

1 Kings 18 Commentary

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THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Click to Enlarge

(NOTE: Many consider Amaziah and Hezekiah as "good" kings)
SEE ALSO:
[ESV chart - kings of Israel - more information](#)
[ESV chart - kings of Judah - more information](#)
[Another Chart with Variable Dates for Reigns of Kings](#)

1 Kings 18:1 Now it happened after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, **Go, show** yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."

- **Now it happened after many days** : Lu 4:25 Jas 5:17 Rev 11:2,6
- **in the third year**: 1Ki 17:1,7,15 Lu 4:25 Jas 5:17
- **Go**: 1Ki 18:2,15-40
- **I will send rain**: Lev 26:4 De 28:12 Ps 65:9-13 Isa 5:6 Jer 10:13 14:22 Joe 2:23 Am 4:7

Related Passages:

Luke 4:25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, **when the sky was shut up for three years and six months**, when a great famine came over all the land;

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

Now it happened - Of course it did not just "happen," but in the [providence](#) and omnipotence of God, He withheld rain from Samaria.

After many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year How many days? Here we read 3 years, Jesus and James tell us it was 3.5 years (Luke 4:25, James 5:17)

Saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth- While going to Ahab may have been an intimidating thought, God linked it with a promise that should have encouraged Elijah. Earlier God had commanded Elijah "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself." (1Ki 17:3) Now go and show yourself! Where was Elijah at this time? We cannot be dogmatic but presumably he was still at Zarephath. God's commands are accompanied by a clear prophecy that He would send rain. Recall that 1Ki 17:1 said "there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." Which is true? Both are true. God clearly is sovereign over the rain, but mysteriously He uses the words of Elijah to bring the promise to fruition.

THOUGHT - Elijah prayer "tapped into" (so to speak) the will of God, so that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. The better we know His Word, the better equipped we will be in our prayers to "tap into" His will.

God Moves in A Mysterious Way

([Play this hymn](#) - a variation)

(Or [Listen to a chorale arrangement](#))

God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea

And rides upon the storm.

Spurgeon - To unbelief this would have appeared like a command to plunge into the raging waves of the sea, or to walk into a lion's den, but soldiers of the Heavenly King do not reason, but obey.

James Smith - ELIJAH, THE FAITHFUL WITNESS 1 Kings 18:1–39

"Could we but crush that ever-craving lust

For bless, which kills all bless, and lose our life—

Our barren unit-life—to find again
A thousand lives in those for whom we die,
So were we men and women! and should hold
Our rightful rank in God's great universe.”
—KINGSLEY.

The third year of the famine was now running its course. All this time Elijah, as the mouthpiece of God, had no message for the guilty nation. Jehovah Himself was speaking through those barren fields and sealed-up heavens, calling for confession and repentance. There are times when God's servants have to be silent, when He is speaking loudly by some crushing providence. Elijah had a long silence before he made that bold and tragic declaration on Carmel. In this chapter we get a fuller view of the faithfulness of this prophet of fire in his—

I. Readiness to Obey. When the call came, “Go, show thyself unto Ahab,” immediately “Elijah went to show himself” (vv. 1, 2). He had been commanded to hide himself (chap. 17:3). Now he is to show himself. He was equally ready for the one or the other. The man who is set on witnessing for God, as Elijah was, and is willing to hide himself, is sure to be lifted up, brought out, and set before the people as one having authority. To show himself to Ahab was to show himself to one who had been eagerly hunting for his life (v. 12). But the righteous are bold as a lion (Prov. 28:1).

II. Boldness to Rebuke. When Ahab found Elijah he seemed as if he had found a “pestilent fellow.” But was there not a tremor of fear in that question so awkwardly put, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” How could he trouble Israel by shutting up the heavens when the king was utterly helpless? The prophet's answer was straight and piercing as an arrow to his heart from the quiver of the Almighty. “I have not troubled Israel, but thou ... in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord” (v. 18). What constitutes a troubler? “Forsaking the Word of the Lord.” Every backslider is a troubler in the Church of God. Achan's secret sin brought trouble into the whole camp of Israel. What should be said of those infidel “critics” who pose as religious teachers and are troubling the whole land with their soul-damning heresies? The need of the age is Elijahs.

III. Call for Decision. The prophet commands the king, and his eight hundred and fifty false prophets are summoned, with the nation, to meet Elijah on Mount Carmel. It was a big order, but the man who “stands before God” will go in for great things. “How long halt ye between two opinions?” is the pointed question rung out as soon as the people had gathered themselves together. This solitary man of God was intensely practical. Well he knew that “no man can serve two masters,” and that indecision about the service of God was ruinous. Their decision for God or Baal was to be evidenced by their “following Him.” The outward life must declare the inward purposes of the heart.

IV. Desire to put God to the Test. “Let them choose one bullock, and I will dress the other, ... and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God” (vv. 23, 24). Better test our theories and principles in time than to have them breaking down on the border of eternity. The man of faith is never afraid to risk his all on the honour of God (Heb. 11:17). An “answer by fire” was quite a reasonable test for them, as they worshipped Baal, the god of fire. Surely the great “sun god” would not fail such a multitude of prophets. At midday, when the sun was at its hottest, they got frantic, and “leaped upon the altar” as if they themselves were ready to be sacrificed for their faith, but there was “neither voice, nor any to answer.” Their god was the voiceless myth of their own imagination. The “two opinions” between which they halted were MAN'S and GOD'S. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord.” Prove your own selves.

V. Believing Prayer. There is no fuss, no excitement betrayed by the man of God, as he calmly builds the altar and drenches the sacrifice and the wood with “barrels” of water from the sea (Jer. 46:18). He does not seek to make it easy for God to answer by fire, but to make it sure that the fire is from God. His prayer is simple, because it is the prayer of faith. “Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel,” etc. (vv. 36, 37). The prophet urges a fourfold reason for this special miraculous manifestation of His power.

1. That it might be known that THOU ART GOD.
2. That I AM THY SERVANT.
3. That I have done all these things AT THY WORD.
4. That the HEART of the people might be TURNED BACK.

It was a cry for the vindication of God's own honour, a cry that was immediately answered, for “Then the fire of the Lord fell” (v. 38). This was a Pentecostal day for Israel. Those who are truly faithful to God must expect great things from Him, that His own Name may be glorified in them and by them. It is because of our unbelief that signs and wonders are not still being wrought among us. “Command ye me.”

VI. Bringing Others to Confession. “When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, He is God” (v. 39). It was such a revelation as Thomas had when he said, “My Lord and my God.” There is nothing like the down-coming of the fire of God—the Holy Ghost—to burn off the masks from the faces of self-deceived religionists. The “one man ministry” of Elijah was an

overwhelming force in the kingdom of Israel. The man that “stands before God” has always God to stand by Him. There is no other way to bring deluded sinners to their knees but by the power of God in answer to the daring faith of His believing servants.

ILLUSTRATION - John Steinbeck's description of a severe drought in the 1930's - *"The surface of the earth crusted, a thin hard crust, and as the sky became pale, so the earth became pale, pink in the red country and white in the gray country. In the water-cut gullies the earth dusted down in dry little streams. Gophers and ant lions started small avalanches. And as the sharp sun struck day after day, the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward. Then it was June, and the sun shone more fiercely. The brown lines on the corn leaves widened and moved in on the central ribs. The weeds frayed and edged back toward their roots. The air was thin and the sky more pale; and every day the earth paled."* (See [Grapes of Wrath page 1](#))

GOD'S POWER REVEALED - Croft Pentz

1 Kings 18:1, 17–46

Elijah faced the power of sin and Satan. However, he did not stand alone—God stood with him. God was trying to speak to man through the three and a half years of drought. Now He sends Elijah to challenge the worshipers of Baal.

1. THE CONFRONTATION—1 Kings 18:1, 7–18
2. THE CHALLENGE—1 Kings 18:19–24
3. THE COMPLETENESS—1 Kings 18:25–46

Elijah's prayer was: simple, short, and sincere. His prayer was to advance God's work. Too often our prayers become selfish and self-centered.

1 Kings 18:2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.

- **went to show:** Ps 27:1 51:4 Pr 28:1 Isa 51:12 Heb 13:5,6
- **Now the famine was severe:** Lev 26:26 De 28:23-24 2Ki 6:25 Jer 14:2-6,18 Joel 1:15-20

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24+ "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you..... 23 "The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. 24" The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

2 Kings 6:25 There was a great famine in Samaria; and behold, they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.

Ruth 1:1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that **there was a famine in the land**. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

ELIJAH OBEYS, GOES & SHOWS

So - Term of conclusion. Elijah's "conclusion" is to immediately respond to God's Word. And this Word is one that was not without some danger to Elijah given Ahab and Jezebel's murderous hatred of Elijah.

Elijah went to show himself to Ahab He did not say "but God you know Ahab wants to kill me." He just went!

Now the famine was severe in Samaria- The famine is secondary to no dew or rain and is clearly the judgment of the sovereign God Who controls every drop of dew or rain that ever falls on the earth. Note there is no record of a famine in Judah, so presumably Judah was not impacted by the drought. Of course Baal was the northern kingdom's pagan god of fertility and this famine is a clear assault on the people's false belief that Baal was in control of fertility if he could not even produce a few rain showers.

Bob Utley- It has always been a question among commentators whether the severe drought was in Judah as well as Samaria. During the plagues of Egypt, they were limited to Egypt, but not Goshen (i.e., Exod. 8:22; 9:4,6,25-26; 10:22-23; 11:7).

Why was there a **famine in Samaria**? **Moses** had warned Israel that one of the consequences of disobedience would be famine writing that "if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you...And the heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed." (Deut 28:15, 23, 24+) That's God's recipe for a famine of devastating proportions!

ESV Study note - A **famine** was sometimes a divine scourge (Deut. 11:14; 32:24; cf. Lev. 26:3-4), but it could also advance God's purposes, as it did for the sons of Israel in Joseph's time (Gen. 42:5; 45:5-8; Ps. 105:16-17, 23). (Borrow [ESV Study Bible](#))

THOUGHT - God is clearly in control from the beginning (famine in land). God is sovereign, (what word do you see in "sovereign"?) which in simple terms means that He is in complete control over ALL the affairs of nature and history and has the absolute right to act according to His perfect will and His good pleasure. The Bible is history which is "His-Story" in which He is working out His sovereign plan of redemption for the world toward a conclusion which is so certain that we can stake our very life on it. It follows that no "**famine**" just "happens" in Samaria, but God sovereignly controls every famine. What "famine" are you going through beloved child of God? Is He in control? Do you believe that is true? Most of us are either in a "famine," getting ready to go into a "famine" or just coming out of a "famine!" "Famines" are the *classrooms* (or "divine pop tests") in which the Father gives us the opportunity for our faith to be tested and to grow (if we yield to His loving hand). ([Meditate](#) on James 1:2-8+ and 1 Peter 1:6-7+)

The lesson for each of us to learn is that pressures and trials wrought by the "famines" in our life are sovereignly sent (or allowed) by God not to destroy us but to humble us (repeated in Dt 8:2, 3+) and to teach us to "trust in Jehovah with all (our) heart and...not (to) lean on (our) own understanding" but "in all (our) ways (to) acknowledge Him", fully confident that "He will make (our) paths straight." (Pr 3:5, 6+)

May we all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 3:18+) and learn what **Habakkuk** learned so that we respond the way he did to "**bad news**" --"Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, **yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.**" (Hab 3:17-19+)

1 Kings 18:3 Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly;

- **Obadiah who was over the household:** Ge 24:2,10 39:4,5,9 41:40
- **feared the Lord:** 1Ki 18:12 Ge 22:12 42:18 2Ki 4:1 Ne 5:15 7:2 Pr 14:26 Mal 3:16 Mt 10:28 Ac 10:2,35

OBADIAH, AHAB'S CHIEF STEWARD

Ahab called Obadiah ("servant of Jehovah") - This is probably not the Obadiah that wrote the book of Obadiah because he belonged to the southern kingdom and the Obadiah in this verse is identified with the Northern Kingdom (but we must avoid being dogmatic).

who was over the household - Head of Ahab's house would signify he was trusted by Ahab.

Spurgeon on Obadiah working for Ahab - Here was a dove living in the eagle's nest. Obadiah was not a half-and-half man, but feared the Lord fully, hence his character won him confidence even from ungodly Ahab, and in his great trouble the king did not trust any of his idolatrous nobles as he trusted holy Obadiah. He lived in a wicked court, and yet was zealous for his God, and shewed his zeal by feeding the prophets when food was dear, and kindness to them might have cost him his life. If in so difficult a position Obadiah was so earnest, what manner of persons ought we to be who are so much more happily situated?

Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly - This begins a parenthetical statement that will continue in the following verse. This is an amazing statement. Clearly Obadiah was a believer in Yahweh. He apparently was God's man on the scene for "such a time as this" much like the situation with Queen Esther (Esther 4:14+). God had him positioned to be able to secure supplies for the 100 faithful prophets who were in hiding. Had he not had access to the royal pantry (so to speak) it is doubtful he would have been able to provide them with bread and water for 3 years.

"Fear" refers here to obedience and allegiance, the products of healthy respect for the LORD's authority.

Note that the Bible sometimes uses fear of the LORD as virtually synonymous with believe in the LORD. E.g., we see this in the last book of the Bible where John records "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth (MOST PROBABLY AT THE MIDPOINT OF DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK), and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "**Fear God**, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Rev 14:6-7+). That Ahab would have assigned Obadiah to be over his household is surprising given Jezebel's hatred of God's prophets. Did Ahab know he was a believer? We cannot be sure (in my opinion). Was Obadiah a "closet Christian?" I don't think we can say that either. One does wonder why he remained in the pagan Northern Kingdom and not defected to the Southern Kingdom? As the story unfolds it is clear God had a purpose for him in the Northern Kingdom.

Related Resource:

- See my 100+ page article on [The Fear of the Lord](#), a vital truth I fear is seldom emphasized in the modern church (when was the last time you heard a sermon on the fear of the Lord?) Some evangelicals think that fear is not even an aspect of God's attributes in the New Testament but that fear is reserved for the OT. Au contraire, the Bible clearly teaches that a holy, reverential fear of the LORD is foundational to a dynamic relationship with Yahweh. Even David says "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever." For how long? Forever! (Ps 19:9) Thus it should not surprise you that fear is used in the description of God's bondservants in heaven (Rev 19:5+).

Philip Ryken has a very interesting application of the role of Obadiah writing "Though he had a secular calling, there is evidence that he was a secular saint; although he was in the world, he was not entirely of the world (cf. John 17:14–16; 2 Cor. 10:3). True, Obadiah was not as courageous as Elijah. Yet he was a believer in the God of Israel, and there are ways in which he serves as a godly example for Christians who have difficult, secular jobs." (Suggestion for an interesting, practical sermon on Obadiah, read Ryken's section on THE SECULAR SAINT in [1 Kings- digital edition](#) or hardbound copy [1 Kings - Reformed Expository Commentary](#))

Spurgeon - "Ahab called for Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. Obadiah was a man who greatly feared the LORD and took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty men to a cave, and provided them with food and water when Jezebel slaughtered the LORD's prophets." God will never leave himself without witnesses in this world, even in the worst places of the world. What a horrible abode Ahab's court must have been for a believer! If there had been no sinner there but that woman, Jezebel, she was enough to make the palace a sinkhole of iniquity. Yet in that court where Jezebel was mistress, the chamberlain was a man who greatly feared God. We should never be surprised to meet with a believer anywhere. Grace can live where we would never expect to see it survive for an hour. Joseph feared God in the court of Pharaoh. Daniel was a trusted counselor of Nebuchadnezzar. Mordecai waited at the gate of Ahasuerus, and there were saints in Caesar's household. Think of finding diamonds on such a dunghill as Nero's palace. Those who feared God in Rome were not only Christians, but they were examples to all other Christians for their brotherly love and generosity. Surely there is no place without some light of God—the darkest cavern of iniquity has its torch.

QUESTION - [Who was Obadiah in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Thirteen different men are named Obadiah in the Bible, including the minor prophet who wrote the book of Obadiah. The name *Obadiah* was common in ancient Israel and Judah. It means "the Lord's servant" or "worshiper of Yahweh."

One of the twelve minor prophets: Other than what is disclosed through the book of Obadiah, nothing more is known about Obadiah the prophet. His book, the shortest of the Old Testament with only twenty-one verses, reveals that Obadiah probably lived in the harsh and bitter era after the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He was most likely a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

Obadiah's prophecies focus on God's judgment against the [Edomites](#) (a hostile neighbor of Israel) for their part in destroying Jerusalem. Obadiah's message is that God will not forget His people even in their captivity but will accomplish His purpose through and beyond the appalling conditions they endure.

Some of Obadiah's words are remarkably similar to a few verses in [Jeremiah 49](#), leading some scholars to think that [Jeremiah](#) quoted or paraphrased some of Obadiah's prophecy as he was writing his own oracle against Edom.

A governor: Although he served as overseer of the household of the evil King Ahab, this Obadiah remained a devoted servant of God. He is known for safeguarding 100 prophets of Yahweh from Ahab's wife, the wicked [Queen Jezebel](#), by secreting them in a cave and bringing them food and water. He also served as

emissary between Ahab and the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18:1–16).

A descendant of David: The son of Arnan and father of Shecanian was named Obadiah. He was a descendant of King David through Zerubbabel (1 Chronicles 3:21).

A descendant of Issachar: One of the sons of Izrahiah, a descendant of Issachar, was called Obadiah. He was one of the tribal leaders (1 Chronicles 7:3).

A descendant of Saul: A Benjamite named Obadiah was one of the six sons of Azel and a descendant of King Saul (1 Chronicles 8:38; 9:44).

The son of Shemaiah: A member of the tribe of Levi named Obadiah was part of the group of Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the [Babylonian Captivity](#). He was the son of Shemaiah (1 Chronicles 9:16).

One of David's [mighty men](#): Obadiah was listed as the second of eleven experienced warriors from the tribe of Gad who joined David's army at Ziklag. These men were "fierce as lions and as swift as deer on the mountains. . . . The weakest among them could take on a hundred regular troops, and the strongest could take on a thousand!" (1 Chronicles 12:8–14).

The father of Ishmaiah: During King David's reign, Ishmaiah served as chief officer of the tribe of Zebulun. Ishmaiah's father was named Obadiah (1 Chronicles 27:19).

An official: One of King Jehoshaphat's officials sent to teach the law in the cities of Judah was called Obadiah (2 Chronicles 17:7).

An overseer: A Levite named Obadiah supervised the work of repairing and restoring the temple during the reign of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:12).

A descendant of Joab: This Obadiah was the son of Jehiel and a leader of the family of Joab. He led a group of 218 men who returned from exile with Ezra (Ezra 8:9).

A witness: During the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Obadiah was a priest and one of the leaders of the postexilic Jewish community who signed and sealed the written covenant to obey the laws of God (Nehemiah 10:1–27).

A gatekeeper: In the time of Nehemiah, one of the gatekeepers who stood guard at the storehouses was named Obadiah (Nehemiah 12:25).

1 Kings 18:4 for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

- **destroyed the prophets of the LORD:** Ne 9:26 Mt 21:35 Rev 17:4-6
- **in a cave:** Heb 11:38
- **provided them:** 1Ki 18:13 2Ki 6:22,23 Mt 10:40-42 25:35,40
- **with bread and water.** 1Ki 13:8,9,16

OBADIAH'S FAITH IN ACTION

For - This is a great term of explanation. What is the writer explaining in context?

When Jezebel destroyed (cut off, destroy = [karath](#); Lxx - [tupto/typto](#) = strike in present tense - her continual activity against) **the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water** - This would suggest that Obadiah was not overt in his testimony or she would have destroyed him. This would have been quite a job to feed 50 men in one cave and then go to feed 50 men in another cave. The job would be made difficult by the fact

that he might be discovered by Jezebel or her spies. Finally, the job would be difficult in this time of drought when there were decreased food and water reserves. These combined obstacles make one wonder if Obadiah had supernatural assistance? (Note - On the schools of the prophets, see 1 Samuel 10:5 and 2 Kings 2:3-7 and 2 Kings 6:1-2)

Matthew Poole - "**Prophets**: this name is not only given to such as are endowed with an extraordinary spirit of prophecy, but to such ministers as devoted themselves to the service of God in preaching, praying, praising God, and the like"

Spurgeon - "Account for it how you may, it is a singular circumstance that in the center of rebellion against God there was one whose devotion to God was intense and distinguished. As it is horrible to find a Judas among the apostles, so it is grand to discover an Obadiah among Ahab's courtiers. What grace must have been at work to maintain such a fire in the midst of the sea, such godliness in the midst of the vilest iniquity!"

Bob Utley on **destroyed** - The MT has the *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 503, KB 500) which basically means "to cut down." She was killing (cf. 1 Sam. 24:22; 1 Kgs. 11:16; 18:4; 2 Chr. 22:7) YHWH's speakers. One wonders if she was blaming them for the drought or wanted only *Ba'al* and *Asherah* to be worshiped. As YHWH used ravens (or Arabs) to provide bread for Elijah, now Obadiah provided bread and water for the prophets of YHWH (cf. v. 13). Obadiah was not only a man of faith, but of action, dangerous action. He name means "servant of YHWH," and he surely was.

Patterson - That Obadiah would have little difficulty in finding caves for the sons of the prophets can be seen in that over two thousand caves have been counted in the Mount Carmel area. (See [1 and 2 Kings](#))

1 Kings 18:5 Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle."

- **grass**: Ps 104:14 Jer 14:5,6 Joe 1:18 2:22 Hab 3:17 Ro 8:20-22

DESPERATELY SEARCHING FOR GRASS FOR ANIMALS

Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle - This passage is clear evidence that there was a drought as Elijah had predicted and clearly it was so severe that one could hardly find green grass!

*Obadiah saves prophets,
but Ahab saves horses*

Spurgeon adds that "Judgment alone cannot soften the heart, for alt that Ahab cared for when under the chastising hand of God was to preserve his stud. He thought more of his horses than of his soul, or his starving subjects."

F B Meyer on Ahab's focus - We might have supposed that he would set himself to alleviate the miseries of his people; and, above all, that he would have turned back to God: but no – his one thought was about the horses and mules of his stud; his only care was to save some of them alive... What selfishness is here! Mules and asses before his people! Seeking for grass, instead of seeking for God!"

John Schultz: The fact that the king of Israel had to go around the country, looking for grass, is the most ridiculous scene imaginable. It emphasized what happens when the living God, the Creator of the universe is being replaced by idols. Idols cannot create anything, not even grass!

Dale Ralph Davis: Here is an interesting contrast between Ahab and Obadiah. Obadiah saves prophets. Ahab wants to save mules and horses (v. 5). That is typical of kings and governments: the economy is everything. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom And the Folly](#))

1 Kings 18:6 So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

- Ahab went: Jer 14:3

So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

[Bob Utley](#) - This verse shows that Obadiah was part of Ahab's inner circle of leadership.

