

A Study of the Life of Elijah;

A Man Like Us.

Sermon # 10

“A Sad Message For A Bad King ”

2 Kings 1:1-18

As we have studied the life of Elijah we have seen how God sent his prophet Elijah to Israel during the reign of the wicked king Ahab. God wanted to demonstrate through Elijah that the true God of Israel was not Baal. You will remember that in 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah asked the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." In the great demonstration of power that followed in the contest on Mt. Carmel Baal was proven to be impotent and a lie. But Jehovah was shown to be powerful and true when he sent fire from heaven which consumed Elijah's sacrifice. This was a call for Israel to abandon Baal worship and serve the true God, Jehovah. But Ahab, and Jezebel both died as judgment upon their sins.

When Ahab died, his son Ahaziah became king. I have no doubt that King Ahaziah knew Jehovah is the true God. If he was not present on Mount Carmel when Elijah challenged the false god Baal and demonstrated the power of the true God, then he heard all about it. Yet when Ahaziah became king, he refused to submit to the great Jehovah. He was stubborn and rebellious as his parents had been.

Baal worship was more appealing to Ahaziah. Why? He chose not to worship Jehovah, because he knew that Jehovah hated sin, but Baal loves it. Ahaziah knew that Jehovah requires repentance, but Baal allows man to be arrogant and lets him do what he pleases. But the truth is, only Jehovah is true God and all idol worship is demon worship, as the Scripture plainly teaches.

Nonetheless, Ahaziah chose to serve Baal, which is really serving the devil, because he loved sin. Thus, Ahaziah provoked the God of Israel as we read in 1 Kings 22:51-53: "Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. He served and worshiped Baal and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done."

Every time when we sin, we are challenging God and provoking him to anger. We are saying, in essence, "Come on, God. If you are God, why don't you act? I will violate your law; let me see whether you have power to do anything against me." This is what Ahaziah did.

Do you know what Ahaziah's name means? It means "Jehovah has chosen." There is no reference to Baal in Ahaziah's name. He was claiming to be a disciple of Jehovah, just like some people profess to be disciples of Jesus, yet he chose to serve the devil and provoke God and his prophets. But the truth is, the God of Israel was patient with this king. What I want to see this evening is that God gave Ahaziah many opportunities to humble himself and return to the true worship of the great king, the covenant God, Jehovah.

First, God Provides Plenty Of Chances to Repent

Let's examine some of the opportunities God gave Ahaziah.

- *God brought political difficulties to Ahaziah.*

According to 2 Kings 1:1 when Ahaziah

became king, Moab rebelled against Israel. This meant political trouble for Ahaziah. Since the days of David, Moab had been subject to Israel, but when the people of Moab realized that Ahaziah was a weak king they rebelled. The rebellion of Moab caused great political humiliation for King Ahaziah. But who was behind this humiliation? God. This was God's plan to help Ahaziah humble himself and call upon the name of God to help him. Did political humiliation cause Ahaziah repent and call upon Jehovah? No. So God dealt with Ahaziah in a different way.

- *God allowed the king to experience economic trouble.*

In 2 Chron. 20 we read that Ahaziah entered into a shipbuilding venture with Jehoshaphat. Both kings wanted to trade and make a lot of money with this great business venture that joined Judah with Israel.

But Ahaziah was not serving God and so God was against him. God used this occasion to put economic pressure on Ahaziah. In 2 Chronicles 20:35-36 we read: "Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, who was guilty of wickedness. He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were builtEliezer....prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, 'Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made.' The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade." Ahaziah and Jehoshaphat had spent a lot of money to build these ships. They were no doubt counting on a great return on their investment. But instead they lost everything.

Have we done this? Like Ahaziah, we may have invested in something and dreamed of a great return on our investment. But God touched your investment and made it to be nothing. If this has happened to you, perhaps it is to bring you down to the point that you can call upon him and say, "God, have mercy upon me! I have sinned and acted arrogantly. I have treated you with contempt and your word with contempt in spite of your supreme demonstration in my life that you are the true God."

Ahaziah lost his investment, his equipment, his profits; he lost everything. He experienced a great economic upset. But did Ahaziah repent? No.

- *God dealt with Ahaziah in a personal way, by touching his health.*

In 2 Kings 1:2 we read, "Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured." We don't know how it happened. Did he stumble? Was he drunk? Was this an accident? Yes, but God allowed it to happen in an attempt to get the king's attention.

God Not Only Provides Plenty Of Chances to Repent but....

Secondly, Where We Turn When We Are Desperate Reveals What We Truly Believe. (v. 2b)

In this time of serious physical pain, as he was facing death, Ahaziah really revealed his heart's ultimate commitment. The remainder of verse two says, "...so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."

