

## **2 Kings 5**

### **2 Kings 5:1 Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria... was a leper**

A leper could never rise to such greatness in Israel. Leprosy was considered unclean and became a loathsome disease among the Jews (Lev. 13). While the Lord was trying to teach the people the difference between clean and unclean, instead, they let their traditions justify prejudice and malice toward the afflicted. The Syrians, not under the Law of Moses, did not develop the same prejudice.

### **2 Kings 5:3 would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria**

The double portion of Elijah's spirit made Elisha famous. His early miracles must have been well known and the subject of frequent discussion, even outside of Israel.

"There is no scriptural evidence that Elisha or another prophet at that time had ever healed a 'leper,' yet the Little Maid believed a true prophet of God could. One wonders what circumstances she had observed, heard about, or experienced to lead her to this unshakeable faith in priesthood power. Had she or someone she knew been sick, discouraged, or lost, only to be found or healed by a power not of this world? Once we possess a solid testimony of the power of God, our understanding can stretch to accept the truth that nothing is impossible for the Lord. Whatever her previous experience with priesthood power, this little girl bore witness to Naaman's wife that a prophet in Samaria, the capital of Israel, could cure him, if he would just inquire (2 Kings 5:3)." (Camille Fronk Olson, *Women of the Old Testament*, [SLC: Deseret Book, 2009], 256)

A quick list of Elisha's miracles up this point follows:

- Elisha divides the waters of Jordan, demonstrating his prophetic office like Moses, Joshua, and Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:14)
- Elisha heals the bitter waters at Jericho, foreshadowing the Messianic healing of the waters of the Dead Sea (2 Kgs. 2:19-22; Ezek. 47)
- Elisha punishes the group of mocking youth, demonstrating the power to curse as well as to bless (2 Kgs. 2:23-25)

- Elisha prophecies victory against the Moabites (2 Kgs 3:17-20), proving that Jehovah will still fight their battles if they will follow the prophet
- Elisha multiplies the oil of widow allowing her means to pay her debts, reminiscent of Elijah's widow whose cruse did not fail and also symbolic of the atonement itself—that the grace of God pays the creditor of justice to keep us from spiritual debtors prison (2 Kgs. 4:1-7)
- Elisha promises the barren Shunammite woman that she will bear a son, symbolic of the promise given to Sarah and Abraham (2 Kgs. 4:14-17)
- Elisha heals the child after it dies, again reminiscent of Elijah's miracle and demonstrative of his power over death (2 Kgs. 4:18-37)



(Barry J. Beitzel, ed., *Biblica: The Bible Atlas*, [Australia: Global Book Publishing, 2006], 258)

### **George Q. Cannon**

God accompanied that man [Elisha] by His power wherever he went. A great and a mighty prophet was he; so great and so mighty, that it is related of him that after his death a band of Moabites came into the land. The people of Israel were burying a man. While in this act, they became frightened at seeing a band of men, and cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood upon his feet. He was a mighty prophet, and he received those gifts and this power from God, which He bestows upon all those who receive the everlasting Priesthood, and who seek to magnify it in the spirit thereof. (*Journal of Discourses*, 26:58)

### **2 Kings 5:7 when the king of Israel had read the letter... he rent his clothes**

“Interestingly, a little Israelite girl knew about a prophet’s greatness and power from God, but the king of Israel did not... After reading the letter, Joram feared that the Syrians were presenting him with an impossible demand as a pretext to recommenced a war.” (Camille Fronk Olson, *Women of the Old Testament*, [SLC: Deseret Book, 2009], 258)

### **2 Kings 5:11 Naaman was wroth, and went away**

#### **Gordon B. Hinckley**

Naaman was insulted that he should be told to wash in Jordan when there were cleaner streams in his own land, and “he turned and went away in a rage.”

But his servants pleaded with him to do as Elisha had suggested. The proud captain finally relented, and the scripture records, “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (See 2 Kgs. 5:1–14.)