1 Kings 18:7 Now as Obadiah was on the way, **behold**, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?"

- he recognized him: 1Ki 11:29
- he recognized him: 2Ki 1:6-8 Mt 3:4 11:8
- fell on: Ge 18:2 50:18 1Sa 20:41 2Sa 19:18 Isa 60:14
- my master: Ge 18:12 44:16,20,33 Nu 12:11

THE LORD LEADS ONE PROPHET TO ANOTHER

Now as Obadiah was on the way - Note the providence of God. This was not an accidental encounter!

Behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master - How Obadiah knew this was Elijah is not clear. That he fell prostrate and Elijah did not tell him to arise for he too was a mere man is somewhat surprising.

1 Kings 18:8 He said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, **Behold**, Elijah is here."

- your master,: 1Ki 18:3 Ro 13:7 1Pe 2:17,18

MY GOD IS YAHWEH IS READY AND WAITING!

He said to him, "It is I. **Go, say to your master** (lord), '**Behold, Elijah is here.**'" - Elijah says in essence tell Ahab "My God is Yahweh (Meaning of Elijah's name) is hear!" Although Obadiah called Elijah his master (v7), Elijah commands him to go to his **master** Ahab to inform him Elijah was here (and ready to rumble, so to speak). While one might accuse Obadiah of divided loyalties as some commentators do, I would beg to differ, because (1) he clearly feared the Master of masters greatly (1Ki 18:3) and (2) he was willing to risk life and limb to (a) hide 100 prophets and then (b) to actually feed and water them. This hardly sounds like a man who had divided loyalties (in my opinion).

Warren Wiersbe agrees asking of Obadiah "Was he a courageous servant of God (his name means **servant of Jehovah**) or a timid compromiser who was afraid to let his witness be known? The text informs us that Obadiah "**feared the Lord greatly**" and proved it during Jezebel's "purge" by risking his life to rescue and support one hundred prophets of the Lord. **That doesn't sound like a man who was compromising his testimony!**...Not all of God's servants are supposed to be in the public eye like Elijah and the other prophets. God has His servants in many places, doing the work He's called them to do. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea didn't make a big fuss about their faith in Christ, yet God used them to give proper burial to the body of Jesus (John 19:38-42). Esther kept quiet about her Jewish heritage until it was absolutely necessary to use it to save the life of the nation. Over the centuries, there have been numerous believers who have kept a low profile and yet made great contributions to the cause of Christ and the advancement of His kingdom. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Ian Paisley - The Sudden Appearance of Elijah "Behold Elijah is here" I Kings 18:8, 11, 14

The sudden appearance of Elijah after three and a half years was startling. Three times we read "Behold Elijah is here" (see verse 8, 11 and 14). God's man Elijah is here—

I. Here in God's Calendar

Ahab, for three years, wanted to force the time of his appearing but all his royal power was useless. God's man only moves in God's time. God sets His own calendar.

II. Here at God's Command

God ruled Elijah, not Ahab or circumstances. Only when the heavenly command comes can God's man shew himself.

III. Here to Deliver God's Condemnation

The message of Elijah was total condemnation of the Baal apostasy. Elijah was no trimmer. His was a message of death unto death as well as of life unto life.

IV. Here to Issue God's Challenge

The issue was clean cut-Jehovah or Baal? It was white or black. There were no greys.

V. Here to Seek God's Conflagration

The fire alone was the confirming seal. Lord send the fire!

VI. Here to Re-Establish God's Control

There must be no appeasement of apostasy. Slay them utterly is God's command.

VII. Here to Pray for a Break in God's Closed Heaven

After the fire must come the rain. Judgment first then mercy, see James 5:17-18.

1 Kings 18:9 He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?"

- What have I sinned: 1Ki 18:12 1Ki 17:18 Ex 5:21

OBADIAH WAFFLES WITH FEAR & PANIC

He said, "What sin have I committed" - This reminds us of the widow's remark about her sin in 1Ki 17:18. Elijah's presence seems to have a way of making people think of their sins!

That you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?- This is presumptive and surprising. Presumptive because he does not know Elijah's purpose. And surprising because Obadiah had already risked his life in hiding prophets and in being a believer in Yahweh. It goes to show that in a moment, the courage we may have manifest can be dismantled by a new trial or test. Isn't that the nature of our fallen flesh?

William Barnes: This is ironically parallel to the conundrum the Phoenician widow faced in 17:18. When a prophet of God shows up, the situation often escalates to life- or-death levels. Note that Obadiah says in his speech three times that Ahab will kill him (18:9, 12, 14). [This becomes the refrain of vv. 7-14] (See [1-2 Kings - Page 155](#))

1 Kings 18:10 "As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you.

- **the Lord:** 1Ki 18:15 1:29 2:24 17:1,12 1Sa 29:6
- **my master:** Ps 10:2 Jer 26:20-23
- **that they could not find you:** 1Ki 17:5,9 Ps 12:7,8 31:20 91:1 Jer 36:26 Joh 8:59

OBADIAH CLEARLY FEARS AHAB'S WRATH

As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you Finding Elijah was a priority for Ahab.

Bob Utley - "swear" Ahab made the surrounding nations swear an oath that they had looked for Elijah. I wonder in whose name they swore (i.e., YHWH, *Ba'al*, their national god).

1 Kings 18:11 "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here."'"

- **Go**: tell they lord, 1Ki 18:8,14

And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah is here

1 Kings 18:12 "It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.

- **the Spirit of the Lord**: 2Ki 2:11,16 Eze 3:12-14 8:3 11:24 37:1 40:1,2 Mt 4:1 Ac 8:39 2Co 12:2,3
- **he shall slay me**: 1Sa 22:11-19 Da 2:5-13 Mt 2:16 Ac 12:19
- **from my youth**: 1Sa 2:18,26 3:19,20 2Ch 34:3 Ps 71:17,18 Pr 8:13 Ec 7:18 Isa 50:10 Lu 1:15 2Ti 3:15

GOD FEARING PROPHET FEARS AHAB'S WRATH

It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth - While Obadiah fears the LORD greatly, he is human and here expresses fear of man. He apparently did not know or was not able to put into practice Solomon's words "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted." (Pr 29:25). I have a feeling most of the readers of Obadiah's words would have made a similar response to Elijah!

Bob Utley - "will carry you where I do not know" Apparently there was a tradition of YHWH moving His prophets in a supernatural way (cf. Ezek. 3:14; 8:3; 11:1,24; 7:1; 43:5; Acts 8:39; Rev. 17:3; 21:10).

Spurgeon - see full sermon [Obadiah; or, Early Piety Eminent Piety](#)

'I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.' 1 Kings 18:12

To be a believer in God early in life is to be saved from a thousand regrets. Such a man shall never have to say that he carries in his bones the sins of his youth. Early piety helps us to form associations for the rest of life which will prove helpful, and it saves us from those which are harmful. The Christian young man will not fall into the common sins of young men, and injure his constitution by excesses. He will be likely to be married to a Christian woman, and so to have a holy companion in his march towards heaven. He will select as his associates those who will be his friends in the church and not in the tavern, his helpers in virtue, and not his tempters to vice. Depend upon it, a great deal depends upon whom we choose for our companions when we begin life. If we start in bad company, it is very hard to break away from it. The man brought to Christ early in life has this further advantage, that he is helped to form holy habits, and he is saved from being the slave of their opposites. Habits soon become a second nature; to form new ones is hard work, but those formed in youth remain in old age. There is something in that verse,

"Tis easier work if we begin to serve the Lord betimes
But sinners who grow old in sin are hardened in their crimes.'

Moreover, I notice that, very frequently, those who are brought to Christ whilst young grow in grace more rapidly and readily than others do. They have not so much to unlearn, and not such a heavy weight of old memories to carry. The scars and bleeding sores which come of having spent years in the service of the devil are missed by those whom the Lord brings into his church before they have wandered far into the world.

1 Kings 18:13 "Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?

- **what I did**: 1Ki 18:4 Ge 20:4,5 Ps 18:21-24 Ac 20:34 1Th 2:9,10
- **I hid an hundred**: Mt 10:41,42
- **fed them**: Mt 25:35

FAITHFUL SERVICE SHOULD COUNT FOR SOMETHING!

Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water - This is rhetorical and expects an affirmative reply.

James Smith - HIDDEN THINGS FOR HIDDEN ONES.

It was a gracious and merciful act when Obadiah hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and "fed them with bread and water" (1 Kings 18:13).

But how much better is it to be the Lord's hidden ones? Who shall discover those whom He hath concealed? We ask—

I. Who are They? "They have taken counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones" (Psa. 83:3). Then those hidden ones are—

1. HIS OWN. Sought out by His love, convicted by His Spirit, redeemed by His blood. "Your body and your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).
2. HE HIDES THEM. "Thy hidden ones." "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3), and hid by God Himself. What a place of safety! He takes us under the feathers of His own wings. "I flee to Thee to hide me" (Psa. 143:9).

II. Where He Hides. In the safest place in the universe.

1. IN THE PAVILION OF HIS GRACE. "He shall hide me in His pavilion" (Psa. 27:5). We are not under the cloud of the law, but under the covering of His redeeming grace. The word atonement means covering.
2. IN THE SECRET OF HIS TABERNACLE (Psa. 27:5). The secret place of the Tabernacle was where God Himself dwelt, in the Holy of Holies. Into the secret of His own presence hath He brought us. "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "Abide in Me." What a blessed hiding-place is ours! "God is our Refuge, we shall not be moved" (Psa. 46:1).

III. What They are Hidden From. The—

1. PRIDE OF MAN (Psa. 31:20). To be saved from the pride of one's own heart is a great deliverance. The pride of man is the source of many evils. Our security is in the bosom of Him who is the meek and lowly in heart.
2. STRIFE OF TONGUES (Psa. 31:20). The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. God's hidden ones are lovers of peace, and know the peace of God. The confusion of tongues belong to the world, but Thou art my hiding-place (Psa. 32:7). Thy Word is pure, Thy voice is clear and unmistakable.

IV. The Privilege Enjoyed by the Hidden Ones. They dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in a sure dwelling, and in a quiet resting-place (Isa. 32:18). They—

1. ARE TAUGHT HIDDEN WISDOM (1 Cor. 2:7). We have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Wise in Christ. Secret things belong to God (Psa. 31:19; Matt. 13:11).
2. RECEIVE HIDDEN RICHES. "I will give thee the hidden riches of secret places" (Isa. 45:3). Being in Christ, we are in the secret places where the unsearchable riches are (Eph 3:8). "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).
3. EAT HIDDEN MANNA. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17). Those bidden by God have a meat to eat that others know not of (John 4:32), they are fed by the finest of the wheat. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. for I am called by Thy Name, O Lord God of Hosts" (Jer. 15:16).

"Thou blest Rock of Ages,
I'm hiding in Thee."

1 Kings 18:14 "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, **Behold**, Elijah is here'; he will then kill me."

- He will then kill me (KJV): Mt 10:28

REITERATES FEAR
OF BEING KILLED

And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your master, “**Behold, Elijah is here**”’; he will then kill me Even God's prophets are human and have the emotion of fear of men in certain circumstances as in our present pericope.

Spurgeon - The good man was timid, for he had not been living the separated life, and therefore was far inferior in faith to the lonely Elijah, but the prophet bore with his weakness, for he knew him to be right at heart. We that are strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, and not expect all men to be equally bold.

1 Kings 18:15 Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.”

- **As the Lord:** 1Ki 18:10 Heb 6:16,17
- **of hosts lives:** Ge 2:1 De 4:19 Job 25:3 Ps 24:8-10 103:21 148:2,3 Isa 6:3 Jer 8:2 Lu 2:13,14
- **before whom I:** 1Ki 17:1 De 1:38 Lu 1:19
- **I will surely:** Isa 51:7,8

ELIJAH'S AFFIRMATION ASSUAGES OBADIAH'S FEARS

Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts (SEE [Jehovah Sabaoth](#)) lives, before Whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today - Elijah gives his word essentially swearing an oath before the LORD that he will go to Ahab.

Bob Utley- before whom I stand" This is an idiom of being YHWH's servant (i.e., priests or prophets). It denotes intimacy and availability to YHWH's counsel

Donald Wiseman: This first occurrence in Kings of **the Lord of Hosts**’, which also occurs in other prophetic utterances (19:10; 2 Kgs 3:14; 19:31), denotes more than the heavenly hosts (Yahweh Sabaoth) or all subordinate gods or the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 17:45). It includes the idea of God as the God of order and hence refers to his irresistible royal majesty and power (niv, the Lord God Almighty).

1 Kings 18:16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

OBADIAH OBEYS DESPITE HIS FEAR

So - Term of conclusion. Obadiah is satisfied with Elijah's promise.

Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah- Presumably Obadiah led Ahab to Elijah's location.

Tony Merida offers a good character assessment on Obadiah - I think it's worth noting that Obadiah and Elijah provide two ways to serve God. Not everyone will be called to formal ministry like Elijah, but many will be called to serve as “secular saints” like Obadiah. Davis says, “*Elijah's ministry is more public and confrontational; Obadiah works quietly in behind-the-scenes fashion and yet is faithful in the sphere where God placed him. The Bible never tells us that there is only one kind of faithful servant (1 Cor 12:4–6); it never demands that you must be an Elijah clone.* (([1 Kings: The Wisdom And the Folly](#) 231))” Obadiah is like the man or woman working for an unbelieving boss. How should you work in such an environment? Obadiah teaches us to do good work. He was elevated to his position because he apparently did a good job. Christians should be known for good work. Paul says, “Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord” (Col 3:23–24). Obadiah also illustrates how one should use one's influence and resources. Obadiah had access to provisions and made them available to these persecuted prophets. Those who work in professions that allow them to have good salaries and benefits should consider how to use such blessings to advance the kingdom. One might object, claiming that Obadiah was being deceptive, but nothing in the text says that he lied or did anything unethical. He knew about suffering believers, and he used his resources to provide for them. Finally, Obadiah teaches us to be courageous. He ultimately followed Elijah's instructions at great risk to his own life. The lesson here is that if you are ever in a position where it's either obedience to God or obedience to man, choose God (Acts 5:29), even if it might cost you your job—or your life. (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

1 Kings 18:17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is this you, you troubler of Israel?”

AHAB GREETES ISRAEL'S TROUBLER

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler ([akar](#); Lxx - [diastrepho](#) - perverter, corrupter) of Israel (the northern kingdom)? - This verse could aptly be entitled "Blame Shifting." This is a sad commentary on Ahab that he interprets the Word of God from Elijah as that which causes trouble. To the contrary the Word of God is heeded brings peace, not trouble. Of course the unheeded warnings from God will then bring trouble. Ahab is implying that the trouble in Israel was caused by Elijah. He is do deceived (see deceitfulness of sin) that he fails to see that he himself was the true troubler of Israel (see 1Ki 21:20).

Tony Merida rightly opines that "The blame game is as old as the garden. Ahab doesn't want to accept responsibility. God plainly told His people that famine would result if they worshiped idols (Deut 28:22-24). Ahab disregarded God's word and received God's judgment. After three years Ahab still won't change his mind and heart. Instead of repenting, he blames Elijah." (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

This is a false accusation by Ahab against Elijah which recalls Jesus' promise of reward not only to Elijah but to all saints who are falsely accused...

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 **"Rejoice** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **be glad** ([agalliao](#) - "jump for joy" - [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), for (term of explanation - a good one!) your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matt 5:11-12+, cf Jn 15:18-20+)

Warren Wiersbe - Both Jesus and Paul would be called "troublemakers" (Luke 23:5; Acts 16:20; 17:6), so Elijah was in good company. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

[Paul Apple](#) writes that "Unrepentant sin will stir up trouble and disrupt the peace and prosperity of the people of God. The problem is often laid at the feet of the one who exposed the sin. But the real culprit is the one committing the sin."

August Konkell: This accusation of Ahab is itself a contradiction. If Baal is truly god, Elijah could have no power over Israel at all. If Elijah does have power to bring drought, then Baal is not really god. (See [1 and 2 Kings - Page 299](#))

J. Hampton Keathley, III: Ahab's heart was filled with evil treasure—with resentment, hatred, the desire for revenge, and with his solutions for dealing with Elijah. So, immediately, when he saw Elijah, his volcano of corruption erupted in accusations, name calling, maligning, criticism, and blame.

[David Guzik](#) has an interesting thought - According to his theology, it made sense for Ahab to blame Elijah. Ahab believed in Baal, so much so that his government promoted and supported Baal worship and persecuted the worshippers of Yahweh. Ahab believed that Elijah had angered the sky-god Baal and therefore Baal withheld rain. Ahab probably thought that Baal would hold back the rain until Elijah was caught and executed. Instead, Ahab should have turned to the Word of God. Deuteronomy 28:23-24 promised that drought would come to a disobedient Israel.

William Gurnall - A minister without boldness is like a smooth file, a knife without an edge, a sentinel that is afraid to let off his gun. If men will be bold in sin, ministers must be bold to reprove.

Troubler ([05916](#)) [akar](#) is a verb meaning to cause trouble, stir up resentment, cause hatred. It usually describes the trouble brought upon one from another person. The first use is by Jacob addressing his sons Simeon and Levi declaring "You have brought **trouble** (Lxx = [miseo](#) = to be hated) on me." (By killing Hamor and his son Shechem who had defiled their sister Dinah - Ge 34:26-27). (Ge 34:30) In Pr 11:17 "the cruel man does himself **harm** (Lxx = [exollumi](#) - to destroy utterly in the present tense = continually destroys himself!)" In Pr 11:29 Solomon warns that "He who **troubles** his own house will inherit wind," which "refers to actions which make life difficult for one's family." His reward is "empty air," nothing that can be grasped, nothing he can put his hands on. In 1Sa 14:29 Jonathan (son of Saul) declared that Saul had "**troubled** the land" by telling the soldiers none could eat food (1Sa 14:28) Ahab called Elijah a "**troubler** of Israel." (1Ki 18:17, 18).

1 Kings 18:18 He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals."

-
- **I have not:** Eze 3:8 Mt 14:4 Ac 24:13,20
 - **you have forsaken:** 1Ki 9:9 2Ch 15:2 Pr 11:19 13:21 Isa 3:11 Jer 2:13,19 Rev 2:8,9

Related Passages:

Romans 1:22-25+ Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (CF "BAALS" IN ISRAEL). 24 Therefore God gave them over (GAVE THEM OVER TO POWER OF ANOTHER) in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

ELIJAH DENIES AHAB'S ACCUSATION

I have not troubled ([akar](#); Lxx - [diastrepho](#) - perverter, corrupter) **Israel**, **but** (strong term of contrast) **you and your father's house** (e.g., [Omri](#)) **have** - **Your father's house** first would speak of [Omri](#) but surely goes back to Jeroboam I the initiator of all the trouble by setting up two golden calves, one at Bethel and the other at Dan. Ahab's "you troubler" accusation comes flying back in his face like a boomerang!

Because (term of explanation) - What is Elijah explaining? I realize this is a simplistic question, but it trains you in your reading to pause and ponder the terms of explanation like **because** and **for**.

You have forsaken (['azab](#); Lxx - [kataleipo](#)) **the commandments of the LORD and you have followed** ([halak](#)) **the Baals** (note Baals is plural so they have tossed out monotheism of even their false gods not to mention rejecting Dt 6:4+) - Note the spiritual dynamic implied by this passage. God has created us with a "God shaped vacuum" and if it is not filled with the true and living God, our fallen flesh will seek to fill it with various idols, in this case the [Baals](#) of Northern Israel. Elijah's accusation reminds us of the prophet Azariah's words to King Asa when he declared "if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but **if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.**" (2Ch 15:2+) In context God forsaking those who forsake Him in effect is tantamount to Him giving them over to the lust of their flesh as described in Romans 1 ([see Scriptures above](#)). As alluded to above, the irony of following the Baals (and his female consort Ashtaroth) is that these were the rain and fertility gods and they were in the midst of a 3 year drought. And lest we forget, the worship of these false gods and goddesses included animal sacrifices, male and female prostitution, and sometimes human sacrifices.

Tony Merida points out that Ahab was guilty of sins of omission and commission - Sins of omission: "abandoning the commands"; and sins of commission: "followed the Baals." (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

Followed the Baals - As followers of **the Baals** note first they follow multiple gods and secondly, to follow implies they had essentially become "disciples" of the false gods (behind which are demonic powers - cf 1Co 10:20+).

Henry Morris - Baal was associated with the sun and storms, Ashtaroth with sex and fertility. As nature gods, energized by demonic spirits, they were claimed to have "evolved" out of the primeval watery chaos. The worship of both was grossly licentious and extremely cruel. They were essentially equivalent to similar gods in other countries, all having originated at the first Babylon, under Nimrod, and then spread throughout the ancient world with the dispersion.

G Campbell Morgan - 1K. 18:18

I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house.—1 Kings 18.18.

Ahab the corrupt king of Israel met Elijah the prophet of God for the first time under strange circumstances. For over two years there had been a drought in the land according to the word of the prophet. The judgment of God had rested upon the whole land. During that period Elijah had been preserved by God, away from the court of the king. Then, by the direct command of God, Elijah appeared to Ahab. The king greeted him with the words: "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" They were a tacit confession that he knew that the judgment which had fallen upon the land was not due to natural causes, that it had come rather by the word of this strange messenger of the Divine authority. The question was one of resentment and anger. The reply of Elijah was immediate, direct, revealing: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house." And that was so. Apart from the national sins resulting from the corrupt practices of the king, there would have been no judgment. The troubler of a nation is never the man who, in loyalty to righteousness, proceeds against wrong-doing, even though he be probably an outsider. It is rather he through whose corruption

the nation becomes corrupt even though he be king. The men who stand for God, and protest against iniquity, are always troublers of those who are doing evil. But that is a very different thing from troubling the nation. The destroyers of the nation are these very evil-doers, and those who trouble them are rendering the highest service to the nation, even though they are persecuted, and their message, for the time being, refused.

P G Matthew —1 Kings 18:18

There are two ways in which a person can be a troublemaker. One is by sinning against the Lord. In that sense, everyone who sins joins Satan, the ultimate troublemaker. So if you are sinning, I want you to know that you are in league with Satan. You make trouble for yourself, your family, your church, and your society.

But some in the church are considered troublemakers in another sense. If you are a father who leads your family in the way of the Lord, your children may look upon you as a troublemaker, because you bring trouble to their consciences. Ministers of the gospel are labeled troublemakers because they give no peace to a sinner. They declare the truth, and rebels do not like it.

