

14429

ELISHA, THE MAN OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #7 The Cleansing of Naaman the Syrian.

Reading: 2 Kings 5

My dear brethren and sisters and young people. What bro. Murray said wasn't really funny because those of you who saw that play, would no doubt have been very impressed by it. I wonder just how impressed however, you should have been, because having done this study, b&s, and witnessing that play, I was struck with the accuracy of what was said and done. And perhaps not many of you would have noticed, the little details that were put into that play, which indicated a very careful reading of the Hebrew text, which bore the hallmarks of Jeff Barry, but I do believe, b&s, that we virtually had an exposition last evening, in a play form, of this very wonderful story, and of course, this morning all I'm going to do is reiterate a lot of those points which you saw last night and perhaps add a few more details which couldn't be put into play form, in order that we might grasp the significance and the principles of this wonderful story, of Naaman the Syrian.

And a wonderful story it is, because the Lord Jesus Christ took that story as being monumental! Now He took that story not simply as a little Old Testament record, and a nice story for children, He took it as being monumental in the purpose of God. And He says, 'there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha', and there were, because when the Syrians came down later, there were four of them outside the city sitting at the gate with leprosy, and they still have leprosy. And there were only four there, but there were plenty more, and the Lord pointed out to a nation that had been given the oracles of God, there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. And the Lord was pointing out, my dear b&s and young people, that this story was a signpost, pointing the way to the fact that God was going to call the Gentiles, by faith into the hope of Israel, and He was going to cleanse them from the leprous effects of sin and death and give them eternal life! and it was monumental in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ that this incident took place.

And you'll notice in that 4th chapter of Luke, which we won't turn to now, that He also referred to Elijah, 'that there were many widows in the days of Elijah but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto the widow of Zarephath'. And it's remarkable that these two people should be selected as being monumental in the service of God, indicating that God was going to call the Gentiles; 'and to the widow of Zarephath Elijah was sent', says the Lord Jesus Christ, but Naaman came. It doesn't say Elisha was sent, Naaman was cleansed, and there was the call of the Gentiles, and there were the Gentiles being

brought into the hope of Israel. And these two incidents, the Lord Jesus Christ saw, as being a wonderful signpost indicating to His mind, that His work, b&s, was going to be a very broad work, and He was going to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, because the world lieth heavy under the curse of leprosy. And all of us have leprosy, the leprosy of mortality, of which leprosy itself was but a symbol and a sign.

Now when did this incident take place? Well, it could only have taken place in the reign of Jehoram, king of Israel; for about 15 or 20 years before this time, before Naaman came down, Israel and Syria were at war. You remember the battle in which they joined and Ahab was killed by a man who drew a bow at a venture. And then after the war of Ahab when he went towards Ramoth-gilead to fight the Syrians, there was a comparative lull in the wars between Syria and Israel, and it would seem that in that period, and it could only be in that period that such an incident took place, and it seems, b&s, that there was relative peace between the two nations, except for the few marauding bands of Syrians who came across the border like the guerillas do today, and carried away the captives from Israel. And that war was a distinct possibility, things were simmering and as Jehoram knew when he got that letter, that it could quite possibly be a declaration of war, but at the moment there's a comparative lull, and in that lull, God takes the opportunity to save a man! Now it's remarkable how this bible is written; I hope that I've demonstrated that during this weekend, you've got to read it carefully. And we're going to see certain statements in here, that I believe, God was guiding the destinies of Syria and Israel at this time, to maintain that uneasy peace, to give Him time to get that man out of Syria!

I want you to know, b&s, what it says about Naaman. Halfway through verse 1 it says, 'By him Yahweh had given deliverance unto Syria', note that! What an unusual phrase 'by him the God of Israel had given deliverance unto Syria', now what else could that mean? at a time when Syria was fighting Israel, God's people, Yahweh the God of Israel is delivering Syria! and He's delivering Syria by the hand of Naaman. Now what a remarkable statement that is, and you know, when most commentaries come across that (in all the commentaries that I've read on this section) they express amazement at that statement, how that it could be said that Yahweh gave deliverance unto Syria, why? because He was the God of Israel, they can't understand why He should be delivering in Syria, and furthermore, how could He deliver Syria when they were more powerful at this time, than Israel? But they weren't more powerful than the nations north of them, and it would seem, b&s, the great deliverances that God was giving Syria was not for the sake of Syria, because later on, God through the prophet Elisha testified to Jehorahaz that he was to strike, strike, strike, strike, strike Syria, with the bunch of arrows that the king had, symbolically hit, hit, hit them until he utterly destroyed them. So that verse doesn't mean that God was interested in preserving the Syrians, He was interested in preserving them until He got that man out! A remarkable statement! He'd given deliverance unto Syria.

'There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian', and the all-wise, all-powerful providence of God, was hovering over the Middle East as it is today, and the mighty purpose of God was going

to be fulfilled, and that purpose was the purpose of salvation. Salvation of one man, and that man of all men, of all men that God was going to save, the man that Israel had most to fear, not the king Benhadad, but the man that went first into battle against Israel, and that was the man that God wanted! Have you ever, b&s, seen a drama like that; that the man that rode first into battle, who would plan all the manoeuvres against Israel, who would plan the slaughter, who would plan the killing, the man who would plan the annihilation, God wanted him! And there is none of us can come to the Father except we're drawn, and there's nothing in us, b&s, of intrinsic value, but it's by the mercy and the love of God that we're called into the truth; and here is a glorious demonstration of the mercy of God, that that man God wanted, the very epitome of the enemies of Israel!

Now look at him! Note how the bible describes him; he was Naaman, and that interesting because you see, 'Naaman' b&s, is a very old Hebrew name. As a matter of fact, you'd find it used right back in the early chapters of Genesis; it's a very old Hebrew name and it's rather strange that this chapter should have a Hebrew name, and it is my opinion, that he knew a lot more about the God of Israel than we, perhaps understand. He had an old Hebrew name and that Hebrew name, Naaman, means literally 'beauteous', but he was far from beautiful; he's described here as the captain of the host, he was next to the king, as the captain of the host was always next to the king, b&s, he was second always. Under the circumstances of the eastern countries, it was always the captain of the host second to the king; shall we speak to the king or the captain of the host? Remember the words of Elisha to the woman of Shunem? he was #2 in Syria; it says he was a 'great' man and the word 'great' is the same word as used for the woman of Shunem, in other words, he was a man of position and he was a man of wealth. And he's described as being a great man with his master or before his master, so Benhadad considered him a 'great' man; the king considered him a great man. He was loved of his soldiers and respected by them because they called him, 'my father', a title of endearment, not only that, b&s, but he had also impressed a little Jewish girl. He impressed a little Jewish girl very much, he impressed her so much, that she was breaking her heart for her master, and she called him, 'my adon, my ruler'. He impressed that little Jewish girl, so you see, we're learning a great deal about Naaman, who's name means 'beauty', he was second to the king of Syria, he was a man of position and a man of wealth, he was loved and respect by his soldiers, he had impressed a little Jewish girl. And the record goes on to describe him as a mighty man of valour, and as Rotherham puts it, he was a 'hero', he was a hero of valour. And all these wonderful titles that he owned, and in the next three words of the first verse are all in italics (so leave them out of the record, take them out) and all you've got left is the words, a leper.

