

**Connecting Through the Word
Which God Are You Serving?
1 Kings 17 & 18**

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Kings 18:17-24

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”

18 And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because

you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals.

19 Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

20 So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

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.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men.

23 Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it.

24 And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.”

Today, as we study through the Bible we are introduced to one of the great prophets of the Old Testament! Elijah

In 1 Kings 17 he shows up out of nowhere. He is from the small village of Tishbe located in the northern hills of Gilead. He is called Elijah the Tishbite.

His name, Elijah, means, Jehovah is God!

Elijah is mentioned almost 70 times in the Old Testament and 30 times in the New Testament.

Jesus compared John the Baptist to Elijah. That John was partially fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi. In the very last verses of the Old Testament....

Malachi 4:4-6

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Interestingly in the Bible, Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets.

The Law tells us what God expects and demands of us while the Prophet declares we have broken

God's laws and we better repent or judgement will fall on us.

On the Mt of Transfiguration, Elijah and Moses both appeared and were conversing with Jesus about His death of the cross.

The Apostle Paul mentions Elijah in Romans.

Romans 11:2-4

God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

The last mention of Elijah in the Bible is found in

James 5:17-18

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 land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

James uses the story of Elijah to encourage and teach us to pray.

In 1 Kings 17 we learn that before Elijah could confront the wicked king Ahab and all the false prophets of Baal and call fire and rain down out of heaven, he first needed a time of trial and preparation.

He is fed by ravens at the Brook Cherith which is east of the Jordan. But after a while, the Brook dried up and he was told to go to a widow lady in the village of Zarephath. This village was located near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in present day Lebanon.

He was told this widow lady would provide for him. He found her gathering sticks to build one last fire to cook one last meal for herself and her son. Elijah asked her to cook the meal for himself first which she does... then tells her that the bin of flour and the jar of oil would not fail until the day that rain comes. When she gave what she had left, there was enough for everyone in her household for many days.

When you put the Lord first and His Word in your life there will always be provision for you and your family.

But then her son died and she immediately blamed the prophet for bringing her past sins to remembrance.

Elijah took the boy to a separate room and prayed over him three times and God heard his prayer and brought life back into the child.

This was all in preparation for the confrontation with the forces of evil and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel in Chapter 18.

If you want to make a difference in the world you are living like Elijah – “a man of like passions...”, you need to notice his “standing”.

1 Kings 17:1

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, ...”

He stood as one—

1. Who Believed in God.

His faith gave him the victory over all fear of Ahab. Those who have set God before them will not play the coward in the presence of any earthly monarch. It was this consciousness of the presence of God that stiffened the moral backbone of Luther and John Knox. After Pentecost Peter and John were filled with the same holy boldness as Elijah (Acts 4:19, 20).

2. Accepted by God.

Elijah had yielded Himself unto God that he might be a channel through which His words might come to the hearts of the ungodly, and through whom the power of God might be manifested. The Lord accepted his offer, and filled him as an earthen vessel with His divine treasure (2 Cor. 4:6, 7). He had got the victory with his God in secret, now he is rewarded openly. Many of God's notable servants have come suddenly out of unexpected places.

3. In Fellowship with God.

The whole force of Elijah's moral and spiritual being was on the side of the God of Israel. There was a oneness of purpose between them. All idea of self-seeking was withered up by the fire of Jehovah's presence. Those who would serve the Lord will have very unpleasant work to do if they are careful about their own personal interests and honour. The secret of courage and power in the work of Christ lies in knowing His will and delighting to do it.

4. Who Waited on God.

As the eye of the maid is turned to her mistress, watching for the next indication of her will, so stood the life of Elijah before the Lord God of Israel. So may our souls wait on Him.

The Moravian motto is most suggestive with the ox standing between an altar and a plough, "Ready for either." Ready for either sacrifice or service, as the Lord may appoint.

But Elijah's standing before God was not in idleness, but in the fearless attitude of one whose life was a protest against the popular sin of the nation—idolatry. "Let your light so shine" (Matt. 5:16).