We don't criticize Ahaziah for wanting know if he would recover. That's a natural desire. But when we are faced with serious trouble, we demonstrate where our trust really lies. And what we discover in this passage is that Ahaziah did not trust in the God of Israel. He was an practical atheist, because his actions proved that he did not think there was any God in Israel.

When we are at our wit's end, we will reveal in which god we are trusting. Ahaziah refused to trust in the God of Israel. He would rather trust the false god Baal-Zebub, the god of the Philistines, and send messengers forty miles south to Ekron to hear from him rather than to seek the God of Israel. What was Ahaziah doing? He was, in essence, saying, "There is no God in Israel. But I understand that in Philistia there are gods, especially one named Baal-Zebub. Messengers, would you please go all the way to Ekron and get a revelation from Baal-Zebub as to whether I will recover or not?" He refused to consult the true God or his prophet Elijah.

Not Only Does Where We Turn When We Are Desperate Reveal What We Truly Believe but....

Third, God is A Jealous God And Is Not Content to Sit Idly By (vv. 3-4)

"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 did not seek the Lord but in verse three we see the angel of the Lord respond to him. The angel of the Lord here is none other than the second person of the Trinity. This is a Christophany or a pre-incarnate appear of Christ.

Ahaziah had no desire to seek the God of Israel. But we can be guilty of the same thing? With great passion we will seek everyone and everything but the true God, the only one who is competent to help us, redeem us and save us. Why do you think we won't seek God? Because before God we must truly repent, humble ourselves, and confess our sins. But before the false gods of this world there is no need to repent, and that is why men prefer them.

Not Only Is God A Jealous God And Is Not Content to Sit Idly By but...

Fourth, Unrepented Sin Can Cause One To Be Very Hard Headed. (vv. 5-17)

"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 was probably surprised at how quickly his messengers had returned. "Why have you come back?" he asked. And the messengers responded: "A man came up to meet us." "What kind of man was it who came to meet you?" Ahaziah asked. "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And what do you think Ahaziah said? "It is Elijah the Tishbite." In other words, Ahaziah was saying, "Yes, I know this man. He is the prophet of the true and living God. I hate him, and I hate his God!"

So Ahaziah correctly identified Elijah. He understood Elijah's message, but Ahaziah was a stubborn rebel who hated God. And as hard as it is to understand, even though he was dying, he hardened his heart, he remained determined to his last breath to stand in opposition to God.

Ahaziah was dying, but he was determined to oppose God. He wanted to punish Elijah, so he called a captain and told him to take fifty soldiers and arrest Elijah.

The First Arresting Party (vv. 9-10)

"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."

This was in effect yet another opportunity for Ahaziah to repent. He should have humbled himself and said, "Oh, God, now I understand. I humble myself before you. Have mercy on me, a sinner!"

Did Ahaziah humble himself? No. He sent another captain with fifty more soldiers to Elijah.

· *The Second Arresting Party (vv. 11-12)*

"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."

What was the message to Ahaziah? "Ahaziah, you are not winning the war. There is a sovereign Lord of the universe who has declared war against you and he is winning. But you haven't died yet, so you still have opportunity to repent."

Did Ahaziah repent? No. Again, he sent another captain and fifty men.

· *The Third Arresting Party (vv. 13-15)*

"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."

But this captain is different, he humbled himself and pleaded with Elijah, "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight." In other words, the man was saying, "Have mercy on me. I am just doing my duty." And the angel of the Lord told Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So Elijah went to see Ahaziah. This was Ahaziah's final opportunity to hear the message of the Lord and repent. But did Ahaziah repent and say to Elijah, "Please, I understand all this. I am a wicked man. Have mercy upon me"? Oh, no.

In verse sixteen Elijah told the king,

"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.'" And in verse seventeen tells us "So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken."

There was a later king in Judah named Hezekiah (2 Kings 20) who was told he was going to die. What did Hezekiah do? He repented and prayed, and God showed mercy to him. In the same way, God was willing to save Ahaziah, had he repented and trusted in the God of Israel.

Conclusion

The king's refusal to repent is hard to understand yet in the book of Revelation we see God pouring out his judgment and wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth. Did they repent? No. In Revelation 9:20 we read, "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons," and here again we see that all idol worship is the worship of demons, "and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. (21) Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts."

In Revelation 16 we see more wrath of God poured out. Did they repent? In verses 10-11 we read, "The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony (11) and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done."

Sin has a way of hardening our hearts. But as long as we are living our opportunities to repent are not yet exhausted. But it is up to us to use the opportunities that God gives us!