

2 Kings 1-2 - "Oh man of God!"

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We start 2 Kings, really, I say we start 2 Kings, but really there's no, there's no break. 1 and 2 Kings were originally just one book in the original Hebrew so it just continues on from 2 Kings, from 1 Kings, so, there, there isn't really any break at all. And we just keep going on with the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.

Some of you might wonder why the repetition between 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. Actually, in the original Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Chronicles did not come right after 1 and 2 Kings like it does in your Bible. 1 and 2 Chronicles was actually at the very end of the Hebrew Bible after Malachi.

And it is believed that Ezra is the one who wrote down the facts or the information from 1 and 2 Chronicles to give a witness once again of the genealogies of the Jews and the history of the Judean kings.

Now you'll remember in 1 and 2 Chronicles, it doesn't really mention the kings of Israel. It really is only about the kings of Judah, and that's the difference.

There is a lot of repetition, however, between 1 and 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles, but they were written at very different times in Israel's history, and for different purposes. And that's one of the reasons why when we finish with 2 Kings, we're not going to go right into 1 and 2 Chronicles.

We're probably going to wait, possibly even do it toward the end of our study of the Old Testament, because that is originally where those books landed in the Hebrew Bible. There you go, a little history lesson to go along with things.

But we're in 2 Kings, and it begins here in chapter 1, verse 1 by saying, "*After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.*" (ESV)

What does that mean? And by the way, this is going to be developed later in the third chapter. But when a nation during those times got to be strong, they would go and conquer a neighboring nation. Not so much as a land grab, but as a way of generating revenue within the context of their economy. And so what they would do is they would conquer them and then they would say, in order for us to stay out of your business, you need to give us whatever they were strong in.

In the case of Moab, it's going to be sheep and goats. And we'll, we'll find out more about that when we get to chapter 3. But the country might be a country that was rich in gold, or silver, or bronze, or have a lot of camels, or whatever. Whatever their natural resource was when you conquered a country, you would then cause them to pay tribute to you as the conquering nation. And they literally referred to it as paying tribute.

But often when a king passed away of the nation that was receiving the vassal, or the nation that was under them, paying the tribute would rebel thinking, well now there's a shift in the political power of that country, this is a good time to exploit that and maybe we can get out from under, the thumb of this neighboring, kingdom.

And we're going to see that Moab is going to give that the old college try here, when we get into chapter 3. But this is just a passing comment here in this chapter.

And it goes on in verse 2, look with me there in your Bible, to say that, *“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.”*

Ahaziah is the son of king Ahab who has now passed from the scene. And just like his father, he is, the center of Baal worship has influenced his heart to the point now where he has suffered an injury. And when it says he, *“fell through the lattice...”*

Kings in those days had something that the common people didn't have and that was double storied homes, palaces. Most people lived in a single story dwelling. And so if you had a double story dwelling, they would put lattice up so that when people, people couldn't see up into those upper rooms. And you could do your business up there or whatever it was without people gawking. And of course lattice, just like it is today is a fairly thin decorative sort of material and it wouldn't hold weight.

We don't know exactly what happened to king Isaiah, but he fell, tripped or whatever, fell through the lattice. Probably fell from a second story down to the ground or whatever, and injured himself to the point where he now is suffering from this this fall in such a way that he's wondering now if he's going to even recover. And so in order to divine that information, he tells his servants, some messengers, to go to Ekron, or to the god of Ekron, which of course is among the Philistines, all right? So basically he's saying, go ask the god of the

Philistines if I'm going to recover. That's what he's essentially saying that he wants to do.

And so, it tells us in verse 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?’”*

By the way, when you're going through a difficult time in your life, when you have a crisis in your life, who or whatever you turn to, that is your god. Okay? Let's just, I mean, that's the fact of the matter. When we need information, when we need solace, when we need comfort, when we need direction, who and what you turn to, that is your god. And you find out when somebody is really dealing with the difficulties of life, who they really worship. Okay?

Now we know who Ahaziah really is truly worshipping, who he trusts, the god of Ekron, Beelzebub. So he turns to in his hour of need, it's interesting, isn't it? So he does not turn to the Lord.

And this is, for you and I, this is like turning to the world. This is like turning to the things of the world for answers, for comfort, for solace, or whatever we're seeking. Money, information, counsel, whatever. Going to the god of Ekron, is like going to the god of the world, or the gods that the people in the world worship.

