

Elijah Pronounced Judgment on King Ahaziah

2 Kings 1

2 Kings 1:1-18 - *“Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, ‘Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury.’ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’ Now therefore, thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’” So Elijah departed. And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, “Why have you come back?” So they said to him, “A man came up to meet us, and said to us, ‘Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’” Then he said to them, “What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?” So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.” Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: “Man of God, the king has said, ‘Come down!’” So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men. And he answered and said to him: “Man of God, thus has the king said, ‘Come down quickly!’” So Elijah answered and said to them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: “Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight.” And the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he arose and went down with him to the king. Then he said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’” So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. Because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?”*

Background Notes

Ever since the time of King David, the nation of Moab had been held in check by Israel, but after the death of King Ahab they were able to mount a successful rebellion. This successful rebellion is recorded in Scripture, and it is also documented by a non-biblical source - an archaeological find known as the "Moabite Stone." Once again, the historical accuracy of the Bible is confirmed by an extra-biblical ancient source!

Why did God allow the nation of Moab to rebel and cause problems for Israel? One reason was certainly what we learned at the end of 1 Kings. Moab's successful rebellion and the problems they created were part of God's discipline upon the northern kingdom, because they had turned away from the Lord. God can use problems in *our* lives as a means to discipline us and bring us to our senses when we're not walking with the Him.

God brought another form of discipline on Ahaziah, wicked King Ahab's son. He fell through some kind of latticework in his palace in Samaria and was severely injured. Of course that doesn't mean that every time you have a bad fall that the injury is a form of the Lord's discipline - but it could be if your heart is not right with the Lord. This summer my wife Margie and I bought rollerblades. We thought we could stay in shape by rollerblading around. We both had some bad falls and injuries, but we think the falls were caused by inexperience and cracks in the cement - not the Lord's discipline!

Unfortunately, rather than turning to the Lord for help, Ahaziah turned for advice to a pagan deity: Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (a Philistine city). Can you believe it? A king of Israel, who could have inquired of the Lord, the one true God of Israel, turned instead to a pagan "deity" to find out whether or not he would recover. Ahaziah got his answer, but it was not from Baal-Zebub. His answer came straight from God by the mouth of the prophet Elijah: "*You shall surely die.*" Ahaziah would not recover from his injury.

Doctrinal Points

1. God's judgment upon unbelievers will not be withheld forever.

Back in 1 Kings 18, when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, the fire of the Lord fell from heaven. The amazing thing on that occasion was that the fire fell on the sacrifice - not on the unbelieving people! It was a great picture of the judgment of God coming down upon Christ at Calvary, so that people can go free.

But God's judgment upon unbelievers will not be withheld forever. Here the fire of God came down from heaven upon people - two companies of 50 soldiers sent out by wicked King Ahaziah to capture Elijah. The fire of God that came down from heaven and zapped them! This is a picture of the coming judgment of God upon unbelievers.

Ahaziah and the people of the northern kingdom of Israel certainly had every opportunity to turn to the Lord. God was patient and longsuffering, giving them time and every chance to repent. But they did not repent. They went on in their evil ways!

Wouldn't you think that Ahaziah would at last have turned to Elijah for healing when he was so badly injured? After all, Elijah was known to have raised a boy back to life. But no - Ahaziah did not repent, nor did he turn the nation back to God in any way. And so the judgment of God was pronounced on Ahaziah. *"You shall surely die."* The judgment fire of the Lord was about to fall, not on a sacrifice, but on the representative of the unbelieving people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

This is a picture of the truth that God will not withhold his judgment upon unbelievers forever. It reminds us of Hebrews 10:26-27: *"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."* Right now, during this age of grace, the wrath of God's judgment is restrained. But God will not withhold His judgment on unbelievers forever.

2. God's mercy is available for all those who humble themselves before Him.

Where do we see God's mercy in this chapter? Look at verse 13, when the third captain approached Elijah. The third captain and his contingent of 50 men received mercy. They did not get zapped. Why not? They were preserved because they humbled themselves. They asked for mercy – and they received it! Apparently the other captains were proud and sarcastic, but the third captain fell on his knees and begged for mercy. I think I would have done the same - wouldn't you?

The point here is that God's mercy is available for all those who approach God with humility and ask for His mercy. I think if the only benefit salvation offered was escape from the fires of hell, I'd humble myself and plead for mercy (even though salvation offers us so much more)! But if I'm "scared" into turning to Christ as my Savior, that's OK, because the coming judgment of God on unrepentant sinners is very real!

How about you? Have you availed yourself of the mercy of God? Or are you still in the decision-making process? God's judgment is real, and it is surely coming. The wrath of God will come upon those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, but God's mercy is available for all those who humble themselves and ask for His mercy!

Practical Applications

1. Where do you turn when you're hurting?

King Ahaziah was hurting physically, but instead of turning to the Lord, he turned to a pagan "deity." Why didn't he turn to the Lord? Well, he knew if he turned to the Lord he would have to hear what he didn't want to hear from the Lord. He would have to acknowledge and admit that he was wrong, and that God was right and just in disciplining him. And he would have to repent and change his wicked ways. So he deliberately turned away from the Lord, and chose to seek a false, useless "god."

Where do *you* turn when you're hurting? We've already talked about how God can use physical problems as a spiritual wake-up call, but what about emotional problems or emotional hurts? Where do you turn when you are hurting emotionally? Are you lonely? Do you feel unimportant - or left out - or rejected? Or maybe you're hurting in your marriage. Or maybe you just feel like your life is all messed up. Do you turn to God and His Word? Or do you turn to the world?

God loves you and cares for you, and He has the solution to all your emotional hurts. But sadly, many people turn to the world for solutions to their emotional hurts. They turn away from Christians, and from the church. Why? One reason may be that the church has fallen down on the job of offering help for hurting people. Another reason may be that we Christians have to stop being so selfish. As we come to God and His Word, we may find that *we* have to change *our* ways.

In fact, maybe that's why so many Christians are emotionally hurt – we don't turn to God and His Word for help! Why not? Maybe because we'll have to admit that we're wrong? Maybe because we'll have to say we're sorry. Maybe because we'll have to become willing to submit to an authority figure God has placed in our lives. It may mean that we have to acknowledge that sin in our lives is the problem.

Where do you turn when you're hurting? Let's be willing to turn to God and let Him begin the healing process.

2. Let's not be afraid to confront the unbeliever with the truth!

Elijah boldly told the truth to Ahaziah's messengers, and he boldly confronted wicked King Ahaziah himself with the truth. What about us? Are we afraid to confront unbelievers with the truth? What about our neighbors? What about the people with whom we work or go to school? What about the people we sit next to on the plane or train or bus?

Most people believe there is a God, but they also think they don't have to worry about the future. Are we afraid to tell them that if they don't trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, they will die in their sin? God has equipped us with the message and the means to confront the unbeliever. Let's not be afraid to confront the unbeliever with the truth!