What the Hebrew text is trying to do, is to impress us, b&s, with this fact, with this tremendous contrast; 'vain is man' we sang in our opening hymn, with all his ambitions and all his show, dying mortal man, that hymn was very suggestive as to the condition of Naaman. Naaman, beautiful, captain of the host, #2 in Syria, a great man, a man of position a man of wealth, loved of his master, called 'father' by his soldiers, a Jewish girl loved him, he was honourable which means 'lifted up of faith', but what of faith? He was

a hero of valour, a leper! that's what the Hebrew text is saying. Doesn't even say but he was a leper, LEPER! and you can imagine Naaman looking at himself, what was the good of being #2 in Syria? what was the good, b&s, of having men and women bow and scrape to you, with that scourge on your body, a vile disease, a disease which ate away the tissues of the flesh and the skin, and left large red, ulcerated sores all over your body; a disease, b&s, which attacked first of all, the tongue, the mouth and the eye, and then the fingers and the toes would drop off, one by one; it would be working internally as well as externally, so that every time he would open his mouth to talk, his breath would be absolutely vile, so that nobody could be in his presence. He would be a living death, walking around a monument of living corruption; what's the good of being #2 in Syria? And God wanted him! And the leprosy that he had, b&s, was the best thing that ever happened to him, it was the best thing that ever happened to him, and when we bemoan our fate very often, and circumstances of life, don't ask why this has happened to me because of what I am? ask yourself 'what is God trying to teach me?' and the best thing that ever happened to Naaman, the best title he ever earned was the title of a leper, because that led him to eternal life. That led him to the way of salvation, and if he wasn't a leper, b&s, he would have forever gone on to be the mightiest man in Syria, and it would have looked beautiful on his tombstone. And he was a leper, and that was the best title he had!

But the heartbreak it caused in his house, we saw dramatized last night, and I hope our minds centred upon the reality of the thing, and quite apart from the little funny things that happened in that play, we all laughed at them, and I don't doubt that each and everyone of us were drawn to make our picture of the heartbreak that was in that house. And there came into Naaman's house, a little Jewish maid; and here again, b&s, the providence of God, (what a remarkable thing the providence of God is) these marauding bands, these companies of Syria, had gone down and brought back a little maid, and 'she waited on Naaman's wife'. You know, what a remarkable thing, can you imagine, you're a family in northern Israel, and the Syrians had come across the borders and had broken up your house and taken away one of your daughters, a young girl, and left you a smoking ruin. What would you imagine would happen to that girl? Well, you wouldn't want to think about it; you would try all you could to burn out of your mind the possibilities, they were worse than death. Your own daughter who you tried to bring up in the hope of Israel, perhaps, and she was a godly little girl, make no mistake about that! She was no riff-raff, evidently a godly little girl, and not only that, but a very impressive little girl so that she would have been an outstanding little maid! and what a heartbreak for mom and dad, that she's now in the hands of the Syrians. And all the sadness and sorrow, b&s, of that incident, (now they may have been killed, they may have been taken with her, we don't know the circumstances), but there must have been somebody, relatives, acquaintances, who would have missed that little girl, but the mighty providence of God, wanted that Syrian, and so somebody's got to suffer!

You know, whenever God moves His hand to save anybody, someone's got to suffer; we preach the truth, to bring people into the truth, we've got to give up our time, we've got to make sacrifices, someone's got to suffer, that somebody else might be helped, that's the principles of God, b&s. It'll never change, and people come into the truth at

the expense of others who give time and energy to bring them into the truth. And here's a circumstance where more than time and energy was given, life itself was at stake; integrity was at stake, she could have become a mental defect if she had been handed over to the soldiers, all these were distinct possibilities in an age when they were very barbarous, when lust went unrestrained, but somehow that girl carried on through, and she must have impressed one after another until she found her way at last, into the household of Naaman. And she found in the great captain of the Syrian host, b&s, a man who controlled his marauding bands, somebody she was drawn to! And the little girl was ever ready to preach the truth; and there's a lesson for Christadelphians; we've got a wonderful heritage, let's share it with others! Let's get out amongst these Gentiles and preach the truth, yes, strengthen the things that remain, that's the most important work today, no doubt about that! yes, study the bible; it's alright to study the bible, but never forget to mark up the fundamentals either, that you can bring them to the attention of people, the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the covenant to David, the covenant in Eden, never forget those things, b&s, and ever be ready to preach the truth. The day we stop preaching the truth, God will stop preaching it to us, and this little Jewish maid had knowledge of Israel that she wasn't going to bottle up in a vase and make a shelf of royal jars, she was going to give it to somebody.

And of course, she waited on Naaman's wife, and evidently there was struck up between these two women, a great kinship. Look at the 123rd Psalm, here's an expression which I believe was applicable to the situation in Naaman's household. In Psalm 123 in verses 1 and 2 we read, 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us'. And I believe that verse, b&s, the principle of it was applicable in that house, that as the eyes of a maiden looketh unto the hand of her mistress; so we wait upon the LORD our God in our anticipation of mercy. And no doubt as the little maid moved in and out of the court of the house of Naaman, and became attached to both Naaman and his wife, that their eyes would meet, and the little pleading eyes of the Jewish maid, pleading for mercy which she found in that household, and now, b&s, she saw in the eyes of her mistress, another plea for mercy for herself! (of course, the mistress wouldn't be appealing to her, she wouldn't know) but the little Jewish maid saw in the eyes of her mistress, a big void that was there, that had come into that household.

Can you imagine what leprosy would do to married life? They would virtually be completely and utterly divorced; they couldn't live together, it would be impossible! Could you imagine what it did to the domestic circle of that house? and the little Jewish maid saw all that, b&s, and she was moved with compassion, because she didn't want to see anybody perish. She wasn't like a lot in Israel, like Gehazi, who called Naaman 'this Syrian' showing that his Jewish nationality had given him some pre-eminent advantage above this Syrian! She didn't think that at all, she said, 'Would God that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria' (she preached the gospel to people who didn't believe it) and you know, b&s, that expression 'would God' that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria', she uses a Hebrew word 'achalay' which is an

expression of extreme anguish and a passionate expression, it really means 'Oh the bliss'; 'Oh, the bliss of knowing the prophet in Samaria', that's what she was saying, and as she saw the tragedy and the appeal in the eyes of her mistress, she said, 'Oh, the bliss of knowing the prophet in Samaria', so you see, it wasn't just a haphazard statement, it was a word that conjured up all the passion of the feelings, all the bliss of knowing the prophet in Samaria. And you know, who would take notice of a servant? I mean, you get servants saying all sorts of things, (you know, I've got plenty of servants!!) but you would, wouldn't you? I mean, they had plenty of servants and they would be saying all manner of things, but that statement impressed both Naaman and his wife. It impressed both of them; it must have been a statement, b&s, of great appeal, for a man who was #2 in Syria, was prepared to go in before Benhadad on the basis of what his servant had said, because you see in verse 4 when it says, 'and one went in', you notice the word 'one' is in italics, Naaman went in, the Hebrew has it; that's the expression, it doesn't name him there, but it says, 'and he went in'.

