

**1 Kings 18:17-21** <sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. <sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

- It has been some 60 years since the revolt in 931 BC that split the Jewish nation into the 10 tribes of Israel in the north and the 2 tribes of Judah in the south. While Judah will have a handful of good kings during the time of the divided kingdom, Israel will have none; her backslidden rulers plunge her further into sin and further away from Jehovah the longer they are permitted to reign.
- Ahab is the seventh king of Israel, and he will reign for 22 years from his capital city, Samaria. He has a taste for splendid architecture, which he will indulge by building an ivory house and several cities. In addition to his capital in Samaria, Ahab also will erect a royal residence at Jezreel, built partially on land he steals from Naboth after having that loyal subject put to death on false charges.
- His worst mistake will be his politically-arranged marriage to the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. This heathen princess named Jezebel so controls her weak husband that he soon establishes a temple in Samaria for the worship of the god Baal, and high places in honor of the goddess Asherah, where orgies of legalized vice, perverted sex and human sacrifice are common.
  - **1 Kings 16:33** *And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*
- The priests have either succumbed into silence, or fled to Judah in search of a place where they will not have to compromise righteousness to avoid persecution. The prophets of Jehovah have been persecuted and slain or escaped only by being hid in caves. No godly leadership is left in Israel!
- The licentious character of Baal worship has a subtle attraction for the austere Hebrews who are bound to serve a holy God under a chaste and rigorous moral code. So strong is the tide of corruption that it appears as if the knowledge of the true God will be lost among the Israelites.
- **BUT JUST IN TIME GOD RAISES UP A PROPHET NAMED ELIJAH!**
  - "When sin reaches the high water mark, grace overflows its banks."
  - **Isaiah 59:19b** *When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*
- Elijah is basically "a nobody from nowhere." Referred to only as "the Tishbite," he is from the small town of Tishbeh in Gilead. We know absolutely nothing else about his family or birth, but his name means "My God is Jah (Jehovah)." With God on his side, he didn't need to be a somebody! He will eventually become the most famous and dramatic of Israel's prophets, a powerful man of God.
- He literally came out of nowhere three and a half years ago when he appeared suddenly before wicked King Ahab with a pronouncement from Jehovah.
  - **1 Kings 17:1** *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*
- Baal was the Canaanite god of the elements (sun, rain, fire, storm) and was often pictured with thunderbolts in hand, standing on the back of a bull, or in the form of a bull himself. Baal became king of the gods by defying Mot, the god of death, who had killed him and taken him to the underworld. Baal was called back to life by the goddess Anat, who slashed herself with knives as a sign of mourning. Thus, Baal worship involved this grotesque and bloody ritual.
- This kind of heathen worship had been prevalent in the nations around Israel, but God's concern was that His people were now "blending" the worship of Jehovah with the worship of Baal. Baal was a "multiple deity," with each locality having their own Baal whose full name they kept secret (Baal-Shamim, Lord of the skies; Baal-Hammon, Lord of wealth; Baal-Gad, Lord of good fortune). Since the word Baal meant "master" or "lord," the Israelites even used this name to speak of Jehovah, the Lord! It was this kind of association, assimilation and compromise that God hated!
  - **Isaiah 42:8** *I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*

