

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (August 21) – 2 Kings 1, 2

Ahab and Jezebel's son, Ahaziah, continues in the wickedness of his parents. When he falls sick, he sends messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, god of the Philistines. Baal is the Canaanite word for "Lord," and Baal-Zebub means "lord of the flies." The Pharisees, though wrong about a great many things, rightly understood that Beelzebub was not a god at all, but the prince of demons (Mark 3:22). When the king's soldiers arrogantly attempt to arrest Elijah, he calls down fire from heaven and consumes them. In the New Testament, the disciples ask Jesus for permission to call down fire on a Samaritan village, but Jesus rebukes them (Lk 9:54).

Only two men have been taken to heaven without dying: Elijah and Enoch (Gen 5:24). Although Elijah did not write a book of the Bible, he was considered to be greatest of the Old Testament prophets, and God performed many mighty miracles by his hand (16 in total). Yet, Elisha, his successor, is promised a double portion of Elijah's spirit. During Elisha's ministry, God uses him to perform 31 miracles, and then Elisha dies. One miracle short? Don't worry, that's not a problem for God. He always keeps his promises (see 2 Kings 13:20–21).

Tuesday (August 22) – 2 Kings 3

Jehoshaphat is a righteous king of Judah (see 2 Chronicles 17), and yet he makes an alliance with the wicked king Jehoram of Israel, second son of Ahab and Jezebel. This is an example of what the Bible calls "being unequally yoked with unbelievers." Though St. Paul's warning against this in 2 Corinthians 6:14 is usually understood as forbidding marriage between Christians and unbelievers, it can also apply to keeping company with evildoers. God has purposed to destroy Jehoram, but for the sake of Jehoshaphat, He gives Israel and Judah victory over Moab. Nevertheless, God's judgment against Ahab's house will come to pass.

Wednesday (August 23) – 2 Kings 4

In verse 1 it seems that there is some sort of school for prophets. This might remind us of our present-day seminaries. One of the young prophets has died, leaving behind a poor widow with two sons. In those days children could be taken by creditors to settle one's debts. Notice how the miracle of the oil mirrors a similar account in Elijah's ministry. This is because Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Likewise, Elijah had raised a boy to life, and now Elisha does the same for the Shunammite woman's son. These are the only two resurrection accounts found in the Old Testament. But when Jesus raises the dead on multiple occasions, he demonstrates that One greater than Elijah has come.

Thursday (August 24) – 2 Kings 5

The account of Naaman's cleansing is a foreshadowing of baptism. The prophet literally tells Naaman to go be "baptized" (the same word in the Greek version of the Old Testament) in the Jordan River. At first Naaman despises the plain, muddy water of the Jordan. Likewise, one might say of baptism today, "How can plain water do such great things?" "Certainly, not

just water,” Luther answers, “but the word of God in and with the water...” (Small Catechism). Naaman would have rejected this saving gift but for the counsel of his servants. May God grant such servants and friends to all of us.

Friday (August 25) – 2 Kings 6, 7

Once again Elisha comes to the rescue of the “sons of the prophets,” this time causing a lost ax head to float in the water. And even though the king of Israel is wicked, God miraculously intervenes to rescue his people from the Syrians. In a similar way, God intervenes among the kingdoms of the world today for the sake of his Church.

In chapter 7 God delivers Samaria, capital city of Israel, from the hand of the Syrians. The king, though not quite as wicked as his father, seeks to kill Elisha, but then changes his mind. Elisha promises that by tomorrow there will be bread in plenty. The king’s officer who doubts Elisha’s word lives to see the miracle, but is trampled by the hungry crowd that rushes out to plunder the Syrian camp.

Saturday (August 26) – 2 Kings 8

Back in 1 Kings 19, God had instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Syria. But until now Hazael has been a servant to king Ben-Hadad. Now as Ben-Hadad is dying, Elisha performs what God has decreed concerning Hazael: “You will become king over Syria.” Yet under Hazael the Syrians will become an even greater scourge to the people of Israel. This is to fulfill God’s judgment upon His people because of their idolatry.

The third son of Ahab, Joram, becomes king of Israel, continuing the wickedness of his father and mother. But Ahab and Jezebel’s wickedness had spread into the neighboring kingdom of Judah as well. Remember Jehoshaphat, the good king who foolishly made an alliance with Ahab and his sons? That alliance was formalized with a marriage between Jehoshaphat’s son and Jezebel’s daughter, Athaliah. And now the grandson of Ahab and Jezebel, Ahaziah, sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Yet God had promised to utterly destroy the house of Ahab, a promise that is about to be fulfilled.

Sunday (August 27) – 2 Kings 9

Returning once again to 1 Kings 19, God had instructed Elijah to appoint three men to positions of authority: Elisha was to succeed Elijah as prophet, Hazael was to reign over Syria, and finally, Jehu was to become king over Israel. Elisha now finishes the last part of this task, anointing Jehu, who has until now been a captain in the army. Jehu has been chosen by God to destroy the house of Ahab. Jehu does as God commands: He kills Joram, king of Israel and third son of Ahab. He kills Ahab’s grandson, Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was visiting Israel at the time. Jezebel, the queen mother, who somehow is still living all this time later, hears of the deaths of her son and grandson and prepares to meet Jehu. She paints her face and adorns her head, thinking perhaps to seduce Jehu. But a few unimpressed eunuchs throw her from a window to her death. Thus, the judgment of God upon Ahab’s house is fulfilled.