

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIFTH YEAR, 1877. APRIL. FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

B. C. 894.] LESSON IV. GEHAZI THE LEPER; or, Covetousness punished. 2 Kings 5, 20-27. April 22.

EXPLANATORY.

SERVANT OF THE MAN OF GOD. The guilt of Gehazi is here indicated. Honored by association with a holy man, holding toward him a relation similar to that which Elisha himself had once held to Elijah, (1 Kings 3, 11), and with the prospect of one day succeeding him in the prophetic succession, Gehazi stood on an eminence of privilege which only made his fall the more signal. This Syrian. "This foreigner." As if it were no crime to plunder an alien. Not receiving. His mercenary soul can see no moral grandeur in the freeness of the captain's cure, but only a foolish loss of a good chance to make money. The Lord liveth. A blasphemy to bolster up his wicked purpose. I will. First the impulse, next the thought then the purpose of evil.

FOLLOWED. A guilty plan put into speedy execution. Naaman saw. Probably recognized him as the messenger of verse 10. Is it well? "Is it peace?" A common form of salutation in the East.

MY MASTER HATH SENT ME. How quickly the sin in the heart sends a lie to the lips? Mount Ephraim. A general name for the mountainous district in the center of Israel. A talent of silver. Worth from \$1,500 to \$2,000. A statement which carried deception upon its face. The worst evil was that Naaman was likely to suppose that the frivolous excuse came from the master instead of the servant, and thus misjudge the prophet and his religion.

BYCONTENT. As we would say "please." Bound. In two bags. In accordance with the Oriental custom of carrying money in bags, each holding a certain sum. Two... servants. A load of money and costly robes, burdening two servants. What a present to ask in behalf of two young men, from the common people, and devoted to the unworldly life of prophets!

TOWER. Or "hill." Probably a rise of ground which kept Elisha's house from view. Let the men go. Let they might be noticed, and bring his fraud to light. They departed. But his crime remained, and its results were already upon his track.

STOOD BEFORE HIS MASTER. What a contrast between the appearance and the heart. His look was that of the devoted servant; but his thoughts were where his guiltily-gotten treasure lay concealed. Whence comest thou, Gehazi? The prophet would test his honesty, and give him a chance to redeem his fault by confessing it. No whither. One lie requires another to hide it.

WENT NOT MINE HEART? The seer's inward glance had followed every step of the secret errand, and looked down into the black depths of his wicked heart. Is it a time? No time for selfish purposes, when a good deed is done, and impression made upon a heart for God and the truth, Olive-yards, and vineyards. While bringing his treasures of wickedness home Gehazi had been planning out the grand estate, with its orchards of olive and its bowers of grapes, its fleeces and fat oxen, its servants and maidens, which his booty should buy. Now, like lightning, the prophetic word flashes up his secret purpose to sight.

LEPROSY OF NAAMAN. An exchange, but who was the gainer? A momentary sin—but a life-long punishment; a secret sin, but a penalty which all might behold, seared into the pallid cheek and the burning brow. The promise of a life-time blasted in one fatal hour! He that might have been in "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," must sit down in the loathsome company of the lepers. To thy seed. The child of a leper, however fair in its infancy, is almost certain to develop the taint in after years. So do men's crimes infuse poison and disease into the blood of their descendants. He went out... a leper. The change was instantaneous and complete. Was the penalty too severe? Not when we remember: 1.) Gehazi's high privileges. 2.) His debasement of spiritual gifts for selfish uses—the crime of Balaam. Num. 22, 23. 3.) The misrepresentation of religion which he gave to Naaman, tending to make him think that, after all, godliness was only for gain.

"How do you know, with certainty, the truth of your religion?" said an inquirer to a humble but faithful disciple. "Just as I know the sun shines," replied the other; "because I see its light and feel its heat." And so there are thousands, competent and faithful witnesses, who know from their own experience the truth of Christianity, because they have felt in their own hearts and lives its transforming and comforting and sustaining power

NOT OUR OWN.

BY REV. E. W. ALLEN

We are not our own. Whose are we then? We belong, of course, to the purchaser. Paul settles the question—"ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit which are his." Jesus Christ is the purchaser, and the price paid for our redemption was his precious blood. Peter says, we "were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Precious blood! who can tell us how precious? Can pen, pencil or eloquence describe it? Can the imagination paint it? Can the holy songs of earth and heaven unfold its mysterious wonders and triumphs? The redeemed have been singing for ages, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain," and yet the song is ever new, and its import seems too vast for their comprehension. And ages on ages still, will only heighten the sublimity of the song, and make it more and more the song of deepest mysteries. "Angels desire to look into these things," and they will desire still, and forever, for this ocean of infinite mercy and boundless love, their vast, comprehensive intellects will never be able to fathom.

Belong to the purchaser. Do we not? Suppose you purchase an estate. You pay the full price required, and it becomes yours by right, and all that belongs to it—all that proceeds from it is yours. Jesus Christ paid the purchase-price for us, and are we not his? Has he not a claim to all we are, to all we have, and does he not reasonably require us to glorify him in our body and spirit. Are we the Lord's? Then all we possess is his, for we possess nothing that is good but it came from him. All our earthly possessions are his and should be used for his glory. Our time, talents and influence are his, and should be used as he directs.

Are we the Lord's? Then he will be with us in the day of trouble, and whisper, "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me. Lo I am with you always." Always! blessed thought—always to defend, support, protect, deliver and keep us, and in that last hour—the dying hour—O how comforting will be his presence, and how sweet his words, "My rod and my staff shall go with thee!"

Are we the Lord's? Then, when done with earth, he will take us to a better place—"I am going," said Jesus, "to prepare a place for you"—a better place than earth, where there is no sorrow, no pain, no tears, no sickness, no death; it is in "my Father's house, where you shall enjoy the bliss of heaven forever."

Not your own, Christian friend, but the Lord's. Acknowledge his claim, yield to his demands, delight in his will, and obey all his commandments, and your life will be happy and useful, and you will soon go to enjoy the immediate presence of him, whose you are, and be with him forever.

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