

## 2 Kings 1-2

Good morning and thank you for joining us. We're now moving back to the OT on Sunday mornings as we go through the Bible in order, book by book and verse by verse.

This brings us to the book of 2 Kings.

Part of the reason why we alternate between NT and OT on Sundays is it's quite possible some folks here have ever read 2 Kings, let alone do a verse by verse study of it.

I know it's not exactly popular to study a book like this on Sunday mornings, but it goes back to the basic question-do we believe the Bible is God's word? I'm convinced it is!! **2 Timothy 3:16 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

It's wisely been said in order to be a whole Christian, we need the whole Bible!

It's important we spend a few minutes reminding ourselves of the state of Israel at this time.

Three kings ruled over the whole nation – all 12 tribes – Saul, David, and Solomon. After Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided by a Civil War. **SHOW PIC** Nineteen kings reigned over the northern kingdom of Israel... Twenty kings ruled the southern kingdom of Judah. The entire period of history covered about 500 years between 1 and 2 kings. **CLOSE PIC**

Jewish tradition says that 1 Kings, and 2nd Kings were written by the prophet Jeremiah. There are 25 chapters in 2 Kings, and this morning we're gonna go through chapters 1 and 2 as we look at the end of Elijah's ministry,

The title of this morning's message is A Shocking Ministry  
Let's pray

Remember where we are on the historical timeline. King Ahab of Israel was killed at the end of 1 Kings. In his place his son, Ahaziah, reigns over Israel in the north.

**1 Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.** Moab had been under Israeli control since the days of David. But Israel has weakened and the Moabites see the death of Ahab as their opportunity to regain their own independence

**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."** How he exactly got hurt we're not sure, but the new king Ahaziah was apparently taking a stroll on the roof of his palace, and fell through the "skylight." Now the new king is laid up in the ICU. He's badly injured, and he's wondering if he'll walk again.

But instead of seeking counsel of almighty God, Ahaziah sends messengers to the Philistines, Israel's enemy, to inquire of their god, Baal-Zebub.

Last month on Wednesday nights we saw how on Mount Carmel, Elijah revealed the foolishness of Baal worship. Yet despite the facts, Ahaziah decides to seek counsel from this fake God.

It's interesting, "Baal-Zebub" means "Lord of the flies." This is the name Jesus called Satan in Matthew 12.

Flies of course, carry disease. So whenever plagued with a mysterious illness pagan people were tempted to call on the god of the flies.

King Ahaziah's messengers are on their way, when God sends His own messenger to intercept them.

3-5

3 But the angel<sup>[fn]</sup> 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. 5 And when the messengers returned to him, (King Ahaziah) he said to them, "Why have you come back?" Remember the messengers were sent to seek a word from the pagan priests of Baal-Zebub, but the word from Elijah persuaded them so much that they didn't follow through on their original mission, and they come home early.

6-7

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?” The king is angry. Who dares declare such a bold message to the king? Who is this man who said this?

8 So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.”

And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.” Evidently, Elijah was a hairy guy. I picture him with bushy hair and scraggly beard. He was like John the Baptist – the antithesis of fashion, and style, and opulence. **Matthew 3:4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.**

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!’ ” 51 men should have been plenty to capture one prophet. Obviously they're getting ready to arrest Elijah and bring him to the king.

But please notice how the captain admitted the righteousness of Elijah when he called him “Man of God.” Point being, even though they were on orders from their king, they knew they were doing something wrong.

The Bible clearly teaches that we owe submission to the government and governing authorities **Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.**

Yet this Biblical command to submit is never absolute, but always conditioned by the greater responsibility to submit to God **Acts 5:29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."**

This commander should have resisted the ungodly and immoral command from King Ahaziah and obeyed God instead. His fifty men should have refused to obey the ungodly and immoral command of their captain.

**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.** Elijah responded that if he really were a man of God, then the captain and his men were on an ungodly and immoral mission. Since Elijah could not bring down fire from heaven without Divine approval, he asked God to evaluate these men and their actions against God's prophet.