And so I repeat, do not let pride stand in your way. The way of the gospel is a simple way. Some of the requirements may appear to you as elementary and unnecessary. Do not spurn them. Humble yourselves and walk in obedience. I promise that the results that follow will be marvelous to behold and satisfying to experience. (“Everything to Gain—Nothing to Lose,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 96)

## **2 Kings 5:13 My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?**

“Well might we ask: If the Prophet Joseph had asked me to journey to Missouri, would I have gone? If the Lord had called me to serve as an apostle, would I have accepted? If I were asked to tend the children or grandchildren of the members of the First Presidency, would I hesitate? If I had been bidden to attend the School of the Prophets, would I take along my scriptures, study and prepare ahead of time, and attend regularly? If my call to serve as a home or visiting teacher had come to me through an open vision, would I accept? Would I be faithful? ‘You can put it down in your little black book,’ **Elder Boyd K. Packer** has warned us, ‘that if you will not be loyal in the small things, you will not be loyal in the large things. If you will not respond to the so-called insignificant or menial tasks which need to be performed in the Church and Kingdom, there will be no opportunity for service in the so-called greater challenges.’” (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991], 76)

### **Boyd K. Packer**

Human nature hasn't changed over the years. Even today some of us expect to be bidden to do some “great things” in order to receive the blessings of the Lord. When we receive ordinary counsel on ordinary things, there is disappointment, and, like Naaman, we turn away.

Let me give you a modern-day example. President Kimball has been President of the Church for eight years. In virtually every conference sermon he has included at least a sentence telling us to clean up, paint up, and fix up our property. Many of us have paid little attention to the counsel.

Question: Why would a prophet tell us to do that? Has he no great prophecies to utter?

But, is that not a form of prophecy? For has he not said to us over and over again, “Take good care of your material possessions, for the day will come when they will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace.”

Already there is a fulfillment. Families who might have afforded a home when first he spoke now despair of getting one.

For some reason, we expect to hear, particularly in welfare sessions, some ominous great predictions of calamities to come. Instead, we hear quiet counsel on ordinary things which, if followed, will protect us in times of great calamity. (“The Gospel—The Foundation for Our Career,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 85)

### **Gordon B. Hinckley**

There sits in this hall a man known to many of you. Some years ago he received a missionary call to the Western States Mission with headquarters in Denver. He had been to Denver a number of times as a member of the university debate team. It was only over the mountain. He and his parents had dreamed of a more exotic field, of one of those “faraway places with the strange-sounding names.” His friends smiled. Some dear to him doubted the wisdom, the inspiration of his call. Why should so choice a young man be called on a mission from Salt Lake City to Denver? But he went. He became a powerful missionary. There are those today who thank the Lord for his coming. He was named counselor to his mission president and experienced marvelous opportunities for training in leadership. He met there a beautiful girl whom he later married. Out of the remarkable and peculiar opportunities of that mission, there emerged within him qualities that have made him preeminent in his chosen vocation. Today he sits here as one of the Regional Representatives of the Twelve. (“If Ye Be Willing and Obedient,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 124)

### **Rex. D. Pinegar**

Are we not sometimes like Naaman, looking for big or important things to do and bypassing simple things which could change our lives and heal us of our afflictions?

At a Brigham Young University fireside, **President Hunter** said, “If you feel that ... what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren’t very famous either” (“‘No Less Serviceable,’ ” *Brigham Young University 1990–91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, Provo: BYU, 1991, p. 6).

On another occasion, he said that “the achievement of true greatness is a long-term process. ... It seems that it always requires regular, consistent, small, and sometimes ordinary and mundane steps over a long period of time” (“What Is True Greatness?” *Brigham Young University 1986–87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, Provo: BYU, 1987, p. 115).

The Lord has said, “Out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

**President David O. McKay** also spoke of the power of small and simple acts:

“There is no one great thing that we can do to obtain eternal life, and it seems to me that the great lesson to be learned in the world today is to apply in the little acts and duties of life the glorious principles of the Gospel. Let us not think that because some of the things named this afternoon may seem small and trivial, that they are unimportant. Life, after all, is made up of little things. Our life, our being, physically, is made up here of little heart beats. Let that little heart stop beating, and life in this world ceases.” (“The Simple Things,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 80–81)

## **2 Kings 5:14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan**

“It is no mere coincidence that the details of Naaman’s cleansing from leprosy should so closely resemble those of the process of being cleansed from sin.