- Because of Baal's supposed power over the natural elements, the pronouncement of Elijah must have seemed like the raving of a lunatic to King Ahab. But crop failures and the full horrors of a nationwide famine soon convinced him otherwise!
  - **James 5:17** *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*
- Over the past forty-two months, while Israel has been starving, Elijah has been sustained by the miraculous power of God. First fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, and then kept by the widow of Zarephath, he has never gone hungry. This widow was a Phoenician of Jezebel's own race, by birth a believer in idolatry. Jezebel's comrade was unwittingly aiding Jehovah's champion!
- Zarephath means "smelting furnace." When God puts you in the furnace, He will supply your need!
- When Elijah appears before Ahab once again, the king's resentment boils over into a cutting accusation. The bold prophet quickly turns the tables with a rebuke from the Lord.
  - **1 Kings 18:17-18** <sup>17</sup> *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? <sup>18</sup> 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.*
- Facing the wrath of this prophet-killing king, Elijah has only two options - **RUIN** or **REVIVAL**. He issues a challenge to Ahab that is so one-sided the king cannot resist it. Elijah, the nobody from nowhere, against 850 prophets in front of the entire nation. Ahab just knows that he can't lose!
  - **1 Kings 18:19** *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*
- On Mount Carmel, Elijah issues his challenge to the nation and his appeal to the undecided.
  - **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.*
- In the Hebrew, the question is even more impressive: "**How long will you limp on two knees?**" (like a cripple not able to bear weight on either leg), or "**How long will you hop on two branches?**" (like a bird hopping from bough to bough, never still and consequently never building a nest).
- Most of the people wanted to worship Baal and God at the same time. The worship of idols was not proposed as a substitute for, but as an accompaniment to the worship of Jehovah! They had no objection to dividing their allegiance, as long as they kept on good terms with the ruling powers!
- They wanted to do the impossible and amalgamate opposites, but this God would not allow! Two religions which are diametrically opposed cannot both be right. You cannot enjoy the smile of the world and the "well done" of Christ at the same time! Divided service is dishonoring to God, as it puts Him on the same level as Baal ... and He will not share His glory!
- The longer men halt, the harder it is to decide between two opinions. Israel could not avoid making a choice, because the longer they waited, the tighter the cords of corruption drew them to the side of Baal. Their indecision was making a decision for them! It was not **REFUSAL** of Jehovah, but **NEGLECT** of Jehovah, that was their problem.
  - **Hebrews 2:3** *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; <sup>4</sup> God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*
- The contest Elijah puts forth could not have been more advantageous to the prophets of Baal:
  - **1 Kings 18:23-24** <sup>23</sup> *Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: <sup>24</sup> And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.*
- Baal was the god of fire – this should have been no contest! The priests enjoyed a vast majority in numbers, the patronage of their rulers, popular favor with the people, and impressive glittering vestments. They also got to petition their god first, and spend nearly the whole day in prayer. They were passionately earnest, furiously persistent, fiercely religious, and undeniably sincere!
- **BUT IN THIS TERRIBLY ONE-SIDED CONTEST, THEY STILL LOST!**
- Other tests might have been chosen which would have been more favorable to Elijah. But no, he must march right into the enemy's territory and challenge him in his very citadel! Is Baal the god of

the elements? Then withhold the rain and call down fire! It has always been that way with God – remember the book of Exodus?

- Do the Egyptians worship the Nile River? Let the sacred waters be turned into blood!
- Do they make a religion out of physical cleanliness? Let them be overrun with vermin!
- Do they idolize the goat, the ram and the bull? Let the cattle perish by a Divine scourge!
- Do they worship the sun gods? Let their country be covered with impenetrable darkness!
- Do they worship Osiris, the Giver of Life? Let the firstborn child in every home perish!
- God has no problem working on the enemy's turf! **The Almighty is never at a disadvantage!**
  
- After dressing their sacrifice and placing it on the altar, the prophets of Baal called on the name of their pluralistic god from morning till noon, leaping up and down at the altar. At noon, Elijah began to mock them and they began to cut themselves in frenzied worship, adding their blood to that of the sacrifice. They prophesied until the time of the evening sacrifice, but to no avail!
  - **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.*
  - **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.*
  
- The Bible makes particular note that it was at "the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice" that Elijah finally got his turn! (verses 29 & 36) The evening sacrifice was offered daily at 3:00 p.m. This offering was associated with separation in the nation of Israel:
  - The evening sacrifice itself was to separate the people from the penalty of their sins.
  - It had its origins in the first Passover lambs when Israel was separated from Egypt.
  - David prayed for cleansing, that the lifting of his hands would be as the evening sacrifice.
  - Ezra's prayer of reconsecration for Israel was made at the time of the evening sacrifice.
  - Jesus, the Lamb of God, cried "It is finished" at 3:00 p.m. and separated us from our sins!
  
