

## ***Background Characters in the Old Testament***

### ***Gehazi: Missing the Mark***

Lesson #12 for December 18, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 39:4-6; 2 Kings 4; 5; 8:1-6; Jeremiah 9:23,24; John 13:1-17; 1 Timothy 6:10.

1. This lesson covers the biblical history of a man who apparently had great opportunities for service but threw it all away in his greed for money.
2. We know nothing about Gehazi's background. We do not know what kind of family he came from or how he was called by Elisha. Everything we know about him is found in 2 Kings 4; 5; and 8:1-6.
3. But, Gehazi was in a very enviable position. He had the privilege of associating with one of the greatest prophets of all time. He saw many miracles. He may even have known Elijah. Remember that Elijah had been swept up to heaven in a fiery chariot while walking beside Elisha! (2 Kings 2:1-18) When Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, (Deuteronomy 21:17; 2 Kings 2:9) he was just asking for the portion usually given to the firstborn son. The firstborn son was expected to care for the parents in their old age.
4. Elisha's ministry may not have been as fiery and glamorous as Elijah's. But, raising someone from the dead certainly was pretty impressive! (2 Kings 4:32-37) Following the example of Elijah, Elisha took prime responsibility for the schools of the prophets which by that time had expanded to six different institutions across the nation. What kind of association do think Gehazi had with those institutions and the "sons of the prophets" who attended them? Did Gehazi teach any classes in those schools?
5. Gehazi was described as a servant. In the Bible we have descriptions of various kinds of servants. Eleazar was such a faithful servant that for a long time, he was regarded as the likely inheritor of Abraham's wealth. He was trusted with choosing a wife for Isaac! (Genesis 24:2-4) Joseph was so faithful in his service that Potiphar left everything in his charge except his wife. (Genesis 39) Each of us has the opportunity of being a servant of God and having the power of the Holy Spirit poured out upon us. (Acts 2:18) Moses was described as "the servant of the Lord." (Exodus 14:31; Deuteronomy 34:5)
6. Servants, of course, have one prime responsibility, and that is to meet the needs and carry out the wishes and wants of their master. That could involve carrying messages, going on errands, or doing various tasks to assist the one they are serving. In the case of Gehazi, it was apparently some kind of apprenticeship. Of course, we do not know what would have happened to Gehazi if he had remained faithful. However, considering the way Elijah trained Elisha, it seems logical that Elisha intended to hand off his "prophetic line" to Gehazi.
7. The disciples of Jesus all hoped to be prime minister of Israel some day! They followed the humble Nazarene hoping for wealth and power and fame! Finally, in His last night on this earth with them, Jesus—taking the role of servant—by washing their feet, opened their eyes and started them thinking about a new kind of kingdom. (John 13:1-17) Try to imagine what it would have been like to be a disciple of Jesus. How would you describe the servant-leadership of Jesus?
8. One of the most difficult lessons for selfish human beings to learn is putting the needs of others before themselves. What are the best opportunities in our lives to learn such loving care for others? Under ideal circumstances, children should learn that from their parents and have it reinforced as they, in turn, instruct and guide and demonstrate for their

children.

