

Whom Do you Serve?

(1 Kings 18)

Introduction

Good morning Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God? Today we are going to be in Old Testament territory if you want start making your way to 1 Kings 18. Today, there is a substantial and growing amount of people that would claim to have no responsibility to a higher power. They would also claim to not worship or serve anything out there. However, everyone whether they are aware of it or not is in service to something. The Bible gives in two general categories: you are either in service to Him, or you are in service to Satan, the Devil. No middle ground. Satan doesn't mind at all if you reject him as long as you reject God. To believe in no service to another is to be in service to Satan. We are going to see where the nation of Israel yet again will need to make a choice who they are going to serve and worship. This is a well-known event in Scripture and one with great relevance today.

Background

Characters:

1. Elijah: a prophet of God whose name means "my God is the Lord," came from Tishbe in Gilead, but nothing is known of his family or birth. He was the prophet of God during this time up until his student Elisha took up the mantle. Before the Word of God was established and complete, God primarily used prophets to speak His people, other cases God would speak directly to certain individuals. They did not have much of God's Word available to them. Today, God is not using this method of communication. We today have the Word of God directly written and accessed. We are tasked to study thyself approved unto God when it comes to understanding and discerning it. As I read through the Old Testament and consider many of the

circumstances, I am reminded not to take it for granted of the access to God's Word that I have today. Hebrews 1:1-2

(1) God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, (2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Word), whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

John 1 teaches us that Jesus is the Word of God. Therefore, God speaking to us by His Son is the same is speaking to us by His Word.

God used Elijah to turn Israel back to Him. He was a man who experienced great victories but also much discouragement.

2. King Ahab. Good ole King Ahab. No doubt, this was one of if not the worst king in Israel. During this time, the Hebrew people were divided into two kingdoms. Israel, and Judah. Ahab was king over Israel while Jehoshaphat over Judah. Out of the twelve tribes, Benjamin and Judah were under the kingdom of Judah while the rest of the 10 under Israel. You'll find a consistent phrase under many of the kings, ". . . did evil in the sight of the Lord. With Ahab though, you'll find a difference. 1 Kings 16:29-34

(29) And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. (30) And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. (31) And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. (32) And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. (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. (34) In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

As a result of Ahab's increasing wickedness, disobedience to the Lord and worship of Baal, God sent Elijah to prophecy a drought that would come upon Israel. This drought lasted for 3 years.

3. Jezebel – Most are probably familiar with this name. Jezebel the wife of King Ahab. Good queen or bad queen? So infamous is her name that, to this day, no one names their baby daughter "Jezebel." To call a woman a "Jezebel" is now a heavy insult. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, a priest of the false god Baal. He was the priest-king of Tyre who murdered his own brother to take over the throne. Not your ideal father-figure, but Jezebel followed in her father's footsteps and was herself a power-hungry murderess who stopped at nothing to get what she wanted. She is the one who brought the worship of Baal back to Israel.

4. Obadiah. This is not to be confused with the minor prophet Obadiah, – the shortest Old Testament book, we are unsure if its him or not. There are 13 different men named Obadiah. This Obadiah was an overseer over King Ahab's home. He showed great faith by hiding the 100 prophets of the Lord from Jezebel's wrath that we will read about.

I. Prologue to Mount Carmel, vv. 1-19.

(1) And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. (2) And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. (3) And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: (4) For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) (5) And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. (6) So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. (7) And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? (8) And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. (9) And he said, What have I sinned, that

thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? (10) As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. (11) And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. (12) And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. (13) Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? (14) And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. (15) And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day. (16) So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. (17) And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? (18) 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. (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.

Here, we have the Lord send Elijah to go confront Ahab. This would seem like a death sentence for Elijah since Elijah prophesied to him of a drought to come. Elijah finds Obadiah who was on his way to gather food for the horses and mules and tells him to inform Ahab that he is here. Obadiah sees it as his death sentence because he feared Elijah wouldn't show himself and that Ahab would have found out he had been keeping 100 prophets of the Lord safe and feeding them. Elijah assures him that we will show himself to Ahab. The two meet up and Ahab calls Elijah the one who troubles Israel. He doesn't see that its him who brought judgment upon Israel. Elijah sets him straight, its him and his father's house that have forsaken the commandments and followed Baalim that brought this trouble. He then proposes to gather Israel unto Mount Carmel and 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves (Asherah). (Show picture of Mount Carmel) Rather than being a single mountain, Mount Carmel is a high, wooded mountain ridge. At its highest point, Mount Carmel reaches over 1,700 feet above sea

level. To the northeast of the ridge, there you can see the valley of Jezreel. An amazing sight and one I was blessed to see in person along with Tabitha and other members of Lighthouse.

