

Lessons from Elijah

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[0 : 00] We're going to be in 1 Kings chapter 18 today, taking a little step away from Jonah this morning. I wasn't sure what this was going to look like as far as our setup.

I wasn't sure if we would have a screen or a live stream broadcast or any of that. Thankfully, people got together and made that happen. And I'm grateful for the team who showed up this morning. We were up here. I did not look like this. We were just getting everything ready and over at the church, bringing some things over. And I'm grateful for that group as well.

So we're taking a step away from Jonah this morning and we'll finish our series on Jonah next Sunday. So make sure you're in your place for that. But Jonah chapter 4 will be next Sunday. Today we're in 1 Kings chapter 18. I'm going to ask you, just so nobody falls asleep on this, if you can, if it's not too difficult for you where you're sitting, if you're able to just join us in standing, let's read 1 Kings chapter 18 together.

[1 : 06] You follow along as I read. I'm reading from the New Living Translation. Later on in the third year of the drought, this is happening in God's people of the nation of Israel.

So the Lord said to Elijah, great prophet, Go and present yourself to King Ahab. Tell him that I will soon send rains. So Elijah went to appear before Ahab. Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe in Samaria.

So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. Obadiah was actually a devoted follower of the Lord. Once Jezebel had tried to kill all the Lord's prophets.

And Obadiah had hidden 100 of them in two caves. So 50 prophets in each cave had supplied them with food and water. So Ahab says to Obadiah, We've got to check every spring and valley in the land to see if we can find enough grass to save at least some of my horses and mules.

Great King Ahab there really worried about his people. Actually, he's worried about saving his own horses and mules. So he says in verse 6, it says, They divided the land between them.

[2 : 12] Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. As Obadiah was walking along, he suddenly saw Elijah coming toward him. Elijah, Obadiah recognized him at once and bowed low to the ground before him.

Is it really you, my lord, Elijah? He asked. Yes, it is, Elijah replied. Now go and tell your master, Elijah is here. Oh, sir, Obadiah protested.

What harm have I done to you that you're sending me to my death at the hands of Ahab? For I swear by the Lord your God that the king has searched every nation and kingdom on earth from end to end to find you.

And each time he was told, Elijah is here. King Ahab would force the king of that nation to swear to the truth of his claim. And now you tell me, go and tell your master, Elijah is here.

But as soon as I leave you, the spirit of the Lord will carry you away to who knows where. When Ahab comes and finds you, he cannot find you. He will kill me. Yet I have been a true servant of the Lord all my life.

[3 : 13] As no one told you, my lord, about the time when Jezebel was trying to kill the Lord's prophet. I hid a hundred of them in two days and supplied them with food and water. And now you say, go and tell your master, Elijah is here, sir.

If I do that, Ahab will certainly kill you. So he's stressing out, right? Elijah, you're sending me to my death because I know you're not going to wait around for him to come kill you.

Please don't do this. But Elijah says in verse 15, I swear on the Lord Almighty, in whose presence I stand, that I will present myself to Ahab this very day. So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come.

And Ahab went out to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw him, he explained, so is it really you, you troublemaker of Israel?

Elijah says in verse 18, I have made no trouble for Israel. You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshipped the images of Baal, this false god, instead.

[4 : 20] Verse 19, now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel along with the 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah who are supported by Jezebel.

Let's pray. God, you're about to tell an incredible story of how you won today. I pray that you would win today, today, and in our hearts, and in our church, we'll give you all the glory in Jesus' name. Amen. You may receive it. Thank you for standing so long. Verse 20. We had to set the stage here, and now we're going to preach through the rest of this passage.

This is one of my personal favorite Bible stories that we find in the Old Testament. Elijah on Mount Carmel. And we have some lessons that we can take away from this today that I believe will help all of us and help our church.

So we left off. King Ahab, wicked King Ahab, had been seeking to find the prophet of God because he didn't worship the one true God.

[5 : 26] He worshipped Baal, this false god, this idol that had been made by man, and they lifted him up as though he was their creator. He was their God. And so, of course, they resisted and rejected anyone who was worshipping and telling others to worship the one true actual God, Jehovah.

And so, Elijah was public enemy number one in Ahab's eyes. He'd been searching high and low for him.

