**5 Elijah – Forgetting about God**

**2 Kings 1**

Here is the story of Ahab and Jezebel’s son, Ahaziah who reigned only two years before his death. A decade or so before Ahaziah's accident, Elijah had won his great victory over Baal ([1 Kings 18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18)), but Ahab and Jezebel hadn't been convinced or converted and neither had their family ([1 Kings 22:51-53](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+22%3A51-53)). When Ahaziah was severely injured by falling through a lattice, he turned for guidance to Baal and not to the Lord God of Israel. "Baal" simply means "lord," and "Baal-Zebul" means "Baal is prince."

The announcement that he would die should have moved Ahaziah to repent of his sins and seek the Lord, but instead, he tried to lay hands on the prophet. Ahaziah knew that Elijah was a formidable foe, so he sent a captain with fifty soldiers to bring him to the palace; but he underestimated the prophet's power. Did Ahaziah think that he could kill the prophet and thereby nullify the prophecy? (The Lord's words in [v. 15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A15) suggest that murder was in the king's mind.) Or perhaps the king hoped to influence Elijah to change the prophecy. Years before, Elijah ran away in fear when he received Jezebel's threat ([1 Kings 19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+19)), but this time, he remained where he was and faced the soldiers unafraid.

1. **Who do you seek out when you need answers? What makes them a reliable source of information?**

Answers vary, but those lucky enough to have a good mentor or guide will appreciate their influence in our lives. Such people are very valuable and are a gift from the Lord.

1. **How far away is Ekron (1:2) from Samaria? (see map on back of page) Why do you think this king went outside the country when there were probably priests of Baal back in Israel?**

Why did the king decide to send messengers forty miles away to Ekron to consult the priests of Baal? True, Elijah had slain the 450 prophets of Baal ([1 Kings 18:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18%3A19), [22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18%3A22), [40](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18%3A40)), but that was ten years ago. Surely other priests of Baal were available in the land. The king's parents had fed hundreds of these priests at their table ([1 Kings 18:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18%3A19)), and it wouldn't have been difficult for King Ahaziah to import priests of Baal to serve as court chaplains. Perhaps he sent to Ekron for help because he didn't want the people in Samaria to know how serious his condition was. The temple of Baal at Ekron was very famous, for Baal was the chief god of that city, and one would expect a king to send there for help. Note that Ahaziah asked the priests of Baal for a prognosis and not for healing.

1. **What message did God send Elijah to share with the messenger of the King? (1:3-4) What was the problem of the king of Israel at the heart of this message?**

Elijah intercepted the royal envoys and gave them a message that would both rebuke and sober the king. Why did he want to consult the dead god of Ekron when the living God of Israel was available to tell him what would happen? He would surely die! This ominous declaration was made three times during this event—twice by Elijah ([vv. 4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ki+1%3A4) and [16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ki+1%3A16)) and once by the messengers ([v. 6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ki+1%3A6)). Instead of being spokesmen for Baal, the messengers became heralds of God's Word to the king!

1. **Why do you think that we have such a strong desire to know the future? How would it impact you if you knew what the stock market was going to do next week or about the day of your death?**

Answers will vary, but probably include a desire to control the future. Sadly, most of us would rather not know as Ahaziah does when we will die. If you can’t change it, you just make the days between now and then miserable.

1. **How did the messengers describe the man they met? (1:7-8) What do you think is going through the king’s mind when he figures out who the prophet was?**

It seems incredible that the king's messengers didn't know who Elijah was and didn't learn his identity until they returned to the palace! Elijah was Ahab's enemy ([1 Kings 21:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+21%3A20)) and Ahaziah was Ahab's son, so certainly Ahaziah had said something to his courtiers about the prophet. The description the messengers gave of Elijah reminds us of John the Baptist who ministered "in the spirit and the power of Elijah" ([Luke 1:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+1%3A17); [Matt. 3:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+3%3A4)). The phrase "a hairy man" (kjv) suggests his garment rather than his appearance. The niv reads "with a garment of hair." Like John the Baptist, Elijah wore the simple camel's hair garment of the poor and not the rich robe of a king ([Matt. 11:7-10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+11%3A7-10)). It would seem that fear and anger are going through the mind of the king when he hears that it is Elijah.