You saw in the play last night that Naaman approached Benhadad; that was accurate because it was Naaman that went in; now you imagine, #2 walks into #1, and he said, 'you know, I've heard I can be cleansed of the leprosy? What? who told you? Oh, the girl that sweeps our house!' And you see, that's how silly it would have sounded; 'a little Jewish maid, Jewish maid? what would she know about it? Well, I tell you what, she's very impressive! Very impressive?' And you see, b&s, we don't have to dramatize this, because you go through the scriptures on the relationship of servants and masters, you don't get the intimacy that you find here. And whenever is a master going to take heed of his servant like this? But you see, Naaman was always doing that; like when he went off in a blazing rage to go back to Syria, it was his servant that stopped him and said, 'now look, my father!' and he listened to him. You see, he had humility, it was there with him; he was a man who could listen to reason, he wasn't beyond reason. Whereas most captains of the host were so arrogant and brutal, why if any servant would suggest to them on how they should order their lives, they'd smack them in the teeth! But here was a man that went to #1 and he's #2, and he's got a little girl that sleeps in his house that reckons he can be clean! Now you imagine the passionate appeal of that little maid, and remember this, we've only got in this bible, a precis of what was said, she wouldn't have said only that! there would have been in that household, I believe, discussions on the people of Israel. And the character of that little maid would have enlightened that house, b&s, and gained for her protection and ultimately salvation for her master. And Yahweh, Yahweh the mighty God of Israel, b&s, was hovering over Syria, that's the beauty of this story! and in that little drama there's a mighty power hovering over it all, giving deliverance unto Syria for the time being. He didn't want war, He wants that man, because of that little girl and He's hovering over her, inspiring her faith with memories of the truth. And she's inspiring this woman who's inspiring her husband, who's inspiring the king, that they might bring salvation. That's the wonder of this story!

And then she says, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for (notice this) he would recover him of his leprosy'. Now look at the margin for that phrase, Hebrew 'gather in', He would gather him in from his leprosy. What did she mean by that? they would understand the word 'recover', we understand the word 'recover',

but she didn't say that! She said he would gather him in from his leprosy, she was using phraseology, b&s and young people, that was based upon Jewish law. You see, that very phrase is used of Miriam, you remember Miriam? The woman in the ecclesia who said of the AB's, they took too much upon themselves You remember her? she got leprosy because of this, but God was merciful to her, and it said after the leprosy had recovered, that she was received in. And that's exactly the phrase that the Jewish maid uses here; she said, 'Would God that my lord, oh, the bliss of knowing Elisha' oh, the bliss of knowing the salvation of God, if he knew that, why, she said, God would receive him in!' That's what she was saying and she was using Jewish terminology because they didn't understand that. Unless, of course, that she had explained it to them, and you see, b&s, the leper in Israel was a social outcast; when you contracted leprosy in Israel, you had to do several things, you had to uncover your head, tear your clothes, put a covering over your upper lips, sit outside the camp, and there you were wandering around and anyone who came near you, you had to sing out, 'unclean, unclean, unclean' to keep them away from you. And there you wandered out in the wilderness with that mournful cry until you rotted into the sand. You're a social outcast, a religious outcast, but they didn't practice that in Syria; the heathen didn't understand those laws which were excellent, because the leprosy, of course, was contagious and they intermingled, but the little Jewish maid saw him as an outcast and saw that God could gather him in, if only he knew the prophet in Samaria!

So Naaman went in and told Benhadad all about this, and Benhadad in verse 5, encourages him to go down to Israel, he said, 'Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold', you know, the equivalent of that, when I checked up on this in a commentary where somebody had some authority upon ancient coinage and weights etc. in about the year 1890 the equivalent was \$50,000. That was an enormous amount of money he sent into Israel, no wonder Gehazi was impressed! and not only that, b&s, but he sent 'ten changes of raiment'. And some people wonder why it was that he sent an enormous sum of money and put with it 10 changes of raiment; they think, 'well, that would be just a little drop in the bucket, why worry about it! But you see, they weren't ordinary garments, they were festival clothing; they were holiday gear, and that attracted Gehazi. He was impressed, this was in-style, and he wanted to be way out! As funny as that might sound, absorb the lesson! Absorb that lesson, that's what he's saying, it was all very attractive but he sent it down to Israel, and you saw the scene last night, which I felt was one of the best scenes of the lot, the scene where that letter was handed to Jehoram was beautifully done because I felt it captured the whole spirit of what we've got, because when that letter came, in effect what Benhadad had said was this, as the RSV renders verse 6, 'now when this letter has come unto thee', the RSV version says, 'when this letter reaches you I have already sent Naaman'.

There's poor old Jehoram getting a letter to cure a man of leprosy, and he was on his way! So it wasn't any good him writing back and saying, 'P.S. too bad, so sad, you're dead'. He couldn't do that because the man was already on his way, and of course, it conjured up in Jehoram's mind, as we saw last night, that it could only mean one thing, that you get a letter to recover a man of his leprosy, and the man who's being sent is

who? the butcher of Syria, the captain of the host, he's on his way! It only meant one thing in the mind of Jehoram, he seeks a quarrell!; and you know the faith of Jehoram, don't you? When he joined alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah and the king of Edom, to fight against the Moabites, he was the first one to break, and his words were, 'Yahweh delivers into the hands of the Moabites'. He had terrific faith! and he never gave Elisha a thought, and on that occasion, b&s, when he went against the Moabites, that's the expression he used, 'Yahweh delivers into the hands of the Moabites', until Jehoshaphat made enquiry if they had a prophet of Yahweh there; and one of Jehoram's own servants knew that Elisha was there, but he didn't know! And one of the king of Israel's servants said, 'here's Elisha'.

Why didn't the king know? because he didn't take any notice of him; he had the prophets of his mother and the prophets of his father, who are excellent when things are going well, but you can't find them when things are bad! And here he is in a strait and says, 'Am I God, to kill and make alive?'. And James in his epistle tells us that is a prerogative of God, He alone can kill and make alive; Jehoram was right in saying that, until Gehazi said this unto Jehoram, 'send him to Elisha, he'll handle the problem'. And there was a purpose in sending him to Elisha; Elisha, b&s, had a purpose in having Naaman sent to him. He'd thought this all out, and the purpose he had at the end of verse 8 was this, 'let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel'. And he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel, that was the purpose of Elisha, and you know, b&s, there's very great power in that; Elisha didn't say, 'send him to me and I'll heal him; send him to me, I'm better than you'. He said, I've got a purpose in this, I want him to see there's a prophet in Israel; and Hosea the prophet spoke about this, that the prophet's activities were evidence of divine activity, 'by a prophet Israel was brought out of Egypt, and by a prophet they were preserved', says Hosea, and yet he's implicit in that he's saying Yahweh preserved those people through His prophet. This is what Elisha wanted to show Naaman! he wasn't interested in Naaman, he was interested in that man's salvation, so Naaman is redirected much to the relief of Jehoram, to the household of Elisha.

Now I want you to notice the record of scripture, (you know we don't very often get away from the text of scripture, and we get related verses, you know, and we build up a story, and that's excellent, it's terrific); but you know, there's a lot in just the record itself that you don't want to miss, you want to read it carefully. Now look at verse 9, it says, 'So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot', now when you look at that word 'chariot' b&s, you find that there's a deliberate purpose why that word 'chariot' appears there. Because the divine record is using the plural word here for 'chariot'; the word for 'chariot' in the singular is found in verse 21, 'he lighted down from the chariot', that word is singular. But here the word is plural and there's a deliberate attempt on the part of the divine inspiration here to indicate to us, that Naaman pulled up outside the house of Elisha, with the magnificent retinue that he had with him, of the soldiers, the horses and his chariots! And you could hear them rumbling down the road as they come to the humble house of Elisha. And Naaman thought he was going to make a tremendous impression, he's got more than \$50,000. with him and some terrific gear; he's going to impress Elisha, he's going to get all his chariots(plural) they're all there with him, all his

horses, and he's going to come up with a great big show! And he rolled up to the door of Elisha, and Elisha spurned him, b&s, because there was a man who bore in his flesh the mark of living corruption and he was glorifying it!