9. There is a modern parable told about a righteous man who died. When he arrived at the pearly gates, St. Peter asked him if he had any last request before he entered the holy city. "Yes," the man said. "I would like to visit 'hell'!" So an angel escorted him to "hell" where he saw that all of the inhabitants looked like skin-and-bones ghosts! The people looked like they had not eaten for months. As they were looking around, the man heard a bell ringing. It was the dinner bell, and everyone was rushing toward a long narrow building which was apparently the "cafeteria." But, at the door, each person was fitted with "tubes" that fit over his elbows, prevented the elbows from bending! They sat at tables facing each other and each struggled as hard as he could to get something into his mouth, but without success. It was awful! Soon, the bell rang again, the meal was over, and no one had eaten a thing.  
When they returned to heaven, they were just getting acquainted with the area when a bell rang! "What was that?" the man asked. People were walking toward a long narrow building. Everyone look happy and well nourished. As they arrived at the door, angels put those same "tubes" on their arms so they could not bend them. But, when they sat down, each person picked up some of the lovely food and began to feed the person across the table from him!
10. We first learn of Gehazi in 2 Kings 4:8-17. What do we see Gehazi doing? Gehazi was ministering to the people under the guidance and direction of Elisha. Elisha even seemed to value the opinions of Gehazi. Gehazi was helpful in noting the fact that the woman of Shunem had no child.
11. Read 2 Kings 4:18-31. Some years later, we pick up the story when the woman's young son suddenly developed a life-threatening illness and died the same day. He may have had a ruptured "berry" aneurysm, a ruptured arteriovenous malformation in the brain, or even cerebral malaria. Since she had been given that son miraculously at the command of Elisha, the woman could think of only one thing—getting back to Elisha. She traveled as quickly as possible to get there. She was determined not to let anyone—even Gehazi—prevent her from getting into the immediate presence of her benefactor. When the woman fell down before Elisha and took hold of his feet, why do you think Gehazi tried to push her away? Had Gehazi ever have to protect Elisha from other suppliants in the past? Or, was he just becoming more callous because of his selfishness? Elisha managed to raise the boy back to life even though Gehazi could not do anything.
12. We must always remember that selfishness is the hallmark of Satan's kingdom. The followers of Satan are always looking for ways to take care of "number one." On the other hand, God's kingdom is a kingdom based on love. Everyone there is seeking ways to serve the needs of others.
13. Read 2 Kings 5:1-19. A young Israelite girl was captured, taken as a slave, and ended up serving in the home of Naaman, a general in the military forces of Syria. When it became known that Naaman had contracted leprosy, a dreaded skin disease, the young Israelite girl remembered the famous stories of healings that had been performed by Elisha. She mentioned to her master's wife the possibility that Elisha could heal him. The very idea that someone might be able to heal his disease led Naaman to set everything else aside and travel immediately—with appropriate letters of introduction—to Israel to seek healing. He took with him an enormous amount of money!
14. First, he went to the king of Israel and asked him where he could be healed. The king panicked. He was certain that this was some kind of excuse for the Syrians to start a war with Israel. But then, Naaman was directed to Elisha.

15. Elisha instructed Naaman to go the Jordan River and wash himself seven times. After receiving Elisha's instructions, at first, Naaman rejected the idea. Why should he wash in the Jordan River when he knew that Syrian rivers were much nicer. But, his servants pointed out that it was a very simple request, costing him nothing. And after the seventh time down into the water, miraculously, he came forth whole. Suddenly, Naaman who had questioned Elisha's credentials and the power of Israel's God became a firm believer. At first, he had looked at the matter from a merely human standpoint without considering the possibility of real divine intervention.
16. He then returned to Elisha, very humbly addressing Elisha as a servant would and offering a huge reward for his cure. Shouldn't Elisha have accepted some of the money and used it for the schools of the prophets? No doubt to his great surprise, Elisha refused any compensation of any kind and sent him on his way with two donkey loads of dirt! (2 Kings 5:17)
17. Why did Naaman want to carry two donkey loads of earth back to his home in Damascus? In Elisha's day, people of many of the surrounding nations believed that there were different gods and that each god was attached to a certain portion of the earth. If one was in a country, he was expected to worship the god of that country. But, if one was in another country, he should worship the god of that country. Naaman was convinced that the God of Israel was far superior to any other god he had heard of. He wanted to serve Him, and the best way he could think of to do that was to carry some of Israel's soil back to Damascus so he could worship God on His own soil!
18. If only that were the end of the story! Gehazi, perhaps struggling with how to make ends meet, heard the conversation between Elisha and Naaman. He was sure that he could make up a story that would explain Elisha's change of mind and, thus, enrich himself at the expense of this Syrian.
19. Was Gehazi aware that God was omniscient? Was he aware of the writings of Moses in the Pentateuch as well as the writings of Joshua and Samuel, etc.? Did he know about the Psalms of David such as Psalm 139 where David clearly spelled out the fact that God knows everything and is in every place?
20. No doubt, Naaman and his servants were somewhat puzzled by the strange behavior of Gehazi; but they were more than happy to give him all that he asked for—even double what he asked. (2 Kings 5:20-27) Gehazi quickly returned home. When he approached Elisha, the questions started coming. Rather than confessing what he had been doing, he lied to God's prophet. Then Elisha informed him that God had already informed him of all that had taken place. Then the leprosy which had been removed from Naaman fell upon Gehazi.
21. Can you think of other Bible characters who were overcome by greed? What about Balaam? Solomon? Judas? Annanias and Sapphira? And Simon? (Acts 8:12-24)
22. Gehazi had the privilege of observing a large number of miracles. What is the role of miracles in our Christian experience? Can you think of an example when someone's faith was greatly strengthened by the performance of a miracle? Or, are miracles primarily just to get our attention?
23. How do you think Elisha supported himself? Did he pay Gehazi for being his assistant? Did Gehazi really believe that he could pull off that deception so that neither God nor Elisha would ever know? What was Gehazi's biggest sin? Taking all that money? Or lying to the prophet?
24. Ellen White said that Judas repeatedly stole from the purse that he carried which was

