

SECOND KINGS

Chapter 1

Elijah Denounces Ahaziah

After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. 2 Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, “Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.” 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? 4 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 went. 5 The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, “Why have you returned?” 6 And they said to him, “There came a man to meet us, and said to us, ‘Go back 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.’” 7 He said to them, “What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?” 8 They answered him, “He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.” 9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” 10 But Elijah answered 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. 11 Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, “O man of God, this is the king's order, ‘Come down quickly!’” 12 But Elijah answered 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. 13 Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and entreated him, “O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. 14 Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious in your sight.” 15 Then 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 16 and 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.’” 17 So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

1:1 *After the death of Ahab.* See 1Ki 22:37. (CSB)

Moab rebelled. Moab had been brought into subjection by David (see 2Sa 8:2), but when the northern and Transjordan tribes rebelled and made Jeroboam their king, political domination of Moab probably also shifted to the northern kingdom. An inscription of Mesha king of Moab (see chart on “Ancient Texts Relating to the OT”) indicates that during the reign of Omri’s “son” (probably a reference to his grandson Joram, not to Ahab) the Moabites were able to free the area of Medeba from Israelite control. (CSB)

Explains why Ahaziah's brother and successor, Jehoram, later undertook an expedition against Moab with the cooperation of Jehoshaphat of Judah (3:4–27). (TLSB)

1:2 *Ahaziah*. Cf 1Ki 22:51–53. (TLSB)

lattice. Windows were covered by latticework rather than glass. (TLSB)

upper chamber. Typically, the living and sleeping quarters. (TLSB)

Baal-Zebub. Originally Baal-zebul (NT Beelzebul), “Baal is prince”; here, the writer expresses disdain for this Canaanite idol by calling it Baal-zebul, “Lord of a fly.” (TLSB)

Ekron. The northernmost of the five major Philistine cities. (CSB)

A Philistine city c 40 mi SW of Samaria. It boasted of a baal with unusual powers of healing. Archaeological finds suggest a switch from devotion to Dagon to Baal, whose name is then often incorporated in Philistine personal names. (TLSB)

if I shall recover. Ahaziah appears to have feared that his injury would be fatal. He turned to the pagan deity for a revelatory oracle, not for healing. (CSB)

1:3 *angel of the LORD*. The Lord usually spoke directly to the consciousness of the prophet (1Ki 17:2, 8; 18:1; 19:9; 21:17). Perhaps the means of revelation was changed in this instance to heighten the contrast between the messengers of Ahaziah (vv. 2–3, 5) and the angel (which means “messenger”) of the Lord. (CSB)

1:4 *not come down*. From the upper room. (TLSB)

You shall certainly die! Ahaziah will receive the oracle he sought, but it will come from the Lord through Elijah, not from Baal-Zebub. (CSB)

1:5 *Why have you returned back?* Ahaziah realized the messengers could not have traveled so quickly to Ekron and back. (CSB)

1:8 *garment of hair*. See 1Ki 19:19. Elijah's cloak was probably of sheepskin or camel's hair, tied with a simple leather thong (cf. Mt 3:4). His dress contrasted sharply with the fine linen clothing (see Jer 13:1) of his wealthy contemporaries and constituted a protest against the materialistic attitudes of the king and the upper classes (cf. Mt 11:7–8; Lk 7:24–25). (CSB)

Hbr “baal [or possessor] of hair” is used only here. Either his hair (including his beard) was long or he wore a hairy garment, which became characteristic of prophets. (TLSB)

That was Elijah the Tishbite. Ahaziah was familiar with Elijah's appearance because of the prophet's many encounters with Ahab, his father. (CSB)

1:9 *he sent to Elijah a captain of fifty men*. The pagan people of that time thought that the magical power of curses could be nullified either by forcing the pronouncer of the curse to retract his statement or by killing him so that his curse would go with him to the netherworld. It appears that Ahaziah shared this view and desired to take Elijah prisoner in order to counteract the pronouncement of his death. (CSB)

fifty men. Typical platoon. (TLSB)