1. **How might the outcome have been different if Ahaziah had consulted with the Lord first?**

While there was a promise to Ahab that his line would be destroyed (1 Kings 21:22), God might have spared Ahaziah from this death. After all, God did give Ahab a reprieve when he humbled himself ( 1 Kings 21:28-29)

1. **How does the king try to undo the prophecy of God? (1:9) What is the result of the kings attempt to overcome Elijah?**

The announcement that he would die should have moved Ahaziah to repent of his sins and seek the Lord, but instead, he tried to lay hands on the prophet. (This reminds us of King Herod's seizure of John the Baptist; [Matt. 14:1-12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A1-12).) Ahaziah knew that Elijah was a formidable foe, so he sent a captain with fifty soldiers to bring him to the palace; but he underestimated the prophet's power. Did Ahaziah think that he could kill the prophet and thereby nullify the prophecy? (The Lord's words in [v. 15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+14%3A15) suggest that murder was in the king's mind.) Or perhaps the king hoped to influence Elijah to change the prophecy. Elijah's reply meant, "Since you called me a man of God, let me prove it to you. My God will deal with you according to your own words." The fire that came from heaven killed all fifty-one men. This judgment was repeated when the second company of fifty arrived.

1. **Why do you think that God killed these 100 men who seemingly were only following orders from the king? Why do you think God allows bad things to happen to people today?**

We must not interpret these two displays of God's wrath as evidence of irritation on the part of Elijah or injustice on the part of God. After all, weren't the soldiers only doing their duty and obeying their commander? These two episodes of fiery judgment were dramatic messages from the Lord that the king and the nation had better repent or they would all taste the judgment of God. The people had forgotten the lessons of Mount Carmel, and these two judgments reminded them that the God of Israel was "a consuming fire" ([Deut. 4:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+4%3A24) and [9:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+9%3A3); [Heb. 12:29](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+12%3A29)). King Ahaziah was a proud man who sacrificed two captains and one hundred men in a futile attempt to prevent his own death. These were not innocent men, the victims of their ruler's whims, but guilty men who were willing to do what the king commanded. Had they adopted the attitude of the third captain, they too would have lived.

1. **How does the third captain approach Elijah differently than the first two? (1:13) How does God treat this man differently?**

Insisting that Elijah obey him, the king sent a third company of soldiers, but this time the captain showed wisdom and humility. Unlike the king and the two previous captains, he submitted himself to the Lord and His servant. The third captain's plea for himself and his men was evidence that he acknowledged Elijah's authority and that he would do God's servant no harm. The Lord's words in [verse 15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ki+1%3A15) suggest that the danger lay in the hands of the captains and not in the hands of the king. Perhaps the king had ordered them to kill Elijah en route to the palace or after he had left the palace. If the king had to die, he would at least take Elijah with him!

1. **What difference does our attitude make when we are put in difficult situations? What can we learn from the third captain?**

The third captain showed a willingness to submit to the Lord. He came and recognized God’s power even as he did his duty. There will be times that we must do something that is distasteful, but we can do it as well with honor toward God and a desire to please Him. The other men tried to order Elijah down from the hill as if the king was more powerful than God. This third captain recognized God’s power and fell on his knees before the true God and His servant.

1. **How has the Lord’s message changed from the first prophecy (1:3-4) till the last (1:16)? What does that tell you about God and about the king?**

The king was in bed when Elijah confronted him and for the second time told him he would die. How many times must the Lord repeat His message to a wicked sinner? The king would leave this world with "you will surely die" ringing in his ears, yet he refused to obey the Word of God. Again, we're reminded of Herod's response to John the Baptist, for Herod listened to John's words but still wouldn't repent ([Mark 6:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+6%3A20)). After about two years on the throne, Ahaziah did die, just as Elijah had predicted, and his younger brother Jehoram (or Joram) became king.

1. **What is the best response when God punishes us or people that we love? What have you learned from this text about the need for obedience to God?**

Answers will vary, but should include repentance when we have sinned against God. Only fools like Ahaziah think that they can tell God what to do. When God speaks, we need to listen. Christians should listen because the loving Heavenly Father sees danger coming in our lives and is warning us of the consequences of what we are doing. The wicked should listen because God will punish evil as it destroys the lives of others. They cannot stop God or His control of the world.

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