He came back when he had washed in the river Jordan walking and he stood before Elisha. He left his chariots behind, but now he's got them all with him and here's a man with an incurable disease speaking of the leprosy of sin, and he's glorifying flesh, and he thinks that Elisha is going to be dreadfully impressed with this! He was impressed alright, and Naaman it says, 'stood at the door of the house of Elisha'. The RSV says 'he halted' as the word 'stood' means, he halted. And you can imagine, 'halt!' HALT! and they all halted, so he stopped at the door of Elisha, and when he saw that door, of course, he called the halt, and the great majestic company he had drew to a halt, and everybody stood in rank and he waited for Elisha to come out of the door. And no one appeared, and you know, we have on record, b&s, what he was thinking, we've got on record in this book what Naaman was thinking because in verse 11 we read, 'That Naaman was wroth and went away and said, Behold, I thought', (look at the margin) I said with myself, he's talking to himself. What did he say? 'he will surely come out to me'. But he didn't and after a pause like we saw last night, the door swung open and out came a cringing Gehazi. 'Go wash in Jordan' and went back inside, now look, this is a drama and meant to be so because you see, God was working on that man, and when that message was given to him, 'go wash in Jordan' that servant went back inside, and he would have probably said, 'was that Elisha?' and someone would have known perhaps. Whether anyone knew Elisha by sight, we don't know, but it says Elisha sent a messenger, so they must have obviously recognized him as such. And probably somebody said, 'is that Elisha?' And some one said to the Naaman, 'well not really, it was a messenger'. A messenger? and you can imagine the scene, b&s, of that several hundred of men (I don't know) but there was a great company says the record, and that great company there, and the central figure, Naaman the Syrian, and he's just been issued with a blazing insult, and now he's going to sit there and just stew a bit, and this is baptism, b&s, this is baptism.

A silly little act, isn't it? Door opens, people come out dressed in a white gown, and that's all, they go into water and it looks mad, you get down into the water in front of a crowd of people and you feel about that big! and you think, you know, this is crazy. But you're the central figure and all eyes are rivetted on you, and you're declaring to everybody sitting there, I'm nobody, and anyone who thinks they can conduct a baptism in private, is working on the basis of wrong doctrine. Because baptism is never private, but public. And the baptism, b&s, of going into the water is nothing; necessary 'yes', but the act in itself doesn't mean a thing, it's what's happening to the heart and mind of the individual that counts. And Naaman's there, the central figure, and I could imagine, b&s, every pair of eyes rivetted on him, and he just went scarlett and just stewed over this thing. What was he going to do?

And the pride of Naaman was rising up, and up, as he was stewing over this thing, and he would felt those eyes boring through his back; there were all the captains of his hundreds, the captains of his thousands, all his lieutenants, all his officers who had ever

fought with him, had seen him valiant in battle. He was a mighty man of valour, all those fellows he'd grown up with in military college in Syria, all his friends were there, perhaps some of his relations were there, who'd known him all his life and when he moved in Syria, #2 in Syria, what's he going to do? A dirty little messenger has just given him an insult, 'go wash in Jordan' and the man inside, Elisha the man of God, disdained to come out and see him even! You think of it, b&s, that's baptism; 'he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abases himself shall be exalted'. And he couldn't stand it, and he went away in a blazing rage.

But before we move on, let's look what Elisha told him! 'Go wash in Jordan seven times', I don't think there's any need for me to deal with Jordan, is there? I think we know for what the Jordan stands! and here again the principle is underlying, there's no doubt about what Elisha was telling him; get down there, Naaman, and stick your feet in the mud. And if you want to get rid of that leprosy, there's a place down there for it, leave it there! Leave it there! Jordan wasn't going to wash him clean, b&s, in that sense, but if the waters of Jordan had any intrinsic value that they could wash, all the waters of Jordan were going to do, was to receive the pollution! The thing that was going to cleanse him was when he walked out of Jordan, and stood upon the shore, and God's spirit was going to cleanse him. All Jordan was going to do was to receive the pollution, and therefore, what Naaman said about Jordan was absolutely true! It was a dirty stream, it didn't have the qualities of the rivers of Damascus; he was right, and that's the very point that the servant of Elisha was trying to make to him. That's the very point of it all, it's got to be humility, it's got to be submission to something we don't like, not something we like to do! 'Go wash in Jordan seven times', well, seven times, number of the covenant, not only that, b&s, but look at this (don't turn these up because we want to concentrate on this record) but Leviticus 14 and verse 7 says, that when the leper in Israel was to be cleansed, he was to be sprinkled seven times with water, and then he had to be smeared seven times with oil. So here was water as a symbol of the cleansing power of the Word (you're clean through the Word which I've spoken unto you) There also was the oil a symbol of the Word, of health and prosperity and of joy, and there was the necessary requisite of seven times in Israel for the leper to be cleansed. And something else had to be done too, there was water, there was oil, and there was blood, because the leper, you see, when he was brought back into the camp, the priest took a trespass offering dipped his finger in the blood, he put the blood upon his ear, upon his thumb and upon his big toe, and on that basis he was received into fellowship again. So there was water, oil and blood and John the apostle said, 'these three agree in one principle, for there are three things that bare record, the water, the Spirit and the blood; and those three things, b&s, cleanse leprosy, so the term seven times, was an indication to Naaman, that there were things in Israel that he had to observe. The power of the Word of God is a thing to make us joyful and a thing to make us clean; and the necessity for sacrifice (I'm going to tell you something else) See what I did with the blood on the ear, thumb and big toe, you know that only ever happened in Israel to one other person, and that was when the high priest himself was inaugurated into his office. And so, only two men in Israel had their ears, thumbs and toes touched with the blood, the high priest and the leper. What was the Law trying to tell us, b&s? that all God's people were priests, so that when a brother or sister comes into the truth,

he stands in relation to his God, as being in prospect of a king and priest upon this earth, and he's learning now for his priestly duties to have compassion on the ignorant and of them that are out of the way, that's the qualification. So whilst he's learning this, of course, he's under covenant relationship to God; so if he leaves the truth and he goes into the world, and he mucks around with lepers, dabbles around with \$50,000 and wears all the in-gear, and there he's mucking around with lepers! What does God consider him? God considers him out of fellowship; gone out of fellowship is God's attitude, but he can come back, God will never bar him from coming back, but he must exceed to the principles of the Deity, so he's got to get the water and the oil, and when God finally accepts him, b&s, (the ear, the thumb and the toe) he comes back into the nation virtually as a priest! and again he's re-instated in the nation as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, because now he listens to God, he going to sacrifice all else and listen to God, sacrifice all else and work for God, sacrifice all else and walk for God, and if he's prepared to do that on the basis of sacrifice, then he's going to be received in as Miriam was. And that's what the little maid told Naaman.

And so dispensing with the details of the Law, Elisha gets to the root of the matter and says, Jordan will be all sufficient if all those principles were seen in Jordan; 'you get down there and wash seven times!' And away he went in a blazing rage, but you see, b&s, we're all like that; I don't suppose those of us who came from the world or even someone brought up in the truth, except that when we first heard it, you see, (pardon me for a personal plug here, but take my own case) I was 16 when my sister jammed me against the wall and told me I was an idiot! I was on my way to a football game with a flask of whiskey in my backpocket; 16 I was, and I had everything the world could offer. Ah, yeah, I was coming up! I was in football and all that sort of thing, had everything! I was 16 when she told me that, but I was 22 when I accepted the truth! it was too much for me; I knew what she said was right, I never doubted that, never doubted it from when she opened her mouth, although I didn't know anything about the bible, Genesis to me was a race horse! but I knew what she said was right, it sounded right, it sounded logical, real, it made a tremendous impact on me. I didn't disbelieve it, but I just couldn't give up the world; I just couldn't drag myself away from it and for six years, b&s, I lived in the world, and in those 6 years from 16 to 22, I did all that a young man could ever wish to do. I was the life of the party, a good sportsman, and all this sort of thing, and I was miserable! and I use to go to bed at night, utterly miserable, and drink myself blind drunk so I could sleep, because I'd shutter in terror if I didn't, because I knew what she said was right. And that's how Naaman went away from there, he knew what that prophet said was right! He knew it in his heart but there were too many people watching him; there was too much at stake. #2 in Syria meant a lot to him, and he went away in a blazing rage, and adding insult upon insult, he couldn't take it, b&s, and he went away in that spirit, but God knew his heart! and He knew that there was a reasonable man; give him time, give him time and he would be able to bend, and God would bend him, and bend him, and bend him, and he did!

