

“Like He Wasn’t Even There”

2 Kings 1:1-18

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All Scripture quoted from ESV unless otherwise noted

Ahaziah was a bit of a chip off the old block; 1 Kings 22:52-53 gives us a quick glimpse into the M.O. of the new king of Israel, Ahaziah (Ahab’s son.) “...and in the way of his mother...and in the way of Jeroboam...provoked the Lord...in every way his father [Ahab] had done.” What comes to mind when you think of provoking? I envision walking by a pit bull and poking at it with a stick. Naturally, when you do that, you should probably already know what to expect, right? Ahaziah was Ahab’s son; would be very familiar with the stories of Elijah, and of the God whom he served. So it is particularly odd (to me, at least) that he would go about provoking the Lord who had proven his power and authority time and time again during the 22-year reign of Ahaziah’s father, Ahab.

Ahaziah fell through a lattice and was seriously injured, as he sent messengers not to seek out medical help, but to seek out a prophecy over whether he would live or die. Baal-Zebub must have been some deity specific to Ekron, but one whose legend grew and became that of a powerful, evil god; in the NT, Beelzebub is a name applied to Satan himself. A modern-day equivalent might be if Ahaziah had gone to a fortune teller, with her crystal ball, or maybe a candle-lit séance with a Ouija board, asking, “Will I live or will I die?”

Because Ahaziah had acted as if God were not even in existence, God says Ahaziah will not recover. Why would Ahaziah do this? One can only speculate; maybe it would be a little bit like a modern-day Christian who went to a voodoo medicine man or witch doctor instead of praying for God’s healing; or maybe if he/she were to call the psychic hotline instead of praying to God for healing.

Once the delegation returned and Ahaziah found out it was Elijah that had delivered the prophecy of his demise, he sent a series of 3 delegations of 50 men (and the captains that led them) to get Elijah and bring him back to the palace, so Ahaziah could talk to him directly. Maybe from Ahaziah’s perspective, ‘Elijah had God’s ear.’ No doubt, his father had talked about how when Elijah asks for drought... for rain... for fire... it always happens. Maybe Ahaziah figured that ‘Since Elijah can twist God’s arm, maybe if I can twist Elijah’s arm, God will have to do what I want.’

This reduces the movement of God to a formula; IF you (a) THEN God has to (b) This is not at all what God wants. Think about it; would you want your children to reduce their relationship with you to a formula? Why not? God wants you to have a relationship with Him, not an arrangement.

As dutiful soldiers, the first two companies followed the king's orders and commanded Elijah to return with them. The third captain, however, takes a very different approach. The major difference is in which authority each of these captains was trusting. Even today, we are under orders to honor our governing authorities (whether you approve of them or not. See Romans 13:1-2). But we are on higher orders; to honor God first and foremost (See Acts 5:17-32, and in particular, v.29)

Finally, the third captain convinces Elijah to return with him (though actually, it was an angel of the Lord who told Elijah to go, not so much the captain himself.) Standing at last before Ahaziah, Elijah gives the same pronouncement that he had given to the original group of messengers whom Ahaziah had sent to Ekron to seek council from Baal-zebub.

We should give more thought to what will happen to us after we die, rather than giving so much thought to when or how we will die. Ahaziah was given a rare gift; definitive knowledge that his time on earth was very short. Sadly, there is no evidence that Ahaziah repented in any way before he died. And because he had no son to leave the kingdom to, his brother Joram became king. His full name was Jehoram, but that name is often abbreviated as Joram, maybe in the same way in which we abbreviate William to Bill or Timothy to Timmy or Margaret to Peggy – two names, but one person.

So what are some takeaways from this incident from the ministry of Elijah? The first is that God's grace is available to you today. Ahaziah was given the rare gift of knowing that his death was soon to take place. Most people are not given this warning – yet even when he was, Ahaziah did nothing to seek God's mercy and grace. You don't know when your time on earth will come to a close, but you do have this moment – this day – to seek God's grace, love, and forgiveness. Don't be like Ahaziah, and miss the moment.

A second takeaway is that you should trust in the God who is worthy of your trust. In the original pronouncement of judgment, "therefore" is very emphatic – BECAUSE Ahaziah had acted as if God did not exist, THEREFORE he would not recover. It was not that the injuries were beyond the ability of God to heal, but because he had sought out a false God instead of the God of Israel, God had decreed that Ahaziah would not recover.

Third, each one of us ought to use the time at hand to prepare for the time ahead. Ahaziah was asking the wrong question – not, "Will I die," but, "How do I prepare for it?" What would you do differently if you knew your time was short? Would you conduct business as usual, or would you react accordingly? When Jezebel told Elijah (1 Kings 19:2) that, 'By this time tomorrow, you'll be dead,' Elijah ran for his life! But since you cannot run from God, maybe you should be running to God – you don't know how much time you do have left, so use that time to prepare your heart and soul for the eternity that is to follow.

And our final takeaway is that Jesus came to save, not to destroy. Elijah called down fire from heaven on the first two companies and their captains. That is not what Jesus desires for you today. Compare Luke 9:51-56, in which the disciples, upon being rejected in Samaria, wondered if they should call down fire on those who had offended them, as Elijah had done. Jesus said, 'No, that's not why I've come into the world.' Jesus has come to seek and to save those who are lost, and He welcomes into His kingdom family all those who will call on His name for salvation. Trust His authority and His ability to heal, save, and satisfy. Ahaziah is an example of one who did not do any of that; he acted as if God weren't even there.

Takeaways from this message.

Observations from 2 Kings 1:1-18

- ✓ **God wants you to have a RELATIONSHIP with Him, not an AGREEMENT.**
- ✓ **Ahaziah was given a RARE GIFT; definite knowledge that his time on earth was very short.**

Takeaways from 2 Kings 1:1-18

- ✓ **God's GRACE is available to you today.**
- ✓ **Trust in the God who is WORTHY of your trust.**
- ✓ **Use the time AT HAND to prepare for the time AHEAD.**
- ✓ **Jesus came to SAVE, not to DESTROY**

DIG IN!

Here are some farm-fresh questions that will help you to personalize and apply this morning's message.

1. ***What was most surprising, unexpected, or helpful from today's passage/message? Why?***
2. ***Describe the difference between a relationship and an arrangement. How does that apply to spiritual relationships?***
3. ***If you were to alphabetize the letters in alphabet soup, would it taste better? Why?***

4. *Why do you suppose Elijah called down fire on the first two companies of 50 soldiers? Does that seem unjust? Explain why it is*
5. *What does the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (1:17) say about Elijah's faith and/or status as a prophet of God? Why?*
6. *Ahaziah turned to an idol, and was left with the idol's ability to heal. When have you turned to an idol rather than trusting in God? Be honest! Have you properly dealt with and repented of that? If not, when will you?*
7. *What have you learned through your personal time of Bible reading this week?*