“...The scriptures say that in response to Naaman’s request, Elisha sent out a messenger, saying: “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” (2 Kgs. 5:10.)

“The act that would bring about Naaman’s cleansing—immersing himself in the Jordan River seven times—was so undramatic that Naaman, oblivious to the symbolic reference to the seven-day quarantine required of a leper in Israel and oblivious also to the importance of humility, obedience, and faith, was offended and refused to comply. The account continues: “But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

“Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.” (2 Kgs. 5:11–12.)

“Naaman seems to have been angered on two counts: first, that Elisha would communicate with him through a mere servant rather than honoring him with a personal response; and second, that the promised cure should involve an

action on Naaman's part, a simple action at that, rather than a dramatic miracle at the hand of the prophet.

"Here again, a spiritual parallel is apparent. The Lord likewise conveys the messages of the gospel of Jesus Christ—including teachings of repentance and baptism—not personally and dramatically, but most often through humble servants and subtle whisperings of the Spirit. He does not cater to the vanity and hardheartedness of those who would desire a miraculous sign or a personal visitation.

"Moreover, like Elisha's message to Naaman, the command to repent and be baptized is at once a call to do both less and more than we might expect. It requires less than we might expect in the sense that it does not necessitate dramatic sacrifices or epic trials. And it requires more than we might imagine because, instead of a single, near-impossible feat, it involves a lifelong commitment to humble obedience and self-effacing service. To obtain a remission of sins, each of us, like Naaman, must believe in the power of God to cleanse us and must humble ourselves before God. We must voluntarily initiate the process of remission by freely stepping into the waters to be baptized by humble servants of God to whom has been delegated the proper authority. The attendant cleansing, while certainly among the greatest of miracles, is also among the least visible—cleansing the inner man and not the outer." (Travis T. Anderson, "Naaman, Baptism, and Cleansing," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 28, 30)

## **2 Kings 5:27 the leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee**

"Ironically, the story involves a pagan who, because of a prophet's refusal to accept any reward for what God had done, accepts the God of Israel, and an Israelite who, because of unbridled greed, betrays that God. The talent of silver measures Gehazi's covetousness and lies. His was no mere hankering after a reward for the curing of leprosy—it was a craving to become financially well-established." (Richard Tice, "Bekahs, Shekels, and Talents: A Look at Biblical References to Money," *Ensign*, Aug. 1987, 31)

### **George A. Smith**

In pursuing our daily avocations we become mixed up, more or less, with the world; we are called to battle with the world, and we have exhibitions from time to time of the weaknesses of human nature. I remember very well in the days of Kirtland, hearing men testify that they knew this was the work of God, and that they had seen visions of the armies of heaven and the horsemen

thereof, as did Gehazi, the servant of the Prophet, and then, in consequence of the failure of a bank, or because some business transaction did not come out in accordance with their expectations or desires, they would apostatize and come to the conclusion that they never knew anything about it, and become infidels. This shows the weakness to which some individuals have been subject. I also remember, in the great apostacy which took place in Kirtland, that those who apostatized considered that all the talent of the Church had left it, and yet the work rolled right along, and, so far as they were concerned, they were never missed, and were soon forgotten, and nobody could tell where they went to. I have occasionally met them twenty or thirty years afterwards, and could hardly tell where they dropped out, their disappearance made no ripple. The facts are, brethren, that the work of the Lord does not depend upon us. If we go into darkness, if we let our hearts be filled with covetousness or corruption, or give way to licentiousness, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, unbelief, or any crime that corrodes our system or organization, so that our tabernacles become unfit for the holy Spirit to dwell in, it will withdraw from us, and the light that is in us becomes darkened, and that darkness is so great that we grope as a blind man and wander hither and thither, and those who suffer themselves to be led by these blind men fall into the ditch with them, but the work rolls right along. (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 17: 196)

