

Traveling with Elijah

Seven lessons from the life of Elijah



Created by
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Lesson Seven:

Elijah's End

2 Kings 1:1-2:14

1. Biblical text

Elijah Denounces Ahaziah

1 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?

Elijah Taken to Heaven

2 Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?" And he said, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." 4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. 5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; keep quiet." 6 Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the

Jordan. 8 Then Elijah took his cloak and rolled it up and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me."

10 And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so."

11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the

two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

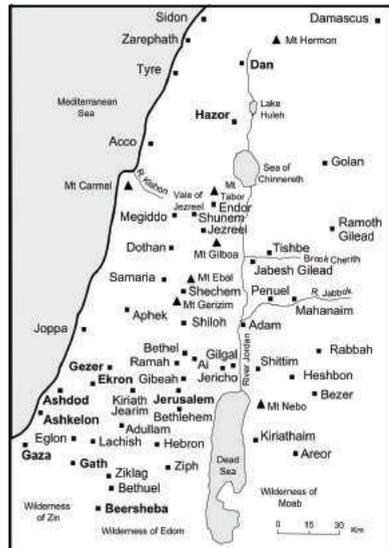
13 And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

2. Meaning of the story

2.1 Wrath on the family of Ahab (2 Kings 1:1-8)

After Ahab died in the manner predicted by the prophets, his son Ahaziah became king. Instead of turning to God, he continued in the wicked ways of his parents. (1 Kings 22:51-53)

As soon as Ahaziah became king, Moab rebelled against Israel's rule. Ahaziah was not able to force Moab to submit again, because he had been weakened by an injury after falling through the lattice (mashrabiyya) from the first floor of his palace. It probably did not occur to Ahaziah to ask the God of Israel for forgiveness and healing.



[Picture 1, map of Israel]

He actually send messengers to the god Baal-zebub (Lord of the Flies) in the city of Ekron. This was the most northern city of Philistea (Gaza). [Picture 1] The son of Jezebel did not consult the gods of Tyrus, where his mother came from. He served his own Baal.

Elijah intercepted the messengers and announced to the king that he would die because he did not serve the God of Israel. As far as the prophet was concerned, the wickedness of King Ahab's family had reached such an extent that God's full wrath was to be poured out upon them.



QUESTION:

- What does it mean that God is a jealous God? (See Exodus 34:14)
- When or why does God stop being merciful? (See Romans 9:15,18, Revelation 2:4-5, 19:1-3)

2.2 Being instrumental in judgement (2 Kings 1:9-18)

King Ahaziah wanted to speak with Elijah but his intentions were probably not pure, as he sent his army to escort Elijah to the palace. Elijah was suspicious and from his hide-out he threw fire on two groups of soldiers. "You say that I am a man of God? I'll show you that I am!" Elijah said, killing 102 men. When a third group of soldiers arrived, an Angel of God told Elijah not to fear King Ahaziah and to follow the soldiers.

Maybe the death of the two groups of soldiers made king Ahaziah wise enough to realise that he must listen to Elijah, even if initially he had a different worldview and different plans. Elijah announced once again that King Ahaziah would die of the disease that struck him after he fell from the window. The king did not ask for mercy.



QUESTIONS:

- Imagine that King Ahaziah had asked for mercy, what might have happened?
- Does God use Christians to 'administer punishment'? (See 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, 11:27-34, Galatians 1:9, Revelation 6:9-11)

2.3 End of Elijah's ministry (2 Kings 2:1-14)

We do not know how the prophets were aware, but they sensed that something was about to happen to Elijah. Elisha, his trainee, refused to leave him, and was told by prophets in Bethel and Jericho that Elijah's departure time had come. Notice that Elijah made the reverse route of Joshua when he entered the promised land. Does this symbolise a leaving of God as well?

At the Jordan River Elijah performed his last miracle. His final act, splitting the river in two, showed that he was in the 'in the league' of Moses. [Picture 2]

Elisha begged for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, just as the eldest son was eligible for a double portion of his father's inheritance. He hoped to be able to follow in Elijah's footsteps in serving God. Elijah did not finish his ministry without having disciples to follow in his course.



[Picture 2, Elijah parting the Jordan River]

Elisha begins his own ministry with a splash, namely with the same miracle of the parting of the waters that Elijah had done just before. All hope was not lost for Israel.



QUESTIONS:

- If God would finish your life or ministry today, what would you hope is lasting?
- How would you feel if the effect of your work would completely collapse?
- What was Elijah's life's legacy?
- What do we learn about God from this story?