meant to be for the benefit of Jesus and His disciples. (DA 559.2; RH, August 7, 1900 par. 5) Why did Jesus apparently overlook that greed until it was too late? Why did God allow Balaam to proceed all the way to Palestine and attempt to curse the children of Israel to earn money? (Numbers 22-25) God blessed Solomon with a great deal of wealth. Didn't He understand that would be a great trap for Solomon?

25. Selfish human beings can be incredibly self-deceptive. No doubt, we learn that from Satan himself who is the ultimate example of self-deceit! Up until the third coming of Christ, he thinks that somehow or other, he is going to win in the great controversy! How foolish are we when we believe him?
26. The Bible only mentions Gehazi on one further occasion. (2 Kings 8:1-6) Was it a good idea for the woman of Shunem to go and live among the Philistines? Why was she coming at the end of that drought to appeal to the king? Remember that property was always supposed to be returned to the original owner at the end of the seven-year cycle. We do not know why Gehazi was at the king's palace. But, as he was explaining the miracles that had been performed at Elisha's command, suddenly, the woman of Shunem—probably now a widow—showed up requesting to receive back her property which she had abandoned during the seven-year drought. While Gehazi was telling of what may have seemed to the king to be fantastic tales, living proof showed up.
27. Did this final encounter with the woman and her son lead to repentance on the part of Gehazi? Or, was he just reminded of what might have been?
28. There is only one kind of "wealth" that really counts and which is worth boasting about on this earth. That meaningful wealth is knowing God. (Jeremiah 9:23,24)
29. Did Gehazi spend the rest of his life just thinking about his past and what might have been? Did he ever truly repent of his sin? What happened to all that money? Unfortunately, we know nothing of the rest of his life. Was his story just to warn us not to follow his example?
30. Gehazi might have been a mighty prophet of God if he had remained faithful to his calling. That one sin has led us to despise his name. No one names his children after him! Certainly, he must have felt sorry for what happened.
31. The "love of money" is one of the greatest temptations known to mankind. (1 Timothy 6:10) It is probably the prevailing sin of our day! How can we as Christians avoid that trap? Everything on this earth belongs to God. He created all of it. Why do we sometimes get the feeling that some of it is "ours" and that we have "earned" it? Every talent or skill that we have comes from God. Do we use His means for His ends? Or, do we make Gehazi's mistake and take advantage of every opportunity to get more for ourselves?

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