Look around you. Look at the people around you that don't know the Lord. What do they turn to when they need comfort, when they need direction, when they need healing? When they get sick? Here, Ahaziah is sick.

Now, I'll just tell you that some people, some individuals have taken this idea and they've run with it, from the standpoint of Christians, sickness, our need for medical attention from time to time. And they've said, see now, we're never to turn to the world. So anybody that like goes to doctors and seeks medical attention, takes pills or whatever, that's ungodly, that's wrong, and we should never do that. Which personally I think is very, very excessive and that sort of thing. I thank God for doctors and nurses and medicine and surgeons and those sorts of things.

Now, I will say that there's always a balance with everything. Here's the point. If somebody says, hey, is it wrong to go to see a doctor? Is it wrong to take medicine? Of course not. Of course not.

Here's the question though. Again, there's a balance with everything. The question is, where's your hope? Where's your hope? That's really the question that needs to be asked. It's not wrong to go to a doctor, but it is wrong to put your absolute ultimate hope in a doctor. I do believe that.

I don't think it's wrong to take medicine at all. But if your hope is in medicine and not in God, the God who created men who can make medicine, then you've stepped way down the ladder as it relates to where you're putting your trust, you see.

Because God created mankind, mankind through the wisdom that God has given has come up with some pretty amazing scientific discoveries related to medicine and our ability to treat sickness and injury and that sort of thing. And for that we are grateful and we say, Lord, thank You. And we praise God.

When somebody has to go to the hospital or have surgery or whatever, we pray for them, and we pray that God would guide the doctors in their decision making, guide the physicians in their attempt to figure out what's going on. Or guide the surgeons in their procedures and so forth and so on. Why are we praying that? Because we know that God is ultimately in charge.

God is the ultimate physician, right? It's not, it's not what you do, it's where is your hope? See, somebody could say, I don't go to doctors. I don't take medicine, but their hope could be in something else entirely that is still not godly, you see.

It always comes down to that question. Where is your hope? And of course we live in this culture today. Did anybody else get tired of commercials? And all the commercials that I have to turn off the sound when, I ever do watch anything. When all these commercials, especially during the news, boy, they want to hit you up during the news.

It's like they gear the thing to hypochondriacs and you can't, you listen to these commercials about medicine, it's like it reads like a horror story. I mean, they're sitting there. You're watching these images of these people outdoors playing ball or tennis or something, while this voice is saying, telling you about all the potential side effects that reads like a horror film, right? And, if you suddenly have a desire to eat dogs or something, go, contact your doctor immediately. This could be a sign of a serious condition. And you're...

There's this one that I was hearing just recently, what they're basically saying throughout the course of this message is, are you sure you're not really sick and

you just don't know it? I mean, that's essentially the message of the thing. Talk to your doctor today because you could really be sick and we think you are. It's just awful. I mean, just, I hate it, even watching this stuff, but see, it's playing into a natural tendency, survival instinct that is built into us to fear, to fear. I mean, do you understand that, that these pill commercials are essentially based, predicated upon getting you to be afraid so that you'll go, I got to do that.

Listen, that's the opposite of trusting in the Lord with all of your heart and leaning, not in your own understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledging Him who will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6) Now that's the promise of God's Word.

And you and I just, we get sucked into it. You know one of the things I hate about getting older? Is talking to people who are also like me getting older, who talk about nothing but their health. I hate it. I hate it. I'm sorry if you've talked to me recently about your health, but I always do that. I say something and then I think to myself, oh no, what have I just done?

I'm not saying I don't want to pray for you guys because, and I want to be serious about this. You know what? The Bible says, is any among you sick, let him come, call forth the elders, and let them, let anoint you with oil in prayer, the prayer of faith. (James 5:14) And we need to do that more. And frankly, you need to do that more.

You need to be willing to come and call on the elders and have pray for you if there's a physical illness or something going on in your life. And here's why. Because ultimately your trust needs to be in the Lord.

I'm not saying don't take your medicine by all means, take your medicine. Go to your doctor and let him help you, and let the Lord use that also. But put your hope in the Lord. Put your hope in God.

There's other kings of Israel for which there were illnesses, there were injuries, and there were things. There's one particular king that we'll get to who has a disease of the feet, and it says in the record that he only consulted the physicians. And that's what he was really remembered about, largely, is that he got this disease and he never consulted the Lord, ever. Never went to God.

