

## Bibles???

### The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to 1 Kings 18

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through 1 Kings

And we are currently in the portion of 1 Kings where we are looking at the life of Elijah and the lessons and the applications that we can learn on how the Lord molded Elijah and exercised his faith – and in doing so, all of this prepared him for a particular moment in time.

Chapter 18 is that moment.

The battle of the Gods on Mt Carmel.

Let's pray...

In our text last week –

God had given a word to his prophet, Elijah

That he was supposed stand before the wicked king Ahab – and declare that the drought was going to come to an end.

Remember, back in chapter 17 –

When we were introduced to Elijah – God had given him a word to pronounce the drought against Israel because they had turned to idolatry.

One of the gods they were worshipping was Baal – who was supposed to be the god of rain.

And so, for 3.5 years, God pronounced judgment on Israel because He wanted them to repent – Baal was not the one who provided for them, it was Almighty God who did.

So Elijah turns himself in –

He declares the drought over.

And then he sets up a showdown between God and Baal.

Elijah didn't want to have a theological debate with Ahab – he wanted the Ahab and the people to see for themselves who the one true God is.

Let's pick it up in verse 20

**[1Ki 18:20-46 NKJV] 20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD [is] God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.**

So the nation comes to see the battle

And as the people are gathered at the foot of the mountain – Elijah wants them to pick a side.

“All of you for Baal – on this side”

“All of you for Yahweh – on this side”

That was the choice –

There is no middle ground –

And this is something that we find over and over again in scriptures

**[Jos 24:15 NKJV] 15 "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."**

“Undecided” is not an option

You are either “for” God or “against” God. There is no place for not being sure.

To be “undecided” is to be decided against the Lord.

But notice that the people did not pick a side –

They hesitated in a place of indecision.

Many of them knew Elijah was right, Yahweh was the true God, but it was a dangerous stand to take.

The conventional wisdom of the day and politically correct position was to follow Baal.

So, caught between a conviction on what was right and the desire to be part of the crowd and avoid trouble, they did NOTHING.

So here is the challenge -

**22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets [are] four hundred and fifty men. 23 "Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay [it] on the wood, but put no fire [under it]; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay [it] on the wood, but put no fire [under it].**

So I mentioned last week that Elijah is stacking the cards against him

He is giving the advantage to the prophets of Baal

They are going to set up two altars – the prophets of Baal – they get to pick the bull for their sacrifice and the bull for Elijah's sacrifice.

They are also going to do this on top of Mt Carmel – this is the center of Baal worship.

This is the highest place in the area –

And also Elijah lets them go first.

So if Baal answers by fire first – contest over

They have 450 prophets – Elijah is just one

Those were the rules of the contest -

**24 "Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."**

Now,

Elijah knew Yahweh was the real God of fire.

That had been God's calling card in the scriptures.

Moses & the burning bush

The pillar of fire that led Israel to the Promised Land.

Fire covered the top of Mt. Sinai when God descended to give them the 10 Commandments.

When they dedicated the tabernacle and the temple – God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices.

**25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare [it] first, **for you [are] many**; and call on the name of your god, but put no**

fire [under it]." 26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared [it], and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But [there was] no voice; no one answered. Then they **leaped about the altar** which they had made.

The Baal team goes first –

There is 450 of them so – there god must be real.

Especially when Elijah is only one

By the way – this is some of the thinking that goes on today

If there is a big crowd – then, God must be in it.

And so people follow the crowds

But crowds alone are not a true indicator of spiritual truth and reality.

It doesn't mean that if there is a crowd that God can't be in it

We just need to understand that God doesn't always manifest Himself that way.

This is why Jesus rebuked the church of Sardis in Revelation 3

**[Rev 3:1 NKJV] 1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**

Sardis was the happening church

But Jesus says you guys are not worshipping me – you are dead.

So the Baal guys go up first

They do their thing – from morning until

They go through the motions and no fire

And I had you make a note that they leaped about the altar

They are dancing around the altar –

Some have even suggested that they threw themselves on top of the altar hoping to entice Baal to act.

Think about their misguided worship

They want to see something, they want their god to respond and when they don't see anything – they intensify their fleshy efforts to reach him

One of the things we have to grasp church is that God's response is not predicated upon our activities or emotions – He simply responds to our belief in Him

True faith isn't what we do

True faith is what we believe

And it is faith that causes to fall

Belief is not measured by outward activity – it is measured by what is in our hearts.

**27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he [is] a god; either he is meditating, or he is **busy**, or he is on a journey, [or] perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened."**

So Elijah told the prophets of Baal that Baal couldn't hear them; they needed shout louder still!

He even suggested reasons why the fire hadn't fallen.

Maybe Baal was deep in thought, or was busy.

This word "busy" is movement – & that's really what Elijah meant; maybe Baal was having a movement.

Maybe he is in the bathroom.

That's why he hasn't answered your prayers.

Maybe he is out of town or is taking a nap.

Our God is perfect in all of His ways

He is never going to be too busy

He doesn't sleep

He certainly doesn't go potty



We don't have to try to get His attention because we already have it.

