

# 2 Kings

## 1. Introduction and chapter 1

April 26, 2009

Many pastors are at fault to give an impression to their congregation that the Old Testament is boring, too much details for nothing. In a way that is how I used to think about it when I was a baby Christian. All of that was changed when I went to a Calvary Chapel Men's Conference in Prescott, AZ in 1992. The Lord used Pastor Huck Kusner of Calvary Chapel Black Canyon City to open my eyes to these 39 Books of the OT that are filled with richness of God's truth, precepts and principles.

I believe that the Lord stores wonderful lessons from this Book for us. It is my prayer that all of us take all the truth from it and apply them into our lives by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Book of 2 Kings describes what happens to a people when compromise takes over their lives. It records the end of the northern kingdom of Israel when Assyrians took over and the captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylonians. Both kingdoms rebelled against the covenant of the Lord and became idolatrous nations like their pagan neighbors.

The Lord sent godly messengers – two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, as well as godly kings like Jehoash, Hezekiah and Josiah to these runaway kingdoms to awake them from their carnality and lethargy. Yet the people of both kingdoms turned their noses against their God and ended up captives of the foreign nations.

I believe that our country is in this very situation.

*Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

In this once-great-Christian nation, the United States of America, we can no longer call evil evil without getting yelled at, harassed or even losing jobs. As our society is getting decayed worse and worse because of people's blatant sins, we must be light and salt. We must be distinctive. We must be children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

The hour has come for God's people to be alert to the voice of God and obedient to the will of God, because God is seeking men and women with the hearts to obey and follow, not compromise.

### **A. THE AUTHOR & TIMELINE OF THE BOOK**

Traditionally many biblical scholars believe that 1 and 2 Kings as one book were written by prophet Jeremiah around 560-550 B.C. Nobody can be certain that he wrote them, but he had the qualifications to do so. He was a priest and prophet who would have access to official government records of these events in the history of Israel.

### **B. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE BOOK**

The Book of 2 Kings revolves around a principle in life that God Himself will not change. Even though it's a godly principle – obeying the Lord – consistently, we tend

to ignore it. Here it is: Persistent sin will be forgiven when we repent, but its consequences will not be erased.

A few weeks ago, I was too lazy to go get a pair of cutting pliers to cut a plastic band, so I pulled out my sharp pocket knife and tried to cut it. Instead of holding the knife blade outward from me, I held it inward. As I was doing that, I was thinking, "This is not the proper way to cut." As soon as I finished thinking, the blade cut the band and slapped my left thumb's first joint. The cut was deep enough to feel the blade on my bone. The blood was gushing out, so I applied a Super Glue to stop the bleeding which it did in a matter of a few minutes. Now I have an ugly scar and a portion of my left thumb does not feel anything because I cut the nerve endings.

What is the moral of this bloody story? A couple of things:

1) Right before we sin against the Lord, the Holy spirit speaks to us through our conscience that it is wrong. We can stop it, or we can ignore it and commit the sin.

2) Right after we sin, we may repent. But the consequence of our sins will still remain as a reminder in the future.

*Hosea 8:7a They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind.*

### **C. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE BOOK**

As we read in 1 Kings, a civil war did in fact split the nation. Ten of the twelve tribes went up to the north and established a headquarters in the place called Samaria. This capital of Israel stood for 208 years, until 722 B.C., when the kingdom fell into the hands of the Assyrians. Take special note of the fact that in over 200 years of the northern kingdom's existence, none of the 19 kings was godly. They were all wicked.

And in the more than 340 years of the southern kingdom Judah's existence, only eight kings walked with God, some of those inconsistently.

### **D. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

The structure of 2 Kings is rather complicated:

- 1) Chapters 1-10 emphasizes the northern kingdom and its decline.
- 2) Chapters 11-17 alternates between the two kingdoms.
- 3) By the end of chapter 17 we read of the demise of the northern kingdom.
- 4) Chapters 18-25 we find a record of the demise of the southern kingdom.

It is important to note that 2 Kings begins with an extended emphasis on two prophets.

- 1) 2 Kings continues the record of Elijah's ministry from the Book of 1 Kings.
- 2) The chronicles of Elisha's ministry. Try not to confuse the two prophets. Their names are similar. After Elijah was caught up into heaven, Elisha carried on the work of a prophet, remaining a thorn in the side of the kings as he called the people back to the worship of the one true God. Elisha's death is recorded in chapter 13.

Even though they are not mentioned in this Book, there were three other prophets of significance during the dreadful years described in 2 Kings: Jonah, Amos and Hosea.