I think God wants you to talk to Him about things that are bothering you, concerning you, and frankly causing problems. I think God wants you to take those to Him in prayer. And Husbands, if I'm talking to couples, if your wife is sick, I think God is looking to you to lift her up in prayer.

We have this wonderful example in Genesis chapter 25 of Isaac recognizing his wife's condition of barrenness, and it's a very simple statement that simply says, and Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, Rebecca. (Genesis 25:21)

And it's a beautiful verse that simply shows a husband taking his wife and bringing her to the throne of grace because there was a situation for which he personally had no answer. And there was nothing he could do. There weren't fertility clinics back then, so it was a difficult situation. But, but Isaac did what he could, and that was he took it to God. And that's just such an important thing to remember.

The bottom line here is, put your trust in the Lord, put your faith in God. And, these other things that God has given us to have and to enjoy, wonderful, take advantage of them, but make sure your eyes aren't off God.

You could even bring up insurance for that matter. I mean, who doesn't have insurance? We all have some kind of insurance. In fact, the government requires us to have insurance on our vehicles to even drive. We have to have at least liability insurance. Well, the problem with insurance is that it can actually bring you to a point where essentially you start to trust that, well, I'm covered, I'm covered. Don't really have to pray about things because I'm covered. If I ever if I lose my crop or something like that, we got insurance. You see it's like hey take advantage of things that you have to take advantage of but put your trust in the Lord. All right.

Elijah is told by the Lord to, *“Arise, (here in verse 3 and) go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and (then to ask) ...them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’”* Is that exactly why you're going there? Because there is no God here in Israel?

“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. Boy, how'd you like, what a great... You give this quick message to these guys and then leave. Yeah, he's going to die. He's not going to survive this thing. Well, the messengers don't even go to Ekron or to Baal-zebub. They're so, I don't know if they're shaken by this message, but in verse 5, they return to the king.

And they say, *“...and he said to them, ‘Why have you returned?’”* You're back. That's..., you couldn't have gotten there and back by now. *“⁶ And they said to him, (well,) ‘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.'

(and) 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 (the king responded) he said, (by saying, oh yeah, yeah, I recognize that) "It is (that's) Elijah the Tishbite."*

Interesting, isn't it, that John the Baptist wore the exact same outfit? Which is one of the reasons that some of the people asked him; John the Baptist, that is, if he was Elijah. Now, they didn't ask him that simply because he bore an interesting, descriptive resemblance to the Elijah of the Bible, which, of course, they obviously had that resemblance.

They asked him for another reason, and we'll get into this a little bit later, but they asked him, of course, because the prophet Malachi said that Elijah would return. And that's why they asked John if he was, in fact, Elijah. We'll talk more about it.

The king says, oh yeah, I know who you're talking about there. That was *"Elijah the Tishbite."*

Then in verse 9 it says, *"Then the king sent to him (to Elijah) a captain of fifty men with his fifty. (in other words, with all the men in his troop, and) 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."*

Now you read this and you're like, woo, that's intense. You have to remember though some important things about this. Baal worship you'll remember was huge. And do you remember me saying back when Elijah met with those 450 prophets of Baal and they built the double altars, remember. And Elijah challenged them, whosoever God sends fire from heaven to consume the altar, or the offering rather, that is God. And he challenged them, remember?

Do you remember the reason why he challenged them with fire? Because Baal was considered to be the god of fire so that was a sign to the people that day on Mount Carmel that Baal was not a true god, that he did not have control over the elements such as fire, and YAHWEH, their covenant God, did have all the control over those elements. All right.

Still you have to understand that we're still dealing with this center of Baal worship there now in Israel, and so the fact that fire comes down from heaven and consumes these soldiers of the king is yet another sign to the king, and to the people of Israel that YAHWEH is God. But there's more to it than that as well.

Remember what just happened. Ahaziah is injured and therefore sick. He's told by the Lord he's not going to recover, but he first sent to go to get word from Baal-zebub. All right?

And now when Elijah gives this message saying, from the Lord, actually you won't survive, the king sends these messengers to him and what does he tell them to say? "*O man of God.*" "*O man of God,*" come with us. Isn't it interesting they refer to him as man of God? The king no doubt told them what to say. "*O man of God,*" come with us.

