

Elijah

God's man to a nation in crisis

Who sends the rain?

Lesson 6

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1 KINGS 18:21 KJV "AND ELIJAH CAME UNTO ALL THE PEOPLE, AND SAID, HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS? IF THE LORD BE GOD, FOLLOW HIM: BUT IF BAAL, THEN FOLLOW HIM. AND THE PEOPLE ANSWERED HIM NOT A WORD."

1 Kings 18:19-46

When Elijah came suddenly on the scene, he issued a judgment on the nation of Israel because it had gone into the idolatrous worship of the god Baal and goddess Ashtoreth. Israel endured three and half years of drought that lead to a devastating famine throughout the land. During this time, God sent Elijah into hiding to protect, provide, and allow His message of judgment to sink deep into the minds of the Israelites.

I. The challenge offered

A. The call to gather

1 Kings 18:19-20 KJV "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel."

When Elijah was speaking with King Ahab, he issued a challenge to him and the nation of Israel to gather at Mount Carmel with all the prophets of Baal and lets see who is the true God. This was to be a challenge between the 400-plus prophets of Baal and Elijah, one lone man.

B. The question to the people

1 Kings 18:21 KJV "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

It is interesting to note that the question was not put to King Ahab or Queen Jezebel; but to the people. Elijah wanted the nation of Israel to quit flipping back and forth between the worship of Baal and the worship of Jehovah. He is asking the question, "How long will you waver between two different opinions? You need to make a decision as to whom you are going to serve." This is the same question that Joshua asked the nation of Israel in the Promise Land.

Joshua 24:15 KJV "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day

whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

One must realize that Elijah is being intolerant while King Ahab is promoting tolerance. King Ahab's position was to be tolerant of all religions and to do what you felt was right in your own mind. He wanted everyone to be tolerant of other gods and worship. Elijah was quite the opposite. He was intolerant of those who flipped back and forth in their worship. He realized that God is a jealous God and the people need to serve Him with their whole heart. He pushed the nation to make a decision on whether or not they were going to follow the Lord.

When he pressed the question, the people did not answer. They would not commit to one or the other.

C. The challenge to decide

1 Kings 18:18-24 KJV "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How

long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the

other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and



said, It is well spoken."

Elijah puts for a challenge to the prophets of Baal to show which god is really God. The challenge is for both sides to make an offering of a bull and see which god will show up and accept the sacrifice by sending fire down from heaven. Now, the prophets of Baal thought this was a good test because since Baal was supposed to be the god who sends the rain, then the lightning and thundering would be contributed to him. The people thought that this was a good idea to prove who truly was the Lord.

II. The challenge begins

A. Prophets of Baal zealous cry and effort

1 Kings 18:26-29 KJV "And they

took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

The prophets of Baal began very early in the morning and cried all the way until the noon hour for Baal to show up and take the offering. With all their crying, they began to dance wildly around in order to arouse their god. The prophets of Baal began to cut themselves with knives trying to arouse their god. About noontime, Elijah began to make fun of them and their god. He began to mock them by saying that they need to cry louder because maybe he is away, not listening, asleep, or on a journey. The literal interpretation of the pursuing is that he has withdrawn to a private place or gone to the bathroom. By the time most of the day had passed, the prophets of Baal had no strength or voice left to do or utter anything. They were exhausted and Baal was silent.

One must make a very serious note - religious zeal and sacrifice is useless if the god is false. A person can be the most zealous, sacrificial, religious individual alive but if he is worshipping a false god then all his effort is in vain.

Proverbs 16:25 ¶ There is a way

that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

A person can be sincere in his belief and still go into eternity with out the Lord. Sincerity and zeal is not sufficient for salvation. Only faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will bring eternal life.

B. Elijah's effort and prayer

1 Kings 18:30-35 KJV "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

1. Elijah's preparation

Elijah called all the people to come near so they could see what he was doing so there would be no mistake. He wanted the people to see the preparation to insure in the minds of the people that there was no trickery involved in the sacrifice.

Elijah repaired the altar to the Lord. He took twelve stones, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel, to make the altar. Then he prepared the bull for sacrifice. Elijah put everything into its proper place in order to offer the sacrifice to the Lord. He

followed the commandments of the Lord in how to offer the sacrifice to Him.