### **E. THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE BOOK**

Sinning despite warning brings ruin without remedy. Inexcusable wrong brings inescapable wrath. Abused privilege incurs increased penalty. The deeper the guilt the heavier the consequence. Correction may be resisted, but retribution cannot be

evaded. All these thoughts crowd into our minds when we read 2 Kings – as we see the battered, broken tribes of Israel and Judah dragged behind the chariots of their pagan conquerors. We cannot fail to see the book’s central message: “Willful sin brings a woeful end.”

## **F. SEEKING THE LORD OF THE FLIES**

*2 Kings 1:1-4 Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 2 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.” 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?’ 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.*

The kingdom of Moab was located in southeast section of northern kingdom Israel. They were conquered by king David and were submissive to Israel until this time.

“Baal” simply means “lord,” and “Baal-Zebub means “lord of the flies,” one of the names Jesus’ enemies used to insult Him in Matthew 10:25.

Why did the king decide to send messengers forty miles away to Ekron to consult the priests of Baal? Surely there would have been plenty of priests of Baal in his land. The temple of Baal at Ekron was very famous, because Baal was the chief god of that city. I get the feeling that Ahaziah was thinking if he inquired Baal-Zebub in Ekron, he might get a good prognosis.

People including immature Christians want to hear what they want to hear rather the truth from the Lord our God through the Word of God. When a person chooses not to hear from God through the Bible, he or she would accept just about anything to please oneself or justify their sins. That would be abomination to God if that person is a born-again Christian.

Whenever the angel of the Lord was mentioned in the OT, it speaks of the appearance of Jesus in human form. The theological term would be ‘christophany’. The Lord Himself told Elijah what this wicked king was doing.

## **G. ELIJAH THE TISHBITE**

*2 Kings 1:5-8 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.”*

The description the messengers gave of Elijah reminds us of John the Baptist who ministered in the spirit and the power of Elijah. The phrase “a hairy man” suggests his garment rather than his appearance. Like John the Baptist, Elijah probably wore the simple camel’s hair garment of the poor and not the rich robe of a king.

When we went to Israel, some people from our group rode a camel. But I chickened out because I heard that a camel has a tendency to spit at a person he doesn't like. I didn't want to have a camel's loogie on my face.

The announcement that he would die should have moved Ahaziah to repent of his sins and seek the Lord, but instead, he tried to lay hands on the prophet. Just like Ahaziah, when sinners don't like the messages from God against their sins, they try to shut down the messengers of God.

"The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act" was reported out of the Judiciary Committee of the House into the Congress last Thursday. The bill, which is expected to face a vote in the full House later, would add gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and disability to the list of protected categories under federal hate crimes law.

It means that Christians and others, especially pastors and Bible teachers, who speak out publicly against homosexuality will be treated with the same type of prosecution, like they did in Europe and Canada, that criminals would face for committing acts of violence against homosexuals and transgender people. It means that I will end up in prison for speaking the truth against homosexuality and will start a prison ministry from inside if this bill passes and President Obama signs it.

## **H. PRIDE AND HUMILITY**

*2 Kings 1:9-14 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. 11 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. 13 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."*

It only has been ten years since Elijah brought down the fire of God to 850 prophets of the pagan gods on the Mount Carmel. The two captains and their soldiers should have heard about the reputation of prophet Elijah. Just like their king Ahaziah, they didn't consider God of Israel a whole lot. The result was their own cremations in extra crispy.

I wouldn't be one bit surprised if the second group of soldiers were standing near the pile of burned skeletons of the first group of soldiers. When we are filled with pride, we don't see disasters near us, because all we see is ourselves.

*Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

However, the third captain showed wisdom and humility and submitted himself to the Lord and His servant.

*James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

## **I. A STARK CONTRAST**

*2 Kings 1:15-18 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. 16 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.'" 17 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. 18 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?*

We cannot help but admire Elijah's consistent obedience to the Lord. The man was alone, standing before the king and, surely, surrounded by the king's armed bodyguards, faithful to Ahaziah, who could have finished him off with one thrust of a spear. Yet the man of God never gave the risk a second thought. He was so convinced, so committed to his Lord, that the thought of self-protection never entered his mind.

True characters of godly men and women is demonstrated in their willingness to face unpleasant conditions, even threatening circumstances, with remarkable calm. They act with firm conviction, even though it means incurring personal unpopularity, imprisonment or death. Nothing deters their passion to obey their God... regardless.

What a stark contrast we see here! A king in a royal robe with a jeweled crown who had all things physically yet was in total depravity spiritually. A prophet in a poor man's camel hair garment with a leather belt who had nothing physically yet was rich in God's truth.

If the Lord brings the rapture today, would you be ready to meet your Savior? Or would you be ashamed because you are not ready? If you know that you need to make some drastic changes in your life to be ready to meet the Lord Jesus, please do not put it off to next day. Be right with Him today by repenting from your sins.

## **J. APPLICATIONS**

1) The Bible isn't only a message to believe, but it's also a mandate to obey.

2) Be right with Him today by repenting from your sins.