

## Eliyahu ~ Part 16

In my last post, we looked at **God's Sentence to Ach'av** in **1 Kings 21:17-29**. In this post, we rejoin **Eliyahu** in **2 Kings 1:1-17** where once again **God Judges Sin**.

<sup>1</sup> *After Ach'av's death Mo'av rebelled against Isra'el.*

<sup>2</sup> *When Achazyah fell through a latticed window of his upper room in Shomron and lay injured, he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, consult Ba'al-Z'vuv the god of 'Ekron, and ask whether I will recover from this injury."*<sup>3</sup> *But an angel of Adonai said to Eliyahu from Tishbe, "Get up, and intercept the messengers of the king of Shomron, and ask them, 'Is it because there's no God in Isra'el that you're on your way to consult Ba'al-Z'vuv the god of 'Ekron?'"*<sup>4</sup> *Therefore Adonai says, "You will never leave the bed you are lying on; you will certainly die."*<sup>5</sup> *Then Eliyahu left.*<sup>6</sup> *The messengers returned to Achazyah, and he asked them, "Why have you come back?"*<sup>7</sup> *They answered him, "A man came to meet us. He told us to go and return to the king who sent us, and tell him, 'Here is what Adonai says: "Is it because there's no God in Isra'el that you're sending to consult Ba'al-Z'vuv the god of 'Ekron? Therefore you will never leave the bed you are lying on; you will certainly die.'"'"*<sup>8</sup> *He asked them, "The man who came to meet you and told you these things, what kind of a man was he?"*<sup>9</sup> *"He was a hairy man," they answered him, "with a leather belt around his waist." He said, "It was Eliyahu from Tishbe." [That sure sounds a lot like Yochanan the Emmerser in Matthew 3:4. No wonder he was thought to be Eliyahu.]*

<sup>9</sup> *Then the king sent a commander of fifty to Eliyahu, together with his fifty men. Eliyahu was sitting at the top of a hill. The commander climbed up to him and said, "Man of God, the king says to come down."*<sup>10</sup> *Eliyahu answered the commander of fifty, "If I am in fact a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and burn you up, along with your fifty men." Fire came down from heaven, and it burned up him and his fifty men.*<sup>11</sup> *The king sent him another commander of fifty, together with his fifty men. He said to him, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down immediately!'"*<sup>12</sup> *Eliyahu answered them, "If I am in fact a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and burn you up, along with your fifty men." Fire came down from heaven, and it burned up him and his fifty men.*<sup>13</sup> *The king sent a third commander of fifty, with his fifty men. The third commander of fifty climbed up, approached Eliyahu and fell on his knees before him. He pleaded with him: "Man of God, please! Have some regard for my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours!"*<sup>14</sup> *I know that fire came down from heaven and burned up the two other commanders with their fifty men; but now, have some regard for my life."*<sup>15</sup> *The angel of Adonai said to Eliyahu, "Go down with him; don't be afraid of him." So he got up and went down with him to the king.*

<sup>16</sup> *Eliyahu said to the king, "Here is what Adonai says: 'You sent messengers to consult Ba'al-Z'vuv the god of 'Ekron. Is it because there's no God in Isra'el you can consult? Therefore, you will never leave the bed you are lying on; you will certainly die.'"*<sup>17</sup> *So he died, in keeping with the word of Adonai spoken through Eliyahu." ~ 2 Kings 1:1-17a (CJB)*

### God Judges Sin

After the death of wicked King **Ach'av**, the nation of **Moav** took advantage of **Achazyah**, his son, and successor, and broke the bonds of vassalage that had chained them to Israel. Years before, David had defeated **Moav** (2 Sam. 8:2) and **Achazyah's** successor, **Y'horam**, would join with **Y'hoshafat**, king of Judah, to fight against the **Moavites** (3:6ff). But the Lord oversees the nations of the earth and His decrees determine history. **Achazyah** was an evil man, but when the Lord isn't allowed to rule, He overrules (see Psalm 33:10-11).

A decade or so before **Achazyah's** accident, **Eliyahu** had won his great victory over **Ba'al**, but **Ach'av** and **Izevel** hadn't been convinced or converted and neither had their family (1 Kings 22:51-53). When **Achazyah** was severely injured by falling through a lattice, he turned for guidance to **Ba'al** and not to the Lord God of Israel. **Ba'al** means "lord," and **Ba'al-Z'vuv** means **Ba'al** is "prince."

Why did the king decide to send messengers forty miles away to **'Ekron** to consult the priests of **Ba'al**? True, **Eliyahu** had slain the 450 prophets of **Ba'al**, but that was ten years ago. Surely other priests of **Ba'al** were available in the land. Note that **Achazyah** asked the priests of **Ba'al** for a prognosis and not for healing.

God keeps His servants informed about matters that other people know nothing about. When God's servants are walking with their Lord, they can be confident of His directions when they need them. This had undoubtedly been **Eliyahu's** experience. **Eliyahu** intercepted the royal envoys and gave them a message that would both rebuke and sober the king. Why did he want to consult the dead god of **'Ekron** when the living God of Israel was available to tell him what would happen? He would surely die! This ominous declaration was made three times during this event ~ twice by **Eliyahu** (vv. 4 and 16) and once by the messengers (v. 6). Instead of being spokesmen for **Ba'al**, the messengers became heralds of God's Word to the king!

The announcement that he would die should have moved **Achazyah** to repent of his sins and seek the Lord, but instead, he tried to lay hands on the prophet. [Sound familiar? This reminds us of King Herod's seizure of John the Baptist in Matthew 14:1-12.] **Achazyah** knew that **Eliyahu** was a formidable foe, so he sent a captain with fifty soldiers to bring him to the palace, but he underestimated the prophet's power.

Did **Achazyah** think that he could kill the prophet and thereby nullify the prophecy? Or perhaps the king hoped to influence **Eliyahu** to change the prophecy. But **Eliyahu** took his orders from the King of Kings and not from earthly kings, especially a king who was an idolater and the son of murderers. Years before, **Eliyahu** ran away in fear when he received **Izevel's** threat, but this time, he remained where he was and faced the soldiers unafraid.

When **Eliyahu** was confronted by the commander the fire that came from heaven killed all fifty-one men. This judgment was repeated when the second company of fifty arrived. Note that the second captain ordered **Eliyahu** to *come down immediately*. Don't keep your king waiting! The memory of the contest on **Mount Karmel** should have warned the king and his soldiers that **Eliyahu** could bring fire from heaven. [Yet another example of not learning from history.]

These two episodes of fiery judgment were dramatic messages from the Lord that the king and the nation had better repent or they would all taste the judgment of God. The people had forgotten the lessons of **Mount Karmel**, and these two judgments reminded them that the God of Israel was *a consuming fire* (see Deuteronomy 4:24 and 9:3; Hebrews 12:29).

Insisting that **Eliyahu** obey him, the king sent a third company of soldiers, but this time the captain showed wisdom and humility. Unlike the king and the two previous captains, he submitted himself to the Lord and His servant. The third captain's plea for himself and his men was evidence that he acknowledged **Eliyahu's** authority and that he would do God's servant no harm. The Lord's words in verse 15 suggest that the danger lay in the hands of the captains and not in the hands of the king.

The king was in bed when **Eliyahu** confronted him and for the second time told him he would die. How many times must the Lord repeat His message to a wicked sinner? The king would leave this world with *you will certainly die* to ring in his ears, yet he refused to obey the Word of God. After about two years on the throne, **Achazyah** did die, just as **Eliyahu** had predicted.

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Eliyahu**. We continue in **2 Kings 2:1-6** where we learn what **God Wants Us to Remember**.