And it was a servant who finally bent him, and as Naaman went away you could hear him breathing fire, 'Jordan! oh, hah, Jordan, oh, Jordan, the filthy little stream', and he would be conjuring up in his mind, b&s, the rivers of Damascus right up here! Now

look here, I've seen Damascus, it's right in a plain and you can land there in Damascus, and it's a magnificent sight; the Anti-Lebanese range here, ah, beautiful towering mountains which form a wall north of Damascus, only a few miles, and out of those Anti-Lebanese ranges the sparkling streams which feed the rivers of Damascus. Mine you, today, the rivers of Damascus are polluted beyond all description by the Arabs, but remove that and take the natural rivers that must have existed in the days of Naaman, and they were in every word as he described them, 'rivers' and the word means 'to sparkle'; the sparkling rivers of Damascus and they were. Because you see, the snows of Hermon fed those rivers and they ran steeply down through Damascus onto that plain.

And he said, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the waters of Israel?' Naturally speaking, he was dead right, as a matter of fact, b&s, he was far more right than he himself ever realized, because here's a very interesting fact. 'Abana' do you know where 'Abana' is used? in the 4th chapter of the Song of Solomon, now you have a look at this; here it's called 'Amana' but they have identified it as the same river, it's a variation of the same name. In the Song of Solomon chapter 4 and verse 8, here the bridegroom speaks of the bride and he says, 'Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards', and you see, b&s, here is the bridegroom telling his bride where they're going to take their honeymoon. Now this (I hope I don't get carried away with this, ah, this is something that really carries me away; not honeymoons but this verse). But look, this is the bridegroom speaking to his bride as to where they're going to spend their honeymoon and where is he going to take her? He's going to take her to the heights of Lebanon; that won't literally be, because Zion in the age to come will exceed all those mountains for beauty; but in order that Solomon may impress us with the beauty of the kingdom, he takes what was then, the natural contours of the land, and look, b&s, when you look at Hermon, if you could ever get up on top of Herman, (and there are Jews there every weekend as partisans of Syria), but if you could ever get up there and look down over the land, you'd have the land stretching before you in a great panorama. And that's where the Lord Jesus Christ in a typical sense, is going to take His bride, and they're going to look from the top of Herman, and there's the Promised Land spread before them, but it's from the top of Amana. And there was the source of that river up there; and here's a wonderful thing, Amana is a word that means 'amen', it's from the same root as the word 'amen', it means 'finality', and not only that, b&s, but the word for 'amen' and the word for 'covenant' are almost identical. So here is the covenant of God set by Herman and it runs down through the land as a river of life, and do you know what else? As the Amana spilt itself on the plain of Damascus, it divided itself into seven rivers, Naaman was nearer the truth than he realized! Amana was undoubtedly a better river than Jordan; it spoke of greater things, it speaks of the covenant of God, it speaks of the refreshing snows of Herman, it speaks of that dew from heaven, b&s, and it speaks of the saturation of the Land of Israel by the living waters of life, based upon the 7 streams of the covenant; the 'amen' when the bride will be taken by her bridegroom, the end of her existence, the goal of all her ambitions; and wouldn't we say 'amen' if we could stand with Christ in the Land? What else do you want? What else? AMEN, that's it as far as

I'm concerned, that's all we require in life. And when he said, 'are not the rivers of Damascus, better than the waters of Israel?' in one sense he was nearer the truth than he ever realized. But for the moment, b&s, before the waters of Amana, come the waters of Jordan. And nobody gets to Amana, to see the sparkling crystal clear waters of the covenant of God, before they are prepared to go and have a look at the leprous waters of Jordan; to leave down there the things of this life that they might go to higher things. And that was the lesson of Naaman the Syrian.

And the end of verse 12 says, 'he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near'. Can you picture it? You know, what a wonderful record this is, as he turned away in a rage (he's in a chariot doubtless, he wouldn't ride in anything else) Imagine him swinging the horse around and shouting the rage of it, 'Abana and Pharpar back to them; dirty stream!' And on he went in a blazing rage, he was going to stand indignant, b&s, he wasn't going to submit to this! And you can imagine as he rode away, it says, 'his servants came near'; and I can picture them, probably two of them or one of them, perhaps, coming either side of his chariot, driving up alongside of him, and as they went along, he's still steaming and he's driving towards Syria, and they came right up close, and under the thundering hoofs of the horses and the turning of the wheels, they address him in terms of endearment 'My father'; they didn't say 'my lord', 'my king', 'my God', my father; a term of endearment! Those servants loved him and he was struck by that, b&s, and the overtones of love and respect cooled his rage! Now with his rage cooled down, 'is it unreasonable what he has asked you to do?. Ah, true, it's going to take a lot; and you're going to have to get off your horse (literally) and you're going to have to gird up your loins, and walk through that squelching mud; and you condemned the river in your own words. And yet you've got to get into those waters and it's going to hurt. Now you consider it, my father; we love you, you've got leprosy, you're #2 in Syria but look at your flesh! Consider mortality, what's it got to offer? When you go back to Syria to the rivers of Damascus, and you go for a swim, so what? Beautiful crystal clear waters but you'll still have that flesh, rotting away, ulcerating sores; you'll still be divorced from your wife virtually. What the good of it? What's it going to be, this life or the hurt of another?' And I can imagine that conversation, b&s, you can well and truly imagine that this is only a precis of what was said! 'Now, my father, if he had asked you to do some great thing, you would have done it? Yes, and all it would have done for you is to exalt your pride! Is that the purpose of the river Jordan?'

And such like words, b&s, would have passed between them until the chariot slowed down, and Naaman feeling the heavy atmosphere that would have pervaded the whole company, as everybody saw the captain of the host of Syria, bending to the will of God, turned his chariots to the right, and the record says 'he went down'. And he'd have gone down a long way, and you can imagine that host as they all swung to the right, b&s, and down they went! And as he went down, so he went down in the estimation of that host; he wasn't going to stand on his dignity, he was going to bend, and bend he did! I can picture that scene as they must have spread out on the plains of the Jordan there, a little north perhaps of Jericho, perhaps halfway up, opposite Samaria. And as they spread out, they would be like an amphitheatre, as the great leader gets off of his chariot, probably with a look over his shoulder at the crowd, soldiers hanging their

heads in embarrassment, and the mighty man of valour strode to the river Jordan. One time, two, three, four times, five times, six times, seven, wonder of wonders, a little child, and how expressive, b&s, 'his flesh came again as a little child'. What it means, of course, is that there was a reviving of his natural substance, the flesh was pink and healthy looking, glowing with health, but I believe the term is wonderfully expressive, that the flesh came as a little child and Jesus said, 'except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven'.

