

Background Characters in the Old Testament Lesson 12 4Q 2010

Gehazi: Missing the Mark

SUNDAY

Who was Gehazi? He was Elisha's servant. The lesson emphasizes his role as servant.

Read first paragraph, "Being a servant..." thoughts?

What do you think about the idea of being a servant?

Let's list the attributes of a faithful servant?

- Obedience
- Loyalty
- Trustworthiness
- Faithfulness
- Willingness to listen and be taught

Consider Biblical servants, can you name any of note?

- Abraham's chief servant
- Joseph
- Naaman's servant – who advised Naaman to follow Elisha's advice
- Jesus

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

Does the Bible teach the reality that God's kingdom is the kingdom of service, where, in love, we all serve each other?

Then how do we understand John 15:15, when Jesus said to His disciples, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."

Many of you have heard that A. Graham Maxwell, author of *Servants or Friends* died this week. Graham spent his life working to spread the truth about our God of love. He emphasized the idea that God actually wants friendship with us rather than mere servanthood.

Would you believe that this idea of friendship with God, that Christ has invited us to, is one point in which has been criticized? It is alleged that the idea of friendship with God diminishes the Biblical teaching of servanthood and creates an imbalanced concept of our relationship with God.

What is the balance between servants and friends and how do the concepts get distorted?

Is there a difference between friendly service and a serving friend?

What distortions of servanthood and friendship have you encountered?

- Servants do what the master says, no questions asked, they hear and obey.

- What about Abraham and Moses? Were they God's servants and friends? Did they ever question God?

What happens if we take the position that service means we obey without question, we simply do what the master says?

Do we develop as God would have us? Can a character be changed by mere obedience without thinking, without reason, without agreement?

A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. God does not want blind obedience He wants an intelligent obedience. Thus He invites us into friendship with Him to understand Him, His methods, principles and even plans!

Consider these quotes:

- He [Christ] maintained his disguise till he had interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to **an intelligent faith in his life, his character, his mission to earth, and his death and resurrection**. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, **not** because it was supported by his personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of his life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth. *The Signs of the Times*, Oct. 6, 1909.
- All whom God has blessed **with reasoning powers are to become intellectual Christians**. They are not requested to believe without evidence; therefore Jesus has enjoined upon all to search the Scriptures. Let the ingenious inquirer, and the one who would **know for himself** what is truth, **exert his mental powers** to search out the truth as it is in Jesus. Any neglect here is at the peril of the soul. **We must know individually the prescribed conditions of entering into eternal life**. . . . We cannot allow these questions to be settled for us by another's mind, or another's judgment. . . . We cannot trust the salvation of our souls to ministers, to idle traditions, to human authorities, or to pretensions. . . . **The Lord positively demands of every Christian an intelligent**

knowledge of the Scriptures. *Review and Herald*, March 8, 1887 (2RH 117:1:1 - 2:0); *The Medical Missionary*, May 1, 1892

Thoughts? What is the difference between friendly service and a serving friend? Does being a friend of God do away with service? Or the closer in friendship the great one serves if they have God's character reproduced within?

Graham's ministry has asked those who have been blessed by Graham, or have some story to tell to share it with them. This can be done at www.pineknoll.com

In 1984 Graham wrote the following:

I believe that the most important of all Christian beliefs is the one that brings joy and assurance to God's friends everywhere -- the truth about our Heavenly Father that was confirmed at such cost by the life and death of His Son.

God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be -- arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. Jesus said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." God is just as loving and trustworthy as His Son, just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious Person who values nothing higher than the freedom, dignity, and individuality of His intelligent creatures - - that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given. He even prefers to regard us not as servants but as friends.

This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting Good News that wins the trust and admiration of God's loyal children throughout the universe.

Like Abraham and Moses -- the ones God spoke of as His trusted friends -- God's friends today want to speak well and truly of our Heavenly Father. We covet as the highest of all commendations the words of God about Job: "He has said of Me what is right."

Thoughts?

