

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Bible study/Prayer Meeting

Date 1st February 2023

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles Ps/Hymn Read 1 Kings 18:21-24 Text 1 Kings 18:24

Series The Doctrine of God series Title The Only True And Living God.

The Prophet Elijah was raised up by God during a time of spiritual darkness when King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had authorised and promoted Baalim false worship throughout the land.

The name, **Baalim** is Plural, for **Baal**, therefore the worship of Baalim included many gods.

It was a **polytheistic religion**. The word, **Poly** means **many**, and the word **theos** means **God**, **Polytheism** means **many gods**.

It was claimed that Baal was the god of weather, and fire, but they kept inventing more false, gods.

God's man, Elijah stood in gap for truth and righteousness. Like the Apostle Paul, Elijah was set for the defence of the gospel.

It is interesting to note the meaning of Elijah's name, "**my God is Jehovah**," or "**Jehovah is my God**."

Therefore, when the name of Elijah was spoken or when Elijah was in the presence of another, his very name pointed to Jehovah the only True and living God of heaven and earth.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal, in the presence of the people, yeah even King Ahab, which God is the only true and living God, is it Jehovah, or Baal.

The only way for Elijah to confirm that Jehovah is the only true and living God, while exposing Baal as false, was proving God hear and answers.

God is using Elijah to set the scene, make the challenge, but only God Himself can demonstrate He is the only True and Living God.

The challenge is stated in **1 Kings 18:24** *“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.”*

Elijah can preach the message given by God, but signs following the preaching of the word belong to God.

Elijah prays but Only God can answer.

God will show Himself to be the Only True and Living God, by answering prayer, intervening and in so doing He exposes false religion and every other god as false.

False gods, according to **Ps 115:5** *“they have mouths, but they speak not.... **verse 6** “...ears, but they hear not...” why **verse 4** “their idols are silver and gold the works of men’s hands.”*

Scripture clearly teaches God is the only true and living God, for instance, **Ps 42:2** *“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...”*

(Joshua 3:10 *“And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you...”* **Job 19:25** *“for I know that my redeemer liveth....”*

Jeremiah 10:10 *“But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: **Daniel 6:26** “I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.”*

Matthew 16:16 “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”)

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the Truth and the life.*

The **SC 5** are there more Gods than one? A - *there is but one only, the living & true God.*

In **1 Kings 18**, both the prophets of Baal and Elijah the prophet of God, will set up an altar a place of sacrifice to offer unto their God *and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.*”

In preparing the altars and sacrifice, Elijah stated there was to be no human interference. He said in **verse 23** “*and put no fire under:*

The Prophets of Baal, would secretly add fire to their altars to make it look like Baal was answering the people with supernatural fire, giving the impression Baal answered by fire.

That’s how false religion is so deceiving because it is man interviewing in lives, giving false hope.

Elijah removed any human interference, gimmicks.

It came to the time when both altars where prepared. The prophets of Baal went first in presenting their sacrifice to Baal, and in **verse 26** they “*called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us...*” Now if Baal was the true and living God then this was time to see fire.

Read on in **verse 26** “*But there was no voice, nor any that answered...*” there was no response, as they continually call upon Baal.

(Now they take matters into their own hands, notice the rest of **verse 26** “*...And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*”

Verse 28-29 “*And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 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 words **regarded** mean **attention**, Baal or the many gods associated to Baal, did not give any attention to their prayers, why because Baal was a false god, invented by men whose purpose was to get rid of any existence of God.

How many today have placed their hope of sins forgiven in many false gods, leaders, images, statues, idols, prayer repetitions, religious schedules, when all the time they are depending upon men’s invention, schemes, that make money, and further their cause.

Yet the dear, sincere worshipper, remains lost in sin, still under the burden of sin, heading for a lost eternity in the torments of hell.

All eyes turned to Elijah, and when he offered the sacrifice, **Verse 32** “...*he built an altar in the name of the LORD...*” He went the extra mile, even making it humanly impossible to light a fire himself, **verse 33** “*Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.*”

They were to do this three times. Then in **verse 35** “*and he filled the trench also with water...*” The wood and animal is soaking wet, it cannot lit on fire.

Then the key verse is **Verse 36** “...*I have done all these things at thy word.*” Elijah prays in **Verse 37-38** “*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.³⁸ 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.

On Mt Carmel the God of Elijah revealed Himself to be the only true and living God by means of the fire.

However, the vital point is to see, that God revealing Himself by fire as the true God was connected with the offering of sacrifice and the acceptance of it.

The fire fell upon the sacrifice because it was accepted by God, as the way He had chosen to glorify Himself and restore sinners into fellowship with Himself.

I FIRST, THE FIRE FALLING REVEALED GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD BY HIS PRESENCE.

When Elijah called upon the name of Jehovah, the fire fell, revealing God's presence that day.