And Nicodemus the ruler of the Jews, who crept along the streets of Jerusalem at night, when he went passed the houses of people that mattered, making sure they weren't looking out the window, and darting across to the next corner, heading towards the home of Jesus, and when he got where Jesus was staying no one saw this man go in there; the ruler of the Jews, and when he thought the coast was clear, he sneaked in the door, and Jesus said, 'men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil'. And He said to Nicodemus, 'except ye be born from above, you'll never enter into the kingdom of God'; his flesh too, had to come like a little child, another creature had to be born and it didn't have to be Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, it had to be a manifestation of God, a humble child; and I believe, b&s, that expression 'his flesh became as a little child' is very eloquent, and you know, here we have a touch of something very wonderful, it says that 'he returned'. The Lord Jesus Christ healed 10 lepers on one occasion, 9 of them were Israelites, 1 was a Samaritan, and as He sent them to the priests for the cleansing under the Law of Moses, seven times in water, seven times with oil, blood of the trespass offering, on their way to keep the details of the Law, they suddenly found that they didn't need the Law at any rate, all they needed to do was to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart, and believe that He was the anti-type of the Law, and that was all that was necessary, and they found themselves cleansed before they got to where the Law was administered; and the 9 Israelites just kept running, but the Samaritan who was amongst them, stopped running and he returned to Jesus. And Jesus made the point, 'there were 10 of them, where's the other 9? There is none returned to Me except this Samaritan'. And they were a hated and despised people, and Naaman returned! He returned, b&s, and I want you to notice how he returned, 'he returned to the man of God', says verse 15, 'he and all his company'. Notice the word 'company' the word is 'marchanch' 'his camp', so he returned to Elisha the man of God with his camp, the word has the idea 'to pitch tents and encamp', where are the horses? Where's his chariots? where's the pomp and ceremony? tumbling down the river Jordan into the Dead Sea. Gone! washed away! and he came simply with his camp, nothing else, and now he's down on ground level.

He stood before Elisha, he stood before Elisha and he said in verse 11, 'he will surely come out to me, and stand before me', but he didn't; but now at last, the cycle has turned and he stands before Elisha. And Elisha is going to accept him because he says to Elisha, 'take a blessing or present from thy servant'; look at the position he now takes. And what does Elisha say? Elisha, b&s, does a remarkable thing, he comes out and says, 'As Yahweh liveth, before whom I stand', and there was the principle! And what is the principle? Naaman thought that Elisha would come out and stand before him, but he didn't; and it wasn't, b&s, until Naaman was prepared to come out and stand

before Elisha, and call him 'my lord' and he'd say I'm your servant, that Elisha reminded him, 'look, Naaman, don't ever think that I'm superior to you, I didn't stay in my house because I thought I was superior to you; I wasn't humiliating you one man to another, we're not working on personalities, Naaman, we're on a common level. Forasmuch as you partake of flesh and blood, I also myself likewise take part of the same; we're on a common level, Naaman, I didn't refuse to come out because I wanted you to stand before me, it's because Naaman, I myself, stand before Yahweh! And until you're prepared to stand with me, before Him as a servant, I couldn't recognize you!' But let us truly understand this Naaman, the King of us all, the power that is all, is not me, but the One above!

And what did the apostle Paul say about the Lord Jesus Christ? He says in the Corinthians doesn't he, 'that we are of Him, Who is of God; that no flesh should glory in His presence, but he that glorieth shall glory in the Lord.' So he said, 'we are of Him, Who is of God, that no flesh (and that includes the flesh of Jesus Christ despite what people will say, who preach the heresy of clean flesh; that includes His flesh) that no flesh should glory before God, so that we are of Christ, Christ Himself in all humility says, 'I am of my Father, that God should be glorified; that no flesh should glory'. And Elisha did that, the salvation of God, he said I stand before Yahweh. And there, b&s, was beautifully put before Naaman the principles for which he stood. And everybody understood the point then, and then, of course, Naaman offered him the gift.

And really, Elisha couldn't accept that under any circumstances; he couldn't accept it under any circumstances because if he stood before Yahweh as the servant, having received from God the cleansing from leprosy, how on earth could he accept payment for what he'd done? Can you imagine going to an interested friend's house to teach the truth, and asking for a couple of dollars to cover your petrol expenses. Well, you know what I mean, that's the sum total of it, when somebody on your behalf has gone out of their way, given their time and energy and money, taking you to their house, fed you and clothed you, looked after you for a long period of time, that you might come into the truth, how could you possibly go and say to a stranger, 'look I've got a few expenses to look after!'; it would be abominable! And when Elisha said, 'I stand before Yahweh', he, of course, showed Naaman that he himself was indebted to God, he couldn't except anything for that! 'Freely have we been given', says Peter, so freely we give. And the Lord Jesus Christ said that, 'freely I give unto you; freely you must give!'

And then Naaman asked a very simply request, he said 'I want two mules, and a burden of earth'; he asked literally in the Hebrew for a yoke of mules that they might carry between them, some soil. He wanted some soil of Israel, he wanted the Land of Israel, and he wanted that, he told Elisha, 'to build an altar'. And he carried back into Syria, b&s, a heap of soil, that he might keep the principles of the truth; and you know what he's working on, don't you? and this is interesting. He was working on the 20th chapter of Exodus which says, 'when thou shalt make an altar unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not make an altar of stone, of hewn stone; but an altar of earth shalt thou make Me. And if thou shalt make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not lift up thy tools upon it for thou hast polluted it.' And what God was saying is this, that the altar which was going to

be just a mound of earth or unhewn stone, would be an altar which He would shape and not them! But here's the interesting feature, there were two distinct types of altars in Israel; there was that one spoken of in Exodus 20 and there's another one spoken of further on in Exodus, the altar of the tabernacle which was shaped and built where Israel were to come to worship and to keep the Law. What about the altar which was not shaped? where was that to be placed, b&s? Where was it to be placed? The record says in all places where I record My name; so there were two distinct altars in Israel, one which was shaped and was located in Jerusalem and where they had to come to keep the Law, and one that was not shaped which could be found anywhere providing it was based upon the principles of God's name. And there went a burden of earth back to Syria, and an authorized altar was built under the shadow of the god Rimmon. And a man worshipped that! and when Jesus was talking to the woman of Samaria, as to whether they should go to Gerizim or Jerusalem to worship? and He said, 'the hour's coming and now is, when neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father, but in every place; he that calleth upon Him in spirit and in truth, He said, you're worshipping!' And understanding the principle of Exodus 20, in all places where I record My name, Naaman took that earth back with him, and he built an altar in Syria. And who would ever doubt, b&s, that God had recorded His name with Naaman? Nobody!

Then we've got the problem of Rimmon! 'when I go to the house of Rimmon'; I'm not going to spend a long time on this, but some suggest that that's in the past tense. In the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge for example, they suggest for example, that it is all in the past tense, 'but when I had gone to the house of Rimmon in the past' Yahweh pardon this thing. Look at it that way and there's no problem, look at it in the sense that 'when I goeth into the house of Rimmon' in the future tense it becomes a problem. Did Elisha allow a compromise, b&s? I don't think so! There's only two ways that we can look at this, it's difficult to determine from the original Hebrew (as far as I'm concerned) but it seems to me that either we look at it in the sense that it is in the past tense 'when I have gone to the house of Rimmon in the past, I pray that Yahweh may forgive that' or as was expressed last night in the play, that he went there merely that the king might lean upon him, and when the king bowed, he himself might have physically been pulled over, but offering no allegiance whatsoever to Rimmon, and therefore, Elisha says 'well, the conscience and the motive is pure, go in peace'. Only those alternatives are the way we can look at that verse; in either case there would never be a prostitution of the principles of God, in the mind of Naaman. So there were many lepers in Israel but none of them was cleansed save Naaman the Syrian.