In truth, none of us likes to be told to repent. None of us likes to be reminded of the Holy God's sovereign demand upon our lives. We think, "That preacher goes too far! He wants to tell me how to raise my children and how to order my life. He preaches the word and commands me to repent. I am sick of him!" King Ahab was no exception. He did not appreciate Elijah preaching against his flagrant idolatry. He called him "the troubler of Israel."

But Elijah declared to Ahab, "I am not the troubler of Israel in the sense you think I am. I am not responsible for this severe drought afflicting the nation. I have not committed a crime against the state. But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands in the Bible and have followed the Baals. For this sin, God has cursed you and your nation. Not I, King Ahab, but you, are the real troubler of Israel."

Behind all of fallen humanity, there is Satan, who is the evil troublemaker. He comes to steal, kill and destroy. He deceives us into thinking, "My father is the troublemaker, my pastor is the troublemaker, and, above all, God is the troublemaker." No! The real troublemakers are those who follow Satan's ways. But praise be to God, Christ has come and defeated Satan, sin, hell and death. He is the Savior. And if you believe his gospel, you will be saved.

1 Kings 18:19 "Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

ELIJAH'S REQUEST FOR FALSE PROPHETS

Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, Who eat at Jezebel's table - In the ancient near east, eating at one's table was a mark of close fellowship. Jezebel is fellowshiping with the ambassadors of darkness, the devil's men! 1 Kings 18:36 makes it clear that Elijah did all this at the command of God.

Constable points out that "the Phoenicians regarded Carmel as a sacred dwelling place of Baal. Storms with lightning and thunder were common on Mount Carmel, and Baal worshippers viewed them as manifestations of their deity. The name "Carmel" means "the garden land," and it was famous for its fertility. In the minds of many, Baal had the advantage in this contest.

Warren Wiersbe - Mount Carmel was located near the border of Israel and Phoenicia, so it was a good place for the Phoenician god Baal to meet Jehovah, the God of Israel. Elijah told Ahab to bring not only the 450 prophets of Baal but also the 400 prophets of the Asherah (Astarte), the idols that represented Baal's "wife." It seems that only the prophets of Baal showed up for the contest (1Ki 18:22, 26, 40). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Tony Merida - Mount Carmel is a mountain range of limestone and flint, containing many caves, off the Mediterranean coast, which at its highest point is 525 meters (1,724 feet). It sits near modern-day Haifa. It's a beautiful place to visit today. Davis tells us of its mention in historical documents. In Egyptian records it was called "**Holy Head**," suggesting it was a sanctuary. An Assyrian king dubbed it "the mountain of Baal of the promontory." In our day we might call it "**Baal's Bluff**" (Davis, [1 Kings: The Wisdom And the Folly](#), 234). Therefore, this site is the selected battleground, not because it was just a great place to watch a fight but because it was a location of Baal worship. Olley summarizes, "Its location is favorable to the worship of Baal and Asherah with lush vegetation due to the headland encouraging rainfall. It was also the site of a broken down altar of the Lord (30)." (See [The Message of Kings - Page](#)

54 172) (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#)) (See also [Ten Mountains Associated with Divine Encounters](#))

Bob Utley- What a large number of fertility prophets who Jezebel fed! The prophets of Asherah are mentioned only in this verse. Only the prophets of *Ba'al* are killed in v. 40. Possibly Jezebel did not let them come to the contest.

Payne - "Jezebel was not content with a private chapel, nor with her husband's readiness to pay lip-service to Baal; she meant to dethrone the God of Israel, and make her Baal the chief deity and her faith in the official state religion." ([Kingdoms of the Lord: A History of the Hebrew Kingdoms](#))

QUESTION - [What is the significance of Mount Carmel in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - Rather than being a single mountain, Mount Carmel is actually a high, wooded mountain ridge. In the Bible, Mount Carmel is best known as the site of the [prophet Elijah's](#) dramatic showdown with 850 pagan prophets. (ED: TEXT IS NOT CLEAR THE PROPHETS OF ASHTAROTH SHOWED UP).

Carmel means "vineyard," "orchard," or "garden" and reflects the fertile beauty of Mount Carmel's picturesque slopes. The mountainous ridge starts on the Mediterranean coast in the northwest part of Israel at the south shore of the Bay of Acre. From there, the range runs southeast down to the plain of [Dothan](#). Running along the northeast side of the ridge is the [Valley of Jezreel](#). At its highest point, Mount Carmel reaches over 1,700 feet above sea level.

Most notably, Mount Carmel is the scene of a spectacular head-to-head confrontation between the false prophets of Baal and [Asherah](#) and the One True God of Israel. The episode takes place during one of Israel's worst times of crisis under King Ahab. To please his wife, [Jezebel, Ahab](#) set up an altar to Baal at the top of Mount Carmel. [Baal](#), the favorite deity of Jezebel, was reputed to be the god of rain and vegetation.

In 1 Kings 17:1–24, Elijah the Tishbite enters the story as an emissary of the Lord. The prophet confronts Ahab and predicts a drought in response to Ahab and Jezebel's unholy devotion to Baal. When the end of the drought neared, to prove that the Lord God was the only true God, Elijah proposes a contest. All of Israel was summoned to Mount Carmel to witness the confrontation between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). The match would show whose god was able to send fire from heaven to consume their offerings. The prophets of Baal prayed all day and cut themselves violently to get Baal's attention, but no one answered (verses 28–29).

By evening it was Elijah's turn. He rebuilt the ruined altar of God that existed on Mount Carmel. He set the offering on top of the wood and then drenched the whole thing with water and prayed aloud: "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. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again" (1 Kings 18:36–37). God answered with a spectacular display of fire from heaven, consuming the offering, licking up the sodden wood as well as every drop of water that had been poured over the altar. Even the rocks of the altar were consumed. The people fell on their faces, proclaiming, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God" (1 Kings 18:39). Elijah then ordered the people to execute the 850 false prophets according to the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 13).

It seems that the [prophet Elisha](#) later used Mount Carmel as a home base (2 Kings 4:25). From ancient times, Mount Carmel has been regarded as a holy place and a symbol of beauty and fertility. In the tribal divisions, Mount Carmel was part of the territory of (western) Manasseh. Like the region of upper Galilee, Mount Carmel received plentiful rainfall in biblical times, producing lush, beautiful forests and rich grasslands on the lower slopes suitable for grazing. Isaiah associates God's glorious restoration of redeemed humanity with the "splendor of Carmel" (Isaiah 35:2). Solomon compares the head of his beloved with the beauty and nobility of Mount Carmel (Song of Solomon 7:5).

James Smith - ELIJAH ON CARMEL; OR, FAITH VINDICATED 1 KINGS 18:19–39

There are only two religions: (1) The Religion of Man; (2) The Religion of God. Man's religion may have much that is attractive and pleasing to men, but it lacks power and authority. It is a lifeless body. The religion of God is attested as Divine by miraculous fire from Heaven in answer to believing prayer (1Ki 18:37; Acts 2:3). We have here—

I. The Religion of Form and its Followers.

1. THEY ARE MANY. "Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty" (1Ki 18:22). A depraved religion will always be popular with a depraved humanity (Matt. 27:21). The proverb, "Vox populi, vox Dei," is in spiritual matters untrue (Matt. 7:13).
2. THEY ARE EARNEST. They cried aloud and cut themselves with knives," etc. (1Ki 18:28). Zeal, but not

according to knowledge (Rom. 10:3), is like a steam-engine on the wrong track. Good misdirected.

3. THEY ARE DECEIVED. "Neither was there voice, nor any to answer" (1Ki 18:29). The favour and power of God is not to be purchased with self-effort (Titus 3:5; Acts 8:20). The fire of the heavenly baptism will not come upon us by leaping upon the altar and cutting ourselves (1 Cor. 13:3), it is by faith (Gal. 3:14; John 7:38, 39).

II. The Religion of God and His Worshipers. It cannot be said of Christians that they worship they know not what (1 John 5:20).

1. THEY are COMPARATIVELY FEW. "I only remain" (1Ki 18:22). Here is but one against four hundred and fifty, but that one is not Elijah, but God, whom Elijah trusted. The battle is the Lord's (read 1 John 4:4).

2. THEY ARE DELIBERATELY FAITHFUL. "Come near unto Me." See the calmness of Elijah. No "leaping and cutting" with him. He makes not haste, because he believes in God (Isa. 28:16). Oh, for such faith (James 5:17).

3. THEY ARE DIVINELY FAVOURED. "Then the fire of the Lord fell" (v. 38). Our God is a consuming fire. When He comes He consumes the stony heart, and licks up the dust of sin (Matt. 3:11, 12).

III. The Call of the Prophet for Decision. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1Ki 18:21). Notice—

1. THAT THERE ARE TWO OPINIONS. God's and man's. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." They are as wide apart as light and darkness. Which do you follow? (See Psalm 139:17).

2. THAT THERE ARE MANY WHO HALT BETWEEN THEM. The choice is between the "wisdom of man" and the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:19–30), between sin unto death and obedience unto righteousness (Rom. 6:16).

3. THAT THEY ONLY ARE SAFE WHO DECIDE FOR GOD. When the people saw it they said, "The Lord, He is God," but the prophets were slain at the brook (v. 39). What are the results of seeing the "goodness and severity of God" at the Cross of Christ?

Bob Gass - On the Way to Carmel

Now bring all the people ... to Mount Carmel. (1 Kings 18:19, TLB)

Elijah's destiny was to stand on Mount Carmel and call down fire out of heaven. But he could only get there progressively—for that's how God works. First, God sent him to a brook at Cherith, which means "covenants." At some point in your spiritual journey, you've got to learn that your God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. To do it, He'll dry up rivers, make axe heads swim, and order fish into a net, but He'll keep His promise to you, come what may. Note, God told Elijah, "... I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (1 Kings 17:4). Had he gone anywhere else, God wouldn't have met his need, for a covenant is two-sided. You must fulfill your part! Take a moment and ask yourself honestly, "Have I? Am I where God wants me to be?"

Next God sent Elijah to Azrephath saying, "... I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee" (1 Kings 17:9). God uses ravens and widows and whatever He likes—so stop trying to second-guess Him. One day, Sarah Utterbach said to me, "Bob, since your steps are already ordered of the Lord, why are you trying to figure it out?" (See Psalm 37:23.) Good question! Zarephath means "the melting pot." It's where metal was refined. If you're "going through the fire" today, rejoice. God's just separating the gold from the impurities in your character.

HANG IN THERE! WHEN YOU'VE PASSED THE TESTS AT CHERITH AND ZAREPHATH, THEN YOU'LL BE READY TO GO TO MOUNT CARMEL.

James Smith - ELIJAH ON CARMEL; or, Faith Vindicated, 1 Kings 18:19-39

There are only two religions: (1) The Religion of Man; (2) The Religion of God. Man's religion may have much that is attractive and pleasing to men, but it lacks power and authority. It is a lifeless body. The religion of God is attested as Divine by miraculous fire from Heaven in answer to believing prayer (v. 37; Acts 2:3). We have here—

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1 Kings 18:20 So Ahab sent [a message] among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

- brought the prophets together: 1Ki 22:9



Mt Carmel North
Click to Enlarge

AHAB CALLS A CONVENTION

So - Term of conclusion. This indicates Ahab is "game" for Elijah's request, but apparently he does not yet clearly understand what would soon transpire. Obviously he has confidence in his wife's bevy of false prophets to be able to "hold their own" against a single prophet of God. Remember, that when a person is deceived, like Ahab clearly was, by definition of the word "deceived," they do not actually know they are deceived!

Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel- So apparently there were representatives from all 10 tribes of Israel present. This would assure that the news that Yahweh was the true God would be disseminated throughout the land.

Spurgeon - Mark the holy boldness of Elijah, and how it awed the king. Elijah was far more royal than Ahab, for faith made him a king before the Lord. Be it ours to act in the same heroic spirit, never fearing the face of man, but facing the Lord's foes with unflinching valour. So shall we win the "well done, good and faithful servant," which should be the highest object of our ambition.

F B Meyer - See, with what malignant glances his every movement is watched by the priests. No tiger ever watched its victim more fiercely! If they may have their way, he will never touch yonder plain again.

Spurgeon - That lone man, of heroic soul, stemmed the fearful torrent of idolatry, and like a rock in mid-current, firmly stood his ground. He, alone and single-handed, was more than a match for all the priests of the palace and the groves, even as one lion scatters a flock of sheep....The whole band of eight hundred and fifty priests, in all their gaudy attire, gathered upon the mountain's brow to confront the one lone prophet of the living God.

John Schultz: We are not told how much time elapsed between Elijah's private meeting with King Ahab and the gathering on Mount Carmel. It must have taken several weeks to organize a large meeting like that, where not only the Baal priests, but most of the people of the kingdom gathered.

Peter Pett: In what follows we gather that there was at Mount Carmel, a long mountain ridge stretching out into the sea, divided by many ravines, a true sanctuary dedicated to YHWH which had been allowed to fall into disuse. There was also there a sanctuary and altar of Baal which were flourishing, no doubt encouraged by Jezebel. Mount Carmel with its periodic rains and storms, which regularly included lightning, together with its abundant fruitfulness, would be very suitable as a site for Baal worship. (The lightning dancing around the hills is a spectacular feature of life in Palestine). It may have been partly this contrast in the sanctuaries that made Elijah choose Mount Carmel, for it was his purpose to illustrate the revival of Yahwism, and this site on the borders of Israel and Phoenicia, revered by all, was a good place to do it. There is also a good possibility that it was because he knew that the true prophets of YHWH were hiding in the caves there.

Hebrews 11:32-34; 1 Kings 18:1-40

How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him. - 1 Kings 18:20

TODAY IN THE WORD

Pioneer missionary Robert Moffatt served for years in South Africa without seeing any converts. But when friends in England wrote to ask Moffatt what they could send him as a gift, he replied that he wanted a Communion set. The friends were surprised, knowing the difficult struggle Moffatt was having, but they sent him the set anyway. By the time it arrived, enough people had come to Christ under Moffatt's ministry that he was able to hold a Communion service.

There's a certain kind of confidence that comes when you're living by faith in the God "who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). By faith, Robert Moffatt could see those first converts as if they were already there.

God's prophets spoke and acted with the same confidence. Of all the people and events mentioned in today's verses, we chose one of the Bible's best-known examples of the confidence that faith produces. Elijah served during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, arguably the darkest period in Israel's early history.

These two were so fearsome in their opposition to God that anyone with less fire and courage than Elijah might not have been able to stand against them. When Ahab and Jezebel filled the land with idolatry and supported a total of 850 false prophets, Elijah stood in their path to stop the madness and call the people back to God.

Elijah was not afraid of Ahab, even though the king's servant Obadiah reminded Elijah that Ahab could order anyone killed any time he wanted. Elijah's confidence was not self-focused but anchored in the Lord (v. 15), which explains why he called for the contest on Mount Carmel with absolute assurance that God would answer and glorify His name.

Allen Ross - The Spiritual Showdown on Mount Carmel"

Mount Carmel is a range of mountains not one mountain. It was an area that was known for its rich growth because it received a great deal of rain. This fact is reflected in the name; "Carmel" probably means "the vineyard of God," a way of saying it was the richest vineyard in the land.

It is no surprise, then, that the worshipers of Baal had made this mountain a holy mountain. The ancient Canaanites designated any fruitful region or any oasis in the wilderness as a holy place, because to them it could only be well-watered and fruitful if their gods were there. Baal was in their religion the storm god. Little statues of Baal show him with a lightning bolt in one hand like a javelin. Whenever it rained, they would proclaim that that was Baal opening the windows of heaven. Their whole religious system was oriented to the continuation of the cycle of life, so that every year they would have the rains and every year they would have the harvests.

Baal worship was the religion of ancient Canaan, but in the time of the Israelite kingdoms it was confined more to Phoenicia in the north—that is until Jezebel brought it in and tried to make it the state religion. Mount Carmel is pretty close to the border between Israel and Phoenicia, which lay just north across the valley. This mountain, because of its association with Canaanite worship, and because of its location on the religious border, was ideal for the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

Knowing what the worshipers of Baal believed helps us to understand the challenge. If anyone should be able to bring fire from heaven, it should be this lightning wielding storm god called Baal. And so Elijah challenged them on that very point. But of course after cavorting all day around the altar the priests of Baal were unable to rouse Baal to the task. Elijah taunted them with prods about Baal's being on a trip, or musing—expressions actually found in their literature to explain Baal's being unavailable.

But finally Elijah prayed his simple prayer, and the fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the altar, the water in the trough, and the dust. His prayer was simply that Yahweh show everyone that He is the true God. And down through the ages these supernatural interventions in the lives of believers have likewise witnessed to the truth of the faith. They may be answers to prayer, marvelous conversions, divine protection and provision, or a host of other things. But they have regularly reversed the drift away from the faith by people easily influenced with the pull of beliefs and arguments from the world. The church must be demonstrating to the world that the Lord is God; and they must do this by showing how the Lord is at work in their midst in amazing ways.

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

KJV 1 Kings 18:21 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.

BGT 1 Kings 18:21 κα προσγαγεν Ηλιου πρς πντας κα επεν ατο ς Ηλιου ως πτε με ς χωλανε τε π μφοτραις τα ς γναις ε σπιν κ ριος θε ς πορε εσθε π σω α το ε δ Βααλ α τ ς πορε εσθε π σω α το κα ο κ πεκρθη λα ς λ γον

LXE 1 Kings 18:21 And Eliu drew near to them all: and Eliu said to them, How long wilt ye halt on both feet? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him. And the people answered not a word.

NET 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision? If the LORD is the true God, then follow him, but if Baal is, follow him!" But the people did not say a word.

CSB 1 Kings 18:21 Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him. But if Baal, follow him." But the people didn't answer him a word.

ESV 1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word.

NIV 1 Kings 18:21 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.

NLT 1 Kings 18:21 Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

NRS 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him a word.

NJB 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah stepped out in front of all the people. 'How long', he said, 'do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other? If Yahweh is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him.' But the people had nothing to say.

NAB 1 Kings 18:21 Elijah appealed to all the people and said, "How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him." The people, however, did not answer him.

YLT 1 Kings 18:21 and Elijah cometh nigh unto all the people, and saith, 'Till when are ye leaping on the two branches? -- if Jehovah is God, go after Him; and if Baal, go after him;' and the people have not answered him a word.

- **How long will you hesitate:** De 4:35 2Ki 17:41 Zep 1:5 Mt 6:24 Lu 6:13 Ro 6:16-22 1Co 10:21,22 2Co 6:14-16 Rev 3:15,16
- **If the LORD is God:** 1Ki 18:39 Ex 5:1,2 Jos 24:15,23,24 1Sa 7:3 1Ch 17:26 2Ch 33:13 Ps 100:3
- **But the people did not answer him a word:** Ge 24:50 44:16 Job 40:4,5 Mt 22:12,34,36 Ro 3:19 6:21

- James Hastings 16 page message on [1 Kings 18:21 Halting Between Two Opinions \(16 pages\)](#)

THE KEY QUESTION WHO WILL YOU WORSHIP?

Elijah came near to all the people - The people presumably refers to lay Israelites who had gathered for the "Super Bowl" confrontation of Jezebel's prophets and God's prophet.

and said, "How long will you hesitate ([pasach](#)) between two opinions? - Heb "How long are you going to limp around on two crutches?" NET = "How long are you going to be paralyzed by indecision?" ESV = "How long will you go limping between two different opinions?" NJB = "Do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other?" Septuagint = How long wilt ye halt on both feet?" What is Elijah implying? He is clearly implying that the people are engaging in syncretistic worship of false gods and the true and living God.

THOUGHT - Those who limp between two opinions never fall on their knees in humble adoration of Yahweh. Uncertainty will never lead you to deep intimacy. Divided affections will never lead you into devoted worship to God. Who is God? If Yahweh is God, then worship Him. ([Tony Merida](#))

John Olley - Elijah portrays the people's situation picturesquely. 'Limp' (NRSV) is preferable to waver (NIV, v. 21): they are hobbling around or 'hopping' (NJPSV), either at the fork of a road trying to go both directions, or perhaps on crutches. The same word is used of the prophets: 'they limped about the altar' (v. 26; NIV danced)...Elijah's rhetorical question may be a deliberate wordplay: 'How long will you go limping (pōsēḥîm) with two different opinions (ḥassē'ippîm)?' (cf. Sweeney, p. 227). The word translated 'opinions' occurs only here and related words suggest a translation 'crutches' (HALOT; Gray, p. 396; DeVries, p. 228). (See [The Message of Kings - Page 172](#))

Spurgeon on how long - "How many more sermons do you want? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many toilings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? How long halt ye between two opinions?"

MacArthur on hesitate ([pasach](#)) between two opinions - Lit. "limp along on or between two twigs." Israel had not totally rejected the Lord, but was seeking to combine worship of Him with the worship of Baal. The issue posed by Elijah was that Israel had to choose who was God, the Lord or Baal, and then serve God wholeheartedly. (See [MacArthur Study Bible, 2nd Edition](#))

Spurgeon - In silent awe the crowd listened to the one undaunted man of God, as he offered them the great choice of God or Baal, and proposed by one grand test to prove which was truly God.

Adam Clarke had a slightly different understanding: "Literally, 'How long hop ye about upon two boughs?' This is a metaphor taken from birds hopping about from bough to bough, not knowing on which to settle."

If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him- Elijah is not forcing Yahweh on anyone. He is saying you each need to make your personal choice, but you cannot follow both. Jesus gave a similar warning in the Sermon on the Mount declaring "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Mt 6:24+)

One is reminded of some of Joshua's last words to Israel -

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15+)

Amy Carmichael, "Everyday we live, we have to choose whether we should follow in the way of Ahab or of Elijah."

Spurgeon explained "I know you are not decided in opinion, because you are *not decided in practice*. If God be God, *follow* him; if Baal, *follow* him. You are not decided in practice."

B. S. Childs suggests that "The issue is not that Israel wanted to reject Yahweh and choose Baal, but rather to serve them both. Elijah called for an either/or decision." (**ED**: While that may be true clearly Jezebel wanted to reject Yahweh and she was the de facto leader over spineless Ahab).

But the people did not answer him a word- Their silence is telling and it was not "golden!" Clearly their hearts were divided between Jehovah and Baal.