He dug a trench around the altar that would hold two measures of seed. The two measures of seed would be approximately 6 gallons because one measure or seah would be approximately 3 gallons. He had them fill four barrels of water, which was a total of approximately 24 gallons. They did this three times or poured approximately 75 gallons of water over the sacrifice till it filled up the trench around the sacrifice.

The sacrifice and the wood were sufficiently soaked as to prevent any question to the consuming of the sacrifice.

2. Elijah's prayer

1 Kings 18:36-37
KJV "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came

near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."

The time of the evening sacrifice would be the ninth hour or three o'clock in the afternoon, which would leave about five hours of daylight left.

At this time, Elijah prayed to the Lord. First, he praised the Lord for who He was - the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel. Second, he prayed that God would let Israel know today who the true God of Israel was. Third, he prayed that he did these things based on the word that God have him.

Fourth, he prayed that God would show His power and the hearts of the people would be turned back to Him.

Elijah's prayer was not like the ranting and ravings of the prophets of Baal. He did not cut himself and dance around. He calmly and faithfully prayed to the Lord.

C. Jehovah's power

1 Kings 18:38-39 KJV "Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood,

and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

This was not a mere flash of lightning because lightning would not have accomplished this task. But, this was the supernatural fire from heaven that consumed all of the offering, wood, altar, water and even dust. God's power was shown to Israel.

The display had a profound effect on the people. They fell on their faces before the Lord and began to proclaim that Jehovah is the Lord. They realized that Baal was an idol and Jehovah was the true Lord.

D. Ending of Baal's prophets

1 Kings 18:40 KJV "And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

Elijah commands the people to capture



the prophets of Baal and not let a single one escape. Probably, when the fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering, the prophets of Baal began to flee for their lives. Elijah commanded that Baal's prophets be brought to the brook of Kishon where he killed every one of them. One might think that this is extreme but one must remember that the prophets of Baal caused the nation to go into idolatrous sin.

(Note: It was necessary that idolatry and temptation to the worship of idols should be punished with death, as a practical denial of Jehovah the true God and Lord of His chosen people, if the object of the divine institutions was to be secured. By putting the priests of Baal to death, therefore, Elijah only did what the law required; and inasmuch as the ordinary administrators of justice did not fulfil their obligations, he did this as an extraordinary messenger of God, whom the Lord had accredited as His prophet before all the people by the miraculous answer given to his prayer.—To infer from this act of Elijah the right to institute a bloody persecution of heretics, would not only indicate a complete oversight of the difference between heathen idolaters and Christian heretics, but the same reprehensible confounding of the evangelical standpoint of the New Testament with the legal standpoint of the Old, which Christ condemned in His own disciples in Luke 9:55-56 .)

What Elijah did does not give anyone the right to take the life of one who is teaching a false doctrine. Elijah was an extraordinary prophet of the Lord. Today, one does not have the authority he had.

Luke 9:51-56 KJV "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face:

and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

III. The rains come

1 Kings 18:41-46 KJV "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

After the sacrifice, there is always a feast. So Elijah tells King Ahab who was witnessing the execution of the prophets of Baal to go back up the hill and dine on the

food and water from the feast. He tells him to hurry because with the prophets of Baal removed from the land, the curse of the famine was being lifted. God was sending rain back to the land.

Elijah went aside to earnestly pray that God might send the rain. Elijah sent his servant to look out over the sea to see what was happening while he was praying. This reoccurred seven times and on the seventh time, the servant saw a little cloud on the horizon. Elijah knew that the rains were coming so he sent his servant to warn King Ahab to go to Jezreel immediately so the rains would not hinder him.

The Lord sent an abundance of rain to the land. This showed the nation of Israel that Jehovah is the Lord. It was Jehovah, not Baal, that controls the rain.

might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

IV. Lessons

A. Zeal and Sincerity - just because a person has a tremendous amount of zeal and sincerity does not mean that he is right and is serving the Lord. Zeal and sincerity is not a substitute for saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Elijah was one man against over 400 prophets of Baal - one with the Lord is a majority.

1 John 4:4 ¶ Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

C. The ultimate end of false worship is destruction. The ultimate end of true worship and faith is eternal life.

D. There is power in prayer.

James 5:17-18 KJV “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it