Now with your permission (it's a bit late) for the Melbournites, but I want to have just ten minutes upon a very very interesting personality, Gehazi. Verse 19, 'He said unto him, Go in peace; so he departed from him a little way', the margin says 'a little piece of ground'. He didn't get very far, did he? and I can imagine Gehazi, as we saw last night, rocking from one foot to another, looking at those garments. And his mind was filled with materialism; now look, this man knew the truth, his name, b&s, means 'the valley of vision'. And if you would like to make a note of this, the 22nd chapter of Isaiah and verse 1, Isaiah says, 'the burden of the valley of vision' and the two words he uses is

'Gehazi', and what was Isaiah's message? Isaiah's message in the 22nd chapter was against men who knew the truth, but because of the presents, materialism and the pleasures of this life they had left the truth for riotous living. And he started off that chapter by calling it the 'valley of vision'=Gehazi. And here's a lesson to all the young men and young women in the ecclesia, as well as the older ones in the ecclesia, and don't make any mistake about that, but here's a young fellow who's lost his life, lost everything, not only that, but here's a young fellow that had a mark put upon him, that was not only going to affect him, it was going to affect his children. And to brethren and sisters with children remember this, that we're responsible for our families. True the principle is that if the fathers eat sour grapes, the children's teeth are not set on edge', every man will answer for himself, but always remember this, b&s, the example we set in this life is the example our children are going to follow for good or ill. And Gehazi found that to his consternation; now I want you to notice what he's called in verse 20, he's given his full title, 'But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God' and that is his full title. Why? What that record is saying is this, 'I want you now, says God, to have a look at the man who was to be the successor of Elisha, as Elisha was of Elijah'. Any wonder the truth went out of existence and Israel was taken into captivity, with a successor like that on the scene! Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, there's his full title, and you know, b&s, the word 'servant' there means 'a boy'. The Hebrew word always calls Gehazi merely a boy; it never describes him as being a proper servant in the sense that Elisha was to Elijah, it never says he ministered unto Elisha as Elisha did to Elijah, he was just 'a boy', completely immature and he never grew up!

And he said within himself, 'Behold my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian', you see, he made a distinction of races; but God has said that He's no respecter of persons, but of whatever nation he is, if he obeys God, God will receive him! But you see, Gehazi was a Judaizer, 'this Syrian'; I'm a Jew. Why can't I have those garments? I'm a child of God, he's a dog'; that was his outlook. He was poison, wasn't he? He was a man that when the woman of Shunem came with a broken heart, the thing that outraged Gehazi was that that woman would dare outrage the dignity of Elisha. And he was going to boot her out; 'let her alone'. He didn't understand human compassion, and when Elisha put the dead staff in his hand and sent him racing toward Shunem, fully expecting the woman of Shunem to follow him, he found to his surprise she had no faith in Gehazi; she'd read him and she knew where the power lied. She read him like a book because she was a great woman, and she perceived that that man was a 'holy man of God', and she perceived that Gehazi was a hypocrite! And she divided the two of them, and she said, 'as Yahweh liveth and as thou liveth' (Gehazi didn't live, she wiped him off). She knew him, and this man who said 'this Syrian', now look what he said! He said, 'my master hath spared', listen to the term he uses 'hath spared' he spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as Yahweh liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him'. The word 'somewhat' in the Hebrew literally means 'a speck', I'll just take a speck, and look at the speck he took! You ought to get the value of that speck, the value of that speck came in terms of money to something like \$1600 for one man! but he made the request for two men because he wanted to cover his expenses. You know, it's absolutely dreadful, 'As Yahweh liveth', fancy using that phrase!

Now quickly turn to Jeremiah 4 and you'll see the importance of using that phrase correctly, reading from verses 1 and 2, the prophet says, 'If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith Yahweh, return unto Me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of My sight, then shalt thou not remove. And thou shalt swear, Yahweh liveth, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory'. My dear b&s, that verse of scripture is right on the ball of the principles which Gehazi prostrated before Naaman. Now what that verse is saying is this, if Israel will return to God, and if they will say 'Yahweh liveth' and their motives are true, just and righteous, the nations was be impressed. Now Naaman went away with an elevated idea of Elisha; his mind was elevated because he was staggered, I mean he would be swimming with joy (you can imagine him on his way back to his wife, imagine just that factor alone) the reunion with his wife and the fact that now they could live in a decent happy atmosphere; but quite apart from that, over and above that was the fact that he knew Yahweh, the God of Israel, that he was in the truth, and his mind would be swimming with joy and Elisha would be on a pinnacle of glory with Naaman, because the man never asked for a thing; he'd sworn in truth, in righteousness and in judgment, why, he didn't want this for himself. And you see, this idea was in Naaman's mind, the elevation of the servants of God; this Gehazi, b&s, the great crime that he committed was not simply that he wanted things for himself, he was going to pull down in the mind of Naaman that enormous thing that Elisha had built up; and he was going to cause his master to go into disrepute, and that's where we've got to be careful! Look, I'm a brother, a brother, and you're brethren and sisters of Jesus Christ, sons and daughters of the living God; and every time we mix with the Gentiles and demonstrate to them, that we would like 'a speck' of what they've got, we're pulling down in their minds the estimation of Christadelphians, but that doesn't matter! But 'Christadelphia' means 'a brother of Christ' and Jeremiah says, that if we sware 'Yahweh liveth', let's live as though He did live, not as if He was dead; in truth, in righteousness and in justice, and the nations will be impressed. And here's a man who says, 'Yahweh liveth, I'll go and take a little speck off of him', a blatant hypocrite.

And away he went! And we read in verse 21, 'So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from his chariot', see how quick he was? b&s, he lighted down from his chariot, the original Hebrew says and as the Septuagint version has it, 'he fell or he sprang' from his chariot. Now you remember the fellow when he came up to Elisha, he rode up in his chariot, now he sees Gehazi, he's only a servant of Elisha, he sees him coming and he almost falls out of his chariot, he springs out of it to get on the ground. What a remarkable change of character, sprang out of his chariot to get on the ground, and who's that for? a servant, a mere servant and he's on the ground to him. And this was the attitude that had been induced in the mind of Naaman. And the greedy hypocrite, 'my master hath sent me', and there was the damage done! Oh, of course, it wouldn't destroy in Naaman's mind the principles because of the comment of the Lord Jesus we know that; it wouldn't destroy those principles but you see, b&s, there must have been somewhat of a disappointment in Naaman's mind; oh, yes, he said, I'm glad to give it to you (as anyone would, wouldn't you be glad to give the things for what he'd done for you?) but no doubt in his mind,

there was a little bit of disappointment that Elisha had succumbed even if it was for other people, which Naaman perhaps wouldn't doubt, but there's just that tinge of disappointment and it spread an overcast over the whole thing that had been done, and you can imagine Yahweh looking at that, and frowning upon it!

'He'd only gone a little piece of ground', we read that two of the servants, because the money was so heavy, they had to carry it back for Gehazi and he took it and put it, in verse 24, in a 'tower', the word is 'ophel' which means the 'foundation of a house'. And because Naaman had only gone a little piece of ground, and had come back towards the house of Elisha, it would seem in all probability, that Gehazi hid the money right under his master, because, not only that, b&s, but he couldn't have been gone only a matter of minutes because when his master said to him, 'where have you been Gehazi?' he said, 'I haven't been anywhere' and that shows it must have been a few yards that Naaman had gone, and Elisha was probably out of sight, and he probably shot around the corner of the house, made sure of what he could get, the servants had to carry it back a short distance, he stuffed it under the house, and pretended nothing had happened! Where have you been the valley of vision? Me? Nowhere! Oh!