THOUGHT - Isn't that the temptation/test for all of us? Our fallen flesh continually, daily entices us to bow down to the idols of this world (1Pe 2:11b+) and God's Word and Spirit draw us toward the true God. To whom have you been drawn predominantly (not perfectly) this past week? If you are having difficulty answering this question, you might consider sincerely Psalm 139:23-24 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

Warren Wiersbe - Like Moses (Ex. 32:26) and Joshua (Josh. 24:15) before him, Elijah called for a definite decision on their part, but the people were speechless. Was this because of their guilt (Rom. 3:19) or because they first wanted to see what would happen next? They were weak people, without true conviction. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

John Olley makes a very interesting application of this passage - In many places today Christian worship is practised alongside traditional rituals or contact with shamans or other spirit mediums, especially in times of sickness or trouble. In the secularised West the combination may be more subtle: the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is seen as important in church and family life, but somehow in the worlds of business, politics, international conflict or religious diversity different rules apply: one must follow 'the way of business' or 'market forces'; 'love of enemies' is 'unrealistic'; God 'does not belong' in business or politics; faith 'belongs to your private life'. Elijah challenges every generation: if Yahweh is the only God, he is God of every sphere of life in every place in every age—but that has not been practised in daily life. It is no surprise that the people said nothing (v. 21). (See [The Message of Kings - Page 172](#))

Spurgeon - How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him. "It was a day to be remembered when the multitudes of Israel were assembled at the foot of Carmel and when the solitary prophet of the Lord came forth to defy the 450 priests of the false god. We have on that hill of Carmel and along the plain three kinds of persons. We have first the devoted servant of Jehovah, a solitary prophet. We have, on the other hand, the decided servants of the evil one, the 450 prophets of Baal. But the vast mass of that day belonged to a third class—those who had not determined whether to fully worship Jehovah, the God of their fathers, or Baal, the god of Jezebel. Their ancient traditions led them to fear Jehovah, but their interest at court led them to bow before Baal. Many of them were secret and halfhearted followers of Jehovah while they were the public worshipers of Baal. Elijah's discourse was directed to this third group. Most of the people who were before him thought Jehovah was God and Baal was God, too. For this reason the worship of both was consistent. "I will build in my house," said one of them, "an altar for Jehovah here and an altar for Baal there. I am of one opinion; I believe them both to be God." "No, no," said Elijah, "it cannot be so! They are two and must be two." Many today say, "I am worldly but I am religious, too!" It can't be done; they are distinct and separate. If God is God, serve him and do it thoroughly. But if this world is god, serve it and make no profession of religion. "No one can serve two masters" (Mt 6:24). How many respectable churchgoers think they can be covetous and grasping in business and grind the faces of the poor and yet be saints. How many women received into church fellowship are found to be full of wrath and bitterness—slaves of mischief and of sin—slanderers and busybodies. If we make a profession to be a Christian, we must be one! But if we are not Christian, we must not pretend to be. If we love the world, then let's love it, but let's cast off the mask and not be hypocrites. The double-minded person, who wears two faces, is the most despicable because he is not honest enough to go through with what he professes.

Hesitate ([06452](#)) [pasach](#) means to leap, to pass over, to halt, to limp, to be lame. Before Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, he confronted the Israelites for their syncretism. He asked them how long they would bounce back and forth between the Lord and Baal (1 Ki. 18:21). Then during Elijah's confrontation, the prophets of Baal began to dance on the altar that they had constructed (1 Ki. 18:26). This was probably some sort of cultic dance performed as part of the sacrifice ritual. Pasach is used with the sense of to limp in 2 Sam. 4:4 and 1 Ki. 18:21 and the sense of to leap in 1 Ki. 18:26

Note the same verb is behind pesah, 'Passover', describing Yahweh's 'passing over' (Exod. 12:13, 27) and another form describes 'crippled' Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4).

Bob Utley says [pasach](#) "means "to limp" (2Sa 4:4). It can denote hesitation between two options, as here a type of ritual fertility dance, v. 26 (NIDOTTE, V2, 45,46) NIDOTTE (V3, 275-641), suggests crutches made from tree limbs

QUESTION - [What is the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - The account of [Elijah](#) and the prophets of Baal is recorded in 1 Kings 18. After Israel had gone more than three years without rain as a judgment for their idolatry, the prophet Elijah confronts the evil king Ahab and challenges him to a spiritual showdown. The king was to have all Israel gather at Mt. Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of the false god [Baal](#) and the 400 prophets of the false goddess [Asherah](#) (verse 19).

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah said to the people of Israel, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but

if Baal is God, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The people remained noncommittal at that point. Elijah then challenged the prophets of Baal to prepare a bull as an offering for their god—Elijah would do the same—with this catch: they could light no fire on their altar. The God who answered with fire from the sky would be considered the true God (verses 22–25).

The people agreed that this was a good plan, and the prophets of Baal went first. The pagan prophets cried out and danced around their altar from morning till noon with no answer from Baal. Elijah began to mock them, saying, "Shout louder! . . . Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27).

So the prophets of Baal "shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice" (1 Kings 18:28–29). Despite hours of effort, nothing happened. The historian's comment hints at the emptiness of Baal-worship: "There was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention" (verse 29).

Elijah then called the people to him as he repaired the altar of the Lord. He used twelve stones and dug a trench around the altar. He then placed wood on the altar and laid the cut pieces of the bull on it. Elijah then had the people douse the altar with twelve large jars of water. The water soaked the sacrifice and the wood and filled the trench (1 Kings 18:30–35).

Once the sacrifice was ready, Elijah 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. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again" (1 Kings 18:36–37). Then God did what Baal could never do: the fire of the LORD fell from heaven and consumed the burnt offering *and* the wood *and* the stones *and* the dust, "and also licked up the water in the trench" (verse 38). The people of Israel bowed down and declared the Lord as God (verse 39).

Elijah then commanded the people to put the prophets of Baal to death, in keeping with God's command in Exodus 22:20. Following this event, the Lord finally ended the drought and sent rain upon the land (1 Kings 18:45).

The miraculous event of fire from heaven was an answer to the prayer of Elijah. God was seeking to turn the hearts of His people back to Himself. He used a time of drought to get their attention and then, through His prophet, performed a dramatic miracle right before their eyes. No one who witnessed that event doubted that the Lord was God and that Baal was a powerless wannabe. The repentance of the Israelites was soon followed by God's provision of rain.

James teaches us that "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16), and he uses Elijah's prayer life as a case in point: "Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17–18).

F B Meyer - TAKING SIDES

"Who is on the Lord's side!"-- Ex 32:26.

"How long halt ye between two opinions! If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him. And the people answered him not a word."-- 1Ki 18:21.

MOSES AND Elijah uttered practically the same call, which is always being spoken to each fresh generation. As soon as we can think for ourselves, we are accosted by the challenge of the Divine Voice- Art thou for Me or against Me? Which side dost thou take? From the lips of our blessed Lord comes the additional challenge, which compels us to face the alternative as one that may not be trifled with or put aside: "He that is not with Me is against Me."

How long halt ye between two opinions? We must take one side or the other. When the division-bell rings in the House of Commons, the Ayes must go to the right and the Noes to the left. A man must choose which he will take! If Jehovah, If Baal, We cannot be neutral without being stultified.

Who, then, is prepared to take sides, and to come out to Christ, without the camp, bearing His reproach? (Heb 13:13). To be on the Lord's side is to acknowledge Him as our King as well as Saviour. It is to render to Him our reverence, obedience, love and devotion. It is to abandon all refuges and resorts to our own works and ways, and to strive for heart, mind, and life to be assimilated to His will and character. This is what our Saviour expects and asks of each of us! We are to belong wholly to God, to give Him all that we are capable of giving, to choose His cause, and to find in Him the beginning and ending, the first and last.

Jesus Christ possesses an unimpeachable and absolute right over us--the right of Creator, "it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves"; the right of Benefactor, not only in the realm of temporal but of spiritual existence; the right of Redeemer, and this is the greatest claim of all.

Our decision demands declaration. Christ will not have His followers live in secret. In the days in which we live, when there are so

many temptations to compromise between the disciples of Jesus and the votaries of the world, there is overwhelming reason why we should take His side. And in that great day, He will take our side and acknowledge us before His Father and the Holy Angels!

PRAYER

O Lord, we acknowledge Thy dominion over us; our life, our death, our soul and body, all belong to Thee. Grant that we may willingly consecrate them all to Thee, and use them in Thy service. AMEN.

Vance Havner - SPECTATORS

And the people answered him not a word.... 1 Kings 18:21.

And sitting down they watched him there.... Matthew 27:36.

When Elijah called the priests of Baal and the people of Israel to a showdown between God and Baal, they refused to take a stand. At Calvary, they crucified my Lord and then they watched Him die. Whether Carmel or Calvary, we have set forth here that spectatoritis is the sin of both country and church today. We are a nation of onlookers, a grandstand generation in the stadium, at the show, at home watching television. The church has become a professional pulpitism financed by lay spectators. Everything is geared to showmanship and entertainment that involves no commitment. It is easier to dramatize than to duplicate so what was once an experience has become a performance. We are playactors which is of course another way of saying hypocrites.

Vance Havner - Stand Up and Be Counted!

And the people answered him not a word. 1 Kings 18:21.

There were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knees to Baal. There were four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. They could be counted, but Elijah's audience was noncommittal. They did not declare themselves. They were spectators, onlookers.

Too many Christians are in the grandstand when they should be on the team. Too many are snug at home reading communiques from the front instead of going to the battle.

Too many in our meetings are spectators. They are great onlookers. They get used to it at the movies and in the stadium, and they come to church to be entertained.

But we are all participants in eternal issues, whether we know it or not. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." We cannot play hands off and answer not a word.

"The Lord knoweth them that are his," but He wants us to stand up and be counted

Round Toes or Square Toes?

President Ronald Reagan learned the need for decision making early in his life. A kindly aunt had taken him to a cobbler to have a pair of shoes custom-made for him. The shoemaker asked, "Do you want a round toe or a square toe?" Young Ronald hemmed and hawed, so the cobbler said, "Come back in a day or two and tell me what you want."

A few days later the cobbler saw young Reagan on the street and asked what he had decided about the shoes. "I haven't made up my mind," Reagan answered.

"Very well," said the cobbler. "Your shoes will be ready tomorrow." When Reagan got the shoes, one had a round toe and the other a square toe.

Says Reagan, "Looking at those shoes every day taught me a lesson. If you don't make your own decisions, somebody else makes them for you."

Vance Havner - Elijah's Decision Showdown on Carmel

By Elijah's Decision I mean the choice he called upon Israel to make:

"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." (See 1 Kings 18:21.)

Elijah, that solitary prophet of God, broke out of the woods to announce three years of dry weather. When he appeared again, famine was raging in Samaria. It had rained on neither the just nor the unjust. In the eighteenth chapter of First Kings, rain is promised in verse 1 and provided in verse 45, but between those verses, preparation was made for showers of blessing. Rain is a symbol of the favor of God in revival. Shut up heaven that there be no rain (see Deuteronomy 11:17) is a figure of spiritual drought. We live in such a drought today. There is a famine of the hearing of the words of the Lord, partly because it cannot be heard and partly because so many will not hear it. The drama on Mount Carmel sets before us a pattern for spiritual revival. In order to

understand that pattern, we must study the background and the characters that move upon this scene.

First, there was that rugged man of God, Elijah. Spiritual awakenings usually are spearheaded by a prophet. Elijah was no superman; he was subject to the same passions as we are, but he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and in that, he outstrips us. He could pray down fire or water. We need both today, the fire of the Spirit and showers of revival. He got ready for his mission by the brook Cherith (see 1 Kings 17:3) as did Paul in Arabia (see Galatians 1:17). Every man of God needs a session by the brook before going into battle.

Then there were Ahab, the weakling, and the notorious Jezebel. (See 1 Kings 16:29-33; 17:1-6; 18:4, 13.) They set up the worship of Baal in Israel, and through Athaliah, they did the same in Judah. Jezebel was one of the most wicked women on record. She persecuted the prophets of the Lord and frightened even the sturdy Elijah; so that he took off for the wilderness. In Revelation 2:18-23, we read of another Jezebel, in the church at Thyatira. The church is still plagued with her kind. She would mix the church with the world, join the altar of Jehovah with the altar of Baal, the mystery of godliness with the mystery of lawlessness. She hates prophets, and when Elijah calls for a showdown on Carmel, she wants to murder him on the spot. She teaches and seduces Christians to commit spiritual adultery, forgetting that they are married to Christ, espoused to one spiritual husband. Our Lord condemned the church for suffering—tolerating—Jezebel. We do the same today, and God judges us as much by what we allow as by what we practice. We need a prophet to call the church to decision between Jehovah and Baal, between Christ and Belial.

On the way to meet Ahab, Elijah found Obadiah, who was a good man but lined up with Ahab looking for grass, when he should have been with Elijah praying for rain. It is true that Obadiah hid one hundred prophets in a cave, but prophets that must be hidden in a cave probably would not be worth much in broad daylight! Obadiah was a religious politician trying to work both sides of the street. If Israel had turned to God, it would not have been necessary to send out grass-hunting expeditions. It is not necessary to look for grass when God sends rain, but there will be no showers, until first there is a showdown. There is spiritual famine today and some well-meaning church leaders are trying to alleviate the drought by social reforms and government projects under church auspices. We are oversupplied with Obadiahs, but are woefully short on prophets who can stand on Carmel and call God's people to repentance. A little grass may be discovered now and then by Obadiah's foragers, but it is not God's way to relieve drought and famine. We have no business entangling ourselves with the affairs of this life and becoming infected with the futile enthusiasms of this age. Glorified socialism under the banner of the church is not the answer to our ills today. It is more popular to stand in with the powers that be and team up with Ahab instead of taking one's place with lonely Elijah. Today church convocations spend much of their time trying to work out a grass-hunting program when every one of them ought to turn into a showdown on Carmel, praying down fire and water from heaven. God has plainly told us that if He withholds rain, He will send showers of blessing when His people humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways.

The difference between Obadiah and Elijah was this Obadiah tried to remedy the situation from within the establishment; Elijah sought to change it from without. Obadiah lacked conviction and courage, for otherwise he would never have had a job in Ahab's administration. He reminds us of Lot in Sodom. Both men were vexed and shocked by what they saw—Obadiah in Samaria and Lot in Sodom—but neither of them changed the situation. Dr. F. B. Meyer said: "There is not a single hero or saint whose name sparkles on the inspired page, who moved his times from within: all, without exception, have raised the cry, 'Let us go forth without the camp.'" They tell us today, "Stay in the world, join its clubs, attend its festivities, copy its styles and fashions." That is like a good woman marrying a bad man in order to reform him. The man who joins the world to level it up will find himself leveled down. The church that marries the world becomes worldly instead of making the world become Christian. The times do not need an Obadiah, but an Elijah, to confront Ahab and call for a showdown on Carmel. Archimedes said he could move the earth if he had somewhere to stand. Men who have moved the world have not done it from within: their lever was rested on a fulcrum without.

"And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? 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" (1 Kings 18:17, 18). That put the shoe on the right foot; yet Elijah was a troubler of Israel, one in that noble succession of disturbers of the peace who, through the ages, have kept nations off the rocks and God's people from slumbering their time away. They have aroused sanctuary sleepers, given wicked rulers insomnia, and brought discomfort to the palaces of the mighty. How we need troublers of Israel today! William Barclay says: "The settled ministry began to resent the intrusion of these wandering prophets who often disturbed their congregations." Amos was not chummy with Jeroboam II. John the Baptist was not a guest in Herod's palace. Paul was a prisoner in Caesar's jail, but not Caesar's prisoner!

Ahab was the troublemaker, but Elijah was the troubleshooter. Big business employs such men to look out for bugs and breakdowns. God has such men in the church. They have an instinct for locating trouble and a genius for exposing it. Naturally, they are not popular. It is much more pleasant to be a Gamaliel (see Acts 5:34-36) keeping everything quiet in Jerusalem than to be a Paul exceedingly troubling Philippi (see 1 Thessalonians 2:2). Such men play havoc with the serenity school and irritate the tranquilizers. Just when false prophets of peaceful coexistence have lulled everybody to rest, at ease in Zion, the prophet blasts the neighborhood with a siren that cries aloud and spares not.

When Elijah called for a decision, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" the people answered him not a word. Whether from fear of Ahab and Jezebel, because they would not renounce their idols, or they were waiting to see how this showdown on Carmel turned out, they were a fifth-amendment, noncommittal crowd who would not take a stand. It reminds us of the crowd at our Lord's Crucifixion. We read in Matthew 27:36, "And sitting down they watched him there." Imagine sitting as if at a circus or play, watching the Son of God die for the sins of the world! During the French Revolution some women took their knitting to the guillotines and sat watching the beheadings, but that is nothing compared to the spectators at the cross. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Yes, we were all there; we had a hand in it; we are not onlookers. Too often church congregations sit on Sunday morning as if to watch a performance, and when the preacher calls for decision, they answer not a word. Spectatoritis, whether at Carmel or Calvary or anywhere else, is despicable in the sight of God.

We are beset by neutralism, drugged by moral inertia, immobilized by spiritual paralysis. It is a strange age trying to live in a third dimension as though there were a no-man's-land between right and wrong, heaven and hell. There will never be revival as long as the church avoids a showdown, merges black and white into grey, sets up the altar of Baal beside the altar of Jehovah, professes faith in Jesus, and tolerates Jezebel.

Elijah proposed the test of fire. "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." (See 1 Kings 18:24.) Not figures and finances or fame or feelings, but fire, not a painted Pentecost, not strange fire, or stage fire, but Spirit fire. There is plenty of fire loose in the world, and much of it is not divine but demonic. There are false fires in the church and flames we have kindled in the flesh (see Isaiah 50:11). Some find it difficult to determine which fire is from heaven and which is from hell. Satan imitates the work of God, but the counterfeit must not frighten us away from the true. The supreme test is the fire test. The God who answers by fire, let Him be God!

Elijah repaired the altar of God that was broken down. There never was a revival that did not begin the rebuilding of broken altars of consecration, of family altars, of altars of praise and testimony. Stained glass windows, robed choirs, eloquence in the pulpit, and elegance in the pew have never deceived God. He demands truth in the inward parts, and heaven will keep silent until we approach Him with rebuilt altars.

There must be sacrifice upon those altars—not a sacrifice for sin, for that has been offered once for all. There must be the sacrifice of penitence: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17). How little of that do we see in our dry-eyed churches! There must be the sacrifice of person: Present your bodies a living sacrifice (see Romans 12:1). The Macedonians first gave themselves unto the Lord. A little boy had no money to give to church, but he wrote upon a slip of paper, "I give myself" and put that on the plate. And that was the biggest gift that morning!

Lord Jesus, look down from Thy throne in the skies
And help me to make a complete sacrifice;
I give up myself and whatever I know;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

There must be the sacrifice of praise: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15). We try to work up that sacrifice by artificial means; song leaders sweat and plead trying to bring out a song that is not there. You cannot change the order of penitence, person, praise. When God's people repent and give themselves to God they will have a song. It will be spontaneous, for what is down in the well will come up in the bucket.

Elijah poured twelve barrels of water over the altar and the offering. (See 1 Kings 18:32-34.) I have never heard anybody even mention that detail. He did not warm up the altar to make it easier for God to consume the offering. We try to help God out by fleshly devices. Elijah made it as difficult as possible; so that God would get all the glory. He wanted nobody to suspect that there was a trick about it, fire hidden somewhere. He set the stage so that God would be the only performer. Today we decorate the altar instead of drenching it, but it is only the drenched altar that God sets on fire. We need twelve barrels of water poured over most of our religious activity; then if the fire falls, it will have to be supernatural! Flesh glories in His presence and we never seem to learn that they that are in the flesh cannot please God (see Romans 8:8). If Elijah had started a little blaze of his own, God would not have touched that sacrifice. When he did what he could do and should have done and called on God in holy desperation; then the fire fell.

When everything was finally in order, Elijah prayed: "... 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." (1 Kings 18:36, 37.) Elijah was not on Carmel to demonstrate what he could do, but what God could do. We read in the next verse the fire of the Lord fell. Soon Elijah said, "There is a sound of abundance of rain." The fire and the flood! This is the divine order of revival: a prophet calling God's people back to God; a showdown with the forces of evil; the rebuilding of broken altars; the sacrifices on the altar; supplication in desperate prayer; then the fire of God's power and the flood of God's blessing!

If we ever needed that fire and that flood, now is the time. But we are not ready for a showdown on Carmel. There are too many Obadiahs. We are out for summit conferences, not confrontations; grass-hunting expeditions are the order of the day. Our great church gatherings come and go. Some good things are said, resolutions are passed, but we are operating on a business-as-usual basis in a world on fire. Some say: "We don't have time to put on a revival in our conventions." We don't have time for anything else! It is too late! Some say, "We are here to attend to business." What greater business is there than to rebuild broken altars and offer the sacrifices of penitence, person, and praise? When we do that and call on God in holy desperation, if we ever do, then the fire will fall, and there will be the sound of abundance of rain.

We are beset today with false gospels of liberalism, of secularism, of socialism under church auspices. Great denominations are deteriorating and degenerating. Some have adopted standards of morality that ought to make even infidels blush. The inspiration of God's Word is denied. The church has married the world. Social reform will not get us out of the woods. A return to theological orthodoxy is not enough; the Pharisees were orthodox and separated from the world, but they gave our Lord more trouble than all the publicans and sinners. Evangelism is not enough; the first items on God's program for the church today are repentance, confession of sin, cleansing, separation from the world, submission to Christ's Lordship, and the filling of the Spirit, but we politely dodge all that in our convocations. Elijah did not call a conference of Ahab, Jezebel, the priests of Baal, and Obadiah; he stood alone; and yet he was not alone, for seven thousand had not bowed to Baal. Today there is still a remnant and a cloud the size of a man's hand. Even Elijah ran away from the revival that started at Carmel; so it died aborning. God grant us a visitation that can withstand the threats of Jezebel!

Spurgeon - [Elijah's Appeal to the Undecided](#) (full sermon)

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: if Baal, then follow him." 1 Kings 18:21

I insist that it is your bounden duty, if you believe in God, simply because he is God, to serve him and obey him. I do not tell you it is for your advantage—it may be, I believe it is—but that I put aside from the question; I demand of you that you follow God, if you believe him to be God. If you do not think he is God; if you really think that the devil is God, then follow him; his pretended godhead shall be your plea, and you shall be consistent; but if God be God, if he made you, I demand that you serve him; if it is he who puts the breath into your nostrils, I demand that you obey him. If God be really worthy of worship, and you really think so, I demand that you either follow him, or else deny that he is God at all. Now, professor, if thou sayest that Christ's gospel is the only gospel, if thou believest in the divinity of the gospel, and puttest thy trust in Christ, I demand of thee to follow out the gospel, not merely because it will be to thy advantage, but because the gospel is divine. If thou makest a profession of being a child of God, if thou art a believer, and thinkest and believest religion is the best, the service of God most desirable, I do not come to plead with thee because of any advantage thou wouldst get by being holy; it is on this ground that I put it, that the Lord is God; and if he be God, it is thy business to serve him. If his gospel be true, and thou believest it to be true, it is thy duty to carry it out.

Four things God will not accept—hypocrisy (Luke 6:46), half-heartedness (Luke 9:59–62), double-mindedness (James 1:6–8) and lukewarmness (Revelation 3:15, 16).