Please keep in view, the words of **verse 24,** "**The God that answereth by fire let Him be the God.**"

The flame of fire was the visible manifestation of the Lord's presence among His people.

When God lead the children of Israel through the wilderness, we read from **Ex 13:21-22** "**And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.**"

Again when God called Moses to Mt Sinai to meet with Him, **Ex 19:18** "**And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire:**

When the Fire Fell upon the sacrifice, God was present. He answered Elijah's prayer according to His own Divine purpose in

revealing Himself as the only true and living God, the only Saviour of His people.

Therefore, believer we serve the true and living Saviour, one who answers His people, **Jer 33:3** “**Call unto me and I will answer thee...**”

II SECOND, THE FIRE FALLING REVEALED GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD BY HIS PURITY.

The people had been assembled and their sin was ever before them. Baal worship was vile, unclean and full of sin.

The fire falling, symbolized the purity and holiness of God. God is infinitely, eternally, immutability and absolutely holy.

God's holiness is in active opposition against evil, and on the basis of His holiness, He hates sin.

In Scripture fire is often a symbol and revelation of divine holiness.

Heb 12:29 states “**our God is a consuming fire**”. The Apostle Paul was quoting from **Deut 4:24**.

In that verse the full statement is – “**For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire even a jealous God.**” The original the Hebrew word **consume**, means **to eat, to devour**. The thought is of **a fire that devours**.

Putting the two thoughts together, it means that God in His holiness will punish sinners utterly and completely.

Unconverted Sinners will be swallowed up in the fire of hell that burns against them.

The reason being, God is a **Jealous God**, the word for ‘**jealous**’ could also be translated **zealous**. The Hebrew word reveals that God is jealous or zealous for His own honour, holiness and glory.

Since God is Holy and Just, then Sin is against His very nature, and challenges His justice. On this basis, sin must be punished, or He is not God.

Therefore, Divine wisdom, devised the plan of redemption through Christ's glorious person & gospel ministry in order to save sinners.

God's mercy placed Christ in the sinner's place to pay the penalty of sin.

So, when Christ died as the substitute and sin-bearer, the justice of God was being inflicted and the holiness of God was honoured.

The only hope of sins forgiven is in Christ.

This hope was presented to us while we were yet sinners, and we fled to Christ on whom the fire fell! Therein we are eternally secure.

III THIRD, THE FIRE FALLING REVEALED GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD BY HIS PROPITIATION v39 “**And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces...**”

When the fire fell, all the people saw it, but where did they see the fire fall.

The fire fell upon the sacrifice. That in itself is vital, Between the altar and the people, there was a line of separation, and when the fire fell, it “...**consumed the burnt sacrifice** but the people who were outside the trench were spared.

On Mount Carmel the fire should have fallen on the nation of Israel, and consumed them all, but it fell on the substitutionary sacrifice consuming it all.

God answered by fire. The people had been taught that God forgives sin or God is propitious toward sinners, or God is merciful toward sinners, only through a sacrifice that He accepts.

The altar of Mount Carmel pointed to a greater mount called Mount Calvary, where Christ became our sacrifice.

On Christ the wrath of God burned, as pictured by the fire of God falling to show that satisfaction was made and that there is peace for the sinner.

Jesus Christ is our Propitiation, His blood covers sin. God's mercy is only seen through Christ.

He was the substitutionary sacrifice, accepted by God, who endured the fire of God's wrath to put away sin that He might sinners unto God.

The fire of God's wrath fell on Christ, not on His people. That is mercy, God withholding from sinners all they deserve, wrath, and ruin.

Such mercy endureth forever, meaning God will not punish the one who turns to Him for pardon.

IV FOURTH, THE FIRE FALLING REVEALED GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD BY HIS PURPOSE. V39 ***“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.”***

God's purpose was to Glory Himself and turn His people's hearts back to Him, He came to recover all His people, so they would confess Him as Lord. ***“The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God.”***

Did you notice, **the fire fell**, meaning it came down from above. That was something man could not do. This was not of man but God.

men can only light a fire from the ground that goes up.

But here, there was no effort of man, God did it all. Remember on the cross, after Christ said in **John 19:30** "**it is finished**", **Mark 15:38** "***And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.***"

Notice again, it was from the top to bottom, if man had been involved to cut the veil, he would start from bottom to top.

However, the saving of sinners, is all of God, He does what men cannot do and are unable to for themselves.

Praise the Lord that day you saw your sin in all is corruption, and offence against a Holy God, but then you saw by faith the cleansing stream, that washes from all sin, and turned to Jesus Christ and confessed Him as your Lord and Saviour.

His purpose was to save you from your sin. **1 Thess 1:9** "***For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;***"

Therefore the God of heaven and earth as revealed in His word is the only True and Living God.