



2 Kings 1 shows us the great mercy of God available to man, a mercy that was shown to the third captain who humbled himself before Elijah. However, if we reject God's mercy, the only thing left is His justice, as King Ahaziah learned. In chapter 2, we learn that God rewards loyalty and listens to the requests of His people. We also see that God does not hold guiltless those who mock another's grief.

1. Introduction

a. The title

- i. In an original Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings were one book called **Melechim** (Kings).

b. The author

- i. The writer is unknown, but some say Ezra or Ezekiel.
- ii. Jewish tradition says the writer was Jeremiah.

c. The timeline

- i. 1 and 2 Kings cover a period of roughly 400 years.
 - 1. 1 Kings opens with the beginning of the reign of David's son Solomon, around 970 B.C.
 - 2. 2 Kings ends with the reign of Zedekiah, who goes into Babylonian captivity along with some other Israelites in 586 B.C.

d. The kingdom

- i. Israel was divided into two kingdoms:
 - 1. The southern kingdom of Judah
 - a. The southern kingdom included Judah and Benjamin.
 - i. The term "Jew" comes from the tribe of Judah.
 - b. Judah's capital was Jerusalem.
 - 2. The northern kingdom of Israel
 - a. Israel included the remaining 10 tribes.
 - b. Israel's capital was Samaria.

2. **2 Kings 1:1-2** – *"Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 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.'"*

a. Ahab

- i. **2 Kings** opens by recalling the death of Ahab, the king to the north.
- ii. Ahab was a wicked king married to the wicked Jezebel.
 - 1. Jezebel was the daughter of a pagan priest, and she increased the worship of Baal and Asherah in Israel.

- b. Moab
 - i. Moab was on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.
 - ii. Israel subjugated Moab during Ahab's reign and made them pay tribute.
 - iii. Upon Ahab's death, Moab decided not to pay any more taxes.
- c. Ahaziah
 - i. Ahab's son Ahaziah reigned after him as the eighth king of Israel.
 - ii. Ahaziah believed in the false gods of his parents.
 - 1. Ahaziah enquired of Baal-Zebub rather than God.
 - a. **Ba'al** means "lord."
 - b. **Z'ûb** means "flies."
 - c. Some diseases are carried by flies, so the Philistines tried to appease the lord of the flies.
 - d. Since flies grew in cow dung, this god was called the lord of the dung.
 - e. **DISCUSS**: How does leaving behind the one true God lead a person to serve many nonsensical idols?
 - 2. Ahaziah sought answers in Ekron rather than Israel.
 - a. Ekron was in Philistine territory.

3. **2 Kings 1:3-6** – *"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?" 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. And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, 'Why have you come back?' 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."'"'"'"*

- a. Elijah the Tishbite
 - i. **'Ēl** means "God."
 - ii. **I** means "my."
 - iii. **Yâ** means "Yahweh."
 - iv. Elijah, or **'Ēliyâ** in the Hebrew, means "my God is Yahweh."
- b. The king's messengers
 - i. Elijah interrupted the messengers with God's message.
 - ii. The messengers did not go to Ekron, but they returned to tell Ahaziah the word of the Lord.
- c. The prophecy

- i. Though God showed His justice in His response to Ahaziah's sin, He also showed His mercy in giving him time to repent rather than killing him instantly.
 1. God's mercy is displayed in His patience.
 2. **DISCUSS:** How has God shown Himself patient with you?
4. **2 Kings 1:7-13** – *"Then he said to them, 'What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?' So they answered him, 'A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.' And he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.' 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!"' 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. 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!"' 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. 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. 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.' 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."*
 - a. A hairy man
 - i. Some speculate that the messengers were saying that Elijah had a beard and long hair.
 - ii. More likely, the messengers were commenting on Elijah wearing a hairy garment tied by a belt, much like John the Baptist.
 - b. Ahaziah's response
 - i. Ahaziah dispatched captains and soldiers to apprehend Elijah.
 1. Typically, kings tried to kill the prophets who called them out and gave them a message they did not like.
 - a. In the New Testament, Herod imprisoned John the Baptist for pointing out he was sleeping with his brother's wife.
 - b. When Herod's stepdaughter impressed him with her dancing and he offered her a boon, her mom told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist, and she did.

c. Fire from heaven

- i. The troops Ahaziah sent to apprehend Elijah were consumed by fire again and again, and still the king did not learn.
- ii. This scene is the basis upon which Jesus' disciples James and John asked to call down fire from heaven against the Samaritans for not giving them lodging.

1. **Luke 9:51-56** – *“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 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?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village.”*
2. **DISCUSS:** How are the apostles a warning on aligning ourselves with God’s plan (**Luke 4:18-10; John 3:17**) rather than assuming His plan aligns with ours?

d. The third captain

- i. This third captain went on his knees and pleaded for the lives of him and his men.
- ii. God told Elijah to listen to this captain.
 1. God always honors our humility.
 2. **DISCUSS:** How has the Lord come near to you when you humbled yourself before Him?