What group of people in scripture is called God's servants?

But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his **servants the prophets.**" Rev 10:7

Who are the servants of God? And in this passage what did the servants announce? The mystery of God and what is that mystery?

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of **this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.** ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to **his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.** ¹² **In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.** Eph 3:8-12

Why can we approach in freedom and confidence? Is it because Jesus stands there to protect? Is the mystery that God has a secret payment, the blood of His Son, that if those who are sinners will claim then the Father won't see their sins and they can boldly enter the Father's presence? Is this the mystery?

How is the hidden mystery related to our ability to enter God's presence and the time when the seventh trumpet is about to blow?

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ **the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations,** but is now disclosed to the saints. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this

mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1:25-27

What is the mystery? Christ in you, renewal of heart and mind, regeneration, recreation, healing, restoration, being at-one with God. Why was it kept hidden? Because sin had not transpired and once sin did transpire Satan's lies obscured the truth about God and thus the mystery of His purpose has been hidden by lies.

Can we put the pieces together – what is the mystery? Why is it accomplished when the seventh trumpet is about to sound? And how is it related to our ability to enter freely into God's presence?

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that **when he appears, we shall be like him**, for we shall see him as he is. ³ Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 1John 3:2,3

It is as the seventh trumpet is about to sound, at the end of earth's history that God has a people on earth who have accepted the truth about Him and who, through the work of the Spirit are transformed in character to receive the law of love reproduced within them, and thus we are transformed to be like Jesus, again at-one with God and thus we are able to stand confident in God's presence, knowing Him to be exactly like Jesus!

Middle of the second paragraph the lesson states, "By serving his master Elijah, Elisha would be learning to put himself aside and serve others." Thoughts about this concept of servanthood, and how this brings us into unity with God?

Read bottom pink section, "How do we get..." thoughts?

MONDAY

The story is of the Shunnamite woman who builds a room on her home for Elisha, when Elisha asks what can be done for her Gehazi reports she has no son and her husband is old. So Elisha tells her

she will have a son. She does and later the son dies and is resurrected.

Thoughts?

Is this a miracle? Is it a miracle in the same order as that which happened to Mary the mother of Jesus? In other words, did the Holy Spirit come upon this woman and cause a pregnancy?

Or did God heal the physical malady of infertility and the pregnancy occurred in the normal way pregnancies occur?

In Scripture there are seven examples of miracle births that are metaphorical lessons teaching of The Virgin Birth and our Messiah:

1. Sarah- Isaac – Mount Moriah willing to be sacrificed
2. Rebekah – Jacob – who became Israel the father of the nation built upon twelve sons, Jesus the cornerstone of the church built upon twelve apostles
3. Rachel – Joseph – who sold into slavery (becomes a servant), became ruler to save people from famine
4. Monoah's wife – Samson – blessed with strength to deliver Israel from bondage of oppressors and rule over them
5. Hannah- Samuel – who became High Priest
6. Shunammite woman – child died and resurrected
7. Elizabeth – John the Baptist – who greatest of prophets

Thoughts?

Read bottom pink section "It sometimes..."

Thoughts?

Activities which activate selfish neural circuits will strengthen these circuits, activities which activate altruistic circuits will strengthen these circuits. By beholding we become changed.

We cannot, by force of will, change ourselves. We must fix our eyes on Christ, the truth about God as He revealed, to value and cherish Him and this will have a transforming effect.

But false pictures of God, or embracing the world's value set will only cause greater selfishness.

TUESDAY

The story of Naaman – let's read it from Scripture:

2Kings 5:1-19:

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

² Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴ Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. ⁵ "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. ⁶ The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy."

If you were the king how would you have reacted to this request?

⁷ As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"

What do you think of the king's response? What about today, if today a general comes to you with cancer and a letter from the President of the US along with gold, silver and gifts and the letter

says, “Here the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He has cancer. Please cure him.” What would you do? What if you lived in China and it was the Chinese Premiere who sent the letter with his general? Might you be stressed? Would you simply say – no problem, thank you God for giving me this opportunity to show your power and tell the man to go bathe 7 times in a river and he will be healed?

