Is this the time to take gifts—clothes, money, farms, animals, or slaves—in exchange for something God has done? Now instead of Naaman's gifts you will have Naaman's leprosy for the rest of your life." Gehazi developed leprosy and was no longer Elisha's servant. He became an outcast.

This story is **important** because it shows that God's love and healing power reached out to non-Israelites as well as his own people, Israel. Healing cannot be earned nor bought. It is God's loving gift.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that one servant—an Israelite girl captured in a raid—believed that God would heal her master through Elisha. Another servant—Gehazi—sought payment for what God had freely given to Naaman.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Why did God select Israel as his chosen people? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "For no other reason than that God loved them," you are correct.
2. How do we know that God intended to bless all peoples through his chosen people? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "He promised Abraham that all peoples would be blessed through his descendants," you are right.
3. Why was Elisha's servant Gehazi stricken with leprosy? [Pause]

A. If you answered, “He thought he deserved payment for the healing of Naaman, and lied about it,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. Retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the words and actions correctly. Invite some others to come together and tell them the story of Naaman’s healing. If anyone needs healing, pray for them and ask for God’s gift. Share with them that God loves them and wants them to believe in him as their Savior.

God’s love is for everyone. Peter emphasized that God does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to come to repentance” (2Peter 3:9). Jesus said, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Memorize these words of Jesus.