Do you know what Elisha said to him? 'Went not mine heart with thee', now actually in the Hebrew that is understood in this way, 'neither did my consciousness go anywhere either, Gehazi'. What Elisha was saying is this, where have you been, Gehazi? Ah, me! nowhere. Well, says Elisha, I've got a consciousness of all that you do, and my consciousness never went anywhere either; it wasn't away it was here with me, and I saw you! So you didn't go anywhere, neither did my consciousness, but it knows everything that you've done, because you're my servant. 'Is it a time, Gehazi, to be receiving money?' Look at the principles, b&s, is it a time now, for Christadelphians to receive of the world? Is it a time when brethren and sisters sweat over the bible to preach the truth on Sunday night to the stranger? is it a time when we've got brethren going out knocking on doors, to try and bring interested friends to the truth? is it a time when men and women give up their spare time night after night to preach the truth to people that they might be cleansed from leprosy, that their other Christadelphian friends should go out into the world so that the stranger can say to them, 'is that what your people do? And how many times has that been said to you? when you're trying to inculcate into a stranger the principles of separateness. Oh, but Mr. So-and-so isn't he a Christadelphian? Why, I saw him there or there! Isn't it time, b&s, with the Lord at the door? with the door swinging open in Palestine, with earthquakes in Turkey, with Russia in Europe, with Russia now about to swerve into the Middle East, with Israel on the brink of destruction, with Cambodia split in half, with Thailand next, Burma next, Malaysia next, Philippines half gone, Indonesia next and Australia next? Is it a time for Christadelphians to be taking of the world? Is it a time for Christadelphians to have their minds saturated with materialism? Look, what Elisha said to this man, he didn't say to receive money! He didn't say it was time to receive money, garments, oliveyards, vineyards, sheep, oxen, menservants, maidservants? He read him like a book, didn't he? and every word was rivetted into him, revealing the stark reality of a mind that was immersed in materialism. And every word went home like a shot, money, garments, houses, cars, position, social status, friendship with the world, picture theatres,

television sets, outside friends, Catholics better than Christadelphians, running your brethren down; is it time, b&s, for this? And it's in the ecclesias, and if I speak strongly, forgive me, but it is in the ecclesias! and it's time gone, and there's no time for it!

There's no time for these things, it's time, b&s, to say, NO! as Elisha did, 'before Yahweh before whom I stand, I will receive nothing according to what He dictates' and He dictates the Word of God, and that man went out leprous as snow. 'The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto him'. Why? because when Naaman was a great man, when he was #2 in Syria, when he was respected by his contemporaries, lifted up of face before the king, when he was a hero in the sight of everybody, he was leprous; he was on the ground now at ground level, he was clean, and Gehazi wanted his position, alright, have it! You're rich Gehazi, you're on your way to glory, you're going to spread abroad and make a name for yourself. You want his position, you've got it! LEPROSY, and that was the dreadful end of the story! The alternatives are quite clear, b&s, and we know where we stand!

As this camp comes to a close, we want to bear in mind, the lessons which we've learnt. And we pray that the influence of the school which we've had over this weekend, may never be forgotten, and we're going to carry these principles away with us. And I repeat the warning, b&s, and the warning is this; we pray for the coming of Christ earnestly, and it's been uppermost in our minds for many years, but the emphasis is going to shift a little as time goes by, and I'm not a prophet of Yahweh, I've never professed to be that, I'm one of you. But I'm not blind either, and I'm telling you this, there are events transpiring not only in the Middle East but in Southeast Asia, which are going to mean trouble for this country. Dismiss this if you like, as a scare, but time will tell, that the day is going to come, if the Lord delays, that we in this country are going to be called upon, I believe, to exercise the greatest faith! There are indications, b&s, and I watch this ever so carefully, right down through Southeast Asia, and the troubles that are going on in Laos, in Thailand, in Cambodia and Vietnam, and they're not isolated wars, but are connected in a chain of events which stretches from China to the southern shores of Indonesia, and they are 400 miles from Darwin; and there are 1,500,000,000 people in Southeast Asia, 2/3 of whom go to bed every night starving, and our farmers are protesting in the streets because they can't get enough for their grain, and they've had their wheat quota cut back. And I believe the salvation of this country, in peace and quiet, and I believe, b&s, that over the years we've enjoyed such prosperity and peace in this country, has been solely responsible, because of the Christadelphians; and I told you, you can dismiss it and do as you like, but Paul says, 'all things are for your sakes'. We're the children of God and He cares for us and He loves us, and if we didn't believe that we wouldn't be in the truth. And we're going to make a clarion call now, for the dedication of everyone here, that we stand and maintain the standards of truth, with a rigid discipline firstly of self, and then an appeal to brethren and sisters to come and help. We wave no flag, b&s, for any cause, I am not a partisan; I'm waving no flag for any man or any group a man may lead. I wave a flag for Christ because I believe in Him! and I believe in God, and I believe if we all wave flags for that cause, and if they fly brightly, we'll gather to that banner every brother and sister who has truth in them; and we want to take that still small voice (we're going to sing about it at the end of this

meeting) and we're going to take that back to our meetings and instill that in the mind of others. We're going to take no notice of criticism, of petty jealousy or of envy, we're going to pity people who talk like that! and we're going to love them, because we ourselves have been there. And we're going to overcome all those things by a spirit of love and truth, that will be so powerful as the still small voice, that it will sweep aside all those criticisms and divisions, and bring us together as one in Christadelphia, based solidly on truth! as it is in the Word of God, expressed in our statement of faith and expounded in the works of our pioneers. And we're going to be Christadelphians that are old-fashioned in doctrine and in habits, and we're going to stand out from this world, b&s, that as the world disintegrates, and goes into the abyss, that we're going to be the salt of the earth, everyone of us, the salt of the earth! And I won't bother to spell out the converse, because it's so horrible, that if we relax and spill out the treasure which we've got, then God has a situation ripe in the world, which can destroy us and our children! And these are the facts of life, remote they use to be, but they're coming closer, and tomorrow or the day after, who knows! Reality in this country, trouble, a time of trouble such as never was to every nation upon the face of the earth; oh, b&s, why can't we? why can't we stand in the stream of Jordan with our feet firm and drive those waters back, that others might come with us into the Promised Land? Why can't we stand firm together? we've got every reason to do these things, and all we've got to do, each and everyone of us, is to get down to that book, it's no good unless we do it individually; we've got to give ourselves time, we've got to find time, we've got to adjust our lives to get time to get down to that book, that we can talk one with the other of the glorious principles of truth, and if we do that, then we've got nothing to fear!

Now what was the life of Elisha all about? It was the power of the still small voice, b&s, in Israel. And what was the sum result of what he did? Well, when the world outside was going its way, and Yahweh began to cut Israel short, he was extending the hope of the sons of the prophets, that they might come together to study the Word of God! Now let's thank God, every one of us, let's thank God for what He's given us, and let us determine, b&s, that in appreciation for what He's done for us, that each and everyone of us will so dedicate him or herself to the truth, that what we've got here will never be lost. It will never be lost! and we will have established the truth on the earth that at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, 'shall I find the faith on the earth?' Let Him have the determination to say, 'Yes, I will'. And He will, I believe, but it will be a minority of people, and let us pray that that minority will be Christadelphia, welded together against the wilds of the world. Let us not be Gehazis, b&s, let us be Naamans, and the leprosy of sin and death will pass from us and we'll stand clean in the sight of God!