John MacArthur - TWO RELIGIONS

How long will you falter between two opinions? 1 KINGS 18:21

Humanity has always had two systems of religion available. One is from God and is based on His gracious accomplishment. The other is from mankind and is based on the achievements of men and women. One is all of sovereign grace and is embraced by faith. The other is all of human works and is performed in the flesh. One flows out of a sincere heart, the other from outward hypocrisy.

Even Moses' law, though from God, was not a means of salvation. It was a means of showing people their need for salvation. "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). When Jesus came, He taught us that we are incapable in ourselves of keeping that perfect law. He made it clear that we must choose the religion of grace and faith rather than the religion of law and works. (See [Truth for Today: A Daily Touch of God's Grace - Page 235](#))

James Smith - DECISION

"HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS? IF THE LORD BE GOD, FOLLOW HIM; BUT IF BAAL, THEN FOLLOW HIM" (1 Kings 18:21).

It is sometimes needful to "halt between two opinions," if the proper course of action is not quite clear, but when the right and the wrong stands out in naked reality indecision becomes sin. It is with spiritual things, as with the temporal, the wavering and the lukewarm cannot succeed. The young man who cannot make up his mind as to what business he should follow is in danger of being

ruined. In religion, as in politics, no progress can be made, no definite testimony can be given, so long as the mind is not clear, and the will emphatic. In these, and other matters, a halting man is a useless man, worse than useless, for he is a stumbling-block to others. The scene on Mount Carmel is an object lesson on the need of instant decision for God. Elijah's call is needed now as much as then.

I. Where the People Halted. "Between two opinions." To them this simply meant—

1. **BETWEEN TWO RELIGIONS.** There were only two. The religion of Baal and that of Jehovah. The one was the product of man's darkened imagination, the other was a revelation from Heaven. The heart of man and the heart of God are the only two possible sources of religious thought. Here is the halting ground of multitudes—between the thoughts of men and the thoughts of God. To halt here is to halt—

2. **BETWEEN TWO MASTERS.** Between Baal and Jehovah, between the false and the real, between superstition and revelation, between the tyranny of ignorance and fear, and the freedom of light and truth. The one represents the prince of darkness, the other the Prince of Peace. The design of the one is to destroy, the purpose of the other is to save. His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves. Let not sin have dominion over you. There is no communion between these two masters: no fellowship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. There is no agreement between the temple of God and the house of idols. Ye cannot serve these two masters; your choice lies between them.

II. Why the People Halted. Some thing, or things, must surely have been hindering them from confessing the Lord as their God. They may have been deterred as many in our day are—

1. **BECAUSE OF THEIR NUMBER.** Their name was legion who had entered the broad road of God-rejection. It is comparatively easy to go right, or wrong, while going with the multitude, but a man is his own miserable comforter when he tries to console himself by saying, "If I am not right there are a great many like me." Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." It is poor comfort, when on a sinking ship, to know that many are perishing with you. To remain undecided for Christ because many are doing it is a sad betrayal of moral weakness. Although Baal and the groves had 850 prophets, and Jehovah only one, yet to be with Him was to be in the majority and on the side of victory and blessing.

2. **BECAUSE OF THEIR FEAR OF MAN.** Some halted, doubtless because they feared the wrath of the king. It was very different with the parents of Moses (Heb. 11:23). Ahab was the enemy of God, and the troubler of Israel. He sought to banish the worship of Jehovah out of the land, and because of him many were afraid to acknowledge the Lord. They halted, perhaps because they were convinced that the policy of Ahab and Jezebel was base and revolutionary, but they had no courage to take their stand for Jehovah. The fear of man bringeth a snare. When Luther was told that all the world was against him, he said, "Well, I am against the whole world." "Why halt ye? If the Lord be God, follow Him." Better is it to grieve and forsake the enemies of God than remain an enemy to God.

III. The Unsatisfactory Nature of such a Position. "How long halt ye?" Every moment one halts between holiness and sin, between Christ and the world, is likely to weaken the will power and reduce the life to a waste heap for God and a coming eternity. To remain undecided for God and righteousness to say the least—

1. **IT IS FOOLISH.** It is like the donkey in the fable, which died of starvation because it could not decide which of the two bundles of hay to eat first. Moses was wise when he "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Rebekah was wise when she said, "I will go." The poor Indian woman knew in whom she had believed when, after having been robbed of all her goods, she said, "I would rather die a poor Christian than a rich heathen."

2. **IT IS DANGEROUS.** Indecision has been the ruin of many. Remember Lot's wife. To decide means literally "to cut off" that which is unnecessary. Then "cut off" from that state of sin and doubt, and, like Mary, choose the better part. The undecided are always easily overcome. When Charles I., after having been defeated at the Battle of Naseby, was about to make another charge upon the troops of Cromwell, one of his courtiers caught the bridle of his horse and turned him aside from the path of honour. Charles had not the courage to rebuke him. Who would have dared to have done this with Cromwell?

Decisions, Decisions

Sometimes the decision to do nothing is wise. But you can't make a career of doing nothing. Freddie Fulcrum weighed everything too

carefully. He would say, "On the one hand... but then, on the other," and his arguments weighed out so evenly he never did anything. When Freddie died, they carved a big zero on his tombstone. If you decide to fish—fine. Or, if you decide to cut bait—fine. But if you decide to do nothing, you're not going to have fish for dinner.

Harvard Professor Harvey Cox said, "Not to decide, is to decide not to."

Vance Havner - I HAVE SET MY FACE"

For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isa. 50:7).

So wrote Isaiah concerning God's suffering servant, and when that suffering servant came to earth ". . . he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Throughout the Word of God, the heroes of faith were men who set their faces like a flint.

1. Caleb...wholly followed the Lord God" (Josh14:14).
2. Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. "
3. Elijah asked, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21).
4. Daniel "purposed in his heart" (Dan. 1:8) to be true to God.
5. Paul said: this one thing I do" (Phil. 3:13).

One of our biggest problems today is that most of our church people have never really made up their minds to follow Jesus Christ. They are like Mr. Looking-both-ways in Pilgrim's Progress, or like Lot's wife looking back toward Sodom. They are like the man in the Civil War who wore a blue coat and gray trousers, and was shot at from both sides. They are like a donkey between two bales of hay-undecided as to which to eat. They are like the son in our Lord's parable who said, I go, Sir" (Matt. 22:30), and went not. They receive the word with joy, but have no root nor depth and soon fall away. They never really make up their minds, and are like the man who was asked, "Do you have trouble making decisions?" He replied, "Yes and no."

1 Kings 18:22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

- **I alone** : 1Ki 19:10,14 20:13,32,35,38 22:6-8 Ro 11:3
- **Baal's prophets**: 1Ki 18:19,20 Mt 7:13-15 2Ti 4:3,4 2Pe 2:1-3

Then - Time phrase marking progression in a narrative.

Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men- Apparently Elijah did not know that Obadiah was a prophet and had hidden 100 prophets.

Spurgeon - Numbers are no test of right; but brave is he who dares to hold the truth, where thousands love the lie.

Warren Wiersbe - When Elijah said he was the only prophet of the Lord, he wasn't forgetting the prophets that Obadiah had hidden and protected. Rather, he was stating that he was the only one openly serving the Lord, and therefore he was outnumbered by the 450 prophets of Baal. But one with God is a majority, so the prophet had no fears. Surely the prayers of 450 zealous prophets would be heard by Baal and he would answer by sending fire from heaven! (See Lev. 9:24 and 1 Chron. 21:26.) ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

William Barnes: We already know that this is not literally the situation, although Elijah must surely have felt very much like it was an accurate summary of the case, both here and in 19:10, 14. (SEE [1-2 Kings - Page 156](#))

1 Kings 18:23 "Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it.

PREPARATION FOR THE TEST OF THE REAL GOD

Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. - In this section Elijah gives the false prophets every possible advantage, so they could have no excuses!

1 Kings 18:24 "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."

- the God who answers by fire 1Ki 18:38 Lev 9:24 Jdg 6:21 1Ch 21:26 2Ch 7:1,3
- all the people said, 2Sa 14:19
- That is a good idea Hebrew literally = "the word is good" Isa 39:8

THE PROOF OF DIVINITY IS FIRE ON SACRIFICE

Then you call on the name of your god - You here presumably is the people who had gathered to watch this battle of the gods.

Alan Carr: The whole tragedy lies in the fact that the people are even willing to consider that Baal might be real. After all the things that God had done for them, how could they stoop to the place where they would even consider a contest of this nature? Imagine them expecting God to prove Himself to them after all He had already done for them and their nation!

and I will call on the name of the LORD - Notice Elijah is careful not to say "your LORD," for he knows their divided, "syncretistic" hearts.

and the God who answers by fire, He is God." - Supernatural fire would determine who was the supernatural god! This challenge is significant because lightning which usually occurs with thunder and rain was thought to Baal's arrows. Thus Elijah is giving Baal an opportunity to act where he is strongest. Satan of course is always a counterfeit but the truth is that lightning was described as Yahweh's arrows is in 2Sa 22:15; Ps. 18:14; Ps 77:17; Ps 144:6; Hab. 3:11.

And all the people said, "That is a good idea - Elijah elicits a unanimous affirmation.

David Guzik - To put God and himself on the line before the gathered nation of Israel took a lot of faith. Elijah learned this faith over the many months of daily dependence on God, both at the Brook Cherith and at the widow's house at Zarepheth. iii. Of course, Elijah had plenty of reasons for confidence in the LORD God. First, he was following express instructions from the LORD (1 Kings 18:36). Second, he knew from the history of Israel that God could and would send fire from heaven upon a sacrifice (Judges 6:20-21 and 2 Chronicles 7:1-7).

Spurgeon - "As when a wave,
That rears itself, a wall of polished glass,
For leagues along the shore, and hangs in air,
Falls with one deafening crash, so rose the shout
Of answering acclamation from the crowd.
White-faced, with restless lips and anxious eyes,
Baal's prophets heard, their hundreds cowed and mute
Before one man. They dared not, in mere shame,
Decline the challenge."

Vance Havner - The Lesson of Carmel: God's Power

The God that answereth by fire, let him be God (1 Kings 18:24).

The great day on Carmel had all the elements of a mighty moving of God.

1. The promise of showers of blessing (v. 1).
2. The human efforts of Ahab and Obadiah to meet the need of the hour (vv. 2-16).
3. God's man who was in a sense the troubler of Israel as the disturber of a false peace (vv. 17-20).
4. The call to take a stand for God or Baal (v. 21).

5. The test of fire. Not "the God that answereth by finances or fame or feelings" but "by fire" (v. 24).
6. The repairing of broken altars (v. 30). "Then the fire of the Lord fell" (v. 38). "There is a sound of abundance of rain" (v. 41).
- Elijah prayed down both fire and water. We need both today. And we can have both. When the fire of His Spirit falls from above, the floods of His blessing are sure to follow.

1 Kings 18:25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it."

Related Passages:

1 Kings 16:30-31 Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. 31 It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.

THE RULES FOR THE TEST OF DIVINITY

So - Term of conclusion.

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it - Note the crucial instruction was NO FIRE! One can imagine the faces of the prophets of Baal! Remember this was as we say in the sports world today "sudden death" competition, for the first one to bring fire from heaven would win. And as the scenario unfolded, the ones who failed to bring fire experienced literal sudden death by sword!

Spurgeon - He knew their cunning, and that by sleight of hand they would cheat if they could; hence he said, suggestively, "but put no fire under."

Believer's Bible Commentary - The Israelites were constantly prone to pay homage to other deities, even though the Law expressly forbade it. After the settlement in Canaan, there were strong temptations to conform to the local fertility cults, in which Baal played a leading role. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of the northern kingdom did evil in the sight of God more than all before them (1Ki 16:30) because they made Baal worship official in Israel (16:31). Jezebel was not content with Baal worship as merely coexisting with the worship of Yahweh; she wanted to supplant Yahweh worship with that of the Baal cult. This involved an outright substitution -- a pagan god for the true God. Elijah solemnly protested the practice of idolatry and pagan worship in Israel. He proclaimed that Yahweh was still to be the God of Israel, and vindicated this claim by means of several dramatic events recorded in the Book of 1 Kings.

1 Kings 18:26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.

- **from morning:** Mt 6:7
- **no voice:** 1Ki 18:24 Ps 115:4-8 135:15-20 Isa 37:38 44:17 45:20 Jer 10:5 Da 5:23 Hab 2:18 1Co 8:4 10:19,20 12:2
- **leaped upon the altar:** Zep 1:9

DESPERATE ATTEMPTS OF FALSE PROPHETS

Then - Time phrase marking progression in a narrative.

They took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." - Elijah makes sure the false prophets cannot say "You did not give us enough time to call on Baal."

But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made- No voice or answer because Baal was not a god but a figment of their fallen imaginations (see the [pathogenesis](#) of idols in Ro 1:22-25+).

Spurgeon - They multiplied their litanies and genuflections; they exhausted their whole round of performances, but the sun-god lent them not a spark of his fires.

Paul Apple sums up the scene and advantages of the Baal priests...

- You have first crack at choosing the ox you want to use
- You have the advantage of greater numbers
- You have the home-field advantage here on Mt. Carmel
- You have the advantage of going first in the contest
- You can use as much time as you need – no time pressure put on your efforts
- You can use whatever theatrics and gymnastics you want to try to arouse Baal

Peter Pett Elijah then turned to the prophets of Baal and called on them to go first because they were many. He wanted them to have as much time as they wanted. He knew perfectly well that what he was asking of them was impossible, for there was no one who would hear their cries. Then they were to prepare their sacrifice, but without putting fire under it, and pray as much as they liked. The more they prayed, the more futile their prayers would appear.

Bob Deffinbaugh: We find no mention of these prophets having to construct or rebuild an altar. I suspect that there was already a functioning pagan altar there, which they utilized.

1 Kings 18:27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.”

KJV 1 Kings 18:27 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.

BGT 1 Kings 18:27 καὶ γένητο μεσημβρὶς καὶ μύκτρισεν αὐτοὺς Ἡλίου Θεοῦ τῆς καὶ ἐπεὶ πικαλεσθε νῶν μέγ' ἵτις σὶν τί δόλεσχα αὐτὶ σὶν καὶ μὰ μὴ ποτε χρηματίζῃ αὐτὸς μὴ ποτε καθεδεῖ αὐτὸς καὶ ξαναοῖσται

LXE 1 Kings 18:27 And it was noon, and Eliu the Thesbite mocked them, and said, Call with a loud voice, for he is a god; for he is meditating, or else perhaps he is engaged in business, or perhaps he is asleep, and is to be awaked.

NET 1 Kings 18:27 At noon Elijah mocked them, "Yell louder! After all, he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or perhaps he stepped out for a moment or has taken a trip. Perhaps he is sleeping and needs to be awakened."

CSB 1 Kings 18:27 At noon Elijah mocked them. He said, "Shout loudly, for he's a god! Maybe he's thinking it over; maybe he has wandered away; or maybe he's on the road. Perhaps he's sleeping and will wake up!"

ESV 1 Kings 18:27 And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

NIV 1 Kings 18:27 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."

NLT 1 Kings 18:27 About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!"

NRS 1 Kings 18:27 At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

NJB 1 Kings 18:27 Midday came, and Elijah mocked them. 'Call louder,' he said, 'for he is a god: he is preoccupied or he is busy, or he has gone on a journey; perhaps he is asleep and needs to be woken up!'

NAB 1 Kings 18:27 When it was noon, Elijah taunted them: "Call louder, for he is a god and may be meditating, or may have retired, or may be on a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

YLT 1 Kings 18:27 And it cometh to pass, at noon, that Elijah playeth on them, and saith, 'Call with a loud voice, for he is a god, for he is meditating, or pursuing, or on a journey; it may be he is asleep, an doth awake.'

GWN 1 Kings 18:27 At noon Elijah started to make fun of them. "Shout louder, since he is a god. Maybe he's thinking, relieving himself, or traveling! Maybe he's sleeping, and you have to wake him!"

- **Elijah:** 1Ki 22:15 2Ch 25:8 Ec 11:9 Isa 8:9,10 44:15-17 Eze 20:39 Am 4:4,5 Mt 26:45 Mk 7:9 14:41
- **for he is a god:** Isa 41:23
- **must be awaked:** Ps 44:23 78:65,66 121:4 Isa 51:9 Mk 4:38,39

Elijah Confronts Prophets of Baal

THE TRUE PROPHET MOCKS THE FALSE GOD

It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked (begin to taunt) them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey or perhaps he is asleep (contrast Yahweh - Ps 121:3,4) and needs to be awakened." - NET - "Yell louder! After all, he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or perhaps he stepped out for a moment or has taken a trip. Perhaps he is sleeping and needs to be awakened." NLT - "About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!" Ryken called this "holy sarcasm." Elijah refuses to give the non-entity Baal one iota of respect! Elijah was cutting Baal down to size (so to speak), mocking his impotence, and he would soon follow by cutting Baal's prophets "down to size" (so to speak)!

NET NOTE - Elijah's sarcastic proposals would have been especially offensive and irritating to Baal's prophets, for they believed Baal was imprisoned in the underworld as death's captive during this time of drought. Elijah's apparent ignorance of their theology is probably designed for dramatic effect; indeed the suggestion that Baal is away on a trip or deep in sleep comes precariously close to the truth as viewed by the prophets.

Bob Utley - "Elijah mocked them" It is hard in English to communicate the exact meaning of these Hebrew words. Apparently Elijah was poking fun at the theology of Ba'al. He asked perhaps Ba'al is involved in theological study, maybe Ba'al has gone to the rest room (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1233), maybe he has gone on a trip to the underworld, maybe he has not come back to life this spring.

TSK - Such were the absurd and degrading notions which the heathens entertained of their gods. "Vishnoo sleeps four months in the year; and to each of the gods some particular business is assigned. Vayoo manages the winds; Vuroonu the waters, etc. According to a number of fables in the pooranus, the gods are often out on journeys or expeditions." Ward's [Views of the Hindoos, vol. ii. p. 324](#). (Interesting resource as Ward has comments on many other OT verses) ([See comments in Volume 1](#))

Spurgeon -Idolatry deserves contempt. The irony of Elijah was holy, though bitter as gall. How would Elijah laugh now at the Papists with their god of bread; and the Ritualists with their magical sacraments. His scorn would be unbounded as ours may well be; only as followers of Jesus we mix pity with our indignation.

Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

1 KINGS 18:27—Why was Elijah blessed for ridiculing the prophets of Baal when the Bible urges us to use kind words to our enemies?

PROBLEM: The Bible says here that "Elijah mocked them" and suggested that their god was "meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." However, the Scriptures teach in other places to "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44), "bless and do not curse" (Rom. 12:14), and "let your speech always be with grace" (Col. 4:6). Elijah's conduct hardly seems exemplar of these truths.

SOLUTION: First, it should be pointed out that the text does not specifically commend every word Elijah uttered. It simply says that God answered his prayer to vindicate him by sending fire to consume the sacrifice and the prophets of Baal (v. 38).

Further, it can be argued that Elijah did not violate any of these scriptural exhortations. Nowhere does the Bible say Elijah hated the prophets of Baal or cursed them. As for Elijah's alleged ridicule, it was no doubt cutting, but not outside the limits of a forceful but legitimate use of irony. The same passage that exhorts us to always speak with "grace" also notes that it can be "seasoned with salt." This was perhaps an example of a more salty remark. In any event, there is no indication that Elijah did it with malice. Ultimately, his act was benevolent in that it saved the lives of those who were witnesses of this marvelous intervention of God.

Some "Out-of-Context" Scripture Texts to be used in Church Buildings

- For the janitor's closet — I Chronicles 11:9 — "So David waxed greater and greater; for the Lord was with him."
- For the kitchen or fellowship hall — Isaiah 55:2 — "Eat ye that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness."
- For the Pastor's door when he is out — I Kings 18:27 — "Cry aloud . . . either he is talking or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or per adventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened."
- For the door of the Church nursery — I Corinthians 15:51 — "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

1 Kings 18:28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

- **cut themselves:** Lev 19:28 De 14:1 Mic 6:7 Mk 5:5 9:22

SELF-MUTILATION BY PROPHETS OF BAAL

So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them (Hebrew = "they poured out blood upon them"). Loud prayer to a god who does not exist is futile and foolish (THOUGHT - pray for all the millions around the world caught in this deceptive lie!)

Ancient texts portray the Phoenician Baal as a bloodthirsty as well as lascivious god. His priests slashed themselves with knives in hopes the smell of blood might attract his attention.

Spurgeon - How much torture is there in false religion: our God takes no pleasure in the miseries of his children. Hair-shirts, lacerated backs, and skeletons macerated with fasting, are fit worship for a demon god; but the blessed God loves them not.

NET NOTE - This self-mutilation was a mourning rite designed to facilitate Baal's return from the underworld.

Olley - Self-mutilation is known in similar ancient Near Eastern and hellenistic contexts (Cogan, p. 441). NIV's frantic prophesying (v. 29) recognizes that group 'prophesying' was often accompanied by music and rhythmical dancing leading to an ecstatic state where it was believed the gods communicated messages; cf. 1 Sam. 10:5–6; 18:10; 2 Kgs 3:15 (P. A. Verhoef, 'Prophecy', NIDOTTE 4, pp. 1067–1078). (See [The Message of Kings - Page 37](#))

August Konkell: The customary gashing with knives and blades may be part of a blood ritual seeking the first rainfall. Blood letting was a rite of imitative magic to prompt a release of vital rain. Ecstatic prophesying may be a frenzied activity indistinguishable from mad behavior (cf. 1 Sam. 19:24). These rituals would take place at a fall festival for the Baal cult in anticipation of the early rains. (See [1 and 2 Kings - Page 300](#))

Bob Utley - "cut themselves" This (BDB 151, KB 177, Hithpoel IMPERFECT with waw) was a sign of mourning for the dead, forbidden to the Jew (cf, Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; Hosea 7:14). Here, it refers to part of worship ritual for Ba'al, probably to get his attention!

1 Kings 18:29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

KJV 1 Kings 18:29 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.

BGT 1 Kings 18:29 κα̅ προφ̅τευον̅ ως̅ ο̅ παρ̅ λθεν̅ τ̅ δειλιν̅ ν̅ κα̅ γ̅ νετο̅ ς̅ καιρ̅ ς̅ το̅ ναβ̅ ναι̅ τ̅ ν̅ θυς̅ αν̅ κα̅ ο̅ κ̅ ν̅ φων̅ κα̅ λ̅ λησεν̅ Η̅λιου̅ Θε̅σβ̅ της̅ πρ̅ ς̅ το̅ ς̅ προφ̅ τας̅ τ̅ ν̅ προσοχ̅θισμ̅ των̅ λ̅ γων̅ μετ̅ στη̅τε̅ π̅ το̅ ν̅ ν̅ κα̅ γ̅ ποι̅ σω̅ τ̅ λοκα̅ τωμ̅ μου̅ κα̅ μετ̅ στη̅σαν̅ κα̅ π̅ λθον̅

LXE 1 Kings 18:29 And they prophesied until the evening came; and it came to pass as it was the time of the offering of the sacrifice, that Eliu the Thesbite spoke to the prophets of the abominations, saying, Stand by for the present, and I will offer my sacrifice. And they stood aside and departed.