## **2 Kings 6:6 he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim**

### **Orson F. Whitney**

God works by law. But there are greater laws and lesser laws, and sometimes the greater suspend the action of the lesser. Miracles are not contrary to law; they are simply extraordinary results flowing from superior means and methods of doing things. When Elisha the Prophet raised the sunken ax from the bottom of the Jordan River, he might have done it in a commonplace way—might have laid aside his robes, taken off his sandals, and plunged in like a diver and brought the ax to the surface. But he knew a better way. Plucking a sprig of green from a bush growing on the bank of the river, he cast it upon the water and commanded the ax to float. "And the iron did swim," says the sacred record. I believe it. The prophet's act was not contrary to law, but in accordance with law, a higher law than the law of gravitation which, had not its operation on that piece of iron been suspended, would have kept the ax at the bottom of the stream until raised by some other process. (*Conference Report*, October 1928, Second Day—Morning Meeting 64 - 65)



### **Orson Pratt**

Now what was it that caused the axe to rise in the water? The same Being who gave the law of gravitation, which caused the axe to sink, counteracted that law, and caused the axe to swim. (*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 21: 239 - 240)

### **2 Kings 6:11 Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?**

The Syrian king suspects a spy among his men. How else could the Israelites elude three separate ambushes? How could they know where the Syrians were camped?

### **2 Kings 6:16-17 Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them**

#### **Jeffrey R. Holland**

In the gospel of Jesus Christ you have help from both sides of the veil and you must never forget that. When disappointment and discouragement strike—and they will—you remember and never forget that if our eyes could be opened we would see horses and chariots of fire as far as the eye can see riding at reckless speed to come to our protection. They will always be there, these armies of heaven, in defense of Abraham's seed. ("For Times of Trouble," *New Era*, Oct. 1980, 15)

#### **James E. Faust**

We are not alone in our mortal struggles. As the prophet Elisha teaches, unseen hosts watch over us. In his day, Syria was at war against Israel, and the prophet Elisha counseled the king of Israel against entrapment. The king of Israel followed that counsel and saved himself again and again. This stirred up the king of Syria, who sent by night "horses, and chariots, and a great host," and surrounded the city. "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

Then the prophet answered, saying, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and,

behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” With the help of the Lord, the prophet Elisha was able to save Israel. (“Pioneers of the Future: ‘Be Not Afraid, Only Believe,’ ” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 44)

### **Dallin H. Oaks**

When I read this wonderful story as a boy, I always identified with the young servant of Elisha. I thought, If I am ever surrounded by the forces of evil while I am in the Lord’s service, I hope the Lord will open my eyes and give me faith to understand that when we are in the work of the Lord, those that are with us are always more powerful than those that oppose us.

Bible stories such as these do not mean that the servants of God are delivered from all hardship or that they are always saved from death. Some believers lose their lives in persecutions, and some suffer great hardships as a result of their faith. But the protection promised to the faithful servants of God is a reality today as it was in Bible times.

All over the world, faithful Latter-day Saints are protected from the powers of the evil one and his servants until they have finished their missions in mortality. For some the mortal mission is brief, as with some valiant young men who have lost their lives in missionary service. But for most of us the mortal journey is long, and we continue our course with the protection of guardian angels.

During my life I have had many experiences of being guided in what I should do and in being protected from injury and also from evil. The Lord’s protecting care has shielded me from the evil acts of others and has also protected me from surrendering to my own worst impulses. (“Bible Stories and Personal Protection,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 39)

### **2 Kings 6:17 open his eyes that he may see**

#### **Neal A. Maxwell**

The young lad didn’t, initially, see what the prophet saw, but that through the help and prayer of the prophet he was able to see; his eyes were opened too.

There will be other times when we simply have to trust the prophet, for he will see things we do not see. (*Ensign*, Apr. 1981, 58–59)

#### **Joseph Smith**

I saw Elder Brigham Young standing in a strange land, in the far south and west, in a desert place, upon a rock in the midst of about a dozen men of color, who appeared hostile. He was preaching to them in their own tongue, and the angel of God standing above his head, with a drawn sword in his hand, protecting him, but he did not see it. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 108)