5. **2 Kings 1:14-18** – *“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.”’ 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. 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?”*

a. Ahaziah

- i. Ahaziah wasted his chance to repent.
- ii. Ahaziah died without a son to rule after him.

b. Jehoram, king of the north

- i. Jehoram, Ahaziah's brother, reigned after him.
- ii. The Jehoram who ruled the north was the son of Ahab and Jezebel. The Jehoram to the south was the son of Jehoshaphat.

6. **2 Kings 2:1-5** – *“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. 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 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!’ 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. 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!’”*

a. Elisha

- i. Elisha, or **‘Ēlīšā**, is an abbreviated form of **Eliyshuwa** meaning “my God is salvation.”
- ii. The Lord determined to bring Elijah to paradise and have Elisha take his place as prophet to the northern kingdom.
 - 1. Elijah is one of only two people whom God took to heaven without them experiencing death. The other is Enoch.
 - 2. In **1 Kings 19**, Elijah threw his mantle at Elisha as God commanded, for that “hairy garment” was the sign of a prophet of God. However, Elisha was around 20 when this happened, too young to take over for Elijah, so he became Elijah’s apprentice for four to five years.

b. The sons of the prophets

- i. Some translations say, *“the school of the prophets.”*
 - 1. In today’s terms, we might say “seminary” or “Bible college.”
 - 2. If you had a prophetic calling, you could go to one of these schools of the prophets to be discipled.
- ii. One of these schools was in Bethel (**2 Kings 2:3**).
- iii. The fact that Elijah would be taken up to heaven in a whirlwind seemed to be common knowledge among the prophets.

c. Elisha’s character

- i. Elijah kept trying to get rid of Elisha, but Elisha loyally followed his mentor from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel to Jericho.
 - 1. From Gilgal to Bethel is 12 miles.
 - 2. From Bethel to Jericho is 13 miles.

3. Loyalty is an honorable trait.
4. **DISCUSS:** How does God's unfailing love for us inspire you to be loyal to Him?
- d. Unwanted reminders
 - i. In Gilgal and Jericho, the sons of the prophets reminded Elisha that his mentor would have to depart, but Elisha already knew this.
7. **2 Kings 2:6–9** – *“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. 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. 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. 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.’”*
 - a. Parting the waters
 - i. There are two places in Israel's history where the waters parted:
 1. At the Dead Sea, when God parts the waters to allow the Israelites to leave slavery in Egypt behind.
 2. At the Jordan, where God parts the waters from east to west to allow the Israelites enter the Promised Land.
 - ii. Some believe that in this passage, Elijah and Elisha stood at the same place, but this time God parted the waters from west to east.
 - b. Elisha's request
 - i. Elisha makes an honorable request, desiring what will enable him to serve Israel well as Elijah did.
 1. **DISCUSS:** How has God given you gifts abundantly? How are you using them to serve Him?
 - ii. God honored Elisha's request.
 1. Elisha did more miracles than any in the Bible except for Jesus, getting a double portion of power.
 2. Elisha served for 50 years, getting a double portion of life.
8. **2 Kings 2:10–13** – *“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.’ 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. 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. He also took*

up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.”

- a. Elijah
 - i. Elijah was caught up to heaven in chariots of fire.
 - ii. The New Testament mentions Elijah:
 - 1. Elijah appeared on the mount of transfiguration alongside Moses.
 - 2. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah.
 - 3. Revelation speaks of two unnamed witnesses who will testify of Jesus during the tribulation period, and the signs they work lead many scholars to conclude they are Moses and Elijah.
- b. Elisha
 - i. Elisha cried out *“my father”* because Elijah had been his spiritual father and mentor.
 - 1. **DISCUSS:** Who has been a mentor to you in your walk with Christ? How have you tried to be a good influence for others?
 - ii. Elisha called Elijah *“the chariot of Israel and its horsemen”* to honor his mentor for doing more to protect Israel than Israel’s military.
 - 1. **DISCUSS:** When have you seen God answer His people’s prayers of protection?
 - iii. Elisha tore his clothes, grieving the loss of Elijah.

9. **2 Kings 2:14–18** – *“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. 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. 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.’ 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. 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”?’”*

- a. Elisha called upon God, and He answered.
- b. The sons of the prophets wanted to look for Elijah.
 - i. They seemed to be unclear on what truly happened, thinking God may have transported Elijah somewhere else.

10. **2 Kings 2:19–25** – *“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.’ And he said, ‘Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.’ So they brought it to him. 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.”’ So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. 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!’ 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. Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.”*

- a. Elisha’s second miracle was healing the bitter waters.
- b. Some youths mocked Elisha and said he should be raptured like Elijah.
 - i. **DISCUSS:** Rather than cruel jibes, how are we called to treat the grieving (**Ecclesiastes 3:4; Romans 12:15; 2 Corinthians 1:4**)?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)