

2 Kings 1:1-18

Second Kings picks up right after *First Kings* because they were originally one unbroken book. Scroll size led to *Kings*' division. The *Book of Second Kings* recounts events in Israel and Judah from the death of Ahab to the exile of Israel and Judah. The complex and shifting political setting for the book involves Israel, Judah, Syria, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, as well as Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and other kingdoms far beyond Israel's borders.

Like his father Ahab, Ahaziah was destined to meet Elijah and receive harsh judgment for his idolatry. The occasion for Elijah's confrontation was Ahaziah's injury sustained after he fell out of a window in his upper chamber in Samaria.

1. If someone questioned whether you were a Christian, how would you react and why? Where is your place to be alone and pray, think, plan?

2. Who are the Moabites and what's up with their rebellion? **Moab had a long Biblical connection: Moab, founder of the Moabites, was a son of Lot by incest (Gen 19:30-38). Balak, king of Moab, joined with the Midianites in hiring the prophet-magician Balaam to curse Israel so the Israelites could be defeated (Num 22:1-20). Balaam's mission failed, but when the Israelites camped in Moab just before crossing the Jordan River, the women of Moab enticed the Israelites into a form of idolatry that involved ritual sexual immorality. This resulted in God's judgment against Israel (Num 25:1-9). Moses saw the Promised Land from Moab's Mount Nebo (Num 27:12-23) and was buried there after his death (Dt 34:6). From the region's Acacia Grove in northwest Moab, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Jos 3:1). The tribes of Reuben and Gad actually settled in northern Moab (Num 32:1-37). Israel was spiritually and militarily weak during the period of the Judges, and Eglon, a king of Moab, oppressed Israel, capturing territory east of the Jordan River as far as Jericho. Ehud the judge delivered Israel from Eglon (Judg 3:12-30). Ruth, a Moabite woman, became an ancestor of King David and therefore of Jesus himself (Ruth 2:6; 4:13-22; Mt 1:5-16). Although David had some early friendships among the Moabites (1 Sam 22:3-4), he eventually conquered Moab (2 Sam 8:2). The Moabites remained subject to Israel until after Solomon's death. Political control of Moab fell to the Northern Tribes after the Kingdom of Israel's division. Omri, king of Israel (885 B.C. - 874 B.C.), kept Moab under his control, as did his son Ahab (874 B.C. - 853 B.C.), until Ahab was so occupied with wars against Syria and Assyria that Moab broke free. This was described by King Mesha of Moab in his monument, the *Moabite Stone*. King Jehoram of Israel, King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom joined forces to attack Moab about 849 B.C., but they failed to conquer the Moabites because of a superstitious lack of faith when the king of Moab sacrificed his own son to show how deeply he believed in his cause (2 Kgs 3).**

3. How far out of his way did Ahaziah have to go to consult the god of Ekron? **Ekron was the northern most city of the Philistine pentapolis, about 50 miles from Samaria, and was a center for the worship of Baal, but not as important as Ashdod or Gaza.**
 Who is Baal-Zebub (1:2), and why does Ahaziah want to "consult" him? **"Baal-Zebub" means "lord of the flies," and is a deliberate Hebrew corruption of "Baal-Zebul" — "Baal the exalted" or "Baal/ king of the height or dwelling," and was intended to express the author's mocking or hostility toward this "god." Ahaziah looked for help there perhaps thinking the Ekronite version of Baal was especially powerful and insightful.**

4. Does this sending of “messengers” by Ahaziah and the LORD remind you of anything or anytime? **It is reminiscent of when Jezebel sent a “messenger” to threaten Elijah, and the LORD, in response, sent a “messenger” /“angel”/ *mal’ak* to comfort him (1 Kgs 19).**

Why do the messengers turn back (1:5-8)? **Elijah the Tishbite met up with them at the direction of the LORD.**

Why would a king’s squadron obey the word of a single unknown man over the king’s order (1:5)? **The unknown man was quickly recognized. His sheepskin or camel’s hair cloak tied with a simple leather thong (Mt 3:4) contrasted sharply with the fine linen clothing of his wealthy contemporaries and constituted a prophetic protest against the materialism of the king and other upper class unbelievers. The Hebrew is, “lord of hair” — a play on words with “lord of the flies.” The Word of God’s prophet is authoritative and compelling.**

What tone of voice do you expect from Ahaziah on hearing the man’s description (1:8)?

5. What could Elijah be doing on a hilltop (1:9-12)? **Enjoying some sweet communion time with the LORD in prayer or reflection upon His Word.**

Why did Ahaziah send a captain and 50 men to go get Elijah? **As his father Ahab had dealt with Micah (1 Kgs 22:26), Ahaziah was operating from pagan belief that power and 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.**

Why did Elijah take offense at the soldier’s command? **Ahaziah attempted to place the prophet under the authority of the king. This was a direct violation of the covenant nature of Israelite kingship, in which the king was always to be under the scrutiny and authority of the LORD and His Word.**

Why did Elijah once again resort to “fire”? **This is, by the way, another link between the ministries of Elijah and Moses (Lev 10:2; Num 16:35). But at stake was the question of who was sovereign in Israel: Ahaziah and Baal, or YAHWEH. The LORD had reminded Israel Who was King and Boss and who was His prophet at Mt. Carmel when He toasted the 400 prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:38-39). Now, He does it again by raining fire on the first two captains and their 50 men.**

Are these people slow learners or what? **Yes, and desperate unbelievers committed to repressing the Truth about God.**



Elijah calling fire from Heaven — Gaspare Diziani, 1727

6. Why does the third captain succeed (1:13-15)? **Though the first two captains referred to Elijah as “man of God,” they were not sincere — God was not in their hearts. The third captain also called him “man of God,” and he humbly begged for mercy and respected the LORD and His prophet and recognized their authority and power. Effective living begins with a right attitude before God. Before religious words come out of our mouths, we need to make sure they are from the heart. Trust, humility and respect should mark our attitude before God.**

Does this story strike you as, (a) accurate history of God’s methods of persuasion; (b) folklore revealing how little the ancients respected life; (c) a parable on respecting God’s prophets?

The LORD said through His angel to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him” (1:15). Other than new instructions, what do you hear in this? **TLC from a Heavenly Father Who knows His kid. Everyone has their issues. Elijah’s was fear of direct verbal threats. The LORD dealt with that fear directly.**

7. How does Elijah’s message in person vary from the ones delivered by go-between? **When Elijah spoke to Ahaziah, he began, “This is what the LORD says:” The content of the message doesn’t vary, but is personalized to the recipient.**

With what effect? **“So he [Ahaziah] died, according to the Word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken” (1:17). Ahaziah was punished for turning away from YAHWEH to a pagan false god, and the Word of the LORD was shown to be both reliable and beyond the power of human kings to annul.**

8. What would you say God is like if this chapter were your starting point?
9. In all the demands of life, do you take time to think, pray or meditate as Elijah did on that hilltop? *Are you Too Busy Not to Pray?*

10. *The more things change, the more they stay the same...* so says Alphonse Karr. Our world is strikingly dissimilar and similar to the early-mid portion of the 9th century B.C. National and local governments do not seek God and countries are tormented by war. Many people seek relief in false gods, and close their eyes to the true and living God. How are leaders of governments and their people seeking after false gods and closing their eyes to God and His Word?

What can we do about it?

11. Any of these characters you relate more to: the bed-ridden Ahaziah fumbling for answers; the first two captains, staunch by sorry loyalists; the third captain, a practical person; Elijah, afraid yet aware of God’s true power? How so?
12. How has God proven His power for you in a recent victory in your life?