The word was out, bring the head of Elijah to King Ahab. So then Elijah says, King Ahab, here I am. Come find me. And he came. And Elijah stayed there and waited for him. And then Elijah issues a challenge. He says, go and bring all 450 prophets of Baal to meet me here.

So what happens? Verse 20. Ahab does more than that. He obeys, actually, Elijah's request to summon all of Israel.

[6 : 37] He says, Ahab summoned all the people of Israel and those 450 prophets to Mount Carmel. Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, how much longer will you waver?

Wavering between or hobbling between these two opinions. If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal is God, follow him.

But the people were completely silent. Do you see this? These are God's people. These are God's chosen people.

He's been walking with them, protecting them, leading and guiding them from their very beginning. But they have allowed people to sway them.

They have allowed others to come in and get their attention off of the God who has always been there, never left, never failed. But they have allowed themselves to be seduced or drawn away by other false gods.

[7 : 47] King Ahab was a Baal worshiper. And Israel followed right along with him. So Elijah says, we're going to have a showdown.

We're going to get together and we're going to win this battle and this battle once and for all between Baal and the one true God. So he issues a challenge.

Some of you, I know Israel, want to worship God. Some of you know that God is real and Baal is not. But you're on the fence.

You're sitting there and you won't make a decision because you don't want to be looked at in the wrong way. You don't want to have the wrong label attached to you. You don't want to be unpopular.

You don't want to be canceled. Think we find ourselves in a similar situation in the world in which we live today? It is certainly not popular to be a Jesus follower today.

[8 : 52] And there's all kinds of reasons for that. But one of the biggest reasons is the struggle between light and dark. Between righteousness and unrighteousness.

Between truth and lies. Between good and evil. It's the same struggle that was happening back in Elijah's day.

As he was facing off against King Ahab and these prophets of Baal. And I believe this challenge from Elijah is still good for us today. How long, church, will we waver between two opinions?

If God is God, then follow him. If man is God, if we are God, if the social culture of our world today is God, then follow it.

But if not, then follow God. So what happens? Let's read it. The people would not make a decision. [9:57] They were silent. They were sitting back and waiting to see what happened. So, Elijah says in verse 22, I'm the only prophet of the Lord who has left.

But there's 450 prophets of Baal. So, bring two bowls. Remember, this was the time of animal sacrifices. We talked about this a couple weeks ago. This was before the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ himself, had come down to be the final sacrifice that would ever be needed.

So, we don't advocate animal sacrifices at all. But back then, before Jesus came, that's what they did to show repentance of their sins to their gods. So, Elijah says, bring two bowls.

We're going to sacrifice them. The prophets of Baal can choose whichever one they want. And they cut it into pieces and they lay it on the wood of their altar. So, we've got an altar of Baal over here. They've got the big stones.

They've got the wood on top that they're going to burn. They put the animal on top of that. And then they're going to burn that up and offer it as a sacrifice out of repentance for their sins to their god, Baal.

[11:02] So, he says, you can do that, but don't set fire to it yet. Hold off. I will prepare the other bowl and I'll lay it over here on my altar, on my wood, and I will not set fire to it yet.

Then, verse 24, call on the name of the Lord your God. Your God. Call on the name of your God. And I will call on the name of the Lord God himself.

The God who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God. Sound fair? Well, the people would agree with you because all the people agree with you.

So, verse 25, this is one of the most dramatic stages that we get to see set in all of life. Verse 25, Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, y'all go first.

There's many of you. Choose one of your bowls, prepare it, call a name of the Lord your God, your God, and do not set fire to the wood. Baal's going to do that.

[12:05] So, they prepared one of the bowls and they placed it on the altar. Then, they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon time, shouting, Oh, Baal!

Answer us, Baal! But, there was no reply of any kind. Anybody surprised? No? Me neither.

But, they hadn't wrapped their heads around that yet. So, they keep shouting. They dance all around the altar that they had made. Oh, Baal! Baal, we love you, Baal!

We worship you, Baal! Baal, you're the most awesome Baal we ever did know. We love you. We give our hearts to you. They probably had their own worship songs to Baal. They were having a little worship concert out there, singing to Baal.

They were getting their worship on. But, y'all, nothing was happening. Baal, show yourself real. Burn this fire. Send fire down.

