

## 2 Kings 1 – 2

(A small-group Bible Study.)

1. Second Kings opens by relating Moab's rebellion against Israel (1:1).

This anticipates the events of chapter 3.

David subjugated the Moabites and other nations so that they brought tribute to him (2Sam 8:2, 6).

And Solomon, from the outset, enjoyed the submission of all the nations David had conquered (1Kgs 4:21).

But now Moab is breaking free. Before long, Edom and Libnah will break free from Judah (2Kgs 8:20-22).

**What might be the underlying factors that allowed these nations to break away?**

(2 Chronicles 21:8-10; Deuteronomy 28:13; Endnote 1)

2. Judgment on Ahaziah.

Israel's kings lived with no regard for God — they neither obeyed his laws nor sought his help or guidance.

In contrast, King Jehoshaphat for the most part sought God's help (1Kgs 22:5; 2Kgs 3:11; 2Chr 20:3).

**Might the outcome for Ahaziah have been different if he had inquired of the LORD instead?**

**What if, after hearing Elijah's word of judgment, he had humbled himself like his father Ahab had done?**

(1 Kings 21:27-29; 2 Chronicles 33:10-13)

3. Elijah was recognized by Ahaziah because of his distinctive attire (1:8).

John the Baptist wore similar garb (Mk 1:6).

**In view of what Jesus says concerning John in Matthew 11:7-8, what might have been the intent of Elijah's (and John's) austere attire?**

4. God's last Old Testament word to Israel includes a promise to send Elijah to them "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." (Malachi 4:5, KJV; also 3:1a)

Jesus declared John to be the fulfillment of this prophecy (Mt 11:10, 14; 17:10-13).

**How were the respective ministries of Elijah and John similar?**

(1 Kings 18:37; Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:16-17)

**What about their respective messages of judgment upon Israel for covenant apostasy?**

(1 Kings 17:1 [cf. Dt 11:13-17]; Matthew 3:7-12 [cf. Mal 4:1-6])

5. **What was Ahaziah trying to achieve by arresting Elijah?**

**How was his action a violation of the respective roles of prophet and king — of the king's duty to sit under God's word?**

(Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 1 Samuel 10:25)

6. Elijah called down fire to consume those sent to arrest him.  
**Should we seek to do the same today?** (Luke 9:52-56)  
**What are our “weapons” today?**  
 (2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 4:12; Endnote 2)
  
7. Groups of prophets existed at Bethel (2:3), Jericho (2:5), and Gilgal (4:38).  
 (Literally: “sons of the prophets”, perhaps denoting a sort of *guild* or *brotherhood* of prophets.)  
 Elijah seems to have visited each group immediately prior to his departure.  
**What do you think was the purpose of these groups?** Communes? Schools?  
 (2 Kings 4:1; 5:22; 6:1-2; 1 Samuel 10:10; 19:20; Endnote 3)
  
8. Elisha asked (as a parting gift from Elijah) to inherit a “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit (2:9).  
**How does Elijah handle this difficult request?**  
 (2 Kings 2:10)
  
9. Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan on dry ground (2:8), reminiscent of the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses and of the Jordan under Joshua (Joshua 3 – 4).  
 Elisha was also able to cross later, by striking the water with Elijah’s fallen cloak (2:14).  
**What did the company of the prophets at Jericho conclude when they saw this?**  
 See 2 Kings 2:15. (Compare with 1Kgs 19:16)
  
10. Jericho had been recently rebuilt as a fortified (walled) city, despite the earlier curse placed upon it by Joshua. See Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34.  
 The city seemed to still be under a curse with its bad water and unproductive land (2:19).  
**Why did Elisha request “a new bowl” (2:20), and is there any significance to his use of salt for healing the water (2:21)?**  
 (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5)
  
11. The fiery chariot took Elijah up to “heaven” (2:11).  
 He was one of just two Old Testament saints who didn’t have to face death.  
**How might Hebrews 11:39-40 suggest that Elijah perhaps went to the intermediate abode of Paradise, rather than to heaven itself (God’s dwelling place)?**  
 With regard to Enoch, see Hebrews 11:5.  
 (Endnote 5)

12. The jeering youths of Bethel (2:23-24).

Bethel was the center of idolatry, set up by King Jeroboam as a substitute for Jerusalem (1Kgs 12:26 – 13:1).

