

2 KINGS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

This, and the preceding book, are properly but one book divided into two parts, because of the size of it, as the book of Samuel; it is a continuation of the history of the kings of Israel and Judah; and for a further account of it the reader is referred to the title of the preceding book.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO 2 KINGS 1

This chapter begins with the rebellion of Moab against Israel, (¹⁰⁰⁰2 Kings 1:1), relates a fall of the king of Israel in his house, which brought on him a sickness, about which he sent messengers to inquire of the god of Ekron, who were stopped by Elijah, and bid to return, as they did; and upon the king's examination of them about the cause of their return, he perceived it was Elijah that forbade them, (¹⁰⁰²2 Kings 1:2-8), upon which the king sent to him two captains, with fifty men each, one after another, to bring him to him, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, (¹⁰⁰⁹2 Kings 1:9-12), but a third with fifty men sent to him were spared, and he is bid to go along with them with a message to the king, as he did, (¹⁰¹³2 Kings 1:13-16) and the chapter is closed with the death of Ahaziah, (¹⁰¹⁷2 Kings 1:17,18).

Ver. 1. *Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.*] Which had been in subjection to them from the times of David, (¹⁰⁰²2 Samuel 8:2) refusing to pay a tribute as they had done; taking advantage of Ahab's ill success with the king of Syria, and of his death, and the condition and circumstances of his successor.

Ver. 2. *And Ahaziah fell down a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria,* etc.] Which was either a window or lattice in the form of network, to let in light; or rather were the rails of a balcony or battlement on the roof of his palace, in this form, on which leaning, it broke down, and he fell into the garden or court yard; or walking on the roof of his house, and treading unawares on a sky light, which let in light into a room underneath, he fell through it into it:

and was sick; the fall perhaps threw him into a fever, and which seemed threatening, being violent:

and he sent messengers, and said unto them, go inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease; not to heal him of it, but to know the issue of it; a vain curiosity this! Ekron was one of the principalities of the Philistines, and this idol was the god they worshipped,

which signifies a master fly: which some think was a large metallic fly; made under a planet that rules over flies; and the Heathens had deities they called Myiodes, Myagros, and *απομυιος*, which signifies a driver away of flies; as Jupiter and Hercules were called by the Eleans and Romans, and worshipped and sacrificed to by them on that account^{f1}; and so the Cyreneans, a people of Lybia, worshipped the god Achor, which seems to be a corruption of the word Ekron, because he freed them from flies, after they had been infested with a pestilence through them^{f2}; and Ekron being a place near the sea, and both hot and moist, might be much infested with those creatures. Within the haven of Ptolemais, or Acco, was formerly a temple of Baalzebub, called in later times “the tower of flies”, and used as a Pharos^{f3}.

Ver. 3. *But the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah*, etc.] One of the ministering spirits sent by the Lord to him:

arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria: that is, the king of Israel, whose capital city was Samaria:

is it not because there is not a God in Israel; known, acknowledged, and worshipped there, of whom there had been sufficient proof of his deity and divine perfections, as omniscience, omnipotence, etc.

that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? about future things, when they had God nigh unto them, fully acquainted with them, as this message shows.

Ver. 4. *Now therefore thus saith the Lord*, etc.] Jehovah, the only true God:

thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shall surely die; this sickness should be unto death, and the bed he had betaken himself to should be his deathbed. The phrases of going up to bed, and coming down, are used with great propriety; for in the eastern countries, in their bedchambers, they had a gallery raised four or five feet above the floor, with a balustrade on the front^{f4}, and steps leading up to it; or ladders, which had more or fewer rounds, according as the beds were higher or lower^{f5}:

and Elijah departed; having met the messengers, and delivered his message from the Lord unto them.

Ver. 5. *And when the messengers turned back unto him,* etc.] To Ahaziah king of Israel, as they did as soon as Elijah was gone from them; concluding from his habit, his gravity, and the authority with which he spoke, that he was a prophet of the Lord, and especially from his knowledge of them, and of what they were sent about:

he said unto them, why are ye now turned back? for, by the time they had been gone, he knew they could never have been at Ekron and returned.

Ver. 6. *And they said unto him, there came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, go, turn again unto the king that sent you,* etc.] King Ahaziah:

and say unto him; and then they repeated all that is said by the angel to Elijah, and he had delivered to them, (^{<LXX>}2 Kings 1:3,4) and which was a sufficient reason for their turning back, since they got a full answer from a man of God, of what they were to inquire of at Ekron; which was, whether the king would recover of this disease or not.

Ver. 7. *And he said unto them, what manner of man was he,* etc.] What appearance or figure did he make? what his habit or clothing?

which came up to meet you, and told you these words? they had related to him.