[13:06] Burn this altar up. Burn this bull up. Show this doubter, doubting Elijah, that you are real. You are God. So, they did this until around lunchtime.

And then Elijah's had enough. And he starts making fun. And he says, about no time, Elijah began mocking them. You'll have to shout louder.

Surely, he's a God. Perhaps he's daydreaming. Perhaps he's in the bathroom. We don't know. They all might be otherwise indisposed right now.

You'll have to shout a little louder and get his attention. So, they redoubled their eyes. I mean, they're screaming at the top of their lungs. What does it say next? They raved all afternoon.

Maybe, Elijah says, maybe he's away on a trip. Maybe he's asleep and you'll have to wake him up. Elijah says, have fun at this point. And what happens?

[14:06] They shouted louder. And following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out.

Y'all, what kind of a religion was this? Jesus does not ask us to cut ourselves. Actually, he says, your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. You're supposed to take care of it.

He does not require you to do anything like that. So, these guys are following this religion that is literally causing them bodily harm. So, they're trying to show their devotion to faith by cutting themselves, making themselves bleed and hurt.

So, they raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice. But there was no sound, no reply, no response.

Can we pause the story here just for a second? Y'all will never do what these prophets are doing. [15:15] I'll never do what these prophets are doing. But you know what we do? We try and try to make something else our God instead of Jesus.

And we devote ourselves to it and we keep going back to it time and time again thinking it will give us hope, thinking it will give us fulfillment, thinking it will give us joy, whether it's an unhealthy appetite that we have for alcohol, for drugs, for prescription drugs, for pornography, whatever it is that scratches the itch that you just can't give it up because you're devoted to it. Just like these prophets were devoted to their false God. But I can promise you, just like Baal was never going to answer them, whatever that pursuit is, other than God, it will never fulfill you. It will never give you what you're looking for. It will never provide what God promises to provide for you.

It might be family. You might have an unhealthy obsession with family. It might be a toxic relationship that you just can't give up.

[16:40] It might be toxic traits that you portray toward others. And that's just how you've been for so long, you feel like you just can't change.

This is just who I am. And you're all in on being that person. It will always hurt you. It will never help you. It will never give you what you're looking for.

So I don't think anybody in here is going to go worship Baal. But there's a whole lot of other things besides God himself that you and I do worship on a daily basis.

Maybe it's sports. Maybe it's living the dreams that you never saw fulfilled through your children. Whatever it is, don't let it become God in your life.

because that God will always let you down. It'll never fulfill you. So, let's pick up the story. Elijah finally was done with it.

[17:42] Verse 28. I'm sorry, verse 30. Then Elijah called to the people. He said, My turn. Come on over here. Y'all come over here now. They all crowded around him as he prepared the altar of the Lord that had been torn down.

Man, this was significant. God's altar had been torn down as the nation turned toward Baal worship. And Elijah takes this opportunity to build it back up. He said, This is where we're going to offer sacrifices to the one true God who actually hears us.

So, he builds it back up. He takes 12 stones. One to represent each of the tribes of Israel. And then he uses those stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the Lord.

And then he dug a trench, big hole in the ground, all the way around the altar, big enough to hold about three gallons. Then he piled the wood on the altar, cut the bowl into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood.

Now, he's not done yet. This story's about to get crazy. Then he said, Fill four large jars with water and pour the water over the offering, the bowl, and the wood.

[18:56] Now, how many people in here know how to build a fire? How many of y'all have watched that show on Netflix called Alone? Yes, I'm all about it, man.

It is great. This thing about to go off before. Hey, there we go. We need those in the church. That's pretty cool. Yeah, so I watched this show called Alone.

Holly watched it with me some, and it's these people who get dropped off in this remote location, and they've got to survive. They've heard the people and spread out into different areas, and whoever survives the longest wins this massive amount.

So, they're all out there survivalists. They know how to do it, but it's amazing to watch these people start breaking down. These people who are so confident going in. I've got all the skills. I've got all the training. I know what I'm doing out here, and sometimes they can't build a fire for whatever reason.

Sometimes the wood gets too wet, right? Sometimes their shelter falls apart. Something bad happens, and they're just done. They tap out. They go on. You can't build a fire with wet wood, right?