5. Who had the Authority of God.

He speaks as if the power of God and the resources of Heaven were at his disposal. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." The keys of Heaven had been given to him, and the treasures of dew and rain would only be poured out when he was pleased to open the door. This was a terrible and most effective weapon which God had put into the hand of His faithful servant. Those who fight the battles of the Lord are never sent to warfare on their own charges. Is not the gift of the Holy Spirit equally effective now for the carrying out of God's purposes in the reclaiming of men to the fellowship of His Son? Elijah, like Jesus Christ, spoke as one having authority, because he had the authority of God for that which he spoke.

Elijah was a man "subject to like passions as we are." But have we the faith of Elijah? (Mark 9:23).

In 1 Kings 18, we have one of the most told stories of the Bible. Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal and praying and calling fire down out of heaven.

For three years, Elijah had hidden himself at the brook Cherith and then with the widow in Zarephath, but now he was commanded to "show himself" to wicked King Ahab. But along with God's command was God's promise that He would send rain and end the drought that He had sent to punish the idolatrous nation for over three years.

Obadiah meets Elijah (vv. 1-16).

Students don't agree on the character of Obadiah, the governor of the palace. A man of great authority, he was administrator of the royal palace as well as steward and supervisor of whatever estates the king possessed. But 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! Why should he tell the king and queen what he was doing for the Lord? The Lord had put Obadiah in the palace to use his God-given authority to support the faithful prophets at a time when openly serving the Lord was a dangerous thing.

The king and Obadiah were searching the country for grass and other foliage that could be used to feed the horses and mules used in the army. Ahab wasn't especially concerned about the people of the land, but he wanted his army to be strong just in case of an invasion. It's remarkable that the king was willing to leave the safety and comfort of the palace to scour the land for food for the animals. It seems that when Ahab was away from Jezebel, he was a much better man.

The Lord led Elijah to the road that Obadiah was using and the two men met. Obadiah had such reverence for Elijah and his ministry that he fell on his face on the earth and called him, "My lord, Elijah." But Elijah's aim was to confront wicked King Ahab, and he wasn't about to go looking for him; so he commissioned Obadiah to tell the king where he was. We can understand Obadiah's concern lest the king come back and not find the prophet. During the three years Ahab had been searching for Elijah, no doubt he had followed up many false leads, and Ahab wasn't interested in wasting time and energy at such a critical point in the nation's history. Furthermore, Ahab might punish Obadiah or even suspect him of being a follower of Elijah's God. But when Elijah assured the officer that he would remain there and wait for

the king, Obadiah went off to give Ahab the message.

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.

Elijah meets King Ahab (vv. 17-19).

Everything that Elijah did was according to the Word of the Lord (v. 36), including confronting the king and inviting him and the priests of Baal to a meeting on Mount Carmel.

Ahab called Elijah "the troublemaker in Israel," but it was really Ahab whose sins had caused the problems in the land. Surely Ahab knew the terms of the covenant and understood that the blessings of the Lord depended on the obedience of the king and his people.

Both Jesus and Paul would be called "troublemakers" (Luke 23:5; Acts 16:20; 17:6), so Elijah was in good company.

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 (vv. 22, 26, 40).

The prophets of Baal meet the God of Israel (vv. 20-40).

Representatives were present from all ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom, and it was this group that Elijah addressed as the meeting began.

His purpose was not only to expose the false god Baal but also to bring the compromising people back to the Lord. Because of the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel, the people were "limping" between two opinions and trying to serve both Jehovah and Baal.

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.

Which God is Jehovah, the true and living God? Jesus tells us in Matthew 6 that we can't serve two masters. And then He identifies them. One of the masters is God and the other is money.

Today we don't have Baal worship. Worship of the sun god and his wife of fertility. But we do have earth day.

Jesus indicates that money can become a god in our lives. We can end up serving it instead of it serving us.

Someone said if you want to know where your heart is check your credit card statements or your check book bank statement.

Jesus said that where a man's treasure is there will be his heart also.

Why did Jesus chose to mention money because there are so many things that can become gods in our lives. Our jobs or vocation or position in the company, our education, our hobbies, our sports or even an other person. Anything that becomes more important or a greater priority in your life than God Himself becomes and idol.

So why money?

Money represents your life.

You exchange your life, your time, your skills for a pay check at the end of the week.

You exchanged your life for money.

Money is very important. You need money to buy food, to buy clothes and to provide heat and shelter for yourself and family.

There is nothing wrong with that. Is there?