NET 1 Kings 18:29 Throughout the afternoon they were in an ecstatic frenzy, but there was no sound, no

answer, and no response.

CSB 1 Kings 18:29 All afternoon they kept on raving until the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no sound; no one answered, no one paid attention.

ESV 1 Kings 18:29 And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

NIV 1 Kings 18:29 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.

NLT 1 Kings 18:29 They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response.

NRS 1 Kings 18:29 As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.

NJB 1 Kings 18:29 Midday passed, and they ranted on until the time when the offering is presented; but there was no voice, no answer, no sign of attention.

NAB 1 Kings 18:29 Noon passed and they remained in a prophetic state until the time for offering sacrifice. But there was not a sound; no one answered, and no one was listening.

YLT 1 Kings 18:29 and it cometh to pass, at the passing by of the noon, that they feign themselves prophets till the going up of the present, and there is no voice, and there is none answering, and there is none attending.

- **they raved:** 1Ki 22:10,12 1Sa 18:10 Jer 28:6-9 Ac 16:16,17 1Co 11:4,5
- **the offering of the evening sacrifice;** 1Ki 18:36
- **voice:** 1Ki 18:26 Ga 4:8 2Ti 3:8,9

Related Passages:

Jeremiah 10:5 "Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, And they cannot speak; They must be carried, Because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, For they can do no harm, Nor can they do any good."

BAAL'S PROPHETS PUT ON SHOW OF FRENZY UNTIL 3PM

When midday was past, they raved ([naba](#) = "PROPHESIED"; Lxx - [propheteuo](#)) **until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention** - No one answered because no one was home. I'm sure the demons would have loved to try to create some form of answer, but the sovereign God was in full control and He Alone would be exalted this day on Mt Carmel!

MacArthur: "no . . . no . . . no." This 3-fold declaration emphasized the complete lack of response on the part of Baal. The fact that there was no response indicated Baal's impotence and non-existence (Jer 10:5). (See [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

NET NOTE - The Old Greek translation and Syriac Peshitta include the following words here: "When it was time to offer the sacrifice, Elijah the Tishbite spoke to the prophets of the abominations: 'Stand aside for the time being, and I will offer my burnt offering.' So they stood aside and departed." In 2 Kgs 4:31 the words "**there was no sound and there was no response**" are used to describe a dead boy. Similar words are used here to describe the god Baal as dead and therefore unresponsive.

David Guzik: This is the sad result of worshipping an imaginary god or the god of our own making. We may dedicate great sincerity, sacrifice, and devotion to such gods, but it means nothing. There is no one there to answer.

Bob Utley - "**raved**" This VERB'S (BDB 612, KB 659, Hithpael IMPERFECT with waw) etymology is uncertain. Arabic – to announce Arabic – to bubble Akkadian – to call on the name of the deity. Here, the prophets of Ba'al and Asherah were acting in a ritual frenzy, hoping to attract Ba'al's attention. Even YHWHistic prophets acted in this manner (cf. Num. 11:25-27; 1 Sam. 10:5-6,10-13; 18:10; 19:24; 1 Kgs. 22:10; 2 Chr. 18:9; Jer. 23:13; 29:26).

Paul Apple summarizes their failure:

– Maybe your god can't hear you; Cry out louder

- Maybe your god is sitting on the toilet and can't respond
- Maybe your god is away and not able to hear you at this time
- Maybe your god is asleep
- Maybe your god is impotent and can't respond because he doesn't exist!

1 Kings 18:30 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 which had been torn down.

- **he repaired:** 1Ki 19:10,14 2Ch 33:16 Ro 11:3

Related Passages:

1 Kings 19:10 He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; **for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword.** And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

ELIJAH FIRST REPAIRS THE ALTAR OF YAHWEH

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 which had been torn down - The sad state of God's altar was symbolic of the sad spiritual state of the nation of Israel!

Whitcomb: The calm assurance and dignity of Elijah provides a startling contrast to the heated frenzy of the pagan prophets.

Alan Carr: true faith, unlike false worship, has absolutely nothing to hide! You had better watch the group that talks of secret things and hidden truth! My friend, do not be afraid to put Christianity under the microscope, it can stand the test!

Henry Morris - repaired the altar - In this time of deep apostasy, all of God's altars had been broken down--not by external enemies, but by His own people of Israel (1 Kings 19:10).

Bob Utley - "**he repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down**" This clearly shows the radical change in Israel's worship (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:10,14). YHWH's altar, unlike *Ba'a's*, must be made of uncut stones (cf. Exod. 20:25; Deut. 27:5-6).

TSK - This altar of Jehovah was probably built in the time of the judges; and it was even known among the heathen by the name of the altar of Carmel. Both Tacitus and Suetonius mention an altar on mount Carmel, which Vespasian went to consult: there was no temple nor statue, but simply an altar, venerable for its antiquity.

Constable: Yahweh's altar at that site (one of the high places?) had fallen into disrepair (v. 30). Elijah rebuilt it, as the Mosaic Covenant specified, with 12 uncut stones symbolic of Israel's 12 tribes. There was still only one Lord, one covenant, and one nation with one destiny in the plans and purposes of God, even though the nation had split into two parts.

1 Kings 18:31 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."

- **twelve stones:** Ex 24:4 Jos 4:3,4,20 Ezr 6:17 Jer 31:1 Eze 37:16-22 47:13 Eph 2:20 4:4-6 Rev 7:4-8 21:12
- **saying:** Ge 32:28 33:20 35:10 2Ki 17:34 Isa 48:1

CONSECRATION OF THE ALTAR

Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob- Yes they were divided but the 12 stones symbolized their unity which was God's intent.

Wiersbe - By using twelve stones, he reaffirmed the spiritual unity of God's people in spite of their political division. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."- Elijah names the altar with a reference to Jacob's experience in Genesis 32:28 "He (YAHWEH) said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but **Israel**; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." and Genesis 35:10 "God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But **Israel** shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel." This would emphasize to the 10 northern tribes that God still saw the nation as a unit of 12 tribes.

1 Kings 18:32 So 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 measures of seed.

- And with: Ex 20:24,25 Jdg 6:26 21:4 1Sa 7:9,17
- in the name: 1Co 10:31 Col 3:17

So 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 measures of seed (about 5 gallons) - Elijah was preparing the scene to make it even more impossible for fire to occur.

Spurgeon - The challenge was made in the name of all Israel; therefore were twelve stones set up; the whole nation was now to put the grand question to the test, and see whether Jehovah would answer by fire. The prophet would have nothing to do with Baal's altar; Christ has no concord with Belial

Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

1 KINGS 18:32–35—Where did Elijah get all the water if there had been a drought for three years?

PROBLEM: Even the brook had dried up because the drought was so severe (1 Kings 17:7; cf. 18:2). Yet before Elijah prayed for fire from heaven he doused the sacrifice with water three times until it filled the trenches around the altar.

SOLUTION: There was a severe drought, but there was still water to drink, both for man and beast, from the springs around the land (1 Kings 18:5), and from the brook Kishon (v. 40). The drought was not so bad that the people were literally dying from thirst. The amount of water Elijah used was not astronomical, being only twelve "waterpots" full (18:33–34). Although waterpots varied in size from those small enough to be carried by one person, some were big enough to hold 20 gallons. However, the author of Kings notes that the trench was big enough to hold about two seahs of seed, equivalent to about one-fourth of a bushel. The fact that Elijah commanded his servants to fill the waterpots indicates that they were small enough for one person to carry. The total amount of water probably amounted to about 13 quarts.

1 Kings 18:33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood.

- **he put:** Ge 22:9 Lev 1:6-8

Related Passages:

Leviticus 1:6-8+ 'He shall then skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces. 7 'The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. 8 'Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the suet over the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar.

ELIJAH'S FAITH IN ACTION

Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood- Elijah follows the pattern laid out in Leviticus (see text above).

F B Meyer - Few of us have faith like this! We are not so sure of God that we dare to pile difficulties in His way. We all try our best to

make it easy for Him to help us. Yet what Elijah had, we too may have, by prayer and fasting.

1 Kings 18:34 And he said, “Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” And 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.

- **Fill four:** Da 3:19,25 Joh 11:39,40 19:33,34
- **pour it:** Jdg 6:20
- **Do it a second:** 2Co 4:2 8:21

SOAKING THE SACRIFICE AND WOOD WITH WATER

And he said, “Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” And 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. There is a perennial spring near this traditional site, from which the water may have been brought.

Spurgeon - Till twelve barrels of water filled the trench, and damped all the materials for sacrifice; thus every notion of any concealed fire was effectually removed, and the trial was proved to be a fair and honest one.

John Gates: Elijah insisted on making the test as difficult as possible for God to meet, that the answer might stand out in clearer, sharper contrast to the impotency of Baal and his prophets.

Henry Morris - Note that this made twelve barrels of water (1 Kings 18:33) to be poured on the twelve stones (1 Kings 18:31), representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Donald Wiseman - “There can be no question of trickery, such as the use of naphtha [a flammable liquid often used as a solvent] instead of water, or mirrors for ignition as suggested by some scholars. The opposition was observant and close.”

1 Kings 18:35 The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

- **the trench:** 1Ki 18:32,38

WATER SATURATED AND SURROUNDED THE ALTAR

The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water - Obviously this would make the wood of the sacrifice virtually impossible to ignite by natural means. Therefore ignition of the wood would have to be by supernatural means!

Vance Havner - THE COSTLY OFFERING

And the water ran round about the altar.... 1 Kings 18:35.

After three and a half years of drought with no rain on the just or unjust, water must have been the scarcest thing in Israel. Yet Elijah poured twelve barrels of it on the Carmel sacrifice. When we pray for fire from heaven, we must offer the most precious thing we have on the repaired and prepared altar. It was as though Elijah poured out freely that which was so scarce, expecting God to answer with abundance of rain. Give God the best, what is most rare and precious, like water in time of drought.

Vance Havner - TWELVE BARRELS OF WATER

And the water ran round about the altar.... 1 Kings 18:35.

Elijah doused the altar with water so that if any fire kindled upon it, that fire must come from heaven. He did not warm up the altar with a little fire so that God would not have a hard time adding the flame from above!

A drenched altar is a sorry sight, but it is only the drenched altar that God sets on fire. When we get to the place where it can't be done unless God does it, God will do it! We must build the altar and prepare the sacrifice but we cannot kindle the flame. "All is vain

unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down."

1 Kings 18:36 At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.

- **at the time:** 1Ki 18:29 Ex 29:39-41 Ezr 9:4,5 Ps 141:2 Da 8:13 9:21 12:11 Ac 3:1 Ac 10:30
- **O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel** 1Ki 18:21 Ge 26:24 31:53 32:9 46:3 Ex 3:6,15,16 1Ch 29:18 2Ch 20:6,7 Eph 1:17 3:14
- **let it:** 1Ki 8:43 1Sa 17:46,47 2Ki 1:3,6 5:15 19:19 Ps 67:1,2 83:18 Eze 36:23 39:7
- **and that I have:** 1Ki 22:28 Nu 16:28-30 Joh 11:42

ELIJAH CARRIES OUT THE EVENING SACRIFICE

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word - Elijah makes 3 requests of Yahweh.

THOUGHT - Do not miss the important point that the ultimate goal of our prayers should be that God would be greatly glorified (cf **let it be known that You are God in Israel**). This is a good way to assess our (my) prayers -- will answers to these prayers bring God glory?

Spurgeon - It was no whim of his to chastise the nation with a drought. It was no scheme of his, concocted in his own brain, that he should put the Godhead of Jehovah or of Baal to the test by a sacrifice to be consumed by miraculous fire."

John Schultz: Elijah opens his prayer with the words: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel." The Pulpit Commentary comments: "Two things are to be noticed here: first, that this formula had only once before been used, and that by God Himself, before the giving of law, at the burning bush. It was when God revealed Himself in flaming fire that He had proclaimed Himself the God of Abraham, etc. Secondly, that the variation 'Israel' is made designedly (cf. ver. 31), not only to proclaim the Lord as the 'God of Israel' (cf. ... 1 Kings 17:1), but also to suggest that the name and privileges of Israel belonged to all the sons of Jacob."

R. D. Patterson: At the precise moment when all hope of igniting the wood seemed totally lost, Elijah stepped forward and called on God (v. 36). He pled with the covenant God of Israel to validate that he alone was still God in Israel and this Elijah, who had prophesied the drought and was now calling for a miracle, was truly his servant. He asked God to answer him so that all would know that the Lord was ever anxious for their repentance and return to him (v. 37). Striking with lightning like power, God answered, and such an answer! Heavenly fire fell and consumed not only the wood and sacrifice, but the stones, the soil, and even the surrounding water (v. 38). What a contrast! The prophets of Baal had kept up their wailing and wild ritual for the better part of a day and met with dead silence. Elijah's petition had lasted less than a minute but produced spectacular results. The difference lay in the One addressed. (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary- Page 530](#))

Spurgeon - Let it be known that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that at your word I have done all these things." We might question what right the prophet had to restrain the clouds or to put God's honor to the test. Suppose the Lord had not willed to answer him by fire? Had he any right to make the God's glory hang on such terms as he proposed? The answer is that he had done all these things according to God's word. It was no whim of his to chastise the nation with a drought. It was no scheme of his, concocted in his own brain, that he should put the Godhead of Jehovah or of Baal to the test by a sacrifice to be consumed by miraculous fire. Whenever he takes a step, it is preceded by the Lord's word. He never acts by himself; God is at his back. He moves according to the divine will and speaks according to the divine teaching. Elijah's character stands out not as an example of reckless daring but as the example of a man of sound mind. Faith in God is true wisdom, the highest form of common sense. To believe the one who cannot lie and trust the one who cannot fail is a kind of wisdom that only fools laugh at. An ambassador never dreams that his authorized acts will be repudiated by his king. If someone acts as our agent and does our bidding, the responsibility for his acts lies with us, and we must back him up. If we will only trust the Lord so as to do what he says, he will never fail us, and he will see us through, though earth and hell should stand in the way.

Spurgeon - [Elijah's Plea \(full sermon\)](#)

'Let it be known ... that I have done all these things at thy word.' 1 Kings 18:36

Let every worker who has not been successful answer this question: have you done all these things at God's word? Come. Have you preached the gospel? Was it the gospel? Was it Christ you preached, or merely something about Christ? Come. Did you give the people bread, or did you give them plates to put the bread on, and knives to cut the bread with? Did you give them drink, or did you give them the cup that had been near the water? Some preaching is not gospel; it is a knife that smells of the cheese, but it is not cheese. See to that matter. If you preached the gospel, did you preach it rightly? That is to say, did you state it affectionately, earnestly, clearly, plainly? If you preach the gospel in Latinized language, the common people will not know what it means, and if you use great big academy words and dictionary words, the market people will be lost while they are trying to find out what you are at. You cannot expect God to bless you unless the gospel is preached in a very simple way. Have you preached the truth lovingly, with all your heart, throwing your very self into it, as if beyond everything you desired the conversion of those you taught? Has prayer been mixed with it? Have you gone into the pulpit without prayer? Have you come out of it without prayer? Have you been to the Sabbath-school without prayer? Have you come away from it without prayer? If so, since you failed to ask for the blessing, you must not wonder if you do not get it. And another question: has there been an example to back your teaching? Brethren, have we lived as we have preached? Sisters, have you lived as you have taught in your classes? These are questions we ought to answer, because perhaps God can reply to us, 'No, you have not done according to my word'.

1 Kings 18:37 "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again."

- **Answer me, O LORD:** 1Ki 18:24,29,36 Ge 32:24,26,28 2Ch 14:11 32:19,20 Isa 37:17-20 Da 9:17-19 Lu 11:8 Jas 5:16,17
- **You have turned their heart back again** Jer 31:18,19 Eze 36:25-27 Mal 4:5,6 Lu 1:16,17

TWO PURPOSES OF ELIJAH'S PETITION

Answer me, O LORD, answer me, (1) that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and (2) that You have turned their heart back again - The prophets of Baal futilely tried to get Baal to answer their frenzied cries for 6 hours, while Yahweh answers Elijah's prayer almost immediately! As an aside power in prayer is not related to length or volume, but in the heart of the one praying and aligning his/her will with God's will (cf Mt 6:7-8+).

Alan Carr: His prayer was constructed to accomplish three things. A. That God be glorified. B. That the prophet be vindicated. C. That the people be revived.

Spurgeon - Bishop Hall well observes, "The Baalites' prayers were not more tedious than Elijah's was short, and yet it was more pithy than short, charging God with the care of his covenant, of his truth, and of his own glory." The priests of Baal were full of outward vehemence and fantastic action; Elijah's vehemence was inward, and his manner simple, but devout. His faith was the power of his prayer. His God helped him to pray believingly, and the issue was certain. Faith uses no machinery but that of prayer, but superstition overflows with ceremonials

1 Kings 18:38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

- **Then the fire of the LORD fell:** Ge 15:17 Lev 9:24 Jdg 6:21 1Ch 21:26 2Ch 7:1
- **fire:** 1Ki 18:24 Lev 10:2 2Ki 1:12 Job 1:16 Isa 31:9

ALL CONSUMING FIRE

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench - The result was in essence an all consuming fire, consuming even the stones and dust, in addition to completely drying the water.

August Konkel: The "fire from God" anticipates the advance of the rain. The fiery apparition indicates the divine presence (cf. Ex.

3:2; 19:18; 24:17). Fire also attests the divine acceptance and approval of the sacrifice (1 Chron. 21:26). Fire may indicate both approval of the sacrifice and the divine presence, as with Gideon (Judg. 6:20–22) and Moses (Lev. 9:22–24). (SEE [NIVAC](#))

Clarke on fire of the LORD fell - The action of this fire was in every case downward, contrary to the nature of all earthly and material fire.

Donald Wiseman: The simple prayer (cf. v. 24) contrasts with the long Baalistic ravings. He asks not just for a miraculous demonstration that Yahweh is God but for the conversion of Israel. He reminds God of his previous interventions, using 'Jacob' for Israel possibly as a term of rebuke for the latter's apostasy. On 'fire from heaven' (v. 38) as demonstrating God's power and judgment, see 2 Kings 1:10, 12; Job 1:16. The people's acknowledgment (v. 39) is itself an answer to prayer (cf. vv. 21, 24). (See [1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary - Page 182](#))

Patterson - Elijah's petition had lasted less than a minute but produced spectacular results. The difference lay in the One addressed. (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

QUESTION - [How many times has God sent fire from heaven? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - Fire has come down from heaven several times in history. The Bible records at least six of these instances:

Fire fell from heaven and destroyed Job's flocks (Job 1:16). This was a direct attack from Satan, but, as the earlier part of Job 1 explains, Satan was acting with the permission of God (verse 12). It was a tragedy allowed by God and, in the end, bringing glory to God. On the other side of his trials, [Job](#) was blessed with even larger flocks (Job 42:12).

Fire coming down from heaven was also a means of God's judgment. Fire in the form of burning sulfur rained from the heavens and destroyed [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) (Genesis 19:24; Luke 17:29). God also used fire from heaven to judge the soldiers sent by the wicked king Ahaziah to arrest [Elijah](#)—twice, fire descended from heaven to consume a group of fifty soldiers sent on the king's business (2 Kings 1:10, 12).

But fire from heaven is not *exclusively* a means of judgment. On at least three occasions, God sent fire from above in order to consume a sacrifice: fire came down from heaven to consume the sacrifice that David offered on the threshing floor of [Araunah the Jebusite](#) (1 Chronicles 21:26); to consume the sacrifice at the dedication of the [temple](#), in the presence of King Solomon and the people of Israel (2 Chronicles 7:1); and to consume Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel, in response to the prophet's simple prayer (1 Kings 18:38).

In each sacrifice consumed by fire from heaven, God was making an important point. In David's case, God was forgiving David's sin in conducting a census and halting a plague in Israel. He was also choosing the place where the future temple would be built. In Solomon's case, God was consecrating that location as the place where His name would dwell forever (2 Chronicles 7:16). The people's reaction was to worship the Lord and say, "He is good; his love endures forever" (2 Chronicles 7:3). In Elijah's case, God was shaming the prophets of Baal, whose god sent no fire, and claiming His rightful title as Lord God of Israel. The people on Mt. Carmel "fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!'" (1 Kings 18:39).

Interestingly, during Jesus' earthly ministry, two of His disciples, James and John, wanted to call down fire from heaven in judgment of a Samaritan village that did not welcome the Lord. Jesus, however, "turned and rebuked them" (Luke 9:55). He had not come "to condemn the world, but to save the world" (John 3:17). James and John, rightly called the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), wanted what they *thought* was justice, but their idea went against God's plan of mercy. God's justice will come, but on His terms, not ours.

In the end-times tribulation, the [false prophet](#) will cause fire to come down from heaven as a means of deceiving people into worshipping the Antichrist (Revelation 13:13).

And, at the end of the millenium, God promises that He will destroy the armies of [Gog and Magog](#) with fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9).

Vance Havner - Carmel and Horeb

- Then the fire of the Lord fell... 1 Kings 18:38.
- But the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still, small voice. 1 Kings 19:12.

God was in the fire at Carmel; He was not in the fire at Horeb. We are not to gather from the still, small voice that God is never in wind, earthquake, and fire. He often is. He came at Pentecost with a sound as of a rushing mighty wind. He came in an earthquake in the Philippian jail.

God works in nature in the cataclysmic, in flood and tornado; and He works in the gradual, quiet process of the seasons. He works in mighty mass movements in revival with a Whitefield or a Moody. But He also moves in quiet gatherings in the day-by-day work of faith and labor of love among the churches.

And into our hearts He sometimes breaks in sudden and tempestuous ways, in mountain-top raptures and third-heaven experiences. But He also works in daily growth in the knowledge of Christ, the quiet walk by His sufficient grace.

You cannot live at Carmel all the time. Carmel happens only once in a while. God is at Horeb too—if you have ears to hear.

THE DESCENT OF FIRE UPON THE ALTAR ON MOUNT CARMEL - W Harris

“And the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the sacrifice,” etc.—1 Kings 18:38.

Notice—

I.—The miraculous fire was symbolic of the Divine Nature.

