



2015 3Q “Biblical Missionaries” Lesson 3 The Unlikely Missionary

SABBATH

“And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27, NIV).

Now, for some context:

16 Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath he went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read the Scriptures 17 and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written, 18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed 19 and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.”

20 Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, 21 as he said to them, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.”

22 They were all well impressed with him and marveled at the eloquent words that he spoke. They said, “Isn't he the son of Joseph?”

23 He said to them, “I am sure that you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Doctor, heal yourself.’ You will also tell me to do here in my hometown the same things you heard were done in Capernaum. 24 I tell you this,” Jesus added, “prophets are never welcomed in their hometown. 25 Listen to me: it is true that there were many widows in Israel during the time of Elijah, when there was no rain for three and a half years and a severe famine spread throughout the whole land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to anyone in Israel, but only to a widow living in Zarephath in the territory of Sidon. 27 And there were many people suffering from a dreaded skin disease who lived in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha; yet not one of them was healed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

28 When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were filled with anger. 29 They rose up, dragged Jesus out of town, and took him to the top of the hill on which their town was built. They meant to throw him over the cliff, 30 but he walked through the middle of the crowd and went his way. GNT .

How would our church leaders react to someone coming in to the GC claiming to be God’s Son, and spoke in glowing terms about some medieval Pope? They might not try to throw him off of a cliff, but ...



Why do you think Jesus referenced Naaman, and not the Jewish captive maiden who pointed Naaman to Elisha?

In the last sentence, the lesson states we can see “a model for how the plan of salvation works.” I completely agree.

Any payment[s] required by an angry God? In fact, when Naaman tried to pay for his healing, Elisha refused. What does this tell us? Did Naaman place one of his healthy subordinates in the river in his place? Did Elisha declare him healed without it actually being so? If Naaman, had refused to submerge in the Jordan, would Elisha or God have set him on fire?

What actually happened? HEALING by faith in a Savior [evidenced by works], and restoration to the design protocols of life.

For a review: Leprosy [aka Hansen’s Disease] is caused by a bacterial infection, and while contagious [usually from respiratory secretions], it’s not considered highly contagious. It is generally more prevalent in poverty stricken areas with poor sanitation [e.g. 900 BC Syrian battle camps]. There are some studies suggesting a genetic predisposition for the infection. The infection causes granulomas of nerves, the respiratory tract, skin, and eyes often resulting in a diminished ability to feel pain and loss of parts of the extremities due to repeated injury. More than 50% of all current new cases of leprosy occur in India, and the USA has about 200 new cases / year.

Any insights as to why Leprosy is used in Scripture as a metaphor for sin?

SUNDAY

He Had it All ... But,

I’ve been unable to discover whether or not leprosy was as “feared” by heathen nations as it was by the children of Israel, however, one could conclude that even if it didn’t carry the “legal” stigmas [see below], it was disfiguring and potentially lethal.

4. The [Jewish] Legal Attitude: It should be observed here that the attitude of the Law toward the person, garment or house suspected of leprosy is that if the disease be really present they are to be declared unclean and there is no means provided for cure, and in the case of the garment or house, they are to be destroyed. If, on the other hand, the disease be proved to be absent, this freedom from the disease has to be declared by a ceremonial purification. This is in reality not the ritual for cleansing the leper, for the Torah provides none such, but the ritual for declaring him ceremonially free from the suspicion of having the disease. This gives a peculiar and added force to the words, "The lepers are cleansed," as a testimony to our Lord's Divine mission. <http://biblehub.com/topical/l/leprosy.htm>

Most of Israel viewed leprosy [as well as any other malady] as a judgment from God [see Num. 12: 9-14]. Note verse 9 – “God’s anger burned against them, and He left.”



From the lesson:

“Personal life disruptions, tragedies, and transitions can make people more open to spiritual truth and set them on a search for God. Physical, psychological, political, or other disasters can open people up to the reality of the Divine. Personal loss, national catastrophes, and wars are major motivators that cause people to seek a power greater than themselves. The church has long been aware that increased soul-winning results tend to come in areas in which people are struck by personal or societal suffering.”

This is well said, and true. Does this mean that God brings / allows our suffering in order to get us to pay attention, or are there more explanations? Consider what the primary cause of leprosy is currently. <http://www.cdc.gov/leprosy/exposure/index.html>

MONDAY

An Unlikely Witness

Might this captive girl have been living out, as best she understood, the design laws [Love, Liberty, Worship, Health, etc.] which is what the nation of Israel failed to do? Just like Joseph, Daniel, & his three friends, she gave a revelation of the Designer that enlightened the darkness of a community steeped in serving gods that demanded appeasement. Are we not ALL witness/missionaries – from Lucifer, Adam/Eve, right down to you & I?

Also interesting, is the approach that Benhadad and Naaman take to secure favor / healing by bringing costly gifts [appeasement].

What does Israel's king's reaction tell us?

TUESDAY

Elisha the Prophet

Just a review of Elisha's situation: He was the son of a wealthy land owner, who left the wealth to follow Elijah. Before Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire, he asked for, and was granted a “double portion” of the Holy Spirit. He was a vehicle for God's power in that he, parted the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, he prophesied victory, and drought relief when the armies of Judah, Israel, and Edom were allied against the Moabites, he directed Naaman to wash in the Jordan river to cure his leprosy, he cursed, in the name of God, a group of rowdy youths and two bears tore them to pieces, he was the instrument for the multiplication of olive oil so the widow could be released from her debts, he prayed for the birth of a son for the wealthy woman to reward her hospitality, and subsequently for the resurrection of the same son, he “cured” the poisonous porridge, made the axe head float, fed 100+ men with a few loaves of bread and a few fish, he instructed the king how to avoid the Syrian forces, revealed to his servant the angels circling them, then blinded the group come to assassinate him, and



led them to be fed by his king, before having them released to return home. Even after his death, he performed a miracle [2 Kings 13: 21].

WEDNESDAY

The Healing of Naaman

What do we see of Naaman's character in this story?

- He's reached "rock bottom"
- He attempts to buy his own healing [30,000 pieces of silver & 6,000 pieces of gold – roughly \$3.75 million assuming 1/2 ounce / piece].
- He's teachable – he listened to his wife's servant, Elisha, and his soldiers [the most valuable commanders listen to the soldiers observations and opinions in order to make the difficult tactical decisions].
- He's grateful – he returned to say "thank you" unlike the nine lepers Christ healed.
- He's concerned about being a "stumbling block" to others [bowing in the temple of Dagon with the his king].

Any insights as to why Elisha didn't adhere to custom and bring Naaman in to his house and feed him & his company?

THURSDAY

A New Believer

"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant" (2 Kings 5:15, NIV).

Imagine the wonder of Naaman, being steeped in appeasement-based idolatry, now healed by following some simple directions. Symbolically born again, and unable to constrain himself, acknowledging the Creator with: "there is no God in all the world, except in Israel."

From the lesson: *"The confession that the God of Israel is sovereign in the world is the main theme of the Bible."*

I respectfully disagree. **"God Is Love"** is the main theme of the Bible.

Also quoted in the lesson: "Let this point be fully settled in every mind: If we accept Christ as a Redeemer, we must accept Him as a Ruler. We cannot have the assurance and perfect confiding trust in Christ as our Saviour until we acknowledge Him as our King and are obedient to His commandments. Thus we evidence our allegiance to God. We have then the genuine ring in our faith, for it is a working faith. It works by love."—Ellen G. White, Faith and Works, p. 16.

This passage [along with nearly every other one] leads to very different conclusions based on which Law lens you read it with.