

2 Kings 01 - Annals of Israel: Fire from heaven protects Elijah from Ahaziah

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(12) Israel during Elijah's Ministry (1 Kings 17:1—2 Kings 1:18)

(F) Elijah predicted Ahaziah's death for consulting a pagan deity regarding his illness and showed that Yahweh is the one who brings fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:1-18)

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- Moab, under Mesha its king, rebelled against Israel after Ahab died

— The death of Ahab encouraged Mesha to throw off the burden of taxation that Omri (Ahaziah's grandfather) had imposed when he had brought Moab under Israel's control (Cf. comments on 1 Kings 16:21-24)

— This rebellion was not effective at first but the fact that it began in Ahaziah's reign may suggest that Mesha considered Ahaziah a weaker king than Ahab; it was also a by-product of Ahaziah's following in his parents' idolatrous footsteps (Cf. 1 Kings 22:52-53)

2 And Ahaziah fell through the *window* lattice in his upper chamber which *was* in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of **Baal-zebul**, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness."

2 And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which *was* in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness."

2 Meanwhile, Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper room in Samaria and lay injured. He sent messengers to Ekron with these orders: "Go and consult with Ekron's god Baal-zebub to find out if I'm going to recover from this injury."

2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.

- This verse describes an incident in Ahaziah's life, which occupies the rest of this chapter
— The typical upper balcony of a home was enclosed with wood lattice that, while suitable for privacy, could easily be broken

— The king had suffered serious injury by falling through the lattice of his upper story room, probably to the ground below. His serious injury later proved fatal.

- The king's veneration of Baal can be seen in his sending messengers to Ekron, a Philistine city about 40 miles away, to inquire of a pagan idol whether he would recover

- "...Baal-zebub" - one of the many local male fertility gods which bore some form of the name Baal (meaning "lord")

— Ahaziah had tried to syncretize Baal worship with the worship of Jehovah; his request for an oracle was a challenge to the God of Israel

— His failure to inquire of Yahweh, the God of Israel, reveals the depth of his apostasy

3 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?'

3 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?'

3 But the angel of the LORD spoke to Elijah the foreigner, "Get up and go meet the messengers from the king of Samaria. Ask them 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you're going to consult with Ekron's god Baal-zebub?'

3 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 unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?

- "...the angel of the LORD" - generally viewed as the pre-Incarnate Christ (Gen 16:9; 2 Kings 19:35; Gen 22:15-16 makes the "angel of the Lord" and the Lord the same)

— He appeared to Elijah as He had appeared to many other OT leaders in the past; His appearances always identified an important revelation

- The angel gave Elijah a prophecy to pass on to the king through the royal messengers whom Elijah intercepted as they traveled south from Samaria to Ekron. Although Ahaziah sought a message from Baal-Zebub, he got an answer from the true and living God.

— Perhaps Ahaziah, like his father Ahab, did not want to inquire of a faithful prophet of the Lord since those prophets were consistently opposing rather than supporting the king because of his wickedness (Cf. 1 Kings 22:8)

— God's punishment for consulting a pagan idol rather than Himself was that Ahaziah would fail to recover from his injuries.

4 Now therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'You will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'" Then Elijah departed.

4 Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" Then Elijah departed.

4 Now therefore this is what the LORD says: "You won't be getting up from that bed of yours on which you're lying. You will most certainly die!" So Elijah got up and went.

4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

- This was one of Elijah's last missions. He went to meet the messengers and gave them this challenge: "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ekron?"

— Then he gave them God's unwelcome prognosis: Ahaziah would not recover; he would die

— An adverse oracle indicated that open sin and deliberate defection from God must end in death. The messengers went back and reported to the king what Elijah had said.

5 When the messengers returned to Ahaziah, he said to them, "Why have you returned?"

5 When the messengers returned to him he said to them, "Why have you returned?"

5 The messengers returned to the king and he asked them, "What's this? You've come back?"

5 And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

6 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, "This is what the LORD says: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel *that* you are sending *messengers* to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'""

6 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 where you have gone up, but shall surely die.'""

6 They replied, "We met a man who told us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and ask him, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you're going to consult with Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you won't be getting up from that bed on which you're lying. You will most certainly die!"'"

6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

7 Then he said to them, "What did the man look like, who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?"

7 He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?"

7 He told them, "Describe the man who met you and told you these things."

7 And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words?

8 And they said to him, "*He was* a hairy man with a leather belt worn around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

8 They answered him, "*He was* a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

8 They answered, "The man was a hairy fellow. He wore a leather sash around his waist." The king responded, "It's Elijah, that foreigner!"

8 And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.

- The hairy garment (probably made from goats' dark hair) and large leather belt were part of the dress of prophets at that time

— Cloth woven from hair, as rough as burlap, was sometimes called sackcloth

— Since sackcloth symbolized distress or self-affliction (Cf. 6:30; Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31), Elijah's garb probably visualized the repentance to which the prophets called the people

— Ahaziah knew who Elijah was, of course, since Elijah had consistently opposed his parents, Ahab and Jezebel, for their Baal worship

9 Then *the king* sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty *men*. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "You **man of God**, the king says, 'Come down.'"

9 Then *the king* sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, "O man of God, the king

says, 'Come down.'

9 So the king sent out 50 men, along with their leader. The leader approached Elijah, who was sitting at the top of a hill. He ordered Elijah, "Hey, man of God! The king orders you to come down!"