1.—We are told by scientific men that all natural fire has its origin in the sun—the source of all light and heat, of all the life and beauty of the earth. So this flame, descending as a message of the Eternal God, pointed to Him as the source of all spiritual life, and consequently of all moral beauty. 2. Fire is not, in the least degree, changed in its character by contact with other forms of matter; if we throw into the fire, or expose to a ray of light, the most polluted thing, the light, the flame is as pure as before. So the Holy One cannot be polluted by contact with the vilest of His creatures. God incarnate could “eat with publicans and sinners” without sustaining the least moral injury. 3. Although fire cannot be transformed, it can and does transform all that comes within its influence. So can the Divine Being. Hence fire has ever been regarded as a type of the pure and Holy God, not only by Jews and Christians, but often also by men who have not possessed a written revelation, as the Parsees of ancient and modern times, whose form of religion is perhaps the purest ever invented by man.

II.—The descent of fire after the prayer was a symbolic expression of Divine approval.

There are various ways of expressing approval among men without the use of words. Sometimes the silence of action is more expressive than any sound of words. God’s messages to men have been and are generally silent. The Heavens “declare” His glory without “speech or language” (Psa. 19:3). That which appeals to the sight is perhaps more impressive than that which appeals to the sense of hearing. Hence God has often expressed His approval of His servants’ actions in the same way as He did here to Elijah (see Lev. 9:24; 1 Chron. 21:26; 2 Chron. 7:1; Judges 6:21).

III.—The contest that was thus decided by fire was symbolic of the contest which is still going on between light and darkness, and which will be decided by fire in the future (2 Thess. 1:8).

1. It was symbolic in the inequality of the numbers. One prophet of the true God against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal (verse 22). If the moral census of the world was now taken, probably the proportion would be about the same. 2. It was symbolic, in that the minority was, and is, more than the majority. The one man defeated the many men. There are least that are most. 3. Symbolic, because praying and working will bring the “restitution of all things.” As Elijah restored the altar and continued in prayer before it till the decisive hour came, so God’s minority labour and pray, and, at the evening of the present dispensation, heaven will yield the answer.

SELECTED—I

The world has already received more than one answer by fire, so that it ought not to require another; but one more such answer awaits an evil world (2 Pet. 3:10).

God answered by fire the first transgressions, when Cherubim and a flaming sword were planted at the gate of Paradise. God answered Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, and by a fiery vision confirmed His promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:17). From a flame of fire in the bush He spake to Moses: and out of the fire and clouds and darkness to Israel on Mount Sinai. By fire He answered the transgression of Nadab and Abiram (Numb. 16:35) and Israel, in the matter of Korah. By fire He showed at various times, besides the one we are contemplating, His acceptance of the service of His servants.

God likewise answered the waiting apostles at Pentecost by cloven tongues as of fire.

SELECTED—II

“And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.” Let us spiritually apply this to ourselves.

The fire of the Holy Spirit, with which Messiah baptises every believer, is the witness of God in every such believer. This fire consumes the dross of his corruptions, and warms, cheers, and enlightens his soul. He that is insensible to the testimony of this witness is still dead in trespasses and sins. Let us show, then, that our hearts burn within us by the Spirit of our life and conversation before God and man. May the Lord inscribe His name on our hearts in the flaming letters of His love, that He may not see it

necessary to write it in our ashes, in the eternally glowing characters of His just displeasure.—Krummacher.

1 Kings 18:39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.”

- **they fell on their faces;** Jdg 13:20 1Ch 21:16 2Ch 7:3
- **The LORD, He is God;;** 1Ki 18:21,24 Joh 5:35 Ac 2:37 4:16

TRUE WORDS BUT WERE THEY SINCERE?

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.”- There can be no denying the impotence of Baal and the sovereign power of the Lord. This is a clear answer to first part of Elijah's petition in v38. The question of course is did they **"know"** intellectually or did they **"know"** in their hearts, the latter reflecting true repentance and belief. Like many today say I know Jesus, but they do not truly know Him as their personal Savior. It is the difference between profession of faith and true possession of faith, and it makes all the difference in time and eternity!

Donald Wiseman: This most dramatic story marks the turning point when the worship of the Lord is almost wiped out by the opposition. A single prophet challenges the whole state to return to God.

David Guzik: Tragically, this was only a momentary persuasion. This was no lasting revival in Israel. The people were decidedly persuaded, but not lastingly changed.

Whitcomb: The contest on Mt. Carmel was a spectacular vindication of the uniqueness and sovereignty of Jehovah in a day of satanic darkness. Never in all history was the point more clearly made that “no idol is anything in the world and there is no God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). The three-and-one-half-year famine had doubtless shaken the confidence of many in the ability of Baal, the god of fertility, to answer their prayers. But if any yet hesitated, Elijah's demonstration would remove every excuse for following this vile system of worship.

Vance Havner - TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. 1 Kings 18:39.

When the fire fell on Carmel, the people did not say, "Elijah, he is the great prophet!" but "The Lord, He is the God." God's purpose is not to show us strong in His behalf, but Himself strong in our behalf (2 Chronicles 16:9). Facing Goliath, David prayed that all men might know not that there was a David in the camp, but "that there is a God in Israel" (1 Samuel 17:46). Elijah's prayer on Carmel was that "this people may know that thou art the Lord God..." (1 Kings 18:37). When that is our objective, then the fire will fall and we shall see revival. We begin with, "Hallelujah, Thine the glory!" and end singing, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."

1 Kings 18:40 Then 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 slew them there.

- **Seize** 2Ki 10:25
- **Kishon:** Jdg 5:21
- **slew them there:** De 13:5 18:20 Jer 48:10 Zec 13:2,3 Rev 19:20 20:10

BAAL'S PROPHETS SEIZED AND SLAIN BY ELIJAH

Then 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 slew them there. This action seems harsh, but it was necessary. And it shows how serious God is about idolatry and those who practice it (WOE!) It was an act of obedience to God's own order (Deut. 13:6-9; 17:2-7). As the text reads, it was Elijah himself who killed 400 prophets, specifically the **prophets of Baal**! There is no mention of

slaying the 400 prophets of Asherah. 1Ki 18:19 -20 would seem to suggest all 950 prophets came to Mount Carmel.

Donald Wiseman: The slaughter of the Baal prophets was not an act of wanton cruelty but the necessary retribution, ordered by Elijah as the 'new Moses' on behalf of God, against false prophets as decreed in Deuteronomy (11:5, 13-18; 17:2-5) following the action of Moses and Phinehas (Num. 25:1-13).

Spurgeon - Elijah had the law of God at his back in performing this execution; the men were false prophets, and were justly doomed to die. How Elijah bared his arm for that dread task, and made the dry bed of Kishon run with blood! Not thus smite we at men, but oh that sin's errors and superstitions were thus slain, every one of them. Not one of them should be allowed to escape. Lord, do this killing work among evil systems at this hour!

*O that the fire from heaven might fall,
Our sins its ready victims find,
Seize on our lusts and burn up all,
Nor leave the least remains behind!*

*Then would our prostrate hearts adore,
And own the Lord our righteousness;
He is the God of saving power,
The Lord Jehovah we confess.*

John Olley makes an interesting observation - In considering attitudes to followers of different religions, it is important to observe that Elijah's confrontation was not with pagan followers but with God's own people. He addressed Ahab and the people of Israel, not Jezebel and Phoenicians. This is characteristic of the whole Bible. The frequent warnings about worship of other gods, whether in Old or New Testaments, are to the people of God. The overwhelming tenor elsewhere in the Bible is that other peoples come to see the reality of God and his saving work not through confrontation, but through God's activity amongst his people and their lifestyle. The challenge for God's people amongst the nations is to live out in word and deed their relationship with the only one living, covenant-making, creator God. (See [The Message of Kings - Page 54](#))

I like **Tony Merida's** application of this section - The church today is not a theocracy, and God doesn't call us to kill others who worship false gods. Instead, we are called to put to death idolatry in our own hearts. Don't waver between two opinions! "Put to death the deeds of the body," Paul says (Ro 8:13+, cf Col 3:5+). Don't allow functional saviors to rule your heart—money, success, pleasure, peer approval, beauty, politics, control, or sex. These counterfeit gods cannot satisfy your heart, and they cannot answer prayer. Let your heart say, "Yahweh, He is God!" in humble, heartfelt adoration, and live your life out of the overflow of that confession. True and vibrant worship is possible because there was another showdown on another hillside. Jesus Christ crushed the enemies—Satan, sin, and death—through His cross and resurrection. He was the ultimate Prophet, Mediator, and Victor, showing us once and for all who the real God is. We marvel at Elijah and learn from his prayer and faith, but we realize that what save us and sustain us are the power and grace of Jesus. One greater than Elijah has come. (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

1 KINGS 18:40—Wasn't killing too severe a punishment for the prophets of Baal?

PROBLEM: Isn't this a classic example of religious intolerance, a notorious example of overkill? Further, wasn't it contrary to Jewish law to kill the prophets of Baal because of their beliefs?

SOLUTION: According to the Law of Moses, even Jewish prophets were to be killed for giving false prophecies (Deut. 18:20). Furthermore, idolatry was punishable by death (Ex. 22:20), as was blasphemy (Lev. 24:15–16) and adultery (Lev. 20:10), all of which the prophets of Baal were guilty. Given that these false prophets were also engaged in treason against the Jewish theocracy, the punishment is not surprising and certainly justifiable by a God who is not only sovereign over all life (Deut. 32:39; Job 1:21), but also absolutely fair in executing justice (Gen. 18:25).

Walter Kaiser - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - Why Did Elijah Kill All 450 Prophets of Baal?

Why was it necessary to kill the prophets of Baal once it had been shown that they could not call down fire from heaven as Elijah had? Wasn't it enough to prove that they were false prophets without any power? And if some of the prophets of Baal had to die, why all 450?

Elijah stepped forward after the prophets of Baal had been asking Baal to send down fire from six o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon with no results. In less than a minute's petition to Almighty God, the fire of God fell from heaven. The crowd was impressed and fell facedown, crying, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God" (1 Kings 18:39).

The fire of God could just as well have consumed the 450 prophets of Baal right then and there (and the 400 prophets of Asherah, for that matter). But the divine fire was not the fire of judgment this time, but the fire that signified that the bull Elijah had placed on the altar was accepted. After three and a half years in which the weather forecast was “sunny, clear and warmer” each day, you would have thought that the God that answered by rain would prove he was Lord. But no, before the mercies of God could come, there must first be the sacrifice that prepared the way for those mercies and graces.

Immediately Elijah commanded that all the prophets of Baal were to be rounded up and taken down to the Kishon Valley to be slaughtered there. There was no hesitation on the part of the people; the Lord’s command now came to a crowd that had been startled into responding positively and quickly. Once they had collected all the prophets of Baal, the actual killing may have been done by the people, for on linguistic grounds it is possible to read the fact that Elijah “killed” the prophets of Baal in the sense that he ordered them to be put to death (as in NIV). Here again is another case where secondary causes were passed over as being unnecessary to state, for to attribute the action to the primary or ultimate cause could also involve secondary causes as well.

Why Elijah chose the Kishon Valley instead of using Mount Carmel we may only guess. Perhaps he did not wish to defile the place of sacrifice where the Lord had sanctified himself in a miracle.

The wicked crimes of these prophets of Baal demanded the death penalty (Deut 13:13–15; 17:2–5). Modern thought might consider this to be an overreaction and quite unnecessary, yet when one considers that because of these prophets many persons went into eternity forever cast away from the presence of God, the sanction is completely justified.

Seen in this light, not only are the reaction of the people and the command of Elijah understandable; they are also according to the law of God. It is a serious matter to fool with the holiness of God and his truth.

See also comment on NUMBERS 25:7–13.

Spurgeon - “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let even one of them escape.” Elijah may be called the Iron Prophet; he was a stern and brave man who did not flinch to deliver his Master’s message at all hazards. The Sidonian queen, Jezebel, had issued her mandate that the prophets of Jehovah should be slain, a mandate which was all too well obeyed. No one could stand before this tigress until Elijah came and dared her malice to do its worst. That lone man, of heroic soul, stemmed the fearful torrent of idolatry and, like a rock in midcurrent, firmly stood his ground. He was more than a match for all the priests of the palace and the groves, even as one lion scatters a flock of sheep. He had proved the prophets of Baal to be liars and pretenders and then went on to the natural conclusion. The law of Israel was, “That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he has urged rebellion against the LORD your God ... to turn you from the way the LORD your God has commanded you to walk” (Dt 13:5). Therefore, the case being proven before all men, Elijah commanded the people to seize the impostors, and he himself purpled the Wadi Kishon with their blood. The man did his Master’s will thoroughly, never dreaming of compromise. Perhaps for this reason he, with but one other born of woman, ascended to heaven by an unusual road. The God who made him so grandly faithful had determined that he who passed through the world differently from others should pass out of it differently, and he who had in life flamed like a seraph should in a chariot of fire be carried to his reward.

Spurgeon - [No Quarter \(full sermon\)](#)

Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.’ 1 Kings 18:40

Some will say that they have a constitutional tendency to a sin, and therefore they cannot overcome it; they take out a licence to sin and reckon themselves clear though they indulge their evil propensity. Brethren, this will never do. Indulgences for sin issued by the Pope are now rejected; shall we write them out for ourselves? Is Christ the messenger of sin? I know that some persons feel they are excused in the use of bitter language occasionally, because they are provoked, but I find no such excuses in the Word of God. In no one passage do I find a permit for any sin or a furlough from any duty. Sin is sin in any case and in any man, and we are not to apologise for it, but to condemn it. It is pleaded by some that their father was passionate and they are passionate, and therefore it runs in their blood, but let them remember that the Lord must cleanse their blood, or they will die in their sin. Others will say that their constant discontent, moroseness, murmuring and tendency to quarrel with everybody, must be set down to their infirmity of body. Well, I am not their judge; but the word of the Lord judges them and declares that sin shall not have dominion over the believer. Does a sin easily beset us? We are doubly warned to lay it aside. More grace is needed and more grace may be had. Never suppose that God has given to you a licence for any sin, so that you may live in it as long as you please; no, believe that Jesus has come to save us from our sins. I have received no intimation from the Lord to deal delicately with any man’s sins, or to become an apologist for transgression. My message is that of Elijah—‘Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.’

Spurgeon - Morning and Evening -

“Let not one of them escape.” —1 Kings 18:40

When the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and sternly cried, “Let not one of them escape.” He took them all down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. So must it be with our sins—they are all doomed, not one must be preserved. Our darling sin must die. Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon his own Son. With stern unflinching purpose must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart. Do you ask how you are to accomplish this? Jesus will be your power. You have grace to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace; you have strength to win the victory in the crusade against inward lusts, because Christ Jesus has promised to be with you even unto the end. If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did when his eye of faith rested upon God, and then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. The fine gold of the Christian is oft becoming dim. We need the sacred fire to consume the dross. Let us fly to our God, he is a consuming fire; he will not consume our spirit, but our sins. Let the goodness of God excite us to a sacred jealousy, and to a holy revenge against those iniquities which are hateful in his sight. Go forth to battle with Amalek, in his strength, and utterly destroy the accursed crew: let not one of them escape.

1 Kings 18:41 Now Elijah said to Ahab, “**Go up, eat and drink**; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”

- **Go up, eat and drink:** Ec 9:7 Ac 27:34
- **a sound:** 1Ki 18:1 17:1

ELIJAH'S EARS OF FAITH

Now Elijah said to Ahab - Apparently Ahab was a spectator at the battle of his gods and the God of Elijah!

“**Go up, eat and drink**; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”- Elijah is giving 3 commands to the King of Israel! And he explains the command because the weather will soon change. Elijah hears with "ears of faith!" (there is no cloud, v43, so Elijah is also walking by faith, not sight)

Spurgeon - Only the prophet's ears heard that sound, but faith is quick of hearing. Though not a cloud relieved the burning sky, and no wind had yet arisen from the quarter whence the rain usually came, the prophet was strong in confidence, and did not hesitate to declare it. Faith never goes beyond her warrant when she declares that the Lord will fulfil his word.

Olley has an interesting comment on what Ahab was to eat - He (Elijah) expectantly commands the king to go up, eat and drink (NRSV, NJPSV), that is, participate in the meal associated with the sacrifice, here signifying for Ahab a reaffirming of the covenant with Yahweh. (See [The Message of Kings - Page 54](#))

Alan Carr: His confidence was based on:

- The Precious Word Of God – In 1 Kings 18:1, God told Elijah to confront Ahab and He would send the rain. Elijah did as he was commanded, and he knew the rain was coming. Elijah believed God when God said something.
- The Perfect Will Of God – In 1 Kings 17:1, Elijah had been God's instrument to bring the drought upon the nation. Elijah knew that the drought had been sent because of the idolatry of the people. The rain had stopped because the people were worshiping Baal instead of Jehovah. Now, the Baal prophets were dead, the people had repented and had returned to the Lord God. Elijah knew it was time for the rains to return.
- The Prior Work Of God – Elijah knew that he could trust God to send the rain because of all that he had already seen the Lord do. Remember, he had already witnessed the faithfulness of God at the brook, in the barrel, with the boy, in the bull and over Baal. He has seen the Lord work many miracles before and there was no reason to think that God could not continue to move in power and glory.

James Smith - ELIJAH, THE INTERCESSOR 1 Kings 18:41–46

“Surely, too, some way

He is the better of my love! I'll believe

His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.”
—BROWNING.

The falling of the fire of the Lord from Heaven, and the cutting off of the prophets of Baal, had effectually arrested the rising flood-tide of idolatry that threatened to overwhelm the whole land. Now that the people were on their faces confessing that “the Lord He is God” (1 Kings 18:39) showers of blessing are at hand. The quick ear of the man of God is the first to hear the “sound of abundance of rain.” The heavens will soon be opened to pour out its treasures upon thirsty souls when they bow in humble confession before Him (Isa. 44:3). It was a welcomed Gospel that Elijah preached to Ahab when he said, “Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.” There are those to whom times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord mean nothing more than eating and drinking—personal enjoyment. It was far otherwise with Elijah. To him the sound of coming blessing was an urgent call to prayer. He—

I. Prayed Believingly. He heard the “sound of abundance of rain” (1 Kings 18:41). The sound may have been that of the assuring promise of God ringing in his soul (v. 1). So faith cometh by such hearing. The secret of a bold, courageous life lies in the hearing of faith. When the ear of faith is dull, the feet of service will be tardy and the tongue of testimony will stammer. To prevail in prayer, “hear ye the Word of the Lord.”

II. Prayed Humbly. “He cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees” (v. 42). The believer who is the boldest before men will be the humblest before God. To cast ourselves down is the best way of preparing ourselves for the fulfilment of the promise of God. The greatest in the kingdom of Heaven may be the littlest in the eyes of men (Matt. 18:4). The greatest of all masters was the humblest of all servants. It was the man who could not lift up his face that received the benediction of God (Luke 18:13).

III. Prayed Perseveringly. “There is nothing. And he said, Go again” (1 Kings 18:43). Elijah had heard the sound of a coming abundance, but his servant could see nothing. It is not easy seeing that which as yet can only be apprehended by faith. But although nothing could be seen that did in no way discourage the prophet, he said, “Go again, seven times.” He had the sure Word of God’s promise, and he kept believing and pleading although appearances were all against him. Like Jacob, he will not let go till the blessing come (Gen. 32:26). Elijah walked by faith, while his servant walked by sight. The importunate pleadings of faith will never be sent empty away (Luke 18).

IV. Prayed Definitely. He prayed for rain (James 5:17, 18). This mighty man of God seemed never to have more than one arrow in his quiver at a time. Prevailing prayers have always been definite. David said, “In the morning will I direct (set in order an arrow in the bow) my prayer unto Thee, and will look up,” confidently expecting the answer (Psa. 5:3). The general prayer is generally powerless. Who would come into the presence of an earthly king with a string of generalities, not one of which was immediately wanted or expected? Prayer meetings are often strangled to death by the numberless petitions offered which are never expected to be answered. As a rule the prayer that prevails with God and is answered by floods of blessing springs out of some definite promise of God, received by faith, and perseveringly pleaded before His throne of grace (Ezek. 36:37).

V. Prayed Successfully. “Behold there ariseth a little cloud, ... and there was a great rain” (1 Kings 18:44, 45). Let us take heed when the little cloud appears that we do not despise the day of small things (Zech. 4:10). God’s “little cloud” can be made broad enough to cover the whole sky and to meet all our need. The few loaves and small fishes are sufficient in His hands to satisfy the cravings of a multitude. Elijah asked, believing that he would receive, and he did have (Mark 11:24), and God was glorified in so answering. “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13). Seeing that it is the chief desire of the Son to glorify the Father in answering our prayers, surely this is one of the most powerful of all reasons why we should “ask in prayer, believing that we shall receive” (Matt. 21:22).

Henry Blackaby - Spiritual Persistence

Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a rainstorm.”—1 Kings 18:41

Success can distract you as you seek to follow God’s will. Elijah’s primary assignment was to announce when a drought would begin and end (1 Kings 17:1). God had told him to proclaim to king Ahab that the drought was an act of judgment upon a people who worshiped idols rather than God. In the middle of Elijah’s assignment, a spectacular thing happened. Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and called fire down from heaven, putting hundreds of priests of Baal to death. This was one of the most awesome displays of God’s power recorded in Scripture. Elijah could easily have focused strictly on that event. Fire falling from heaven is much more spectacular than a rainstorm!

When something spectacular happens, we can easily be sidetracked. If Elijah lived today, he might have begun a “Calling Down Fire from Heaven” ministry! The dramatic is far more appealing to us than obedience to the mundane. Destroying hundreds of Baal’s

prophets would appear to be a climactic victory for any prophet of God. Yet Elijah persisted in his assignment. He announced the coming rain. This had been his primary message, and he delivered it.

If you aren't careful, you may become so distracted by the successes you experience that you never complete what God originally assigned you to do. Will your success today cause you to disobey tomorrow?

James Smith - FAITH

1. The Ear of Faith, 1 Kings 18:41
2. The Eye of Faith, 2 Kings 6:17.
3. The Feet of Faith, Genesis 5:24.
4. The Hand of Faith, Acts 3:7.
5. The Heart of Faith, Rom. 10:10.

1 Kings 18:42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

- **Elijah:** 1Ki 18:19 Mt 14:23 Lu 6:12 Ac 10:9
- **he crouched down on the earth** Ge 24:52 Jos 7:6 2Sa 12:16 Da 9:3 Mk 14:35 Jas 5:16-18
- **put his face:** 1Ki 19:13 Ezr 9:6 Ps 89:7 Isa 6:2 38:2 Da 9:7

ONE WENT TO EAT ANOTHER UP TO PRAY

So Ahab went up to eat and drink - Think about this for a moment. All the prophets of Baal have been killed. One would think Ahab would not have much of an appetite knowing that he would have to face the wrath of Jezebel with this horrible news! (See [Olley's comment](#) on 1Ki 18:41)

But - Term of contrast, contrasting the actions of a godless king and the man of God! The contrast could not be more stark!