Ver. 8. *And they answered him, he was an hairy man,* etc.] Either the hair of his head and beard were grown very long, having been much neglected for a great while; or he had an hairy garment on, either of goats' hair, such as the Chinese wear ^{f6}, whose women spin it, (see ^{<Q256>}Exodus 35:26) and of which garments are made; or of camels' hair, such as John the Baptist wore, who came in his spirit and power, and imitated him in his dress, being also, as Elijah here,

girt with a girdle of leather about his loins: for more expeditious travelling, not for warmth, the climate being hot:

and he said, it is Elijah the Tishbite; for he had seen him formerly in his father's court in this dress.

Ver. 9. *Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty,* etc.] Not in honour to him, but to bring him by force if he refused to come willingly:

and he went up to him, and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill; generally supposed to be Mount Carmel;

and he spake unto him; at the bottom of the hill, so loud that he might hear him:

thou man of God; or the prophet of the Lord, as the Targum, as thou callest thyself; for this was said in a sneering, flouting, manner:

the king hath said, come down; and in the king's name he ordered him to come down, signifying, if he would not, he would send his men to fetch him down.

Ver. 10. *And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, if I be a man of God,* etc.] As I am, and thou shalt know it by the following token, though thou callest me so jeeringly:

then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty; this he said not in a passion, and from a private spirit of revenge, but for the vindication of the honour and glory of God, and under the impulse of his spirit, who was abused through the insult on him as his prophet:

and there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty; a flash of lightning, which destroyed them at once; the Lord hearkening to the voice of his prophet, in vindication of him in his office, and of his own glory.

Ver. 11. *Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty,* etc.] The king, not being at all terrified with the awful judgment upon the former, sends another:

and he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, come down quickly; he flouts the prophet in the same manner as the former, and in the king's name commands him to come down, and that immediately; which the king added to his orders, or he himself, signifying he would not be trifled with, if he did not come down directly, he would force him.

Ver. 12. *And Elijah answered and said unto them,* etc.] The same as he had to the first captain, and made the same request of fire from heaven; which accordingly came down, and destroyed this captain and his fifty also.

Ver. 13. *And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty*, etc.] Which was most daring and insolent, and showed him to be dreadfully hardened, to persist in his messages after such rebuffs: and the third captain of fifty went up; instead of calling to the prophet at the bottom of the hill as the other did, he went up to the top of it:

and came and fell on his knees before Elijah: in reverence of him as a prophet of the Lord, and under a dread of the power he was possessed of, of calling for fire from heaven on him and his men, as the former instances showed:

and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight: he owns their lives lay at his mercy; he begs they might be spared, since it was not in contempt of him, and through ill will to him as the prophet of the Lord, but in obedience to the king's command, that they were come to him.

Ver. 14. *Behold, there came fire down from heaven and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties*, etc.] He owns the facts, and ascribes the death of them to the true cause, and appears to have an awful sense of the judgment of God on them, fearing the same would befall him and his:

therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight; by sparing it, what is precious and valuable being spared.

Ver. 15. *And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, &c.*] The same as in (~~2~~2 Kings 1:3) or "had said"^{f7}, as some render it, before this captain came:

go down with him; the captain and his men:

and be not afraid of him; of King Ahaziah, whom he might fear, because of the message he had sent him, that he should die of that sickness, and for turning back his messengers to the god of Ekron, and for destroying his two captains and their fifties; nor of his mother Jezebel, who had threatened his life for killing her prophets:

and he arose, and went down with him unto the king; boldly and courageously, not fearing his wrath; so that the captain not only had his life and the life of his men spared, but answered the end of his message also.

Ver. 16. *And he said unto him*, etc.] Elijah to King Ahaziah when introduced into his chamber; and after some discourse passed between them, he confirmed what he had said to his messengers, and expressed it in the same language as in (~~120B~~ 2 Kings 1:3,4)

Ver. 17. *So he died, according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken*, etc.] How long or how soon after this is not said; however, he died of the sickness, and on the bed to which he went up, as he said:

and Jehoram reigned in his stead: who was another son of Ahab, and brother of Ahaziah, (~~118B~~ 2 Kings 3:1), in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; but as he must begin his reign in the nineteenth, or in the latter end of the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, (see ~~112S~~ 1 Kings 22:51 ~~118B~~ 2 Kings 3:1) and Jehoshaphat reigned in all twenty five years, (~~112B~~ 1 Kings 22:42), he must live and reign after this six or seven years; this therefore is to be reconciled by observing, that this son of Jehoshaphat was made viceroy, or was taken into partnership in the throne by his father when he went with Ahab to Ramothgilead; and it was in the second year of this his reign with his father that the other Jehoram began his:

because he had no son; that is, Ahaziah, wherefore his brother reigned in his stead.

Ver. 18. *Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did*, etc.] During his two years' reign, which yet were imperfect, and his acts must be but few:

are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? in which were written his father Ahab's also, and his predecessors', (see ~~1123~~ 1 Kings 22:39).