And Elijah is responding by saying, man of God, really? Is that what you call me? In other words, you are acknowledging now, the God that I serve. Or are you? Well, I'll tell you what, if I really am a man of God, then let fire come down and consume you.

Do you see what's going on here? God is once again responding to the attitude of the people of Israel, particularly the king, but also many of the people as well, to refer to God, and the things of God, and the people of God, in word only, but there is nothing of the heart that goes along with it.

Do you ever run into that when you talk to people that? Find out that maybe you're a Christian or maybe you talk to people when our nation has gone through a period of difficulty. Have you ever noticed that? When things have happened like 9/11 and Desert Storm, I remember during those seasons, those things that were happening in our culture that people got very God conscious. And some of them even started coming to church. It didn't last very long, but some of them did.

But everybody was talking about God and it all of a sudden became very in vogue to talk about prayer. Even politicians, right and left, who could not care less about God, are talking about, well, we're just praying for our country, and we're asking that God would... And they're doing their... God, oh God... And you know what's going on.

They don't care. It's just, It's just words. It's lip service. That's all it is. And what Elijah is confronting these men with is the lip service, the empty lip service of

saying, “*O man of God,*” come down. Listen, if I'm a man of God, then God is real and worship Him as God. But you don't do that, do you? So if I'm a man of God, hmm, let's see. Let's see if the, maybe if I am a man of God. Humm, if I'm a man of God, then let fire come down.

I bet you those guys, the first guy, the troop that came up, they were probably like, right. Until they became crispy critters on the spot with the fire of the Lord that just consumed them at that moment. And they didn't believe he was the man of God any more than the man in the moon. But Elijah is making a point, and through him, God is making a point. Stop responding to the Lord with empty lip service.

Now, interestingly enough, this situation, repeats. And, verse 11 says, “*Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty (men). And he answered and said to him, “O man of God, (dumb thing to say) this is the king's order, (man of God, you like that? this is the king's order,) ‘Come down quickly!’”*”

Boy, I tell you, they're getting more intense, aren't they? “¹² *But Elijah (is once again going to respond to the empty lip service)...., (he says) “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty. (men)” (boom!) Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.*”

Well, that's a hundred. Well, or a hundred and two, I guess, if you count the commanders along with it.

“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, (now this time you'll notice his language changes, and you can tell there's a sincerity here) “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.”*”

Now, do you see what's going on here? This man is smart enough to do what the king should have done at the very beginning, and that is to humble himself before God and plead for his life. Ahaziah didn't do that.

Even when he found out from Elijah that he was not going to survive. Notice that Ahaziah didn't ask the Lord for mercy. He didn't repent of his sin. He didn't

respond to the Lord in any sort of a..., He just was like, oh, that's Elijah, bring him here.

And then after the first 50 guys are killed, he sends another troop and says, this time command him to come. Dude, what are you thinking? The guy has God on his side. You're going to command God. Yeah, tell him to come quickly. Do you see the hardness of heart? Do you see the pride? Do you see the pride? I am becoming convinced that pride is at the back of just about everything.

It's like the Lord has just been showing me example, after example, after example, pride. We are so prideful and we don't even know it, which is a sign of our pride. But, come quickly, man of God

And God is showing through Elijah, hey, listen, I am the Sovereign, All Powerful, Eternal God and you do not put me in your pocket to control when it seems convenient to you.

Now you have this commander who has the good sense to get off his horse and before anything comes out of his mouth, this guy's on his knees, which is right where he should be. And by the way, when somebody genuinely humbles them self before God, God will always act mercifully.

And you're going to see that it says here in verse 15, it says, *“Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.””*

See this guy, you don't need to be afraid because this guy's broken He's been broken. These other guys, prideful, but this guy, he's been on his knees. He's like spare my life please.

And *“So he arose and went down with him to the king ¹⁶ and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because (look at that word, very important. Or due to the fact that) 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 (or because of that) you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’”*

I don't know how you can make it any clearer than that. The sentence of death that is given to Isaiah about this situation is directly related to the fact that he ignored God. He neglected and rejected God as any means of healing or restoration in his life.

And you know what's really sad? It goes on in verse 17. It says, “*So he died...*” And you're thinking, wow, it makes me think of later on and we'll deal with this king. But it makes me think of king Hezekiah, who was a godly king, but who also became ill. And, the Lord sent word to him that he was not going to survive. And Hezekiah, and whatever you may think about Hezekiah's appeal for a longer life, whether you think that was selfish or not, some people do.