What did Elisha do?

⁸ When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: “Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.” ⁹ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”

¹¹ But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.

What do you think of Naaman’s response? As a kid I remember never understanding it. I thought, hey if he told me to do something that simple I would have been running to the river. Any thoughts as to why Naaman reacted the way he did? Was it pride?

The servants of Naaman, not hung up on pride, gave some counsel:

¹³ Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’” ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

¹⁵ Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.”

¹⁶ The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

Why do you think Elisha wouldn't take any reward? Shouldn't he have started a building fund for a new church? Shouldn't he have accepted gifts for the Samaritan Center? Shouldn't he have started a food bank or a new sanitarium? Why didn't he accept gifts?

What if pastors practiced the same philosophy today? Did Jesus get a salary? What about Paul or the Apostles? If pastors were required to support themselves like Paul did would it change the composition of the pastorate in anyway? Do you think we gain or lose in the church when the pastorate becomes a career rather than a calling?

¹⁷ “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. ¹⁸ But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.”

¹⁹ “Go in peace,” Elisha said.

What about Naaman's request? Was he compromising? What is the difference between Namaan and three worthies in Babylon?

What does this story tell us about God?

WEDNESDAY

Gehazi goes and seeks reward from Namaan:

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

Why do you think Gehazi did this? Any clues? Was it mere greed? Was there some element of prejudice or nationalism?

²¹ So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.

²² “Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.’”

²³ “By all means, take two talents,” said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. ²⁴ When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. ²⁵ Then he went in and stood before his master Elisha.

“Where have you been, Gehazi?” Elisha asked.

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

²⁶ But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants? ²⁷ Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and he was leprous, as white as snow. 2Kings 5:20-27

What do you think about this story, especially the part about Naaman’s leprosy clinging to Gehazi and his descendants forever?

Do you think this was leprosy as we know leprosy, Hansen’s disease? Most likely not as the skin doesn’t turn white as snow – it sounds more consistent with Vitiligo.

THURSDAY

Gehazi finds himself in the king's court and is telling about the Shunnamite woman and her son and son's resurrection. In the intervening years, during a famine, the woman left her country for seven years and when she returned someone else had occupied her home. She now, on the day Gehazi is telling his story, appears before the king and asks for her property to be returned, which the king so ordered.

Thoughts?

Each actor in history stands in his lot and place; for God's great work after His own plan will be carried out by men who have prepared themselves to fill positions for good or evil. In opposition to righteousness, men become instruments of unrighteousness. But they are not forced to take this course of action. They need not become instruments of unrighteousness, any more than Cain needed to. . . . {CC 371.2}

Men of all characters, righteous and unrighteous, will stand in their several positions in God's plan. With the characters they have formed, they will act their part in the fulfillment of history. In a crisis, just at the right moment, they will stand in the places they have prepared themselves to fill. Believers and unbelievers will fall into line as witnesses to confirm truth that they themselves do not comprehend. All will cooperate in accomplishing the purposes of God, just as did Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod. In putting Christ to death, the priests thought they were carrying out their own purposes, but unconsciously and unintentionally they were fulfilling the purpose of God. {CC 371.3}

Thoughts?

Read bottom paragraph, "And so Gehazi..." thoughts? Why could Gehazi only live in the past? Was his mistake such that God would

not allow him to repent? Did God refuse a repentant and humble Gehazi? What happened?

Read first two paragraphs on Friday's lesson, "Solemn..." thoughts?

Does this mean for such a sin a person cannot repent? Was Gehazi's sin worse than Peter's denial of Christ? Why the different outcome?

When the king tried to have the young prophet arrested and the king's arm withered, and the king pled for mercy what happened?

What do you think would have happened if Gehazi would have genuinely repented? Mercy or not?

Why does a false witness not go unpunished? What happens to the sinner that persists in sin?

FRIDAY

Question 1 read and discuss