- The first thing Elijah does is repair the altar of the Lord that was broken down. It was a forsaken relic of patriarchal times, but he knows **the same altar is vital for today's victory**. He builds it again with twelve stones, for even though the kingdom is divided, this miracle will have significance for all twelve tribes of Israel. He dresses the sacrifice in the same way the priests of Baal dressed their sacrifice. BUT HERE THE SIMILARITY STOPS!
- Elijah digs a trench about his altar, and drenches the sacrifice and the altar with twelve barrels full of water, until the trench is filled. **He has put himself at a distinct disadvantage, for his way is so much "harder" than the prophets' way.** But only then does he offer his prayer to the Lord:
  - **1 Kings 18:36-37** <sup>36</sup> *And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. <sup>37</sup> Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*
  
- The reaction from Heaven is immediate – and convincing! **The contest that could never be settled with words is now settled by Divine demonstration!** Anyone can build an altar, but God only sanctifies "His altar" with the fire! The fiery breath of the Almighty settles the question.
  - **1 Kings 18:38-39** <sup>38</sup> *Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.*
  
- **FIRE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SIGN OF GOD'S ACCEPTANCE.** Divine fire marked Abraham's covenant with Jehovah, Moses' call to lead Israel at the burning bush, the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the consecration of Solomon's Temple. The altar fire – not kindled by any human hand or replenished by any material fuel – was the sign of Divine approval.
- **GOD ACCEPTS ONLY ONE PARTICULAR SACRIFICE!** Elijah is thus within his rights to do something terribly "intolerant." He orders all the prophets slain! But since they have been killing Israelites through their religion, he has actually averted more bloodshed than he has caused.
- God's people have never been allowed to compete with the religious world on equal terms! Instead, God gives to "Baal" every advantage and reduces His own resources to a minimum, in order to show that **TRUTH AT ITS LOWEST IS STRONGER THAN ERROR AT ITS HIGHEST!**

- The sin and worldliness of man-made religion is allowed to parade itself, employ its uttermost resources, and consume the entire day while true holiness apparently takes a backseat. Truth looks to be in the minority, but **THE REAL MAJORITY IS WHERE GOD IS!**
- Remember that any man-made religion, evolved out of the spirit of the age, will always command a large following of sincere and earnest people. But earnestness is not everything! **Unless the altar is built God's way, there is "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."**
- When God displays His superior power, it is not just convincing to the false prophets, but to His Elijahs also. **God proves that His truth owes absolutely nothing to the world's favor or help.** The earthly medium through which His grace shines must be as plain as possible!
  - **1 Corinthians 1:25-29** <sup>25</sup> Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. <sup>26</sup> For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: <sup>27</sup> But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: <sup>29</sup> That no flesh should glory in his presence.
- **In the New Testament, we are commanded to offer our very lives in sacrifice to a holy God. But God only accepts ("consumes") the sacrifice if it is done HIS WAY!**
  - **Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
  - **Hebrews 13:16** But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
  - **1 Peter 2:5** Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

<b>ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE</b>	<b>APOSTOLIC SACRIFICE</b>
• drought in the land, brought on by wickedness	• last days full of increasing wickedness
• Elijah hidden and sustained by power of God	• true church is the world's "best kept secret"
• Elijah accused of troubling the nation	• Apostolics accused of "rocking the boat"
• man-made, idolatrous, flesh-pleasing religion worshipping pluralistic god named Baal ("Lord")	• religions with man-made doctrines, easy on the flesh, worshipping a Babylonian pluralistic trinity
• the people are willing to serve both gods, but Elijah ("my God is Jehovah") issues a challenge	• denominations willing to "live and let live" until the "people of the name" are unwilling to compromise
• religion impressive with huge numbers, allowed to parade its gorgeous vestments and take preeminence throughout the day	• the largest crowds, huge events and beautiful buildings seem to belong to other religions, and to them is given the "first part" of the day
• prophets are sincere and earnest, but there is no answer and no fire for their sacrifice	• many religious people are sincere, but God doesn't bless sincerity, He blesses sincere obedience!
• they add their blood to the sacrifice and dance around it, but to no avail – it is not complete!	• they pride themselves on their spirituality, as they "celebrate the sacrifice" (repentance)
• at the time of the evening sacrifice ("separation") Elijah finally has his turn	• God has drawn a line of separation between the people of the name and other religions
<p><b>When Jesus said "whosoever will" He didn't mean "whoever wants to" – He meant "whoever obeys!"</b></p> <p><b>Mark 8:34</b> And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, <b>Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.</b></p> <p><b>Matthew 7:13-14</b> <sup>13</sup> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: <sup>14</sup> Because strait is the gate, and <b>narrow is the way</b>, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.</p> <p><b>Matthew 22:11-14</b> <sup>11</sup> And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: <sup>12</sup> And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>14</sup> <b>For many are called, but few are chosen.</b></p> <p><b>Revelation 17:14</b> These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.</p>	
<b>ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE</b>	<b>APOSTOLIC SACRIFICE</b>
• Elijah is definitely in the minority, but he wins the victory through God's power	• Truth has always been in the minority, but the real majority is where God's blessing resides!