[19:56] Everybody know that? Like, if you're trying to build a fire, find tri-wood. The older, the better, right? You can't build a fire with wet wood. What does it do?

It just smokes, right? It's not going to work. So Elijah's trying to burn this stuff up, and he says, let's pour water all over it. That'll make it better.

He's proven a point, y'all. So, that's what happens. They did it. They poured water all over the offering in the wood, and after they'd done it, he said, do it again.

So they'd go fill up the jars again and dump water all over it again. And when they were finished, he said, do it a third time. So he went. They went and did as he said, and the water ran all over the altar and filled up that trench that he had dug.

He knew what he was doing. This altar, this bowl, this wood is completely drenched, soaked through. And at the usual time for offering a leading sacrifice, Elijah, the prophet, walked up to the altar and prayed, O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant.

[21 : 18] Prove that I have done all of this at your command. O Lord, answer me. Answer me so these people know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.

And what happens? Immediately, the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the bull, burned up the wood, the soaking wet wood, burned up the stones, and burned up the dust. It even lit up all the water in the trench. and when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, The Lord, He is God.

Yes, the Lord is God. For the sake of time, we'll stop there. But listen, my testimony to you is that the Lord is God.

The Lord came through for Elijah that day and the Lord will come through for you. Now, He may not always come through the way you ask Him. He may not always come through just as He did for Elijah when Elijah builds up this altar, lays out the plan and says, God, now it's your turn and God came through just as Elijah had hoped.

[22 : 33] But I can promise you the Lord is God and the Lord will prove that He is God time and time again all throughout the pages of Scripture time and time again all throughout the history of church all around this world and time and time again in the history of your lives of my life God has come through God has made Himself real God has proved that He is the one true God and there is nothing else that makes God want to prove Himself more than His people calling out in faith and saying, God, show that you are God.

Show to a lost world without you that you are God. listen, that gets God's attention that makes God work that makes God come through that makes Him intervene last Sunday we talked about how God can do anything God can work on hard hearts God can turn hard hearts just like He did with the men of them just like He did right here for these Baal worshipping wandered far away children of Israel and He can do it for you maybe you've wandered far maybe your heart is far from God maybe this is your first time to church in a long time maybe you've been coming to church for a long time but your heart has still wandered far away God can bring it back God can get your attention call out to Him today just as Elijah did call out to God today and the fire will fall the fire will come through

God will show Himself real in your heart would you bow your heads with me? God, I don't know what people need from you today Elijah needed a big old flashy miracle maybe there's people that just need a reminder that you are real that you are present that you are with them God, whatever it is show yourself real today turn our hearts away from Baal turn our hearts away from whatever Baal substitute we have put into our lives turn our hearts away from our selfishness our pride our ego our dishonesty our fear whatever it is our addictions God, turn us from that and turn us back to you you didn't give up on your people you didn't give up on them just because they turned their backs on you you used your prophet to get their attention and say no God is God

Baal is not God God, use your scriptures once again this morning to get our attention to remind us that you are God alone you will always come to churches Jared plays would you keep your heads bowed would you remain in your seats and let's enter into a time of prayer before we leave this place and we go back to our day would you let the music wash over you let the preaching of your word convict you where the Holy Spirit wants to point your attention every man woman and child in this room man it's an entertaining story what does it mean for me it means there's something in your life it's probably has a bigger place than God it's an idol we've kind of given up something in your life that's distracted you from your love and your commitment to the one true almighty God and he wants to remind you today that he is real he is powerful he can do anything maybe you need God to intervene I know I need there's things in my life I need God to intervene I need him to step in and show that he is God and maybe you have the same thing God at this moment right now convict hearts draw people to yourself we'll give you all the glory there's someone here today who doesn't

know that they're a child of God I'm going to ask you to slip your hand up right now and say I'd like to give my life to Jesus today before we leave this place I'd like to give my life to Jesus would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you thank you church is there anybody else who would say I need prayer God's working on me about something would you just pray for me God's working with me right now would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you thank you thank you thank you thank you God you see those hands you know what's going on going on in our hearts God make yourself so real to them in this moment show us how big you are how kind you are how gracious you are and how powerful you are so much more powerful than anything else for you .

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