II. Showdown on Mt. Carmel, vv. 20-40.

(20) So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. (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. (22) Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. (23) 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: (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. (25) And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

Elijah confronts the two opinions, who is the true God they should follow? The Lord, or Baal? Is it possible to worship both? Absolutely not. He then proposes a test, seems very logical and even himself to be at a disadvantage. Himself as a prophet to represent the Lord vs 450 prophets to represent Baal. Each get 1 bullock, dress it, cut in pieces, lay it on wood for sacrifice but don't set a fire. The people agreed. Afterall, Baal is the sun god and the storm god. Both were considered in control of the weather and able to send fire or rain from heaven. What irony seeing how they had no rain for 3 years, but worshipped Baal who supposedly could send rain. Let's read on to the next.

(26) And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. (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. (28) 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.

What a sight this must have been! From the morning until afternoon the prophets of Baal chanted “O Baal hear us.” Elijah mocks them “cry aloud” for he is a god, either he talking or pursuing (This means relieving himself), on a journey or he is sleeping and needs to be woken up.: The cried even louder and began to cut themselves with knives and lancets. This would be a very disturbing sight. These prophets cannot be accused of not being passionate or devoted enough. This goes to show that no matter the passion or devotion, if it’s not for the true God, its worthless. Passion does not replace truth. Now, its Elijah’s turn.

(30) And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. (31) And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: (32) And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. (33) And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. (34) And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. (35) And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. (36) 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. (37) 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. (39) 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. (40) And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Elijah gets the attention of the Israelites and rebuilds the altar of the Lord that was broken down. He then took twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel and with those stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord and made a trench around the altar. He prepares his sacrifice and instructs the people to fill four barrels of water and pour it on the sacrifice and wood. Not only once, but three times. So much water that the surrounding trench filled up. Have you ever tried lighting wood on fire that is soaked in water? Seemingly Elijah puts it in a major disadvantage and is asking way more from the Lord than Baal. However, lighting the sacrifice is going to be just as easy for the Lord as it would be dry. It then came to pass at the time of evening sacrifice. This sacrifice it mentions here was disbanded 50 years ago under King Jeroboam. Elijah still remembers it. Elijah then prays “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.” So this was not Elijah’s brilliant plan after all, it was the Lord’s instruction. The Lord answered and fire fell and consumed the sacrifice and everything surrounding it. The water, the dust and the stones. When do you ever see fire consume water and stone? God showed off that day and the people saw it. This was more than they deserved. Then Elijah commanded the prophets of Baal to be seized and killed.

III. God restores the rain, vv. 41-46.

(41) And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. (42) 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, (43) 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. (44) 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. (45) And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel

(46) And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

As the Lord promised, He restored rain. This should warrant Ahab to repent and recognize that the Lord is the true God. Baal is a fraud. Ahab went to Jezreel on his chariot as Elijah on foot ran. The results what happens after is for another story.

Application

Today's world would count the actions of Elijah has bigotry and intolerant. Afterall, why kill the prophets of Baal for being of a different faith? Consider the practices of Baalism worship: 1. Ritual prostitution. They believed Baal to be a fertility god. Priestesses were sex-slaves and were carried off against their will in childhood and horribly abused by the men who used them. The men believed this needed to be done for Baal to produce crops.

2. Baalism involved the worship of Molech (the Ammonite counterpart to Baal), who demanded CHILD-SACRIFICE. Israelites did this. Jeremiah 32:35

(35) And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

The central act of this worship was the sacrifice of the first-born of every woman's body.

According to one tradition, there was an opening at the back of the brazen idol, and after a fire was made within it, each parent had to come and with his own hands place his first-born child (on the) white-hot, outstretched arms of Molech. According to this tradition the parent was not allowed to show emotion, and drums were beaten so that the babies' cries could not be heard as it died in the hands of Molech. Seen in this light, Elijah's actions look different, don't they? He was acting on behalf of God, who deplored this practice and wanted it eradicated from the nation

who was called by his name. He was doing what Ahab (as king) should have been doing—protecting the people from this horror. How deplorable can you get?

It took God removing Israel from the promise land under Babylonian exile to rid of Baal worship. However, Israel and Baal followers are not only ones guilty of this. Worship of Molech: This practice continues and happens all over the world today. It is called abortion. Millions and millions of innocent babies dead and America calls it a right. The Bible calls it murder. One of the mentions of things that are abomination to the Lord – hands that shed innocent blood.

America and this world is far over-do for judgment. Each day we don't receive it is God's grace. This world needs the Gospel to be made clear. We need to make a choice who we are going to serve and follow. If you're not following the Lord, you are following the devil. No middle ground. As offensive as that sounds, it is the truth according to the Word of God. Baal was not there to answer the prophets that day, neither will any other God but the Lord will. What separated are God from the rest, no one else comes to you. The other religions teach you make your way to God and do all the work, the Bible teaches God did all the work. But you can follow the Lord if you're not already. There is only one way. And that is through Jesus. The one who came and live a perfect life – was beaten, betrayed, mocked, but in His love, He went to the cross on our behalf to die. He bore the very wrath that should be ours. He rose again 3 days and 3 nights later – proving who He claimed to be – God in the flesh. It says that if anyone would put their trust in Him to save them from their sin – they will have eternal life. That is the only way to be saved from the wrath to come. Putting your trust in Jesus to save you.