9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

- To many, this story seems like an unnecessarily cruel demonstration of God's power; however, the issues at stake justified severe action

— Ahaziah showed complete contempt for Elijah and the God he represented by sending a band of soldiers to arrest the prophet like an outlaw and drag him before the throne

- He acknowledged that Elijah was a man of God (Cf. v11), but ordered him to come down to him in Ahaziah's name

- "...man of God" - in 1 & 2 Kings this term is a synonym for a prophet

— It is used of Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22), of Elijah seven times (1 Kings 17:18,24; 2 Kings 1:9,10-13), of Elisha more than two dozen times (the first occurrence is in 2 Kings 4:7, the last in 13:19), and of two other anonymous prophets (one is mentioned frequently in 1 Kings 13 and 2 Kings 23:16-17; the other is referred to in 1 Kings 20:28).

— There's a Hebrew wordplay going on here: the first two captains commanded the "man of God" to "come down" (v9,11). Elijah replied, "If I am a man [Heb. *'ish*] of God, may fire [Heb. *'sh*] come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty" (v10,12). Sure enough, fire came down on them, proving that Elijah was indeed a man of God.

10 But Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty *men*.

10 Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

10 Elijah responded to the leader who was in charge of the 50 soldiers, "So I'm a man of God, am I? If so, may fire fall from heaven and devour you and your 50 soldiers..." Just then, fire fell from heaven and devoured that leader and his 50 soldiers.

10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

- Elijah's repetition of the fact that he was indeed a man of God shows that this was an important issue; God's reputation was at stake

— Was Ahaziah in charge, able to command God's servants to obey him? Or was God in charge, able to command Ahaziah's servants to obey Him?

— By sending fire from heaven to consume the soldiers of the king, God was reminding Ahaziah that He was Israel's Ruler and that the king should submit to His sovereignty

11 So *the king* again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty *men*. And he said to him, "You man of God, this is what the king says: 'Come down quickly!'"

11 So he again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he said to him, "O man of God, thus says the king, 'Come down quickly.'"

11 Later the king tried again—he sent another company of 50 soldiers, along with their leader, who ordered Elijah, "Hey, man of God! This is what the king orders: 'Come down!'"

11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

- Ahaziah disregarded this tragedy and tried again to force Elijah to submit to him. This time the captain ordered the prophet, Come down at once!

12 But Elijah replied to them, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty *men*.

12 Elijah replied to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

12 Elijah responded to the leader and to his entire company, "So I'm a man of God, am I? If so, may fire fall from heaven and devour you and your 50 soldiers..." Just then, fire fell from heaven and devoured him and his 50 soldiers.

12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

13 So *the king* again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty *men*. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, "You man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight.

13 So he again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, "O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight.

13 Then the king tried yet again! The king sent a third company of 50 soldiers along with their leader. The third leader went up the hill, approached Elijah, fell on his knees in front of him, and begged him, "Hey, man of God, please treat my life and the lives of these servants of yours as precious!"

13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

- The third captain Ahaziah sent had more respect for Yahweh and His representative than Ahaziah did

— Rather than demanding surrender from a position of assumed superiority, this man submitted to Elijah's authority, falling to his knees before him

— He too recognized Elijah as a man of God, but unlike the first two captains (Cf. v9,11) he pleaded for mercy

14 Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight."

14 Behold fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight."

14 Look how fire fell from heaven and devoured the two other companies of 50 soldiers, along with their captains, but now please treat me as if my life were precious!"

14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

15 And the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he got up and went down with him to the king.

15 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.

15 The angel of the LORD told Elijah, "Go down the hill with that man. Don't be afraid of him!" So Elijah got up and went down with him to meet the king.

15 And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

16 Then he said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Since 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 will not get down from the bed upon which you have lain, but you shall certainly die.'"

16 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 where you have gone up, but shall surely die.'"

16 Then Elijah spoke to the king, "This is what the LORD says: 'Since you sent messengers to consult with Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel with whom to consult regarding his word?—therefore you're not getting up from the bed on which you're lying. You certainly will die!'"

16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

- This whole incident was designed to demonstrate God's sovereignty to the king and the people of Israel. Standing before the king, Elijah fearlessly delivered the message God had given him.

— Because of Ahaziah's failure to consult Israel's God (Cf. v2) and his determination to lead independently, God would depose him (v17). This is the same message Elijah had given earlier to the king's messengers on their way to Ekron (v3-4).

17 So Ahaziah died in accordance with the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And since he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

17 So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

17 And die he did, just as the LORD had said and just as Elijah had spoken!

After this, Jehoram ascended to the throne during the second year of the reign of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram from Judah. He took the place of Ahaziah, who had no son.

17 So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

- Just as Elijah had announced (v4,16), Ahaziah never recovered from his injuries and died shortly thereafter

— God judged Ahaziah for his idolatry economically (1 Kings 22:47-48; Cf. 2 Chr 20:36-37), politically (v1), and personally (v2)

- Since Ahaziah had no son, his brother Jehoram succeeded him as king of Israel

— This accession took place in the second year of Jehoram king of Judah (i.e., the second year of his co-regency with his father Jehoshaphat, 852 BC)

— The kings of Israel and Judah at this time had the same name (the NIV keeps the two kings distinct by spelling the king of Israel's name "Joram" and the king of Judah's "Jehoram")

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- This ends the line of Omri and Ahab