O man of God, the king says, 'Come down!' Ahaziah attempted to place the prophet under the authority of the king. This constituted a violation of the covenant nature of Israelite kingship, in which the king's actions were always to be placed under the scrutiny and authority of the word of the Lord spoken by his prophets. (CSB)

Elijah was well known. The men were apparently afraid to take him but may have mocked him (cf v 4). (TLSB)

1:10 *If I am a man of God.* Immediate, mocking reply, likely answering the captain in the manner he had addressed Elijah. (TLSB)

let fire fell from heaven and consumed you and your fifty. See 1Ki 18:38. Another link between the ministries of Elijah and Moses (see Lev 10:2; Nu 16:35). At stake in this incident was the question of who was sovereign in Israel. Would Ahaziah recognize that the king in Israel was only a vice-regent under the authority and kingship of the Lord, or would he exercise despotic power, like pagan kings (see notes on 1Sa 12:14–15)? At Mount Carmel the Lord had revealed himself and authenticated his prophet by fire from heaven (see 1Ki 18:38–39). Now this previous revelation is confirmed to Ahaziah. Jesus' rebuke of his disciples for suggesting that fire be called down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (Lk 9:51–56) is not to be understood as a disapproval of Elijah's action, but as an indication that the disciples failed to discern the difference between the issue at stake in Elijah's day and the unbelief of the Samaritans in their own day. (CSB)

God would not have His servant mocked. A similar situation arose in Jesus' life. Because the purpose of Jesus' first coming was "to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10), He did not perform a miracle of judgment such as Elijah's (Lk 9:51–55). However, cf Mt 25:41, on Jesus' judgment. (TLSB)

1:11 *the king sent to him another captain.* Ahaziah refused to submit to the word of the Lord in spite of the dramatic revelation of God's power. (CSB)

quickly! Further insult. (TLSB)

1:12 *fire ... consume.* There were other mass punishments in the OT. (TLSB)

1:13 *fell on his knees before Elijah.* The third captain, recognizing that Elijah was the bearer of the word of the Lord, feared for his life and bowed before him with a humble request. (CSB)

please. Complete change of address (cf vv 9, 11). (TLSB)

servants of yours. Captain realizes his place and weakness of the king. (TLSB)

1:15 *not be afraid.* Elijah could now speak plainly and forcefully with the king. (TLSB)

1:16 *no God in Israel.* King's actions denied God His rightful place in Israel. Elijah never conceded the actual existence of false gods, even though he mockingly encouraged the prophets of Baal to intensify their cry to the unresponsive idol (cf 1Ki 18:27). (TLSB)

1:17 *died, according to the word of the LORD.* In the end Ahaziah was punished for turning away from the God of Israel to a pagan deity, and the word of the Lord was shown to be both reliable and beyond the power of the king to annul. (CSB)

Joram. Ahaziah's younger brother (see 3:1; 1Ki 22:51). (CSB)

Son of Ahab, brother of Ahaziah; he only reigned about two years. (TLSB)

second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram's reign overlapped that of his father Jehoshaphat from 853 to 848 B.C. The reference here is to the second year of that co-regency. The 18th year of Jehoshaphat (3:1) is therefore the same as the second year of Jehoram's co-regency (852). (CSB)

Ch 1 King Ahaziah and his troops show disdain for the Lord and His servant Elijah and are condemned with fire and death. Today, the Lord would have us treat His servants with proper respect, pray for them, and hear His Word from them. In this sinful world, God's Word is rare and precious, preserving our lives and delivering us from all condemnation. In Christ, we need not fear our enemies or His wrath. • Mighty Lord, strengthen us to speak Your Word without fear and to treasure the souls of others by sharing Your precious Word with them. Amen. (TLSB)