A couple of things Jesus said.

In the same passage, Matthew 6, Jesus said your life is far more than the things money can buy or provide. Even the necessary things.

Jesus reminds us that the birds everyday are taken care of by God. Not even a sparrow falls without Him noticing.

The lilies of the field are beautiful and are grown by God and even Solomon's glory didn't compare to them.

The Gentiles and pagans make a priority of food, clothing and shelter.

But God's children should seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and then He would take care of all our needs and we shouldn't be worrying or be anxious about that.

Remember what Jesus told the brother who ask Jesus to make his brother share his inheritance with him.

Luke 12:15-21

15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

16 And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,

17 and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'

18 And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

First, Jesus said to beware or on guard against all covetousness!!!! One of the ten commandments.

Because your life does not consist in the abundance of the things you possess.

Then He told the story or parable of the rich farmer who began to accumulate great wealth and he decided to build bigger bank accounts so he could retire on easy street.

Jesus called him a fool!! Not because he was rich, but because he didn't know what to do with his money after he had acquired it.

Jesus said, that he was going to die that night and go into eternity and someone else would get all his wealth.

He was a fool because he decided to live for the temporal rather than the eternal.

The big issue that Jesus is really talking about is the temporal versus the eternal!!!!!!

James asks the question.

James 4:13-15

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—

14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

What is your life?

Your life is more than a few years on earth.

Compared to eternity it is only a mist, a vapor.

Baal worship was living a sensual life focused on the temporal blessings of pleasure and prosperity.

Depending on a made up god, the fire god, the sun god and his mistress to bring you good luck and success.

You then become a slave to the god of your making, and you are no longer free to serve the true and living God.

You can't serve both! You will end up tearing down the altars or worship and adoration and praise to the True God or simply let these altars fall apart because of lack of use and not given them the care and maintenance they deserve.

The god of Baal can't send rain when needed and can't answer to plead to send fire.

Moses told the people they must choose!

Exodus 32:26

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.

Joshua told the people they must choose!

Joshua 24:15

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land

you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Elijah asked the question.

"How long will you linger between two opinions, or two Gods - God or Baal?"

Jesus said you can't serve both.

A person who tries is what James was talking about in James 1 and 4. A double-souled person.

James 1:7-8

*For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is **a double-minded man**, unstable in all his ways.*

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

*8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, **you double-minded.***

9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

So what did Elijah do?

He gave the prophets of Baal the opportunity to prove that their god was real.

Elijah weighted the test in favor of the prophets of Baal. They could build their altar first, select their sacrifice and offer it first, and they could take all the time they needed to pray to Baal.

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.) By noon, Elijah was taunting the prophets of Baal because nothing had happened. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision" (Ps. 2:4). The prophets of Baal were dancing frantically around their altar and cutting themselves with swords and spears, but still nothing happened.

Elijah suggested that perhaps Baal couldn't hear them because he was deep in thought, or busy in some task, or even traveling. His words only made them become more fanatical, but nothing happened.

At three o'clock, the time of the evening sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, Elijah stepped forward and took charge.

Elijah rebuilt the Altar of God.

The place of worship.

The place of sacrifice.

The place of dedication and consecration.

The place of fellowship and communion.

Who originally built the altar that Elijah used? Probably a member of the believing remnant in Israel who privately worshiped the Lord. But the altar had been destroyed, probably by the prophets of Baal (19:10), so Elijah rebuilt it and sanctified it. By using twelve stones, he reaffirmed the spiritual unity of God's people in spite of their political division.

Elijah asked for four barrels of water to be poured on his altar and sacrifice and fill the trench around the altar.

To make sure that no one could accuse him or trickery with it being so dry.

To make another point also.

How valuable do you think water was at this time after 3 years of no rain?

They probably had to gather up the last drop of water they had available.

Remember when the rich man came to Jesus and ask about how to receive eternal life....

First He said, "Keep the commandments."

The man said he kept them all...

Then Jesus said, "Sell everything you have and give it to poor and come and follow me."

The man went away sad....

What you do with your money will prove which God you are serving!

Money represents your life and how you are spending or investing it. You can either spend and invest it on the temporal or you can spend and invest it on the eternal.

God has a test for all of us... in this regard.