**28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the [time] of the offering of the [evening] sacrifice. But [there was] no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.**

Again – we see these prophets trying to entice Baal to act.

They are adding blood to the altar

And so the running around and dancing and loss of blood – it alters their state of consciousness – so they begin to speak words as if they are prophesizing – and they get no answer.

Because their worship was misguided -

**30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD [that was] broken down.**

Now it is Elijah's turn

He gathers the people and takes them to an altar that was used to worship Yahweh – before it was torn down as the people turned to the worship of Baal.

**31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be**

**your name." 32 Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.**

When Jeroboam divided the kingdom of Israel, he wanted the people in his kingdom to forget about the two tribes to the south. He was afraid that if the people went back to Jerusalem to worship, as a complete nation, twelve tribes, that he would lose control over his kingdom.

Yet Elijah reminds the people that God's thoughts toward Israel have never changed. Israel was made up of twelve tribes, whether the people realized it or not.

So he builds the altar on top of the 12 stones

Turn to Ephesians 2 – the same thing applies to us

**[Eph 2:19-22 NKJV] 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner[stone], 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

We see the same thing with the church here

Jesus Christ is our cornerstone –

He wants to build the altar using us

We are the living stones that He is placing in and using

We are the witnesses

And as we live a life that is set apart, by His power and His strength and His grace, we become the altar.

The place where He dwells

So Elijah builds this trench around the altar – enough to hold about 5 gallons

**33 And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid [it] on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour [it] on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." 34 Then he said, "Do [it] a second time," and they did [it] a second time; and he said, "Do [it] a third time," and they did [it] a third time. 35 So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.**

I want you to notice the difference between Elijah and the prophets of Baal

The prophets of Baal – when it was their turn, it was all chaos.

Blood going everywhere

Cutting themselves

Screaming and yelling

They were dancing

And we see the opposite of chaos –

we see order when it is Elijah's turn

**[1Co 14:33 NKJV] 33 For God is not [the author] of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**

And here is some biblical truth -

Where confusion and chaos exist – we can be sure, it is not of the Lord.

He will not be in the midst of it.

