**ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL**

1 Kings 18:16-46

Key Verse 21a

“Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.””

**Introduction**



Today’s passage is a kind of spectacular contest between Elijah and 450 prophets of Baal. We are mesmerized by the power of Elijah’s prayer. We all love to become like him in terms of his prayer power and miracle. But nothing is by accident. It came from a refining process for him during 3 and a half years by obeying God’s word one by one without complaints. When God told him to go to a brook, he obeyed. When he was told to go to Sidonian land to be fed by a widow, he obeyed too. He was able to raise up a boy by praying earnestly to the Lord God who he believed. Then God raised him up by answering his prayer. Then he was recognized by a widow. Likewise the principle remains the same. We can not rely on outside chance or miracle. It came from our personal relationship with the Lord and His divine training according to His will and purpose. May the Lord help us to grow like him in our unbelieving times. May the Lord help us to keep our faith in any situation and continue to help one Bible student until we may be recognized by them. We must also be recognized by our spouse or children so that we may become ready to be used for the work of God to revive a nation. Amen!

1. Read verses 16-24. What was Ahab’s false accusation against Elijah? (16-17) What was Elijah’s reply and suggestion? (18-19) What did Ahab do? (20) What did Elijah say to the people of Israel first? (21) What then did he ask them to prepare? (22-24)

1-1, Read verses 16-24.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” 18 “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals. 19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.” 20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing. 22 Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

1-2, What was Ahab’s false accusation against Elijah? (16-17)

***So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”***

* Somewhat Ahab’s false accusation seems to be legitimate from his point of view. He brought Baal worship to Israel and built a temple of Baal in Samaria according to the initiated work there.
* He had a stable relationship internationally through the marriage with Jezebel. Everything went smoothly and Israel appeared to prosper. But out of nowhere, Elijah appeared and troubled his nation. So Ahab thought that the god of Baal got angry over Elijah and his mission was to catch him and then Baal would send rain.
* But he was deceived by his own dilution and false god. He should have repented of his idol worship and humbled himself before the true and living God and His servant, Elijah who delivered the truth.
* He should also have turned his attention to the word of God written in Deuteronomy instead of blaming Elijah.

Deuteronomy 11:16-17 reads,

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you.

1-3, What was Elijah’s reply and suggestion? (18-19)

***“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals. 19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”***

* Elijah challenged Ahab to summon the people from all over Israel to meet him on Mount Carmel.
* The purpose of this gathering was to prove that the drought was from the Lord, not from Baal and to have the people know who is the true God.
* 850 false prophets (450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah) were supported by Jezebel.(who did eat at Jezebel’s table)

1-4, What did Ahab do? (20)

***20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.***

* Surprisingly enough here, Ahab obeyed and sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel as Elijah had proposed.
* He might have expected that Baal and Asherah would win easily against the God whom Elijah served, for 1 against 450 prophets was a ridiculous match.

1-5, What did Elijah say to the people of Israel first? (21)

***21 Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”***

***But the people said nothing.***

* The people of Israel wanted to give some devotion to both Yahweh and Baal, but the God of Israel was not interested in such divided heart devotion at all.
* Spiritually speaking, Israel was like an unfaithful partner in a marriage who doesn’t want to give up their marriage partner, but also does not want to give up their lover. The marriage partner has a legitimate claim to the exclusive devotion of their spouse.
* People said nothing because they had no objection nor repentance. They were like neutral gear in automobile transmission. Whenever Baal prophets led them to idols, they followed them without thinking. Now they seemed to listen to Elijah.

1-6, What then did he ask them to prepare? (22-24)

***22 Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”***

***Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”***

* Elijah allowed them to choose a bull first and let them take advantage of this so that they may show the power of their god, Baal, to send fire.
* “I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire - he is God.” Elijah wanted to prove the fact that God is the Almighty God and the living and true God over Baal.

1. Read verses 25-39.Describe how hard the prophets of Baal tried to bring fire on the altar of sacrifice. (25-29) What then did Elijah ask all the people to do on his altar? (30-35) What was Elijah’s prayer? (36-37) What happened to his altar? (38) How did the people respond? (39)

2-1, Read verses 25-39.

