

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Ahaziah, being hurt by a fall, sends messengers to Baal-zebub to inquire whether he shall recover, 2 Kings 1:1, 2 Kings 1:2. They are met by Elijah, who sends them back with the information that he shall surely die, 2 Kings 1:3-8. The king sends a captain and fifty men, to bring Elijah to Samaria, on which fire comes down from heaven, and destroys both him and his men, 2 Kings 1:9, 2 Kings 1:10. Another captain and fifty men are sent, who are likewise destroyed, 2 Kings 1:11, 2 Kings 1:12. A third is sent, who behaves himself humbly, and Elijah is commanded to accompany him; he obeys, comes to the king, reproves his idolatry, and announces his death, 2 Kings 1:13-16. Ahaziah dies and Jehoram reigns in his stead, 2 Kings 1:17, 2 Kings 1:18.

Verse 1

Moab rebelled - The Moabites had been subdued by David, and laid under tribute, 2 Kings 3:4, and 2 Samuel 8:2. After the division of the two kingdoms, the Moabites fell partly under the dominion of Israel, and partly under that of Judah, until the death of Ahab, when they arose and shook off this yoke. Jehoram confederated with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, in order to reduce them. See this war, 2 Kings 3:5.

Verse 2

Fell down through a lattice - Perhaps either through the flat roof of his house, or over or through the balustrades with which the roof was surrounded.

Go, inquire of Baal-zebub - Literally, the fly-god, or master of flies. The Septuagint has ἰῆλῆ ἰῆλῆ, Baal the fly. He was the tutelary god of Ekron, and probably was used at first as a kind of telesm, to drive away flies. He became afterwards a very respectable devil, and was supposed to have great power and influence. In the New Testament Beelzebub is a common name for Satan himself, or the prince of devils. See my notes on Matthew 10:25 (note).

Verse 4

But shalt surely die - The true God tells you this; he in whose hands are both life and death, who can kill and make alive. Baal-zebub can do nothing; God has determined that your master shall die.

Verse 8

He was a hairy man - That is, he wore a rough garment, either made of camels' hair, as his successor John Baptist's was, or he wore a skin dressed with the hair on. Some think that the meaning is, he had very long hair and a long beard. The ancient prophets all wore rough garments, or upper coats made of the skins of beasts: They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, says the apostle, Hebrews 11:37.

Verse 9

A captain of fifty with his fifty - It is impossible that such a man as Ahaziah, in such circumstances, could have had any friendly designs in sending a captain and fifty soldiers for the prophet; and the manner in which they are treated shows plainly that they went with a hostile intent.

And he spake unto him, Thou man of God - Thou prophet of the Most High.

Verse 10

And there came down fire - Some have blamed the prophet for destroying these men, by bringing down fire from heaven upon them. But they do not consider that it was no more possible for Elijah to bring down fire from heaven, than for them to do it. God alone could send the fire; and as he is just and good, he would not have destroyed these men had there not been a sufficient cause to justify the act. It was not to please Elijah, or to gratify any vindictive humor in him, that God thus acted; but to show his own power and justice. No entreaty of Elijah could have induced God to have performed an act that was wrong in itself. Elijah, personally, had no concern in the business. God led him simply to announce on these occasions what he himself had determined to do. If I be a man of God, i.e., as surely as I am a man of God, fire Shall come down from heaven, and Shall consume thee and thy fifty. This is the literal meaning of the original; and by it we see that Elijah's words were only declarative, and not imprecatory.

Verse 15

And the angel of the Lord said - Go down with him - This is an additional proof that Elijah was then acting under particular inspirations: he had neither will nor design of his own. He waited to know the counsel, declare the will, and obey the command, of his God.

And he arose, and went down - He did not even regard his personal safety or his life; he goes without the least hesitation to the king, though he had reason to suppose he would be doubly irritated by his prediction, and the death of one hundred of his men. But with all these consequences he had nothing to do; he was the ambassador of the King eternal, and his honor and life were in the hands of his Master.

Verse 17

And Jehoram reigned in his stead - The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Syriac say, Jehoram His Brother reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram. There were two Jehorams who were contemporary: the first, the son of Ahab, brother to Ahaziah, and his successor in the kingdom of Israel; the second, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who succeeded his father in Judah. But there is a difficulty here: "How is it that Jehoram the brother of Ahaziah began to reign in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, seeing that, according to 2 Kings 3:1, he began his reign in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jehoshaphat; and, according to 2 Kings 8:16, Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat began to reign in the fifth year of Jehoram king of Israel?" Calmet and others answer thus: "Jehoram king of Israel began to reign in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, which was the second year after this same Jehoshaphat had given the viceroyalty to his son Jehoram; and afterwards Jehoshaphat communicated the royalty to Jehoram his successor, two years before his death, and the fifth year of Jehoram, king of Israel." Dr. Lightfoot takes another method: - "Observe," says he, "these texts, 1 Kings 22:51: Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years; and 2 Kings 1:17: And Ahaziah died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken, and Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; and 2 Kings 3:1: Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. By these scriptures it is most plain, that both Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, and Ahaziah the son of Ahab, began to reign in the seventeenth of Jehoshaphat; for who sees not in these texts that Jehoshaphat's eighteenth, when Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign, is called the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat? Now Jehoshaphat's reign was not yet expired by eight or nine years, for this was in his seventeenth year, and he reigned twenty-five years, 1 Kings 22:42; nor was Ahab's reign expired by two or three years, for this was in his twentieth year, and he reigned twenty-two years. 1 Kings 16:29. But the reason why both their sons came thus into their thrones in their lifetime, and both in the same year, was because their fathers, Jehoshaphat and Ahab, were both engaged in the war against the Syrians about Ramoth-gilead: and while they were providing for it, and carrying it on, they made their sons viceroys, and set them to reign in their stead, while they were absent or employed upon that expedition."

This is very probable, and seems well supported by the above texts, and would solve all the difficulties with which many have been puzzled and not a few stumbled, had we sufficient evidence for the viceroyalty here mentioned.