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2 Kings 1

“Desperate Times, Desperate Prayers”

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Historical Background

1. 1 Kings and 2 Kings is one book in the Hebrew Bible.
 - a. The Hebrew title is Melechim, which means, “The Kings.”
2. The author is unknown, however, the Jewish Babylonian Talmud indicates Jeremiah was the author.
3. The book of 2 Kings completes the record of the kings of Israel and Judah.
4. This book opens with the transition of prophets from Elijah to Elisha.
5. Elisha is the prominent person in this book and the 50 years of his ministry is covered in approximately half of the book of 2 Kings.
6. **2 Kings 1:1-8** records the final prophetic word from Elijah.

King Ahaziah

7. Ahaziah was the eighth king of Israel after the kingdom was divided (Israel in the north and Judah in the south).
8. **2 Kings 1:2** tells us that King Ahaziah *“fell through the lattice of his upper room.”*

9. Some translations of the Bible use the word, window, which may indicate a window with a lattice like a curtain or shade.
10. Ahaziah sustained some type of life-threatening injury as a result of his fall.
11. Ahaziah sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the pagan god of Ekron.
 - a. Baal-Zebub was a Philistine god.
 - b. Ekron was a Philistine town and the temple of Baal-Zebub was there.
 - c. Baal-Zebub is mentioned four times in the Old Testament (all four in this account) and seven times in the New Testament Gospels.
 - i. The name is synonymous with Satan, who is called the prince of demons.
 - d. Ba'al means, Lord, and Zebub, is from a root word meaning, "to flutter," which yields the noun form: "a fly."
 - e. The correct translation would be, "Lord of the Flies."
 - f. The Philistines believed that flies carried diseases and plagues, so they prayed and appealed to the Lord of the Flies, with the hope that he would protect them or cure them from plagues, disease, or life-threatening illnesses.
 - g. Because flies lay eggs that become maggots, and maggots were found in things like "cow pies," Baal-Zebub was sometimes translated, "Lord of the Dung"!
12. For some unknown reason, instead of turning to God, Ahaziah, the king of Israel, turned to Baal-Zebub for help regarding his life-threatening illness.
13. It's hard to believe Ahaziah would have been so ignorant that he didn't know the difference between a disease/plague and an injury from a fall.
14. Someone should have spoken up and said, "Ahaziah, even if Baal-Zebub was real, his specialty is diseases and plagues, not an injury from a fall! What are you doing?"
15. This is the kind of irrational thinking Ahaziah resorted to because of his desperate physical condition and state of mind.

Elijah And Ahaziah

16. In [2 Kings 1:3-4](#), we read that an angel of the Lord called upon the prophet Elijah for one final assignment: *"But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-*

Zebub, the god of Ekron?" 'Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!' So Elijah went."

17. Ahaziah's men returned to the palace to tell him that they met a man on the way to Ekron who told them to give him the message that he would not survive his injuries.
18. When Ahaziah did a little Q&A with the messengers he realized that the man they met was none other than Elijah!
19. Ahaziah's reaction to the report was to send soldiers to arrest Elijah.
20. **2 Kings 1:9-12** - *"Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill [probably Mt. Carmel], and said to him, 'Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!' Elijah answered the captain, 'If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!' Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men. At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, 'Man of God, this is what the king says, 'Come down at once!' 'If I am a man of God,' Elijah replied, 'may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!' Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men."*
21. It's likely that this account is where Jesus' disciples, brothers James and John, got the idea to call down fire from heaven against the Samaritans.
 - a. **Luke 9:51-56** - *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village."*
22. When news came back that all of the men (2 captains and 100 men) Ahaziah had sent were dead, he sent out another captain and 50 more soldiers!
23. The third captain was smart enough to make sure Elijah didn't call upon God to turn them into "crispy critters"!
 - a. **2 Kings 1:13-14** - *"So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. 'Man of God,' he begged, 'please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!' "*

The Rest Of The Story

24. **2 Kings 1:17-18** - *“So [Ahaziah] died, according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. As for all the other events of Ahaziah’s reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?”*
25. The implication in what Elijah said to Ahaziah was that had he turned to God, he would have been helped, but because he wanted to consult an idol that was incapable of helping, he died without the help he otherwise would have received if he had just turned to God!
26. Ahaziah not only missed out on the possibility of physical healing, he missed out on the opportunity for a closer walk with God.
27. Like Ahaziah, our desperate situations always provide an opportunity for a closer walk with God.
28. It’s as though Elijah was saying: “Is there no God in Israel that you had to go looking elsewhere for something that can’t help you? How foolish you are! God was right there ready to help you! He was only a prayer away!”

Desperate People Pray Desperate Prayers

29. David, when he was in trouble, prayed and he was helped.
 - a. **Psalm 130:1-2** - *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”*
30. Hannah, when she was hurting, prayed and she was helped.
 - a. **1 Samuel 1:10** - *“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.”*
31. Paul and Silas, when they were in prison, prayed and they were helped.
 - a. **Acts 16:16-40** details the account of their miraculous release from the jail in Philippi.
32. Daniel, when he was in trouble, prayed and he was helped.
 - a. **Daniel 6** details the account of his miraculous escape from the lions’ den.
33. Jeremiah, when he was mistreated, prayed and he was helped.
 - a. **Lamentations 3:19-25** - *“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is*

downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him..."

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [2 Kings 1:1-8](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they forgot that even though God was only a prayer away; they turned to someone or some thing for help.
4. When you find yourself in a desperate situation, has it been your habit to immediately turn to the Lord for help?
5. How do you develop a "habit" of always turning to the Lord?
6. What are some of the things people turn to when they find themselves in a desperate situation?
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's statement: "Desperate people pray desperate prayers." (Use examples from #29 through #32 above.)
8. How has the Lord rescued or helped you when you turned to him for help in times of desperation?
9. Read and discuss [Lamentations 3:19-25](#).
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that desperate situations are opportunities to develop a closer walk with the Lord; remember to immediately turn to the Lord for help when they are facing the difficulties and challenges of life; remember to praise the Lord for the ways he brings them out of or brings them through tough times.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).