Elijah went up to the top of Carmel- The **top of Carmel** was apparently higher than the location of the altars.

Spurgeon - Different men go to different engagements. Ahab to eat and drink, and Elijah to wrestle and prevail with his God.

And he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees- What was Elijah doing? Clearly he was praying for rain just as he had told King Ahab in 1Ki 17:1.

*The man who is to take a high place before his fellows
must take a low place before his God.*

-- F B Meyer

Wiersbe: Elijah's unusual posture was almost a fetal position and indicated the prophet's humility, his great concern for the people, and his burden for the glory of the Lord....The prophet didn't give up but prayed a seventh time, and the servant saw a tiny cloud coming from the sea. This is a good example for us to follow as we "watch and pray" and continue to intercede until the Lord sends the answer. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

*The men who stand straightest in the presence of sin
bow lowest in the presence of God.*

-- F B Meyer

F B Meyer - We scarcely recognize him, he seems so to have lost his identity. A few hours before, he stood erect as an oak of Bashan; now, he is bowed as a bulrush. Then as God's ambassador he pleaded with man; now as man's intercessor he pleads with God. Is it not always so – that the men who stand straightest in the presence of sin bow lowest in the presence of God."

Philip Ryken offers an incisive commentary on prayer (it certainly cut to the quick of my heart as I read it)...

How did Elijah do it? How did he keep the home fire burning? Elijah tended the flame through prayer. The

interpretation that the apostle James offers of the life and ministry of the prophet Elijah cannot be escaped (see James 5:16–18). We keep coming back to it again and again: first and foremost, Elijah was a man of prayer.

Let us be honest, though: prayer does not sound very exciting to us. We are ready to go up the mountain with Elijah, ready to confront the people of Israel, ready to mock the prophets of Baal, ready to see the fire of God, and ready to fall on our faces and worship God. Perhaps we are even ready to put sin to death. But are we ready to pray?

Most of us find prayer to be such difficult labor that it does not excite us. Prayer is an intensely spiritual activity that cuts against the grain of our natural inclinations. For proof, consider what happens in a typical prayer meeting, where people spend plenty of time enjoying fellowship, sharing requests, discussing life's problems, and doing anything and everything except praying. Prayer is always the first thing to go. It is the first thing to go during a busy week, the first thing we leave out of our morning routine, the first thing we abandon when we go on vacation. Prayer is raw spirituality, and most of us are not very spiritual.

Yet there is no other way to receive the blessings of God except through prayer. All the spiritual blessings that God has to give come through a life of petition and intercession. If we want the good things that God loves to give, we must pray for them. Wisdom for life's decisions comes through prayer. So does the awesome presence of God in worship. Conversions to faith in Christ, the revival fire of the Holy Spirit, the reformation of a culture—it all comes through prayer.

When we look behind any great movement of the Spirit of God, we will always find prayer. Consider the Moravian revival of 1727. It began in a prayer meeting: "So overwhelmed were the people with the Presence of God, they were convicted to pray 24 hours a day, 7 days a week—and this lasted over 100 years, with astounding results around the world."¹ Or consider the ministry of William Carey, the father of modern missions and soul-winning evangelist to India. The secret of his success? Carey's supporters included a paralyzed, bedridden sister who prayed incessantly for him for fifty years. (Borrow [Liberating ministry from the success syndrome page 74](#))

Spiritual blessings come from God through prayer. There is no way around it. There is no other way to receive spiritual blessings but to pray for them. We cannot have a demonstration of the power of God in our lives, our worship, our evangelism, our families, our church, or our nation without prevailing in prayer.

Frankly, this comes as a disappointment to many Christians. Elijah was able to get a whole nation to the top of a high mountain to see a bullfight. But imagine what would have happened if he had called it a prayer meeting instead. It really was a prayer meeting, of course, but the people in marketing would never let Elijah advertise it that way. No one would show up!

Except the firekeepers, that is. The firekeepers would be there, tending the flame, praying to God, and waiting for his Spirit to descend with fire. The spiritual firekeepers would gather in the longhouse for prayer, kindling their heart-fires and blowing on the coals of biblical faith.

We can become firekeepers like Elijah. We must become firekeepers, because prayer is the only way to stay warm with God. Cold days are coming for the church. We need to know how to keep the flame of faith in Jesus Christ alive in the longhouse so that other people can gather next to us and get warm. ([1 Kings- digital edition](#) or hardbound copy [1 Kings - Reformed Expository Commentary](#)) (Bolding added)

J. C. Ryle on the practice of selfless prayer:

We are all selfish by nature, and our selfishness is very apt to stick to us, even when we are converted

I commend to you the importance of intercession in our prayers. We are all selfish by nature, and our selfishness is very apt to stick to us, even when we are converted. There is a tendency in us to think only of our own souls, our own spiritual conflicts, our own progress in religion, and to forget others. Against this tendency we all have need to watch and strive, and not least in our prayers. We should study to be of a public spirit. We should stir ourselves up to name other names besides our own before the throne of grace.... This is the highest charity. He loves me best who loves me in his prayers. This is for our soul's health. It enlarges our sympathies and expands our hearts. This is for the benefit of the church. The wheels of all machinery for extending the gospel are moved by prayer. (See [Practical Religion](#) and topic [A Call to Prayer](#))

Hudson Taylor, the pioneer missionary to China, was mystified by the numbers of souls being won to Christ at a particular mission station. He was mystified, that is, until he met a man back in England at the end of one of his public addresses. The man was so thoroughly conversant with that particular work that Taylor asked him how he knew so much about it. "Oh!" he replied, "the missionary there and I are old collegemates; for years we have regularly corresponded; he has sent me the names of inquirers and converts, and these I have daily taken to God in prayer."⁷ This was the secret: a man praying daily and definitely for specific conversions. (From E M Bounds [The Purpose of Prayer](#) page 53)

Alan Carr: How he prayed can help us to be more effective prayer warriors for the glory of God.

– He Was Humble – v. 42b, He bowed himself before the presence of the Lord. The man of God had stood tall as an ambassador of the Lord, now he bows low as an intercessor before the Lord! It would do us good to remember that God does not exist merely to answer our prayers or fulfill our wishes. He is God and he will honor the person who comes into his presence humbly, 1 Pet. 5:5-6; James 4:6; 10

– He Was Specific – v. 43, James 5:17-18 tells us that Elijah was very specific in his prayer life. He did not waste time on mere generalities, but he prayed in faith specifically naming the things that needed to be done.

– He Was Earnest – Elijah was sincere about his prayer, James 5:16-18. He did not take a spiritless attitude toward his prayer life, but he prayed with fervency. His soul was moved with the need of the people. He felt the pressure of the thing he prayed for!

– He Was Persistent – v. 43, eight times the servant is told to go and look toward the sea. Seven times there is nothing there. Yet, Elijah kept praying and kept believing. He did not allow the outward circumstance affect his inward assurance that the answer was on the way. He was persistent!

– He Was Expectant – v. 41, 43 – Elijah kept praying and kept sending his servant to look to the sea. Why? Because he was operating in faith in the promise of God. He knew the rains were coming. He was expecting big things from God! (Note: the word for "rain" in verse 41 refers to a heavy downpour. Elijah was expecting big things from a big God!)

– He Was Answered – v. 44 – On the eighth trip, the servant saw a little cloud rising out of the sea. When this news is brought to Elijah, the prophet knew that God's answer had come. His prayers had prevailed and God was sending the rains!

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel.

Such differences obtain still. The children of this world and the children of light are manifest. What though the bodies of four hundred and fifty prophets lay slain in the gorge of the Kishon; or that by one great act Elijah had hewn down the upas tree, the deadly, influence of which had corrupted Palestine; or that the long-expected rain was in the air— yet Ahab must eat and drink. These are the things which the children of the world seek after. Watch and pray, lest you enter into this temptation. Let appetite be kept well in hand— your servant, not your master; and see to it that you are capable of such profound and absorbing interest in the things of the Kingdom of God, as to count the gratification of physical desire unworthy to be compared with the high delights of service, prayer, and communion with the unseen.

Though he must have been exhausted with the excitements and efforts of the day, Elijah must spend the evening hour with God. Though he knew that the rain was near, he felt that his prayers were a needful condition for its bestowment. Though any part of Carmel might have become his oratory, he sought the lonely solitudes of the summit with the outspread sea before him, that his soul might hold undisturbed vigil, and that he might see over the wide expanse of the ocean the first tokens of the coming answer. His attitude denoted his humility. His repeated injunction to the lad, his perseverance. His success approved his faith.

Stand, O suppliant soul, on the highest point of expectant hope; see the hurrying answer, which was being prepared from pools and lakes and seas, long ere thy prayer began. "Before they call, I will answer."

1 Kings 18:43 He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times.

- **Go up now, look toward the sea:** Ps 5:3 Lu 18:1
- **Go back:** Ge 32:26 Hab 2:3 Lu 18:7 Eph 6:18 Heb 10:36,37

LOOK AT THE SEA

He said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” Rain normally came on Carmel from the west, from the Mediterranean Sea.

So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” (return) **seven times** - Elijah had already proclaimed in 1 Kings 18:41 that he heard “the sound of the abundance of rain,” yet there was no visible sign of rain. **Seven times** being symbolic of completion or divine fulfillment (creation in 7 days, walk 7x around Jericho, etc). Note that this also signifies Elijah was showing persistence (and faith) in his prayer.

Spurgeon - True faith can wait; her importunity gathers strength from her Lord's delays, and her expectation remains still on its watch-tower. It is a brave thing to be able to say, “Go again seven times.

NET NOTE - points out that "Several times in this chapter those addressed by Elijah obey his orders. In 1Ki 18:20 and 1Ki 18:42 Ahab does as instructed, in 1Ki 18:26 and 1Ki 18:28 the prophets follow Elijah's advice, and in 1Ki 18:30, 34, 40, 43 the people and servants do as they are told. By juxtaposing Elijah's commands with accounts of those commands being obeyed, the narrator emphasizes the authority of the LORD's prophet."

Matthew Poole - “*Go again seven times*; let us not be dejected for some disappointments, but continue to wait upon God, who will answer me, and that speedily.”

Spurgeon - Morning and Evening -

“Go again seven times.”—1 Kings 18:43

Success is certain when the Lord has promised it. Although you may have pleaded month after month without evidence of answer, it is not possible that the Lord should be deaf when his people are earnest in a matter which concerns his glory. The prophet on the top of Carmel continued to wrestle with God, and never for a moment gave way to a fear that he should be non-suited in Jehovah's courts. Six times the servant returned, but on each occasion no word was spoken but “Go again.” We must not dream of unbelief, but hold to our faith even to seventy times seven. Faith sends expectant hope to look from Carmel's brow, and if nothing is beheld, she sends again and again. So far from being crushed by repeated disappointment, faith is animated to plead more fervently with her God. She is humbled, but not abashed: her groans are deeper, and her sighings more vehement, but she never relaxes her hold or stays her hand. It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer, but believing souls have learned to be submissive, and to find it good to wait for as well as upon the Lord. Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself, and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation: deadly blows are thus struck at our corruption, and the chambers of imagery are cleansed. The great danger is lest men should faint, and miss the blessing. Reader, do not fall into that sin, but continue in prayer and watching. At last the little cloud was seen, the sure forerunner of torrents of rain, and even so with you, the token for good shall surely be given, and you shall rise as a prevailing prince to enjoy the mercy you have sought. Elijah was a man of like passions with us: his power with God did not lie in his own merits. If his believing prayer availed so much, why not yours? Plead the precious blood with unceasing importunity, and it shall be with you according to your desire.

1 Kings 18:44 It came about at the seventh time, that he said, ‘**Behold**, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.’ And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’”

- **a cloud as small**: Job 8:7 Zec 4:10
- **Prepare**: 1Sa 6:7,10 Mic 1:13

THE SEVENTH LOOK REVEALS A SMALL CLOUD

It came about at the seventh time, that he said, ‘**Behold**, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.’ And

he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’” Elijah has been praying and on the seventh time God answers.

Tony Merida says "let's collect some application from this prayer warrior, Elijah. We have already noted some from his "fire prayer." We need to (1) have a relationship with the living God, (2) seek the glory of God, and (3) pray for rebels to turn to God. Now, in verses 41–46, we may add the need to (4) get alone with God, (5) pray with the promises of God, and (6) keep on asking to receive from God....Finally, he persists in prayer until the rain falls, reminding us of Jesus' words, "Keep asking" (Matt 7:7–10). Pray persistently! Paul says to pray constantly (1 Thess 5:17). Don't stop praying for your lost friend or family member. Don't stop praying for the fire of revival to fall on your city. Don't stop praying for God to grant you wisdom, boldness, and faith. Sometimes God answers immediately, but often we must persist in prayer until we see the clouds forming. (See [Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Kings](#))

TSK - {Kekaph ish,} "like the hollow of a man's hand;" in the form of a hand bent, the concave side downmost. Mr. Bruce mentions a similar cloud in Abyssinia, as attending the inundation of the Nile. "Every morning, about nine, a small cloud, not above four feet broad, appears in the east, whirling violently round, as if upon an axis; but arrived near the zenith, it first abates its motion, then loses its form, and extends itself greatly, and seems to call up vapours from all opposite quarters. These clouds having attained nearly the same height, rush against each other with great violence, and put me always in mind of Elijah foretelling rain on Mount Carmel."

David Guzik- Charles Spurgeon used this text as an illustration of the small signs that precede a mighty work of God. He spoke of four "certain signs and tokens for good which prayerful faith clearly perceives when an awakening, a genuine revival is about to come." Christians should regard the following things as clouds, **as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea**

- A growing dissatisfaction with the present state of things, and an increasing anxiety among the members of the church for the salvation of souls.
- When this anxiety leads believers to be exceedingly earnest and importunate in prayer.
- When ministers begin to take counsel one with another, and to say, "What must we do?"
- When we shall see the doctrine of the individual responsibility of each Christian fully felt and carried out into individual action.

Ian Paisley - The Great Example of Prayer

"It came to pass at the seventh time" 1 Kings 18:44

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly.

Elijah had energy to sprint (see verse 46) but he had also the energy to supplicate. He had beaten a well-marked path to the throne of Grace. His power in prayer was manifested in his cry at the altar for God's answering fire, His perseverance in prayer was demonstrated in his cry for rain. We need to follow his example.

I. The Example of His Experience

Elijah had an experience of God answering His prayers, He saw heaven shut up for three and a half years. He saw the fire fell in answer to his prayers. His past experiences drove him to his knees. In the matter of our personal salvation we too have experienced God answering prayer. Let us follow on in the track of Elijah.

II. The Example of His Expectancy

The command to his servant was to look towards the sea. We must not only plead, we must stand upon our watchtower and watch and wait.

Vance Havner - A Cloud Like A Man's Hand"

After the amazing miracle on Carmel, Elijah bids Ahab get up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain—the long drought is about to be broken. There is yet no sign in the sky, but Elijah speaks in faith. Then, the prophet goes up on top of Carmel and casts himself upon the ground, putting his face between his knees. He bids his servant go look toward the sea for a sign of rain. The servant goes, but sees nothing. Elijah bids him go seven times, and with the seventh trip comes the report, "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand" (1 Kings 18:44). Elijah immediately sends word to Ahab and starts toward Jezreel.

Here are significant truths for us. Elijah lives in confidence that there will be rain. At the proper time, he is in contrition, his head between his knees. He uses common sense, bidding his servant look toward the sea where the cloud would be most likely to arise. He is not disappointed with the first report, but sends the servant back seven times in patient continuance. Most of us give up and go

down the Carmel of prayer when the first report shows no sign of rain! Naaman must wash seven times. The child of the Shunammite, whom Elisha restored, sneezed seven times. Jesus bids us forgive a brother seven times a day if he so offend us. We need to learn the lesson of God's sevens.

Finally comes the report of the little cloud like a man's hand, and Elijah acted upon it immediately. God often answers us with a little cloud like a man's hand, and we do not act upon so small a prospect because we want something stupendous and spectacular to happen. We are not willing to fare forth upon the encouragement of a little cloud; we want the thunder and lightnings of some dramatic manifestation. Consequently, there are no showers of blessing.

Moody and Sankey undertook their first evangelistic mission to England upon the invitation of two rather obscure men. One of them had died when they arrived. Their first meeting was attended by a bare handful. It was truly a cloud like a man's hand. But they did not leave Carmel in disgust; they moved forward in faith until God sent a downpour of the Spirit in the land.

Some of us still are huddled on Carmel, our heads between our knees, waiting for more assurance, when we ought to girdle up our loins and be on our way toward Jezreel. We read that when Elijah acted upon the report, "The hand of the Lord was on Elijah" (v. 46). They that wait on the Lord shall run and not be weary, and the prophet was enabled to run this course because he had waited. But remember that we are not to wait all the time: when the cloud rises it is time to run.

God does not answer always with dazzling, tremendous certainties. Sometimes He comes, not with earthquake and wind and fire, but with the still, small voice. Sometimes the answer is not encouraging, it is only a little cloud, but He means for us to act upon it. Are we willing to take the cloud for the rain and count Him faithful Who has promised? We want too much guaranteed in advance, we forget that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. God does not spoil us by granting too much at a time: He tries us with a little cloud to see whether we start for Jezreel or stay on Carmel.

Do not run before the Lord and take matters into your own hands before you see the cloud. But when it arises, gird up your loins and set out running. The hand of the Lord shall be upon you; you shall run and not be weary.

1 Kings 18:45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

- **there was a heavy shower** 1Ki 18:39,40 Nu 25:8 2Sa 21:14
- **Ahab:** 1Ki 21:1,23 Jos 19:18 2Sa 2:9 2Ki 9:16

AHAB RETREATS TO HIS WINTER PALACE AT JEZREEL

In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower- God answers Elijah's prayer, not with a little dew but with a heavy shower. So all the people at Mt Carmel that day not only witnessed the miracle of fire falling from heaven but also the miracle of rain falling from heaven. In His mercy God was demonstrating to the people who were hesitating to worship Him Alone that He was the only living God. Sadly there was no obvious revival in the Northern Kingdom despite the clear demonstration of Yahweh's power.

THOUGHT - Idols are "sticky" and once you begin to grasp them, it is difficult to release your grip! This principle was true then and is still true today. "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." (1Co 10:14+).



JEZREEL VALLEY ([Wikipedia article](#))

And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel - The winter palace was about 17 miles from Mount Carmel.

MacArthur: A town located in the tribal allotment of Issachar at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, N of Mt. Gilboa, about 55 mi. N of Jerusalem. Jezreel was Ahab's winter capital (see 21:1), situated between 15 to 25 mi. E of the Carmel Range. (See [MacArthur Study Bible, 2nd Edition: Unleashing God's](#))

Peter Pett: Ahab did what Elijah had said, but it was not soon enough for the heavens grew black with cloud and wind, and there was drenching rain. And once that rain began to fall it would turn the road into a sea of mud, in which Ahab's chariot would find the going hard, as he made his way towards his chariot city of Jezreel.

Dale Ralph Davis: "Then a heavy rain came" (v. 45). Rain meant life, water for soil, people, and livestock, grain for food, grass for animals (cf. 18:5). Yahweh then is the God of dramatic intervention (vv. 31–39) and of daily provision. Israel's apostasy and divided mind had forfeited these material benefits (Deut. 11:16–17; 28:23–24; Lev. 26:19–20). Now Yahweh graciously restores them. Wallace is right: 'Israel is to learn again this day that the God who sends fire to convert their hearts will also send rain to refresh and feed their bodies.' Yahweh is the God of the spectacular and of the routine, who sends both fire and food (see Ps. 65:9–13). Whenever we fail to acknowledge these latter down-to-earth provisions as Yahweh's gifts, we apostatize to naturalism (a more contemporary, sophisticated form of Baal worship). Whenever we begin to assume that they are ours by some inalienable right, we have become blind to the Father's hand. We forget that the common is special. ([1 Kings: The Wisdom And the Folly](#))

1 Kings 18:46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

- **Then the hand of the LORD** 2Ki 3:15 Isa 8:11 Eze 1:3 3:14
- **he girded:** 2Ki 4:29 9:1 Job 38:3 Jer 1:17 Eph 6:14 1Pe 1:13
- **outran Ahab to Jezreel:** Mt 22:21 1Pe 2:17

ELIJAH'S MIRACULOUS "MARATHON"

Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah - The good **hand of the LORD** signifies supernaturally empowerment to run fast and with endurance. See discussion of [The Hand of the Lord](#). This was an obviously supernaturally empowered 17 mile cross-country run.

William Barnes: The Hebrew literally says "the hand of Yahweh" was upon him (cf. 2 Kgs 3:15); the idiom connotes divine power invigorating the prophet, giving him strength to run the roughly 17 miles (27 km) to Ahab's estate at Jezreel. (See [1-2 Kings - Page 160](#))

And he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel - **Girded up his loins** is that of gathering up the robes and tucking them

into the sash or belt so that they do not get in the way of the legs when running (or working or fighting). Assuming Ahab witnessed Elijah running, he would have now seen overwhelming evidence that Elijah was God's prophet and that God was the true God.

Spurgeon has an interesting note - To shew his loyalty, he acted as a running footman. Stern as he was in his obedience to Jehovah, he was willing to serve the king if the king would serve the Lord.

Philip Ryken makes an interesting observation - In the ancient Near East, kings were almost always preceded by a company of foot servants to herald their approach. To run ahead of a royal person, therefore, was to be subservient to him.....Elijah submitted himself to the governing authority of King Ahab by running ahead of him to Jezreel. His zeal for the King of kings demanded respect for the king of Israel. This shows that for all his boldness, Elijah was a man of deep humility. Indeed, these two virtues are closely related: only the person who is humble before God has the courage to stand up for God in a hostile world. ([1 Kings- digital edition](#) or hardbound copy [1 Kings - Reformed Expository Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe - The Lord not only proved that he was the true and living God, but He also put His approval on the ministry of His servant Elijah. Elijah had neither chariots nor retainers to drive them, but he did have the power of the Lord; and he ran ahead of Ahab and reached Jezreel ahead of the king, a distance of about seventeen miles. This was quite a feat for an older man and in itself was another sign to the people that God's powerful hand was upon His servant. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Spurgeon - In driving piles, a machine is used by which a huge weight is lifted up and then made to fall upon the head of the pile. Of course the higher the weight is lifted the more powerful is the blow which it gives when it descends. Now, if we would tell upon our age and come down upon society with ponderous blows, we must see to it that we are uplifted as near to God as possible. All our power will depend upon the elevation of our spirits. Prayer, meditation, devotion, communion, are like a windlass to wind us up aloft: it is not lost time which we spend in such sacred exercises, for we are thus accumulating force, so that when we come down to our actual labor for God, we shall descend with an energy unknown to those to whom communion is unknown.