So Elijah says -

Put more water on the altar

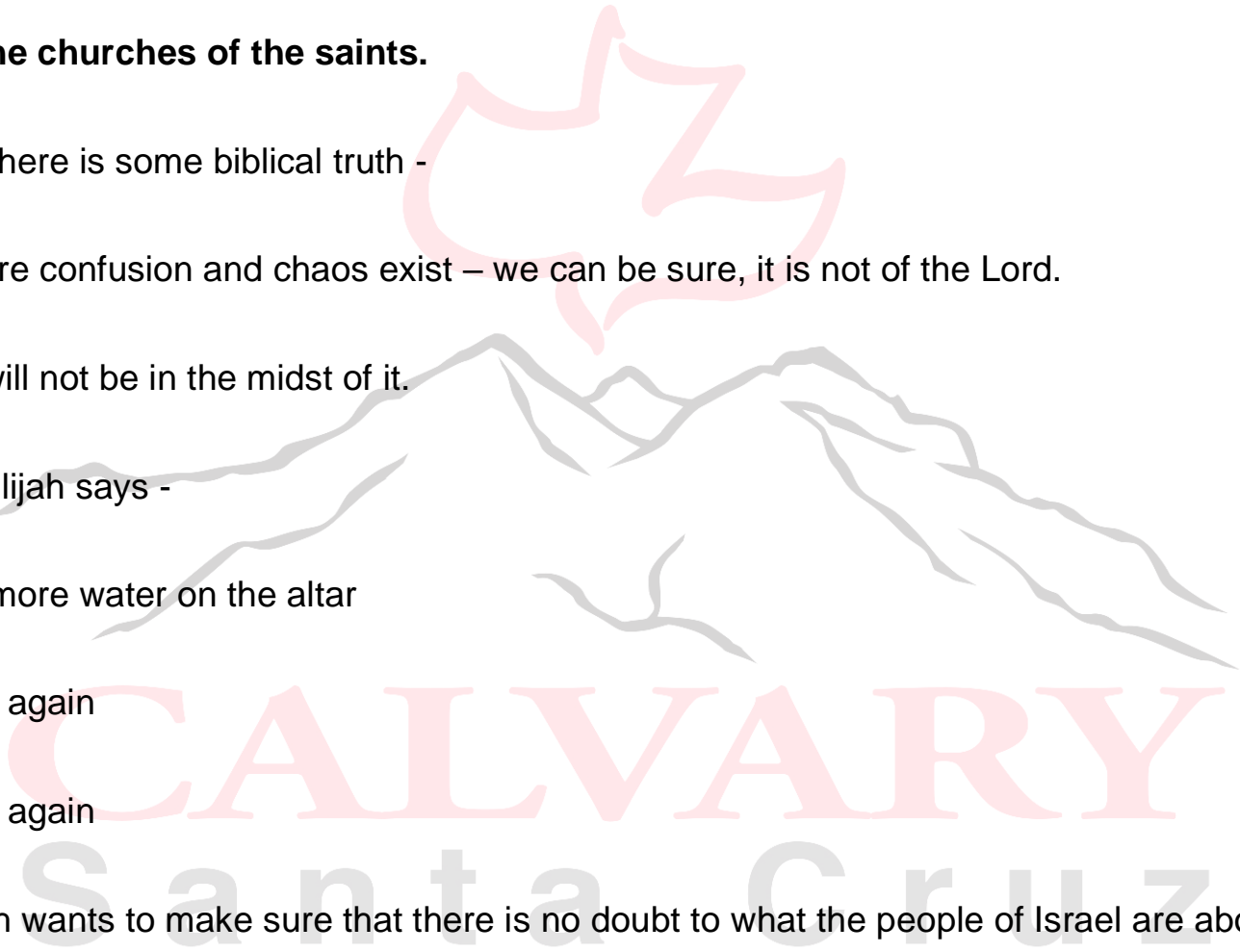
Do it again

Do it again

Elijah wants to make sure that there is no doubt to what the people of Israel are about to see.

He didn't ask of this from the prophets of Baal

But Elijah trusts God enough to know that nothing is too tough for God.



**36 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 Israel, let it be known this day that You [are] God in Israel and I [am] Your servant, and [that] I have done all these things at Your word. 37 "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You [are] the LORD God, and [that] You have turned their hearts back [to You] again." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that [was] in the trench.**

Elijah's prayer was simple but clear. "Yahweh, prove that You are God & that it's all about You!"

I am just your servant

I am just here doing Your will

And as Elijah was finishing up his prayer – fire came down and consumed everything

The wood, the offering, the stones, the water that was in the trenches, the dirt that the stones were sitting on – gone.

God wants to there to be no question in the hearts and the minds of the people that He has visited them.

But keep in mind, that before God could do the work on the people – He had to do the work on Elijah first.

And that is what we have seen over the last few weeks as God exercised Elijah's faith.

**39 Now when all the people saw [it], they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He [is] God! The LORD, He [is] God!"**

The people get it.

The fire fell and now they saw it. They knew it.

**40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.**

This might sound a little harsh

But we have to remember here that Elijah was just following the Law here –

Turn to Deut 17

**[Deu 17:2-5 NKJV] 2 "If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, 3 "who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, 4 "and it is told you, and you hear [of it], then you shall inquire diligently. And if [it is] indeed true [and] certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, 5 "then you shall bring out to**

**your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.**

And rightfully so – these people had led the nation in idolatry

They had turned the heart of the nation

They were destroying the nation

**41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for [there is] the sound of abundance of rain." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees,**

So, now that the people had turned from idolatry – at least for the moment, Elijah knew that the drought was coming to an end – because that was the purpose of the drought.

So – Elijah tells Ahab – you better get yourself a burger and a drink because the rain is coming.

And notice despite the evidence, Ahab did not repent –

Which once again only proves that unbelief isn't a problem with a lack of proof – it's a lack of will.

It isn't that the unbeliever CAN'T believe, He./she doesn't WANT to.

Ahab went to eat – Elijah went to pray.

**43 and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "[There is] nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again." 44 Then it came to pass the seventh [time], that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare [your chariot], and go down before the rain stops you.' "**

As Elijah is praying – he tells his servant to go to the side of the mountain and to look out over the Mediterranean to see if there were clouds appearing

And each time, the servant would come back and say – no clouds.

Seven times, Elijah sent his servant

But on the next one – a cloud formed.

And something that we see here in these verses is how God works through us through our faith

And four things are required

1. Expectancy – Elijah by faith, expected God to act. Faith begins with expectancy. God said it – I believe it and I am going to start looking for it. Do we believe Him enough that when we read in His word that this is going to happen – we expect it to happen. That is faith.



2. Persistence – to keep looking, no matter how long it takes. This is the area where we struggle.
3. Disregard for preconceived notions of what God answers will be like. God said the drought is going to rain – what is our preconceived notion. That when the servant went to go look that a giant thundercloud was going to approach or the sky suddenly turning black – but that is not what happened. A tiny cloud coming out of the sea. God uses the insignificant things because He is stretching our faith.
4. A willingness to act on what God said He would do – even before He does it. When did Elijah send the servant to go warn Ahab – when it started raining or before it started raining? When he heard about the little white cloud. Yet, he believed with all his heart that He was going to do it.

**45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.**

This is a 14 mile race from Carmel to Jezreel

And Elijah beat Ahab to the gate

Now, we don't know why Elijah wanted to get there before Ahab –

But -

Think about what we read with Elijah in our text

He's just had the all time mountain top experience.

He goes from being a lone prophet to national hero.

He's got real pull with God – great enough to call down BOTH fire & rain from heaven.

He's dealt a literal death blow to idolatry.

Then he outruns a chariot.

Certainly Elijah has experienced enough of the power & favor of God to last him for years! Right?

Unfortunately, for Elijah – it was short lived – because of his fear of Jezebel.

And it is going to drive him into a spiritual funk.

And we will see this next week.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'