Regardless of that fact, he turned to the Lord, his God. I mean, he was a godly man anyway. He had done wonderful things for the kingdom of Judah, but he turned to God. I love that example of people turning to God. When people come and they want prayer for something in their life, I love that because it tells me they're turning to God.

I mean, you always hope that somebody isn't turning to God in an empty sort of a fashion or just to fulfill some requirement of religiosity. You hope that there's a genuine coming to God when people come for prayer. But I don't question that. I'm glad when people want prayer. It's like, hey, yeah, you should be bringing this to the Lord.

Ahaziah didn't bring it to the Lord. He didn't, he didn't appeal to God. He didn't say, Lord God, I've been a sinful man. My father was a sinful man and I've turned away from any covenant expression of love or service toward You, and I repent of my sin. And I ask you, Lord God in dust and ashes, I ask you, God, that you might heal, heal my body. I'm convinced God would have done it. There were kings that were worth, worse than this guy, who repented.

In fact, it's interesting. Getting back to king Hezekiah, who we'll come to later. He asks the Lord for a longer life. And during that time, he actually fathers another son who becomes the worst king of all in Judah. Did you know that? King Hezekiah's son. Godly man, had his own struggles with pride, but for the most part, a godly man, who fathers the worst king of Judah.

But his son, at the end of his life repented of his wickedness, and God poured out mercy on his life. God poured out mercy on him. Of course, he had to, He allowed him to see also the consequences of his wickedness and rebellion. But at the end of his life, He literally, He poured out gracious mercy on that man.

And, I read those things in the Bible. When I was a younger man, they used to bug me. Cause I always thought God, I was like... You know how you are when you're younger. It's like nuke them God, they deserve it sort of a thing. And then you get older and you're like, oh, thank you God for such a beautiful picture of mercy. And boy, do I recognize I need that too.

You look at those things and you're comforted by them. Used to be, I used to think, no, that's wrong. You should have smite-d him right where he stood, or smote. Is it smote-d? I'm not good on King James words, but anyway, smote-d. I don't know. Anyway, but God is so merciful, if Ahaziah would have just come to the Lord.

Says verse 17, *“So he died according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken. (and) Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son.”* And the reason that happened is because Ahaziah had no son, so his brother Jehoram became king in his place because he had no son to rule.

And then it says in verse 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?”* We wouldn't know. We don't have the Book of the Kings, or the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

We have the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. But, not the Kings of Israel. So, it's a question that you and I can't, we just assume, well there was a book. There was a Book of the...

And by the way, Chronicles is really simply a word that means, times because it comes from that chrono, that word, chrono, where we would say chronograph or clock. It literally means the times of the kings. Is it not written in the books of the times of the kings and so forth, but again, we don't know.

Chapter 2. *“Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha (his protégé) 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.”* (or it probably was announced, Be-thel but we'll say Bethel cause we're Americans) *But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.”* Stop there for just a moment. Let me just explain what's going on here a little bit.

Elijah is aware of the fact that he is going to be taken up, to be with the Lord. He knows that his time of departure is very near. What we don't know is whether Elisha, well, we know Elisha knows it too. What we don't know is whether Elijah knew that Elisha knew. More than likely he did.

But what Elijah is about to do is he's about to go and visit these schools of the prophets that he has been instrumental in establishing in the land of Israel. And he's going to say his departing words to these various groups. He has established

these schools. These men are being raised up as protégés again. Prophetic protégés if you will. And Elijah is making his circuit around to these various schools to bid them farewell for the last time. He knows he's going to leave. And the Lord is going to bring about his departure.

So he says to Elisha, why don't you just stay here? For God is sending me to Bethel. Notice Elisha's response again. And it's that usual Old Testament thing. *“As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”* In other words, it's like a way of saying, as surely as I'm living and breathing, I won't leave.

We don't know whether Elijah was testing Elisha to see if he was willing to come along or if Elijah genuinely wanted to be alone when he departed. Elijah was a man, I feel like I understand Elijah in a lot of respects in terms of just his temperament, his personality. I think he was a man that really longed for, to be alone. We see that for the most part Elijah's ministry was hidden from the people and he would pop out, give some incredible word from the Lord and then he'd go away again.

