

There's only one way to put out the fire.

Study 5: 2 Kings 1:1-18

How can this study help me?

Often children don't learn from the mistakes of their parents. They don't seem to learn from their tragic childhoods that there is an alternative to the destructive patterns of behaviour practised by their parents. For instance, alcoholism and abuse seems to run through generations.

Similarly children follow the lead of their parents in looking for explanations to the enigmas of life. They imagine that money or success will bring happiness and overcome the pain. Others look for advice and guidance from mediums, the stars or experts. They try and control their own destiny. They will listen to anyone except the God who claims to have made the world and control their destiny.

What's going on in this story?

Once more Elijah "the Baal buster" figures in a remarkable story. Two years after the showdown in Naboth's vineyard, Elijah has one final confrontation with Ahab's family. This time it's Ahaziah, the first son of Ahab and Jezebel. Like his parents, he believes Baal controls his destiny. Read 1 Kings 22:51-53 before you read from 2 Kings 1, and then imagine they are one seamless reading.

- What does Elijah's words word at Naboth's vineyard tell us will happen to Ahab's descendants, including presumably Ahaziah? (1 Kings 21:20-22)
- In what ways does Ahaziah take after his mother and father? (reflect on I Kings 22: 52,53) When you read this in the light of 1 Kings 21:25 what does it say about Ahaziah?
- What would Ahaziah really believe to consult Baal-Zebub (lit. "The Lord of the flies") for his prognosis? Given what had happened on Baal's Bluff (1 Kings 18:36-39), what wilful choice has Ahaziah made?
- How do you feel about Elijah's apparently random acts of calling down fire? (2 Kings 9:9-12) Without the active participation of all the people in worshipping Baal Zebub, could Ahaziah have "walked in the ways of his father and mother"? So what might you conclude about those soldiers destroyed by fire?

Once again Elijah sets the benchmark for a real prophet of God. Real prophets can call down fire from heaven. They bring down judgement. That's why it's important to listen to them.

What about us – here and now?

- According to John the Baptist, what are the two outcomes associated with a response to Jesus? (Luke 3:16-17)

- Presuming Ahaziah knew of Elijah's prophecy against his family, why do you think he continued worshipping Baal?
- Why did it make no difference to his attitude when he lost 100 soldiers?
- Do you think this is typical of human nature?
- Why can we be sure that Jesus the prophet greater than Elijah won't bring down fire on us? (Acts 2:1-4)

So what can I do?

- If we really believed what Paul says about Jesus (the prophet who is greater than Elijah) in 2 Thess 1:7-10 what should we do?
- When enigmatic things happen in our life who do we turn to?
- Like Ahaziah, apparently inexplicable accidents will occur in our life. Does Heb 12:4-11 give us an alternative way of looking at life's enigmas?
- What might this mean for us?