Make no mistake, the challenge here wasn't against Elijah, but rather against all mighty God.

God brought judgment on these men who acted as if Yahweh was not a real God and as if Elijah was not truly His servant.

So what does the king do now that 51 of his men have been burnt up?

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!' "The specific request of the second captain (Come down quickly!) shows that the second captain made his request even more bold and demanding.

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.

I don't know about you, but I read this and I'm like hmmm....I like this method of dealing with my enemies!

But we need to remember what Jesus told James and John. When the Samaritans refused to let Jesus pass through their territory, the hot-headed disciples wanted to duplicate Elijah's miracle. **Luke 9:53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"[fn]**

**55 But He turned and rebuked them,[fn] and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."[fn] And they went to another village.**

James and John say to Jesus 'Let's fry them!'

There've been times when I've wanted to fry an enemy... But just as Jesus rebuked James and John, He's rebuked me.

Elijah had a ministry of judgment, but you and I have a different ministry. **2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.**

Followers of Jesus have been given the ministry of reconciliation, not judgment. Our job is not to call down fire from heaven, but to extend God's mercy and forgiveness.

Just like James and John, often times we too have forgotten "what manner of spirit we are of..."

As Christians we're not disciples of Elijah. We are of a different spirit... You and I are followers of Jesus.

But if we must call down fire from heaven, we first must put it on ourselves. Let's call down the fire of the Holy Spirit – the fire that purifies, and fuels, and forges, and burns away the dross and impurities of our heart. **Psalm 139 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me, and know my anxieties;  
24 And see if there is any wicked way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.**

A third captain is sent, and he wisely changes his approach  
13-14

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.” Perhaps the third captain looked at the two blackened spots of scorched earth nearby before he spoke to Elijah.

15 And the angel[fn] 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. The Captain of 50 was more Elijah’s prisoner than Elijah was his prisoner. But God tells Elijah not to fear-why? Because Elijah was afraid! Elijah was a person just like you and I. James 5 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

So now Elijah stands before King Ahaziah...

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.’” This was the same message Elijah gave to the messengers the king had sent to inquire of Baal-Zebub.

Notice, the message from God did not change just because Ahaziah didn’t want to hear it the first time.



17-18

17 So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. Because he had no son, Jehoram<sup>[fn]</sup> became king in his place, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? Ahaziah had no descendant to pass the kingdom to, so the throne went to his brother after his death.

The account becomes a little confusing here, because the king of Judah at that time was also named Jehoram (the son of Jehoshaphat).

## Chapter 2

1 And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. As we're about to read shortly, apparently it was known to Elijah, Elisha, and the prophets that Elijah would soon be carried into heaven by a whirlwind. Presumably there was a prophecy announcing this that at least some folks knew.

2 Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel." Now we learned in 1 Kings that Elisha was an apprentice to Elijah, and it's been this way now for about 10 years. And here Elisha sensed that Elijah was about to be taken to heaven. He's about to lose the Godly

mentor he's followed for 10 years and Elisha has no interest in abandoning him now.

These aren't just travel plans we're reading about, something important is unfolding in these details...

3-4

3 Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"

And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"

4 Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho."

But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho. As many of you know, serving the Lord is no walk-thru-the-park. Before he's taken to heaven, Elijah goes on a final stroll that's designed to test and confirm Elisha's calling. The 2 men walk from Gilgal - to Bethel - now to Jericho - and on to the Jordan River - and at each stop Elijah gives Elisha the option of staying behind.

We learned in 1 Kings that before being Elijah's disciple, Elisha had been a successful farmer. All along this last lap, Elijah gives Elisha the opportunity to bow out gracefully, slip away, and return home to his former occupation. But each time Elisha agrees to push on. He reaffirms his commitment to press on in the ministry to the finish

5-6

5 Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"

So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!”

6 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.”

But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on. Elijah is passing on the baton, and Elisha is passing the test

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

Everyone knows a monumental transition is about to occur.

8 Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. The waters part supernaturally, and they both walk through the riverbed on dry ground.

