

Elijah on the Hill

I want to look at the incident of Elijah on the mountain in 2 Kings 1. This is during the reign of Ahaziah the son of Ahab who reigned after Ahab's death. Elijah has been through a lot and we see his mature faith in this incident. Ahaziah hasn't learned much of anything and follows in the ways of his parents. I like how vividly the Bible portrays this, as I can't help but picture some of the situations.

2 Kings 1:2-4 NKJV 2 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." 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 departed.

Ahaziah falls and is sick. His response, calling on Baalzebul. Even though that was his intention, God had other plans and sent Elijah, reproving him. Why didn't he call on God?

The messengers return unexpectedly soon to Ahaziah.

2 Kings 1:5-8 NKJV 5 And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, "Why have you come back?" 6 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.' " ' " 7 Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?" 8 So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Ahaziah asks why they turned back, that wasn't what he commanded them to do. They describe the man they met and deliver the message that Ahaziah will die. Ahaziah asks for a description and upon hearing it knows it must be Elijah. We can only imagine what he must have been thinking about this prophet that "troubled" his father so much. He commands a company of 51 men to bring Elijah to him. He must have thought he was taking every precaution sending 50 soldiers and their captain against one older man.

2 Kings 1:9-10 NKJV 9 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!'" 10 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.

The captain and his company of 50 approach Elijah who is on the top of a hill. The captain at least seems to recognize who it is he is retrieving, calling him "man of God". But that didn't matter much to him. He was under the king's command and had a company of 50 men, so he ordered Elijah to "come down". Elijah, seeing this affront to God's messenger (who the king had earlier ignored in seeking Baalzebul), calmly asks God for a response and the whole company was consumed by fire.

We don't know if or how Ahaziah found what had happened, but we see his response.

2 Kings 1:11-12 NKJV 11 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!' " 12 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.

We don't know what the second captain knew of the first, but in any case he didn't learn anything. Again with a company of 50 men, he arrogantly orders Elijah, "come down quickly". Elijah again calmly trusts God in this confrontation between one older man and a company of 51 soldiers and just as quickly fire also consumes this group.

Time to try again

2 Kings 1:13-17 NKJV 13 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. 14 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." 15 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. 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 to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" 17 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.

The third captain seems to have learned the lesson, listen to how he addresses Elijah "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14 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". It seems he understood that one needed to be respectful when approaching God's messenger.

With the proper approach, God has Elijah go back with them. But God's message remains the same, Ahaziah will die instead of recovering. It comes to pass and Ahaziah dies.

What lesson do I want to draw from this? The first is that God takes care of his own. Situations may seem insurmountable. Imagine one older prophet on a hill against 50 trained soldiers. Doesn't even sound like it would be much of a battle. But we need to trust God.

Then we see the need to be fearfully respectful when we approach God. When we pray, we need to be careful to in no way act like we are ordering God. Similarly when reading God's word in the Bible, we again need that fearful respect that will cause us to carefully follow God's instructions. Over and over in the Old Testament we see how people understood how serious it was to approach God or even speak his name.

Matthew 10:28 NKJV 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

We have more reason to take this seriously than the captains and their 50s. We aren't just looking a fire ending our physical life. God can destroy both soul and body in hell.

We've all heard the descriptions of hell, the eternal torment separated forever from anything that is anyway good.

If there is anything needful in your relationship with God. Whether it is initial obedience in becoming a Christian or a correction in your faithful living for God, make that correction now before it is too late. None of us knows if we will even have tomorrow. If we can help you in anyway, come to the front as we stand and sing.