

II Kings 1; Matthew 12:24-28; A Dangerous Decision I. The King's Dangerous Desire II. The King's Futile Request

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you think of dangerous professions you might include those who go to war or serve in the army. And although it is true that serving on the field of battle is dangerous place to find yourself, in our text for this morning we find that serving as a messenger of Ahaziah is even more dangerous! Added to this fact, it is even more dangerous to be creature made in God's image- but to deny, reject and rebel against the One who made you! Before we start, we have to find our place in history. Wicked King Ahab has died in battle. His son, Ahaziah has taken the crown of his father. So the child of Ahab and Jezebel sits on the throne- and he has learned to think and behave like his parents. Although there is a new king ruling over Israel in Samaria- the throne remains just as corrupt. One of the main themes in our text is the sending of messengers as we will see next week. We also have 2 gods in our passage- a false god and the true God. Who has power to save- to hear and answer when called upon? We consider this theme: Jesus Christ rebukes the wicked King Ahaziah for trusting in idols for his aid.

I. The King's Dangerous Desire

We start in our first point by seeing how King Ahaziah finds himself in a very dangerous position. He has a dangerous desire. Our passage opens with Moab rebelling- the power and might of his father's kingdom is already being shattered. Added to this, Ahaziah walks in his father's way. He has set himself up against the LORD- and is a rebel king in the promised land. Having learned nothing from the rebuke and repentance of his father, he follows in his father's footsteps as a wicked king who does evil in the sight of the LORD. A path that will put him at odds with the LORD who alone is God! Next, we find that his own life is on the brink. Ahaziah was walking around the exterior of his palace's upper chambers and he fell through the lattice. Now this could mean that Ahaziah was walking on the lattice work of the upper supports- the pillars and braces that formed the upper part of the palace from which he fell. Or it could be that the lattice here was more like a screen placed over a window. If that lattice screen was over the window, it

seems like Ahaziah was leaning against the screen and then the screen broke. There was no glass on the windows back then- only a wooden lattice work. It would be like a child pushing on the window screen when the window was open- and the screen gives way. So Ahaziah falls to the ground from the upper room- which could have been 2 or 3 stories high. This fall is what lead to Ahaziah's sickness. Now the word, sickness, describes any kind of infirmity or injury. Having fallen from a high window, Ahaziah was likely suffering from broken bones and internal bleeding. So we find Ahaziah's life in a dangerous- threatened place- he is in a precarious situation. To whom will he call? Upon whom will he trust? He chooses to trust in the gods of the nations- and to call upon the idol Baal or Baal Zebub in v. 3. Now this is where we get to this point of his dangerous desire. His desire for health and healing is not the dangerous part- rather the source of healing that is dangerous. To whom does he look- upon whom does he call? Although there are still prophets of the LORD in the land- Elijah and Elisha but also others- Ahaziah chooses to ignore the prophets of the LORD and he sends his messengers to Ekron. As you may remember, Ekron was one of the chief or principle cities of the Philistines- located to the West of Jerusalem along the Med. Coast. He forsakes the source of living water- and tries to dig his own well by his own hands! In doing so, he secures his own destruction and seals his own death! Now let's pause for a little application- the point of this chapter is not – be careful where you walk or on what you lean as you might fall and get hurt. That is not the point- rather the application is this- be careful where you go for help- be mindful when it comes to trusting and depending on something. In the Chronicles of Narnia the Last Battle- remember what happens to those who call upon Tash? Tash comes! For Ahaziah to look for help from Baal Zebub- he will get what Baal has to offer- and that is only slavery and death! Ahaziah thought that Baal could heal him- or restore his body to health. Some trust in horses or chariots- some trust in the gods of the nations- some trust in science to save- but we will trust in the name of the LORD as Psalm 20 states. Today people trust in doctors or medicine- thinking that this science hold the key to their future. All we need is better access to health care- advances in science will save us! But all the while they reject and deny the LORD who gives the

gift of doctors to man- who gave us minds to understand and apply the medicine to the body. It is a dangerous thing to embrace the gift without embracing the giver. To trust the tool while shunning the one who wields the tool! So this king Ahazah has put himself in a dangerous position- to exalt himself over the LORD- by rejecting the help and wisdom at hand in favor of the gods of the nations. Refusing to call on the God who is- secures his own destruction.

