

## “Behold, I Thought...”

*“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 Kings 5:11-12.

The preceding scriptures record the initial response of Naaman to the instructions of the prophet Elisha (instructions delivered through his servant) to Naaman and what he needed to do in order to be healed of the dreaded disease, leprosy. Naaman was “*captain of the host of the king of Syria*,” he was called “*a great man*,” and “*honorable*,” and by him “*the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria*,” 2 Kings 5:1. Outwardly, from a this-world perspective, in modern terminology, it could be said “he had it made.” However, as is often the case among the world’s “*great*,” Naaman had a major problem; he had leprosy, a dreaded, loathsome disease, which could be anticipated to bring about a slow, and even humiliating death.

Fortunately, however, in contrast to the “*great*” Naaman who was “*captain of the host of the king of Syria*,” there was a “*little*” Israelite maid who, by the Syrians, had been taken “*captive out of the land of Israel*,” and “*she waited on Naaman’s wife*,” v. 2-3. Though she had reason to be resentful toward her captors, she was compassionate, and she said to her mistress, “*would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy*,” v. 3. The “*prophet*” to whom she referred was Elisha, who had succeeded Elijah, 2 Kings 3, and who already had performed some noteworthy miracles, 2 Kings 3-4. The “*little*” Israelite “*maid*,” who “*waited on Naaman’s wife*,” evidently had God-fearing parents who had trained her well, and though she was now a “*captive*” waiting on the wife of the general leading the army which captured her, she voiced her concern for her master and even mentioned the one to whom he could go for healing!

Apparently at the advice of the King of Syria, Naaman went first to the King of Israel, and he took with him “*ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment*,” v. 5. The king of Israel mistook the motive of the king of Syria, concluding that he was seeking “*a quarrel against*” him, v. 7. However, the prophet Elisha “*heard*” about what had occurred, so he sent a message to the King of Israel, telling him to let Naaman “*come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel*,” v. 8. So, carrying the silver, and gold, and the ten changes of raiment, Naaman “*came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha*,” v. 9. No doubt Naaman was expecting a glorious reception befitting a man of his imagined dignity, fame, and importance. But to his chagrin, Elisha did not even go out to meet him! Instead, he “*sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean*,” v. 10.

The instructions were simple, easy to be understood, and easy to follow. It would have taken expert help for Naaman to misunderstand the directions given. And the blessings to be obtained were beneficial beyond description! Simply by going (an estimated 20 miles) to the Jordan river and dipping seven times, he could be assured of being completely cured of leprosy. The prophet did not ask for any of the silver, gold, or changes of raiment which Naaman had brought. All he had to do was to go and dip in the Jordan river seven times! He should have been ecstatic with joy!

However, the text says “*Naaman was wroth*,” or angry — angry when he should have

been filled with profound gratitude. He then said **“Behold, I thought...”** What he *“thought”* was revealing about his pride and his character. He said *“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,”* v. 11. Notice: he said *“I thought, he will surely come out to me..”* Even then, he was a part of the “Me Generation,” he wanted a ceremony wherein he would be the center of attention; after all, he was *“captain of the host of the king of Syria.”* As Naaman perceived it, he was an important man. But Elijah did not even *“come out to”* him; to the contrary, he *“sent a messenger,”* whose instructions he perceived to be belittling to a person as important as he imagined himself to be.

Fortunately, however, *“his servants”* exercised more sense than their master. They spoke to him, saying *“My father; if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean,”* v. 13. At that point, Naaman evidently got over his mad spell; he went *“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,”* v. 14.

Naaman then was a changed man. He was healed of leprosy. He was appreciative; He wanted to reward Elisha, but Elisha refused to accept any material reward. Now, being mindful of the great power of the God of the Israelites, he requested two mule loads of earth to take with him back to Syria, so that he might build an altar thereupon in order to sacrifice *“unto the Lord,”* v. 18.

### **“Behold, I Thought!**

This has been called “the great excuse of the Bible.” It reflects the mind set of multitudes as they begin to read the Bible. They have preconceived ideas, and many people, like Naaman, become angry when they hear plain biblical instructions which go contrary to what they have been led to believe. We now cite a few things many have *“thought,”* but which are contrary to biblical teaching.

**1. “Babies are totally depraved at birth, having inherited the sin of Adam.”** However, scripture says *“the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son..,”* Ezek. 18:20. And Jesus instructed His disciples, saying, *“Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven,”* Matt. 19:14.

**2. “Man is saved by faith only.”** But the inspired James declared that *“the devils also believe and tremble,”* and he also said *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,”* James 2:18,24.

**3. “There is nothing in a name.”** However, the apostle Peter said *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,”* Acts 4:12.

**4. “Baptism does not save, and has nothing to do with salvation.”** Again the apostle Peter said, *“The like figure whereunto even **baptism** doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”* I Peter 3:21.

**5. “It doesn’t make any difference what you believe so long as you are honest and sincere.”** However, Jesus said *“ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,”* John

8:32, and the apostle Paul mentioned some who believed “*a lie*,” and who would “*be condemned*” because they “*did not believe the truth*,” 2 Thess. 2:11.

**6. “One church is as good as another, and one doesn’t have to be a member of any church in order to be saved.”** However, Jesus said “*upon this rock I will build My church*,” Matt. 16:18; to it “*the saved*” were added, Acts 2:47, and Jesus said “*Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted*,” Matt. 15:13.

**Conclusion:** Many, many examples could be cited of those who, like Naaman, could say “*Behold, I Thought*,” but whose thoughts are completely foreign to the word of God! God’s thoughts and His ways are as much higher than our ways and our thoughts “*as the heavens are above the earth*,” Isa. 55:8-9. Who are we to take issue with what **God** has said? The Bible was written so that we might learn the thoughts of God, and do the will of God. If you are going to act like Naaman, make sure it’s the Naaman who finally got his head on straight, humbled himself, and then followed God’s instructions. Don’t act like the proud, pompous Naaman who said “*behold I thought*,” and then went away a rage, while still a leper!

\*\*\*\* -Bobby Witherington