From the NIV Study Bible notes for 2:23:

The youths assumed that Elisha was on his way “up” to Samaria to continue the war on royal apostasy.

Baldness was uncommon amongst the Jews, and luxuriant hair was viewed as a sign of strength and vigor.

The youths therefore viewed Elisha as having no power; they displayed utter contempt for him as Yahweh’s representative (and Elijah’s successor) in the struggle against apostasy.

The youths’ punishment was reminiscent of the covenant curse of Leviticus 26:22.

**How might this have served as a graphic warning for the inhabitants of Bethel and for the nation as a whole?**

13. Consider the words of the hymn *God of the Prophets*, based on 2 Kings 2:

God of the prophets! Bless the prophets’ sons;

Elijah’s mantle o’er Elisha cast;

Each age its solemn task may claim but once;

Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

Anoint them prophets! Make their ears attent

To thy divinest speech, their hearts awake

To human need, their lips make eloquent

To gird the right and every evil break.

Anoint them priests! Strong intercessors, Lord!

Anoint them with the Spirit of thy Son;

Theirs not a jeweled crown, a blood-stained sword;

Theirs, by sweet love, for Christ a kingdom won.

Rev. Denis Wortman wrote these words in 1884 for the one-hundredth anniversary of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey (RCA), from which he had graduated in 1860.

**Relate these words to the importance of biblical teaching in the home, school, and theological college.**

## Endnotes

1. The Old Testament views it as beneficial for the nations to be part of the Israelite empire — the blessings promised through Abraham would come to them through submission to God’s appointed king in Jerusalem. See Genesis 49:10; Psalms 2, 47, 72, 110.  
Rebellious Israel (cf. 1Kgs 12:19) would herself someday return and submit to the Davidic king.  
See Hosea 3:5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Amos 9:11; Ezekiel 37:15-28.  
For proud Moab, what does Isaiah (in 718 BC) advise her to do in her time of crisis? See Isaiah 16:1-5.  
How does all this relate to the messianic kingdom, with Jesus ruling the nations from heaven?  
How does he win the nations to himself?  
See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 15:16-17; Romans 1:5; 4:13; 15:8-12, 18; 16:26; Galatians 3:8, 14.  
Compare with Psalm 2; 86:9; Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 42:1-4; Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 12:5; 15:4.
2. The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11:5-6 have supernatural powers reminiscent of Elijah and Moses: fire and drought and plagues. Perhaps the symbolism points to the Law and the Prophets, which together serve as covenant witnesses against the apostasy of “the great city” — first-century Jerusalem (Rev 11:8; cf. Mt 17:3; Ac 28:23; Rom 3:21).
3. These sons of the prophets were “young men” (2Kgs 5:22).  
Samuel had earlier led a prophetic company at Naioth, near his home in Ramah (1Sam 19:18-20).  
From the NIV Study Bible notes for 1 Samuel 19:18: *Naioth* means “habitations” or “dwellings”, suggesting a complex of houses in the vicinity of Ramah where these young prophets resided.  
2 Kings 4:1-7 implies there were separate dwellings for the families on these communes.  
2 Kings 6:1-2 may suggest that a larger meeting room or assembly hall was needed, so that the young prophets could “sit before” Elisha (6:1, NET footnote) and listen to his lectures. Compare 2 Kings 6:1-2 in the following versions: CEV, EXB, NET, NIV (2011), NLT.
4. In 2 Chronicles 21:12 King Jehoram, after the death of his father Jehoshaphat, receives a letter from Elijah. Yet in 2 Kings 3:7 Jehoshaphat is still alive, after Elijah has departed.  
Elijah under divine inspiration evidently wrote his letter in advance, prior to his departure and before the subsequent events related in 2 Chronicles 21. His departure prior to these events explains why he could not confront Jehoram in person.
5. Hebrews 11:39-40 suggests that access to God, both in this life and the next, is our great privilege under the New Covenant — available only because Jesus has died for our sins. Those who died under the Old Covenant entered Hades-Paradise, pending their final resurrection into heaven in AD 70. See Revelation 20:11-15.