But we find that Elisha was much more of a people person. He hung out with people more. And after Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha went out and just lived in Samaria. He lived right out in the open, right out in the city. Elijah never did that. He always lived in the wilderness. He always lived away from the people.

And so there's reason to believe, based on the background, that Elijah was a man who loved that solitude, loved being away. He would come out to do his prophetic business and then he would withdraw once again. And so it's very possible he's saying to Elisha, why don't you just stay here? The mantle of leadership has already been placed on.

You remember when he met Elisha, he symbolically took off his garment, his, his mantle and placed it on Elisha's shoulders and just walked away. It doesn't even say that he said anything, but that was a symbolic statement to say that the ministry that God has placed upon me, has now been placed upon you. Very similar to if you will, Samuel anointing David as king over Israel to say the Lord has anointed you, and so forth. Elisha says, no, I'm going to, I'm going to stay here.

“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.”

In other words, I think what happened here is that Elijah went in to say his farewells to the schools of the prophets. And these young protégés prophets came out and said to Elisha, so we just got the word, your master's leaving. He's going to be taken away today. Were you aware of that too?

And Elisha's response is simply, yes, I know. I don't want to talk about it. Just chill. He doesn't want to discuss it. You can tell that it's a matter of great personal impact to be saying goodbye in this way to his, his master. So he says, *"Yes, I know it;..."*

"Elijah said to him, (verse 4) "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 again, this conversation) So they came to Jericho. (this time, and) ⁵ The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho... " Did the same thing. Came out, talked "to Elisha and said to him, (whoa, we just got the word) "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?" And he (said) answered, "Yes, (yeah) I know it; (I don't want to talk about 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." Probably wanting to get a glimpse of what was going to take place

(And) 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; (in other words, that's beyond my ability) 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."

And I have to wonder if this isn't somewhat a continuing test for Elisha and just his determination to stick with it till the end.

¹¹ And as they still went on and talked, (we don't know for how long, could've been hours) behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. (in other words, they appeared in such a way that Elijah and Elisha are separated and one can't get to the other) 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.*

(and) *Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. (as a sign of grief and sorrow) 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.”*

That statement we just read right there is a very important one. “*And he took up the cloak...*” Your Bible may even say, mantle. And this is a literal picture because Elijah had left that behind again, as a symbol of the ministry. But it says that Elisha took up the garment, took up this thing, and he literally picked it up and walked over, back over to the bank of the Jordan.

But the picture here for you and I, is that Elisha has accepted the ministry that has been passed on to him. And he took up the mantle. We use that phrase today. Someone had a calling to go and be a missionary overseas, and he and his wife took up the mantle and went or something. It's a picture of, of that idea of taking up what the Lord has given and so forth. Not an easy thing to do sometimes, it can be a fairly frightening thing to do.

And I think it was somewhat frightening to Elisha. And I believe that that is what is behind his request to receive a double portion of the spirit that was upon Elijah. I think Elisha is responding in much the way that Solomon responded when the Lord met him in a dream and said, ask what you will and I will give it to you.

And Solomon was overwhelmed at the idea of being king of such a great nation. He said God, I just, I feel like I I'm so over my head in this in this job that you've given me so I need wisdom to be able to do a good job of it. And then the Lord was very pleased and gave Solomon that.

And I think that Elisha is sensing that same overwhelming idea of carrying on the ministry of Elijah and he asks not for selfish or prideful reasons, but because a desire to truly be the servant of the Lord that God is asking him to be. Lord, let there be a double portion upon me that was otherwise on my master Elijah. And Elijah, his promise was if you see me taken up, you will receive it. And so he did, he saw him taken up.

And it says again here in verse 14, it says, “*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?”* (obviously he's just still, he's reeling with sorrow and grief at his master being taken) *And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to*

the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.” And as we finish out the chapter, we find some interesting sort of things going on.

The first is, is quite interesting. It says ¹⁵ *Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him.* ¹⁶ *And they said to him, “Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the Spirit of the LORD has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.” And he said, “You shall not send.”*”

And what that means is, he says, don't bother, don't send these guys, anywhere to go look for him. Because it's just, I know where he went, he went to heaven.