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elijah repairs the old altar from patriarchal times; twelve stones represent all of Israel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yesterday's message will win today's victory; all men need to come to God at the same altar</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elijah's sacrifice looks the same as theirs, but he understands that it is not enough – he drenches the sacrifice with twelve barrels of water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elijah's sacrifice starts the same way (repentance), but God's method is to "baptize" the sacrifice ("he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved")</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the fire of God falls and consumes the sacrifice to confirm Elijah's method!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Holy Ghost baptism – with "fire" – is the Divine seal of acceptance ("our God is a consuming fire")</li> </ul>
<p><b>John the Baptist used the phrase "the Holy Ghost and fire" and there were "tongues like as of fire" on the Day of Pentecost. WHAT DOES THE FIRE MEAN? Fire supplies power, it transforms, it refines, it purifies and illuminates. The "Holy Ghost and fire" is the baptism of the Spirit ACCOMPANIED BY THE POWER TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE!</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The God that answers by fire – let Him be God!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The God that answers by "changed lives" ...!</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elijah "intolerantly" has the false prophets killed to silence their message in Israel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new birth message is an intolerant one! It allows no other message to exist beside it!</li> </ul>

- **Now Elijah, just because you have the right message doesn't mean you can take your ease!**
- The outpouring of rain for Israel was now made possible because God's man had offered the proper sacrifice! The latter rain is possible because of the preaching of Apostolic truth! The rain falls on everyone, but never forget that the Spirit is given to lead men into all truth!
  - **1 Kings 18:41** *And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.*
  - **Acts 2:16-17** <sup>16</sup> *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; <sup>17</sup> And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*
  - **John 16:13** *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*
- **PEOPLE OF THE NAME, THERE IS STILL LOTS OF PRAYING TO DO!**
- While Ahab feasts and takes his ease, the true prophet is on his face before God for the nation!
  - **1 Kings 18:42-44** <sup>42</sup> *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, <sup>43</sup> And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. <sup>44</sup> And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.*
- **PEOPLE OF THE NAME, THERE WILL STILL BE OPPOSITION AND DISCOURAGEMENT!**
- Jezebel is not impressed by Elijah's message, so she threatens to kill him. He flees to a juniper tree and prays to die, but God sends him on a 40-day (TESTING!) journey to Mount Horeb. In response to God's question "What doest thou here?" Elijah makes his famous complaint to God:
  - **1 Kings 19:10** *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*
- God shows Elijah a strong wind, a fierce earthquake and a raging fire, but then speaks to the prophet in a still, small voice. Elijah answers God again (probably weaker this time!), and God tells him there is still work for him to do. **"Elijah, you should have learned by now that the power is not in the big impressive outward things, but in my voice! Baal has no voice! Jezebel may rage, but Jehovah reigns! I only accept one kind of sacrifice! Oh, and by the way ..."**
  - **1 Kings 19:18** *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*
- **YOU ARE NOT ALONE! GOD ALWAYS HAS A REMNANT!**