II. The King's Futile Request

In our next point, we continue by seeing that this request for aid is a futile request. Futile because the message never gets to its intended target- but even more futile because the intended recipient could not answer this request! What can Baal do? How can he heal- or reveal what is to come- when he is nothing but a block of stone or a wood pillar crafted by man? His request is futile in 2 ways, first the request is never delivered. And second, even if that request would have been delivered, what could Baal do- what does a block of stone know? You see, unbelief is not only dangerous it is futile- only the foolish say in their heart that there is no God in Israel. Ahaziah was looking for an answer from Baal- really two things. First, can I be healed- and second- what will happen to me in the future. So the first thing that Ahaziah was looking for was a healing and recovery from Baal Zebub- as we saw in our first point- be careful what you trust in! Well, Ahaziah- he trusted in Baal Zebub. It is interesting to consider just what this god called "Baal Zebub" was known for. He was called Baal- meaning master or lord. So he was called the lord of the flies. Or the Prince of the pests! In that day, flies were seen as the harbingers of sickness and disease. If you get rid of the flies, they would take sickness and death away. Now there is reason for this- flies tend to gather where pollution and death are present. But in crying out to Baal-Zebub, the idol worshippers were asking for healing by way of removing these disease carrying flies. Baal Zebub was seen to either send or take away disease by sending or taking away the flies. But in v. 2, Ahaziah is also asking for direction concerning the future. Baal Zebub was also supposed to be able to give his worshippers secret knowledge of the future. What will happen to me- what does my future hold? This title- Baal Zebub- is found in Matthew 12-

to our ears we find Beelzebub. That is the same name of this false god. Baalzebub comes to be used as another name for Satan and the Devil in the NT. Behind the idols were evil spirits and demons were at work. So here we have a king of Israel looking to demon- Baalzebub- for information concerning the future. Tell me, will I get better? What should I do? This desire- to know the future- continues today. Fortune telling, palm readers and horoscopes continue to promise insight into the future to help you direct your path. The fascination with occult, witchcraft and dark arts is a sign of our world's desire for wisdom, secret knowledge and power. These things are of the devil- they are the tools of Beelzebub- and must be avoided. Because we know who hold the future- not the Lord of Flies but the Lord of Hosts! Instead of looking to the spiritual occult practices of today- we look to the Word of the LORD to direct our path! As we confess in LD 10 concerning providence, our God hold the future in His hands. And for the future, we have a good confidence in our faithful God and Father- that nothing can separate us from His love! So this request of Ahaziah was for healing and a future- to be restored and to be promised lasting life! This is something that no idol can do- but only the ONE true God has that kind of power! There is a God in Israel- but Ahaziah exchanges the glory of God for the futility of an idol. As Rom. 1:23 puts it, claiming to be wise, foolish man exchanges the glory of the immortal God for images resembling man and beast. That is what idolatry does- it tries to find help from an impotent source!

Let's consider again what we read from Matthew 12. The Pharisees were attributing the power of Jesus to the Prince of Darkness. That Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub or Beelzebub they were saying. But these two kingdoms cannot be further apart- their differences are striking! Ahaziah reached out to the Lord of flies- when the LORD of Hosts was near at hand! Baalzebub rules over flies- he is the Prince of Pests! While the LORD God is LORD over all! Consider the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ! They are diametrically opposed- set over and against each other. Satan is the prince of darkness and death- the father of lies- who cannot heal and does not know the future. While Jesus is the Prince of Peace- who is the Lord of life and light! It is Jesus who holds the future and gives us eternal life!

Jesus alone holds the key to both our healing and our eternal future! Baal Zebub cannot heal or save. The Pharisees were equating Jesus and Satan! Satan only binds, deceives and blinds! Jesus brings liberty- setting the captive free! Choose you this day whom you will serve- the Prince of Pests or the Lord of Lords? Only one has the power to heal, reveal the truth and save! Although it is true that Baal-zebub is nothing- a figment of man's imagination- there is spiritual power that stands behind the idol. Listen to I Cor. 10:19, an idol is nothing. But those who offer sacrifices to an idol actually are offering that sacrifice to demons and not to God. Although the gods of this world are nothing- it is also true that Satan uses these idols to deceive and destroy people! There are spiritual forces of darkness that are present in our world- even today. And God's people must have nothing to do with them! Delving into the worship of idols sets you on a path that is dangerous- and lead to death!

To conclude, we have only begun to consider the contrast evident in this chapter. Baal-zebub or the LORD- Satan or Jesus Christ? Who has the power to heal, to reveal the future, and to save those who trust in them? In whom do you trust? Where do you look for healing? In whose hand do you place your future? It is a dangerous thing to be a creature made in God's image- but then reject and rebel against the God who made you! It is dangerous- fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God! Or to look to another than the hand of your maker for help! Jesus Christ rebukes the wicked King Ahaziah for trusting in idols for his aid. As we now come to the Lord's Supper, let our hearts rejoice in the gracious provision provided by our loving and living Host! Earlier I referenced I Cor. 10. Listen to what Paul says in I Cor. 10:21, you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. The LS is a supper of union- identifying those who are in Christ- joined to Him in faith. When we are united to Christ- we must shun anything that would indicate we are united to idols, demons or evil spirit. We serve a risen, living and powerful Saviour! Unlike Baal Zebub, Jesus Christ is alive, powerful and actively working all things for our good! Rejoice in that there is a God in Israel- that we can know that Jesus hears our prayers, secures the forgiveness of our sins and one day will heal all our diseases.