



1  **Dealing With Drought**

1 Kings 18

2  **The war on idolatry**

- The nation of Israel is in a life-and-death struggle over the issue of idolatry: who will be God over Israel?
- Will it be Baal or Jehovah?
- The nation of Israel has been under God's judgment, and there has been a drought for the last 3 ½ years.

3  **Physical and spiritual drought**

- It is deeply important to grasp that the physical drought that was brought by idolatry is symbolic of the spiritual drought also brought about by idolatry.
- When we exalt other things in our lives above Jesus it results in a soul-numbing dearth of the voice of God speaking in our lives.

4  **The final showdown**

- Now, after 3 ½ years of drought, this conflict between idolatry and God, between the followers of Baal and the servant of Jehovah, Elijah, is about to come to its climax on Mount Carmel.
- But this passage is far more than simply historically or sociologically interesting: it is radically practical to us as Christians.

5  **The battle for our souls**

- When we become Christians, Jesus demands our whole devotion and worship.
- However, our souls – our mind, will, and emotions – are steeped in idolatry, the pull that the world and the flesh exert over us when we delight in them more than we delight in Christ.

6  **Reclaiming the idolatrous heart**


- In order to take back the nation of Israel, Elijah's very existence must be an exact opposite to that of the Baal-worshippers.
- So it is for us: Reclaiming an idolatrous mind and heart requires that we live our lives differently, and for an opposite purpose, to the world.

7  **Dealing with the drought**


- At the beginning of the passage, God announces His intent to Israel: to bring an end to their physical and spiritual drought by putting His power on display.
- *After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."* (1Ki 18:1)

8  **DEALING WITH DROUGHT**

1 Kings 18

9  **Two players**

- There are two individuals who will play an important part in fighting against idolatry in Israel:
 - Elijah – The outspoken prophet and man of God, who has been living in hiding for most of the period of drought
 - Obadiah – Ahab's righteous steward, who has secretly been hiding one-hundred prophets of Jehovah from Jezebel's wrath

10  **1 Kings 18:1-4**

- *After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)*

11 **1 Kings 18:5-7**

- *And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself. And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?"*

12 **1 Kings 18:8-10**

- *And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'" And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you.*

13 **Unusual commands**

- Both Elijah and Obadiah are commanded to do something risky and potentially deadly:
 - Elijah is commanded to show himself to Ahab and confront the false prophets of Baal and Ashoreth
 - Obadiah is commanded to facilitate this exchange between Elijah and Ahab

14 **Obadiah's protest**

- Obadiah protests – and for good reason!
- Ahab and Jezebel have been literally scouring the world over to find Elijah, and now Obadiah is afraid that if he goes to tell Ahab, that God will take Elijah away somewhere (which is not an uncommon occurrence for prophets in the Bible), and Ahab will quite literally shoot the messenger.

15 **1 Kings 18:11-12**

- *And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here.'" And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where. And 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.*

16 **1) Counter disobedience with faith**

- Elijah counters Obadiah's objections with his absolute confidence that God is going to protect and care for His own:
 - *And Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." (1Ki 18:15)*

17 **Trials as the root of faith**

- Elijah has been in God's school of humility and obedience for the last three and a half years – and so when he is commanded to go and show himself to his most dangerous enemy, he obeys without question.
- It is this same confidence that allows him to be a source of strength to Obadiah.

18 **Developing faith**

- Several times throughout Elijah's career, God has asked him to do things that on the surface seem like patently bad strategies:
 - Go to the king and tell him that God has said there isn't going to be any rain
 - Go to the wilderness to be fed by carrion fowl
 - Go to a pagan widow for provision during a time of famine
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- 19 **Faith as the source of obedience**
- Faith is the source of obedience. If you (like Israel, Ahab, and Jezebel) are not living in obedience to Christ (in word, thought, or deed), it is due to a lack of faith.
 - By faith – Abel offered up a better sacrifice
 - By faith – Abraham went into an unknown country
 - By faith – Rahab the harlot hid the spies
- 20 **Obedience vs. idolatry**
- The height of idolatry is to choose our own way instead of God's, because:
 - We think our own way is more fulfilling
 - We think our own way is easier
 - We think our own way is wiser
 - Obedience is the opposite – it gladly follows God's commands instead of our own inclinations, plans, or thoughts.
- 21 **Obedience vs. idolatry**
- *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"-- 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. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (Jas 4:13-16)*
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- 22 **1) Counter disobedience with faith**
- Let your past trials and experiences build your faith
 - Let your faith enable action and obedience (faith without works is dead – this is because true faith always leads to action)
 - Stamp out idolatry with glad-hearted, faith-based obedience
- 23 **2) Look for water in the Word, not the world**
- An agrarian society located in an arid land, for Israel to be without water for three and a half years is one of the most severe judgments imaginable.
 - The famine in Samaria was only symbolic of the true judgment – a famine brought about by the lack of the Water of the Word in Israel.
- 24 **Spiritual famine as judgment**
- God withholds spiritual growth and blessing in our lives because of idolatry.
 - In reality this judgment is self-imposed: we refuse to be satisfied in the thing that is truly satisfying, and so as a result nothing else satisfies us.
- 25 **Spiritual famine as judgment**
- The idolatry of Israel brought with it a spiritual dryness and subsequent famine even more damaging than the physical drought and famine that they were currently undergoing.
 - So at the beginning of this passage, God announces his intent: to free Israel of their drought by showing them His power and "bringing rain on the land."
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- 26 **1 Kings 18:5-6**
- *And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.*
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- 27 **Looking for water**
- Ahab is dangerously close to losing his horses – not to mention his nation. This is much more serious than we might initially realize:
 - Horses in this time represented a nation's fighting force – it's ability to protect and defend

itself against hostile nations.

- Israel has not only lost their food supply, they have lost their ability to fight as a nation. Ahab is at the end of his proverbial rope.

28 **Looking for water**

- When we experience times of drought and famine in our spiritual lives, the only recourse we can take is to look for “living water.”
- Ahab, however, instead of going to the one person who can truly solve his problem (God), decides to take it upon himself to find water anywhere else.
- This is usually our response too – when suffering spiritual drought, we look for spiritual renewal in all of the wrong places.

29 **Places we look for water**

- We will look for water (spiritual renewal and refreshment) from a number of sources:
 - Emotional religious experiences
 - Intellectual religious experiences
 - Group religious experiences
- While all of these things can be good, they are only helpful inasmuch as they point us to Jesus Christ.

30 **Places we look for water**

- In any worship, study, or fellowship activity, we run the risk of deriving our satisfaction and fulfillment from the experience itself instead of from the Person it's supposed to be about.
- This is why we so often get burned out in our Christian lives.
- Jesus wants us to be fulfilled in Him, not the things we do to spend time with Him.

31 **Checklist**

- Here are a few questions you can ask yourself about your worship activities:
 - After doing ____, do I feel like I've met my spiritual “quota” and can move on to other things now?
 - Am I thinking about what other people are thinking about me while I do ____?
 - Am I consistently inconsistent about doing ____?

32 **Dealing with spiritual drought**

- 1) Counter disobedience with faith
 - Let your trials grow into faith
 - Let your faith enable obedience
 - Stamp out idolatry with glad-hearted obedience
- 2) Look for water in the Word instead of the world
 - Rely on Christ instead of emotional, intellectual, or worship “experiences”

33 **Epilogue**

- *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" 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. 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." - (1Ki 18:16-19)*

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34 **Next week**

- Next week we'll look at the exciting conclusion to this story: the showdown on Mount Carmel.