¹⁷ *But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, (alright fine) “Send.”* (and in the Hebrew, it's just, go, fine, send him, send him on) *They sent therefore fifty men. And for three days they sought him (meaning Elijah) but did not find him. (of course)* ¹⁸ *And they came back to him while he was staying at Jericho, and he said to them,*” Didn't I tell you weren't going to find him and that was really dumb? A sort of an I told you so sort of a thing.

Who knows why this even happened? It could be that these 50 people, these other prophets just wanted somehow to be a part of what the Lord had done here in this situation. We want to go look for him. That's dumb. The Lord took him away. We want to try anyway. All right, fine.

Now, verse 19, *“Now the men of the city said to Elisha, “Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.”* Stop there for a moment. This is Jericho. Remember, you guys remember, you guys know about Jericho. I assume you've seen Veggie Tales.

Jericho was the very first city that the nation of Israel conquered when they came in to take over the land. And Joshua pronounced a curse over Jericho, saying, whoever tries to rebuild the city, he will do it at the cost of his children. And we've already heard in 1 Kings that someone began to rebuild the city, and in fact, his children died prematurely because of that, when he undertook to rebuild the city.

So that's already been done, and Jericho has now been built. But there's a problem with Jericho, and that is the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful, presumably because of that or in addition to that. What's interesting about this is that it obviously wasn't always so, because there was a thriving city here at one

time, so the water can't have always been bad. So this issue with the water must be a lingering effect of the curse that Joshua had pronounced in the name of the Lord over this city. And so even now the city has been built, it's still really uninhabitable from the standpoint that the water is bad. And so that's what these men are, are telling Elisha.

And verse 20, it says, *“He said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him. ²¹ Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the LORD, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.” ²² So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke.”*

Notice who is doing the speaking, however, through Elisha. It's the Lord, and He is speaking the Word of the Lord. And so God is lifting, finally, the curse over the city of Jericho in a complete sort of fashion.

“²³ He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city (this is a strange story) and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!” ²⁴ And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.”

Wow, what a strange story that is. You got to remember though, where he is coming. It says here in verse 23 that, *“He went up from there to Bethel, ...”* Now you need to remember, have a decent memory about these things, that Bethel was the center of calf worship that king Jeroboam had set up when he pridefully created his own religion. Okay?

Remember what happened. Jeroboam was the man who became the very first king of the divided nation of Israel. And Jeroboam was fearful that all of the people would return to the sons of David when they went back to Jerusalem to worship at the temple and so he created his own religion. He made two golden calves and he set them up in two specific places, and Bethel was the original center of this pagan calf worship.

There's an attitude in this community, in this city of just a total contempt for the things of the Lord. And this statement that these young men are saying to Elisha probably has some connection with word got to them about how Elijah perhaps was taken up and they're now taunting him. Go up you baldhead. It could be that they're actually challenging him, taunting him, to go away in the same way that Elijah did.

And what is what is really going on here is this is the language of real hate speech and this is complete contempt and mockery for the things of the Lord. Don't think of some little 4 and 5 year old boys throwing dirt clods. These are young men. These are youths, but they are, I mean, the word is a little bit, it just means young men. But, I don't believe these are little children as, as it might lead us to believe.

And so there is this great judgment that falls upon these youths and these bearers come out of the woods and maul and kill some 42 of these. And there's a message that the Lord is passing along here about the contempt and the disrespect for the things of the Lord.

God is very gracious, very long suffering, very tender hearted. But He's also God. And the Bible says, it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31) That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? Interesting statement.

But God's not tame. He is God after all. And when you and I hear people mocking the things of Christ, the things of God, I want to just encourage you, don't get all angry. God's able to take care of Himself, God is able to take, and believe me, people, He will. He'll take care of every single heart that was ever contrary, and contemptuous, and whatever, God will take care of it. God will take care of it. You and I,...

It's funny, that's one of the huge differences... Boy, you say something against some people's god, and they'll put a hit out on your life. But you and I should never ever respond that way to the world when they show contempt to God. It's like, hey, that's God's business. And we can assume here that Elisha responded in the judgment of the Lord in this particular situation as a prophet. But for you and I, it's just like, you know what? God will take care of this and you and I don't need to worry about it.

And it says at the end of the chapter, *“²⁵ From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.”* And again, that's the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel. And this is Elisha.

This is the difference between Elisha and Elijah. Elijah, after he was done, he'd go back out to the wilderness and be alone. And Elisha moved right into town. So, quite a difference between these two prophets and the way they worked.