

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

Naaman's Example of Obedience

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Why are we to fear God? Because it is fear that causes us to obey His commands, even when we do not understand why. Some may say it is love that causes us to obey God's commands. Many of us loved our parents as much as it was possible for a child to love them, but we did many things in obedience to them because of the fear of the consequences if we did not obey.

Now, let us consider water baptism. Although we know from 1 Peter 3:21, Acts 2:38, and Acts 22:16 that baptism is necessary for sins to be removed, do we understand why it is that being buried in water is necessary to receive this benefit? Knowing the goodness and the severity of God (Romans 11:22) and knowing there will be terror for those who have not obeyed when all stand before Him in judgment (1 Corinthians 5:9-11), what will **your** answer be when He asks if you were baptized in water for the remission of your sins? God tells us this burial in water portrays the image of Jesus' dying, being buried, and being raised from the grave (Romans 6). At the judgment, will you say, "Lord, I just could not see any reason why it was necessary to be baptized in water." Those who believe God's Word know He will answer, "I told you that, if you believed the gospel and were baptized for the remission of sins, you would be saved. Since you did not obey Me in this matter, you must be cast into everlasting torment with the devil and his angels!" Let's look at the example of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-5. This powerful, brave, wealthy man had leprosy, a fatal disease. A young Jewish girl - a servant in Naaman's house - told his wife about a man in Israel that could cure Naaman. Naaman took generous gifts to the king of Israel, rather than to Elisha, the man of God. The frightened king, knowing **he** could not heal Naaman, was glad when Elisha called for Naaman. Without even coming out of his house, Elisha sent his servant to tell Naaman to dip 7 times in the Jordan River to be cured. Was there any power in the Jordan River to heal leprosy? Naaman left Elisha's house in anger, for he had expected a more elaborate effort to heal. He much preferred to dip in the water of the rivers of his country. Had God said simply, "Dip 7 times in water," Naaman **could have** dipped in the rivers of his country. But, God specified the Jordan River. The servants of Naaman reminded him that, if he had been asked to do some great thing, he would have done it, so why not just do the simple act that the man of God had told him to do. When Naaman decided to obey God's Word, did he just sprinkle some water from the Jordan River on his face? Did he just pour some water on his head? No, he dipped himself in the Jordan River. After the sixth dip, what was his physical condition? He was still a leper. What if Naaman had said, "It isn't going to work," and stopped after the sixth time? He would have gone home a leper. But, when he dipped the seventh time, he was cured; the Bible says his skin became as the skin of a little child! The plan for his cleansing was not devised by man. The cure did not come when he believed the

instruction of the prophet and repented, going to the Jordan River. The cure came **after** he fulfilled the command of God completely.

The baptism of the New Testament which came into force after Jesus' ascension, the "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5, is water baptism. Readers, why would one stop short of obeying all God's commands regarding baptism? The one who stops short of obeying all that God says about water baptism still has his sins, just as surely as Naaman still had leprosy until he obeyed all that God said to do in order to be cured. What power is there in the water of baptism? There is no more power in the water of baptism than there was in the Jordan River. As Naaman found out, however, the power is in the obedience to God's commands. Today, at the point of obedience, one's sins are washed away!