

Who was Gehazi in the Bible?

Gehazi is mentioned in the Bible a few times, in the book of 2 Kings, as the servant of Elisha the prophet. Gehazi is featured in a story about a Shunammite woman's dead child whom Elisha raised to life (2 Kings 4:18-37) and later in a story about how the king of Israel restored that same woman's stolen property to her (2 Kings 8:1-6). But the most well-known story about Gehazi concerns a sin he committed, the cover-up he attempted, and the punishment that followed (2 Kings 5:15-27).

The story of Gehazi's downfall starts with a man named Naaman who commanded the army of Syria. Naaman was a mighty warrior, but had an incurable skin disease called leprosy (2 Kings 5:1). Elisha the prophet healed Naaman of his leprosy by the power of the Lord (verse 14), and Naaman praised God and offered Elisha a gift, which Elisha refused to accept (verse 16). Naaman departed for Syria, but Elisha's servant Gehazi ran after him and told a lie in order to get Naaman's gift for himself. In his lie, Gehazi invoked his master's name, making it appear as if Elisha wanted the gift after all: "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'" (verse 22).

Naaman was only too glad to comply—he was happy to be able to give something out of gratitude for his healing—and he urged Gehazi to take twice as much silver as he had asked for. Gehazi went home with the silver and the garments, which he hid. Later, when Gehazi came before Elisha, he lied again in response to Elisha's direct question as to where he had been (verse 25). It soon became apparent that Elisha knew the truth, its having been revealed to him by God: "Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you?" (verse 26). Then came Gehazi's punishment: "Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever" (verse 27). And, just like

that, Gehazi was a leper.

Elisha asked Gehazi an important rhetorical question: “Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?” (2 Kings 5:26). His point was that the miracles of God cannot be bought. The power of God in our lives is not meant for personal enrichment, and God’s servants should not be doing ministry for the sake of earthly rewards. Every one of us should remember that it is not money that cares for our needs—it is God (Hebrews 13:5).

Gehazi witnessed a miracle, an undeniable display of God’s power that involved the redemption of a man’s health, life, and soul. But all he could think about was money. Naaman needed to see the grace of God in the free and abundant blessing he received; Gehazi destroyed grace by demanding payment.

“The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10), and “you cannot serve both God and money” (Luke 16:13). After years of seemingly faithful service, Gehazi fell. His sin began in the heart, as he coveted what Naaman was offering. Other sins soon followed in a series of lies. Gehazi would have been wise to heed Moses’ warning of long ago, “You may be sure that your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).