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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2330 ~ Naaman Healed of Leprosy.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Leprosy is a disease caused by a skin and nerve infection from bacteria that's spread through skin-to-skin contact. Early symptoms on the hands and feet include light-coloured or red skin patches with reduced sensation and numbness. Once a person with leprosy begins appropriate treatment, they quickly become non-infectious. Leprosy these days can be cured within 6 to 12 months by multi-drug therapy and early diagnosis; however, if not treated, over time it causes the nerve ends to die with the loss of fingers and toes.

During the Old Testament time in the Bible when Elisha was God's prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel, any person who contracted leprosy was to be isolated from healthy people to stop the spread of the disease. This meant that leprosy sufferers became outcasts from their family and the community, and were unable to work or support themselves. Because the consequences of contracting leprosy were so distressing and life changing, people feared the illness, as there was no known cure at that time. They didn't understand how they caught the disease or how to prevent it from spreading.

In today's *Bible Adventure,* Naaman, the top commander in the army of the king of Aram (now known as Syria), started showing signs of leprosy on his skin. At this time in history, the Syrian army had made raids into Israeli territory and some Israelites had been captured and taken as slaves. As a result, Naaman's wife had a small Israeli girl as her servant. This young girl gave a faithful witness for the Lord God of Israel and told Naaman's wife that if Naaman went to visit the prophet Elisha, in the city of Samaria, then Naman would be cured of his leprosy.

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After Naaman came out of the Jordan River as a cured man, he fully believed in the God of Israel and wanted to show his deep gratitude for his healing to Elisha. So Naaman went back to Elisha's house to give him a gift of appreciation. This time Elisha met with him, but Elisha refused to take any money or valuable clothing that Naaman tried to offer him. Being non-Israelite, Naaman didn't realise that God's grace is free and was not something that could be purchased. Elisha also wanted Naaman to know that it was God, and not Elisha, who'd healed him. In doing this, Elisha didn't act like the false prophets living in Israel, who gave their religion in exchange for personal gains.

By his conversion to Israel's God, this non-Israelite man put many of the Israelites to shame. While most Israelites were turning to Baal worship, this formerly pagan commander was now vowing to never again make sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. When God's covenant people reject Him, then God will raise up others to be the ones who receive His covenant blessings instead.

This happy story of Naaman ends with the sad account of Elisha's greedy servant, Gehazi. Naaman hadn't gone very far on his way home when Gehazi ran after his chariot. Gehazi had reasoned to himself that Naaman had brought with him plenty of silver and that he wouldn't miss a bit. Gehazi told lies to Naaman against Elisha, saying that Elisha had changed his mind and wanted some of Naaman's gifts to help someone else. In doing this, he brought discredit onto both Elisha and Elisha's God. Yet Naaman now acted differently to this news than he would have before his healing; he was now a humble man. He got down from his chariot to greet Gehazi with respect and was eager to give Gehazi all that he asked for, and more.

Because a talent of silver was heavy to carry, Naaman sent servants back with Gehazi to help carry the two talents of silver Gehazi had accepted. Gehazi had made Elisha look just like the false prophets who used religion for personal profit. When Gehazi and the servants arrived back at Elisha's place, Gehazi hid what he'd gained. When Elisha asked Gehazi where he'd been, Gehazi denied going anywhere! Once a lie is told, it's easier for a person to tell the next lie until they come rolling off the tongue without effort or a personal conscience sounding the alarm!

Having been enlightened in his spirit by God's Spirit regarding what Gehazi had done, Elisha knew what Gehazi had done and rebuked him for it. With the money he'd obtained, Gehazi was likely planning to purchase some of the good things that Elisha named: olive groves and vineyards, flocks and herds – with servants to take care of them. We aren't told what happened to the money and whether Gehazi gave it back to Naaman or not. However, Gehazi received a just punishment from God for his selfishness, dishonour and disception: he was afflicted with Naaman's leprosy, and his descendants also. Gehazi left Elisha's presence as white as snow from an advanced case of leprosy and was now an Israelite outcast. More than that, he could no longer enjoy the great privilege and blessing of walking with Elisha in the service of the Lord. Gehazi had lied to Naaman, to Elisha and to himself, but he couldn't lie to God. Gehazi became poor by trying to getting rich the wrong way.

Why did Gehazi give in to his temptation to covet Naaman's money and outfits of clothing? He'd seen that Elisha had refused to accept anything from Naaman and he should have left things at that too. All the time Gehazi had served Elisha, he'd never lacked food or anything else. His needs had all been met. But like some people, he lived with a secret discontentment. Many people will ask themselves what they're achieving in life. Have they improved their finances, possessions, career or social position in the last one, five or 10 years?

The problem with these attainments is that contentment in them soon fails when the stock market crashes, or the possessions are ruined by fire or rain, or well-paying employment is lost, or health problems cut social ties with family and friends. All things we see, touch and want here on earth are just temporary, and fail the test of eternity. Who you are here on earth in character and relationship with God goes with you into eternity; and whatever you own or possess here on earth stays here.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew, Chapter 6: "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." So we should ask how we can lay up treasure in heaven.

We are to treasure the Lord Jesus as most important of all. When Jesus is our treasure, Jesus will show us how to live in step with Him and please His Father in Heaven. In gratitude back, we will want to commit our resources, our money, our time, and our talents, – our all, to His kingdom work needed in this world. Our motivation for what we do is important – we're to do everything for God's glory, and not our own. When we live sacrificially for Jesus' sake and serve Him by serving the body of believers in Christ as well as others who come across our path in life, we store up treasure of blessings and rewards in heaven. Possessions on earth are not for us to accumulate and be our source of pride; instead, God will show us how to distribute and use them in ways which honour Christ and bring joy to our minds.

Some Christians display more visible gifts of the Holy Spirit inside the church, including teaching, singing or playing a musical instrument. Such Christians might be tempted to use their gift for their own glory. Those who use their God-given talents or spiritual gifts coveting the praise of men, rather than seeking God's glory, are warned in the Bible that they have already received their 'payment' or 'reward' here and now, and in full. The applause of people was the limit of many of the Pharisees' reward.

When we understand all that God has in store for us in heaven, why would we ever want to work for temporary worldly praise when we can receive God's everlasting reward one day soon in heaven? In 1st Corinthians, Chapter 3, it says: "The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose and each will be rewarded according to his own labour."

The Bible mentions rewards that await the believer who serves the Lord faithfully in this world. We are warned not to lose our full reward by following after false teachers or drifting away from our faith. This is why it's so important to be reading God's Word daily, so that we can recognise God's truth from falsehood when we hear it.

The treasures that await the child of God in heaven will far outweigh any trouble, inconvenience or persecution that we may face here on earth. In Romans, Chapter 8, Paul says: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Do not live like Gehazi, thinking that you can serve two masters, both God and money, for you will find that you cannot. In Matthew, Chapter 7, Verse 33, the Lord Jesus assures us of this promise: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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