

## HEALING NAAMAN OF HIS LEPROSY

Rev. Karl R. Alden

*Lessons: II Kings 5; Luke 4:16-32, Apocalypse Explained 475:18*

Leprosy was one of the most dreaded diseases of ancient times. Its victims were doomed to what was, in many cases, a living death. The skin became red in spots, then dried up, often becoming as white as snow, and the sufferer wasted away until death finally came.

This terrible disease symbolizes profanation of holy things of the Church. The most holy thing in our Church is the Word. A person profanes the Word by joking about the things written in it or making light of its message of salvation. To profane the Word is to become a spiritual leper.

While the Lord was on earth, there was a time when He was preaching in Nazareth where He had grown up. He was telling the people that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country. And He went on to say that there were “many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

Naaman the Syrian was a great captain of the army of Ben-hadad. He was a national hero, because he had delivered his people from their enemy. But he was a leper. His leprosy, however, could be healed, just as those who profane the Word, not knowing that it is the Word, may later be healed.

A small thing is often the cause of the healing of a condition of this kind. The Syrians had captured a little maid of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. When she saw the sad plight of her master, 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.”

The maid of Israel symbolizes the affection for genuine truth, an affection which may be present in the rational mind represented by Syria. This affection would send the diseased one to the prophet of Israel, who symbolizes the Divine truth among people.

As soon as Ben-hadad, king of Syria, heard this he prepared a great present and sent Naaman, not to the prophet, but to the king of Israel. The king was filled with sorrow for he felt that it was an excuse to draw him into war. But when Elisha heard that the king had rent his garments, he said, “Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

So Naaman came with his horses and chariot and stood at Elisha's door. Elisha did not even go out of the house, but sent his servant to tell Naaman to wash seven times in Jordan, and he would be clean. What a simple thing to do! To wash and then be clean. Yet the message made Naaman angry. He had expected the prophet to come out and call on the name of his God and put his hand over the leprosy and heal the leprosy in this way.

In his anger Naaman cried out, "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.

Then his servants 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?"

The clear rivers of Damascus represent the truths of the rational mind, and these truths a person discovers for himself. What they lack is the God-given quality of Divine Revelation. There are many things which a person can discover for himself: all the laws of nature, how to fly, how to go beneath the surface of the sea, and thousands of wonderful things in nature. But none of these can heal a person of spiritual leprosy—none can tell him with a sure voice about God, nor can they reveal to him the spiritual world. These knowledges must come from revelation, and the truths of revelation are represented by the waters of Jordan, the boundary of the Holy Land.

Wash seven times in Jordan and be clean. The number seven means holiness. Let the truths of the Word so fill the mind that a state of holiness and love for those truths results.

Often we think that in order to be heroes, or to be spiritual, we must do some great thing. We are always on the look out for something startling and grand that we may do, which will show our love and loyalty for the things of the Church and for the regenerate life. The truth is that the deep things of spiritual life come not with a great splurge; they come little by little, one thing at a time. They are represented by washing seven times in the Jordan.

To wash spiritually is to learn the difference between right and wrong. This difference is revealed by the truth. So Naaman went and dipped seven times in Jordan, and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a child and he was clean.

The innocent desire to be clean, symbolized by the maid of Israel telling that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal her master, is the, power of remains of innocence that are stored up in childhood. But the body that has been cleansed by dipping seven times in Jordan symbolizes the good of wisdom that comes after the struggles of regeneration have been successfully waged.

In each of us there is a Naaman, a victorious hero but also—because of trust in self—a leper. There is also within us the maid of Israel, and the prophet. If we listen to the voice of conscience, and go to the Word of the Lord, seeking the truth, we will learn of the truth that which will have the power to cleanse us, even as dipping seven times in Jordan cleansed Naaman the Syrian. *Amen.*