9 And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?”

Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” The idea of a double portion wasn’t asking for twice as much as Elijah had, but to ask for the portion that went to the firstborn son, as we see in the book of Deuteronomy. Essentially Elisha is asking for the right to be regarded as the successor of Elijah, as his firstborn son in regard to ministry. This was a request for the spiritual power to fulfill the calling Elisha’s already received.

BTW, Elisha ministers 50 years – 850-800 BC - twice as long as Elijah. He also does twice the number of Elijah’s recorded miracles. Elisha not only inherits Elijah’s ministry, but takes it to new heights.

10 So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” Elisha’s double portion is contingent on him seeing Elijah’s lift-off. It was necessary for the younger man to continue to the end because only a man willing to walk in Elijah’s footsteps could be trusted with his power. And this is a lesson for us.

We all want the power demonstrated by godly men and women, but are we willing to cultivate the godliness and endurance to handle that power and responsibility?

11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. God sent a heavenly limo to fetch Elijah. Elijah is snatched up in a whirlwind, which makes him one of only two men in the Bible who never died. Who was the other man to escape death? **Genesis 5:24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.**

I don’t think we can fully picture how amazing this scene was

12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. Elisha would indeed inherit the prophetic ministry of Elijah, but here he’s mourning the fact that his mentor is now gone.

13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. When Elijah was caught up to heaven his mantle – or the coat of the prophet – fell to earth. It was his symbol of authority.

Think of what it was like for Elisha to pick up that mantle. The mantle did not fall from heaven and rest on his shoulders; he had to decide to pick it up and put it on. He had to decide: Do I really want to put this on? Elijah's ministry was one of great power, but also of great pressure and responsibility.

14-18

14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him. 16 Then they said to him, "Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley."

And he said, "You shall not send anyone."

17 But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, "Send them!" Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. 18 And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?" Fifty men who were devoted to God "We can't believe Elijah really got raptured. Maybe he's stuck on some mountain somewhere. We'd better go find him." The same thing

still happens. There are many seminaries who do not believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. And when the Rapture happens, they'll be searching high and low, wondering where all of those "radical Christians" went!

19 Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren." At this time Jericho had a poor water supply. This made agriculture impossible and life very difficult.

20-22

20 And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'" 22 So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. On our tours of Israel we take you to Jericho and you know what-you can drink the water.

Now we're about to read one one of the more bizarre events in all the Bible.

23 Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" Elijah was a hairy man, but Elisha was just the opposite.

The ancient Hebrew word translated youths here means young men in a very broad sense. It's the same word to describe Joseph

when he was 39 and Solomon when he was 20. Point being these aren't teenagers.

The idea behind the words, "Go up" was that Elisha should go up to heaven like Elijah did. They were mocking Elisha, his mentor Elijah, and the God they served.

24 So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths. You might say it was a grizzly judgment.

Now it doesn't say they died. They may have gotten away with just cuts and scrapes.

Since forty-two of them were struck by the bears, the group may have been quite large and dangerously out of control. Elisha may have needed miraculous intervention to escape.

In his second epistle, Peter said that there will come scoffers saying, "Why hasn't the Lord come back yet? Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Peter 3:3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

But, like the young men in our text, they will find themselves in an "unbearable" situation, in a time of tremendous tribulation when God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting sinful world during

the Tribulation. Those who mock and scoff will find themselves in horrible times.

**25 Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.** It's interesting when he leaves the area of the Jordan the first place Elisha visits is Mount Carmel – the site of Elijah's greatest victory. Perhaps Elisha went there for inspiration and preparation.

Over the next couple of weeks we'll see that there are many similarities between Elijah and Elisha, but there were also several notable differences. Elijah's miracles revealed God's fiery judgments - Elisha's conveyed God's grace.

It was the same spirit on Elisha that rested on Elijah, but the same Spirit worked in a different way through the two men. We'll find the same to be true of God's work in us. **1 Cor 12:4 4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.**

Each of us have our own style and personality. You may be a fiery Elijah, or a laid back Elisha – but the same Holy Spirit will use both types. Let's make sure we're letting Him!!