25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. 27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down. 31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” 32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs[a] of seed. 33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

34 “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. 35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”

2-2, Describe how hard the prophets of Baal tried to bring fire on the altar of sacrifice. (25-29)

***25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it.***

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***27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.***

2-3, What then did Elijah ask all the people to do on his altar? (30-35)

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***34 “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.***

***“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. 35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.***

* Elijah wanted to restore the altar of the Lord in Mount Carmel and did repair without delay even in the midst of a contest.
* He put 12 stones which represented 12 tribes of Israel. In such a way, he wanted to restore their identity before God.
* He also poured out water on the altar so that God’s power may demonstrate very clearly.

2-4, What was Elijah’s prayer? (36-37)

***36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”***

* Both were important. It was important for the people of Israel to know who their God was, and who God’s servant was.
* And that I have done all these things ***at Your word***: This also was essential, and helps us to understand the whole event from God’s absolute words.
* Elijah did this according to the word of God. It wasn’t prompted because of his own. God led Elijah all the way to this momentum.
* There are many gods in the world, such as hedonism or materialism or technology, and many man made religions.
* But they are nothing but idols. They cannot save us from the power of sin and death or deliver us from our practical problems.
* So we should not trust them. We must realize that only the Creator God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the true God, the only true God.
* We must turn our hearts to the Lord and worship him only, from our hearts and put all our hope in Him only! Amen.

2-5, What happened to his altar? (38)

***38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.***

2-6, How did the people respond? (39)

***39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”***

1. Read verses 40-46. What did Elijah do with the prophets of Baal? (40) What did he ask Ahab to do and what did he predict? (41) What can we learn from the Lord God who made small clouds appear, and Elijah’s persistent prayer? (42-44a) What else did he order Ahab to do and what did he do with God’s power?(44b-46)

3-1, Read verses 40-46.

Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

41 And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” 42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

43 “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

“There is nothing there,” he said.

Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”

44 The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”

So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”

45 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. 46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

3-2, What did Elijah do with the prophets of Baal? (40)

***Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.***

* The people now participated in seizing them and had them slaughtered according to Elijah’s command.

3-3, What did he ask Ahab to do and what did he predict? (41)

***41 And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.”***

3-4, What can we learn from the Lord God who made small clouds appear, and Elijah’s persistent prayer? (42-44a)

***42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.***

***43 “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked.***

***“There is nothing there,” he said.***

***Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”***

***44 The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”***

* Elijah was more interested in praying than eating. He persistently prayed with absolute faith that God would send rain surely after fulfilling a purpose that the prophets of Baal were removed.
* God replied to his prayer by sending a small cloud as much as a man’s hand. It is a small but a clear sign of God to initiate His work.

3-5, What else did he order Ahab to do and what did he do with God’s power?(44b-46)

***So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’” 45 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. 46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.***

* Ahab was asked to hitch up his chariot and go down before the rain stopped him. Although there was no heavy rain yet, Elijah asked him to do so by faith.
* Also he ran ahead of Ahab to reach Jezebel first. It was probably because God revealed the meaning and purpose behind the scene.
* Elijah the prophet, full of the power of God, is running ahead. Behind him King Ahab is coming in his chariot.
* In the background, there is thunder and heavy rain, sent by the Lord, in answer to Elijah’s prayer.
* Symbolically, it appears that spiritual order has been restored in Israel. The king is following God’s word through the prophet and God is blessing the nation with rain!

**Conclusion**

God is in the business of restoring a nation where there appears to be no hope at all due to idol worship. But we better put our hope in the Lord because He is living and answering our prayer without fail. He surely raises up His own servant who can challenge a nation for His name’s sake. May the Lord help us to not be deceived by our enemies’ scheme and deception. Rather we may stand firm in the Lord’s side and awake from spiritual hibernation and continue to participate in the spiritual battle for the glory of God. Amen.

**One word: How long will you waver between two opinions?**