In Malachi 3, it's called the tithe. The first tenth of the money you earn by working.

Malachi 3:8-10

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Elijah prayed a simple prayer asking God to prove Himself by answering by fire.

God answered his prayer.

Elijah had to pray seven times to get God to send the rain.

So today, which God do you think you are serving.

I love 2 Corinthians 4

Paul says the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe.

The whole chapter is about how the lost of this world can have their eyes open to see Jesus and who He really is.

We have the treasure of the gospel inside of us... the light of the glory of God... and when we truly put Jesus first in our lives as we deal with daily trials and afflictions, people see Jesus in us.

So, Paul concludes the chapter:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

When you tithe and give your offering to the Lord you are not just giving money to help the church pay the bills and give a pastor and a church facility to come to on Sundays, you are investing in winning precious eternal souls to Jesus.

So, Who is the Lord of your life?

Today, you have a choice!

One day, you will not have a choice.

One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father!!!!

Additional Notes for 1 Kings 18

Elijah had given the prophets of Baal some advantages, so now he gave himself some handicaps. He had a trench dug around the altar and filled it with water. He put the sacrifice on the wood on the altar and had everything drenched with water.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, he lifted his voice in prayer to the God of the covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His request was that God be glorified as the God of Israel, the true and living God, and make it known that Elijah was His servant.

But even more, by sending fire from heaven, the Lord would be telling His people that He had forgiven them and would turn their hearts back to the worship of the true God.

Elijah may have been thinking of God's promise to Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:12-15. Suddenly, the fire fell from heaven and totally devoured the

sacrifice, the altar, and the water in the trench around the altar. There was nothing left that anybody could turn into a relic or a shrine. The altar to Baal still stood as a monument to a lost cause. The prophets of Baal were stunned, and the people of Israel fell on their faces and acknowledged, "The Lord, He is God!"

But Elijah wasn't yet finished, for he commanded the people to take the false prophets of Baal and slay them. This was in obedience to the Lord's command in Deuteronomy 13:13-18 and 17:2-5. The test had been a fair one, and the prophets of Baal had been exposed as idolaters who deserved to be killed. The law required that idolaters be stoned to death, but Elijah had the prophets killed with the sword (19:1). This action, of course, angered Jezebel, from whose table these men had been fed (v. 19), and she determined to capture Elijah and kill him.

The rains return. (1 Kings 18:41-45)

Elijah had announced three years before that it was his word that stopped the rain and only his word could start it again (17:1). He was referring to the power of his prayers, the words that he spoke to the Lord (James 5:17-18).

It had been a long and disappointing day for King Ahab, and Elijah sent him to his retainers to get something to eat. Elijah went to the top of Carmel to pray and ask the Lord to send the much-needed rains. "Every day we live," wrote missionary Amy Carmichael, "we have to choose whether we should follow in the way of Ahab or of Elijah." Matthew 6:33 comes to mind.

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.

Unlike the answer to the prayer at the altar, the answer to this prayer didn't come at once. Seven times Elijah sent his servant to look toward the Mediterranean Sea and report any indications of a storm gathering, and six of those times the servant reported nothing. 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.

The little cloud wasn't a storm, but it was the harbinger of the rains that were to come. Elijah

commanded the king to mount his chariot and return to his palace in Jezreel as soon as possible.

We aren't told how he broke the news to Jezebel that Baal had been publicly humiliated and declared to be a false god, and that the prophets of Baal that she supported had been slain. But neither the drought nor the famine had brought Ahab and Jezebel to repentance, and it wasn't likely that the fire from heaven or the coming of the rain would change their hearts (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:8-11). All the evidence notwithstanding, Jezebel was determined to kill Elijah (19:1-2).

Strength for the journey (1 Kings 18:46)

Soon the heavens were black with clouds and great torrents of rain began to fall on the land. 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.

God had chastened His people with drought and famine but had cared for His special servant Elijah.

God had sent fire from heaven to prove that He was the true and living God. Now He had answered the prayer of His prophet and had sent the rains to water the land.

You would think that Elijah would be at his very best spiritually and able to face anything, but the next chapter records just the opposite. As great a man as Elijah was, he still failed the Lord and himself.

Colossians 3:5-6

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Other Verses for Message

James 1:7-8

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:7-8

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.