

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 16, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



“The God Who Answers by Fire”
1 Kings 18:1-2, 17-40

¹And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.” ²So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria...

¹⁷Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” ¹⁸And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of ^{19a}Asherah, who ^{19b}eat at Jezebel’s table.” ²⁰So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. ²¹And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. ²²Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. ²³Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. ²⁴Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God. So all the people answered and said, ^{24a}“It is well spoken.” ²⁵Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.” ²⁶So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, ^{26a}hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they ^{26b}leaped about the altar which they had made. ²⁷And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry ^{27a}aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with ^{28a}knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. ²⁹And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one

answered, no one paid attention. ³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to 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, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." ³⁴ Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. ³⁵ So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench 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 Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" ⁴⁰ And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. -1 King 18:1-2, 17-40 (NKJV)

While many people like to stick with the New Testament when it comes to reading the Bible, I must confess that the Old Testament has a special place in my heart. I love reading the testimonies of faith heroes like Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Joseph and more. Their lives are so inspiring and if we're honest, filled with enough drama and conflict to keep me on the edge of my seat. One of my all-time favorite testimonies in the Bible is that of the Prophet Elijah, that we have been looking at the last few weeks as we began our study on his life.

This man was on fire for God. Literally at his request the Lord answered with a consuming fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). Elijah was sent on mission from God to turn the Israelites hearts back to their One True God. When we first read of Elijah, the Israelites have been worshiping both the God of their ancestors, who is the One True Living God, and the false God Baal. Enough was enough. God sent Elijah to confront their wavering faith and lead them to make a decision.

7 Things You May Not Know About Elijah in the Bible:

(1) God uses the ordinary, like Elijah, to do the extraordinary - James 5:17-18 reminded us that he was an ordinary man just like us. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit." - James 5:17-18 **ESV** Elijah, a biblical prophet is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. His life was colorful. God used him during a really important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and to bring revival to those people. Like many other characters in the Bible, Elijah's life was not without its challenges. His life was filled with turmoil. There were times when he was decisive and valiant, but there were also times when he was fearful and uncertain. He also demonstrated victory and defeat, trailed by recovery. He recognized the power of God, but he also knew the pits of depression. His life was devoted to the work of restoring true worship In Israel. Ultimately, Elijah urged the people of ancient Israel to turn from sin and to return to the true God and his message is just as important for us today. Elijah's admonition that God's people faithfully serve Him with their whole heart is just as relevant now as it was during his time on earth.

- (2) **Elijah Was Chosen By God** - God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Similar to many of the prophets of the Bible, Elijah didn't seek to be one of God's messengers. Instead, God chose him directly for the position. When he was called, Elijah didn't hesitate to take on his mission, even though it appeared his life would be threatened by the wicked king. Elijah set out at once for the capital city of Samaria to deliver the announcement to King Ahab. Then God sent Elijah into hiding as the drought dried up the streams and withered the crops of the nation (1 Kings 17:7-15; 1 Kings 18:1). Elijah was chosen to confront the followers of Baal simply because he had a relationship with God. In addition to confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he also performed many miracles: providing an endless supply of flour for a widow and raising a young boy from the dead.
- (3) **We Don't Know a Lot About His Past** - Elijah's name means "my God is the Lord." He came from Tishbeh in Gilead, but little is known of his family or birth. While many prophets of the Bible are introduced with information about family lineage, this wasn't the case with Elijah. This shows that his selection by God was divine. He came out of nowhere to do the extraordinary at time when he was so desperately needed. Only God can do that. While we don't know a great deal about his life, we do know a lot about his nature and character. Elijah was attentive to God's voice and walking in obedience to His Word. Through this, Elijah found encouragement, reward and victory. Like any human, he struggled with his own frailties, but he was still used mightily by God. Our Heavenly Father uses us for those same purposes.
- (4) **Prayer Was His Key Strategy** - Elijah prayed to God vehemently. His prayers were bold and he called on God to do the miraculous. His requests weren't small – He prayed for a drought in the land, prayed to raise the widow's son from the dead and called down a fire from heaven to consume the offering on Mount Carmel. The Bible tells us, "At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am Your servant. Prove that I have done all that is at your command. Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench!'" (1 Kings 18:36,38). We see through Elijah's life that prayer is truly powerful. His life reminds us that if we trust in God through prayer, it will make a significant impact.
- (5) **He Suffered With Depression** - Depression is often triggered by life circumstances and can really pull you into the pit. There are numerous biblical references to depression. Scripture describes the struggles of people who suffered with depression even though they were faithful servants of God. These men did not suffer primarily because they were sinners. They suffered because they were human and were susceptible to severe pressures. Elijah grew depressed when he was rebuked while he was anticipating a moment of triumph. His lofty hopes were crushed; he became sick at heart. Up until this point, Elijah had been the epitome of spiritual courage. He now collapses, runs away when Israel most needs his leadership, possibly missing the chance for national repentance and turns suicidal. He suffered from spiritual depression – a specific kind of depression that is related to commitment to God. Elijah's depression, along with many other biblical characters, alerts us to the fact that being committed to God does not necessarily exempt us from being depressed.
- (6) **His Life Was Threatened** - When the false prophets of Baal were dead, Elijah's life was threatened by Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. As Israel's queen, she brought the worship of her god Baal, influencing King Ahab to worship Baal and set up idols in Israel (1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 21:25-26). God's prophets who bring messages of warning are often hated and accused of being the cause of such suffering. Jezebel and the false prophets of Baal hated Elijah and they did everything in their power to catch him. In a moment of human weakness, Elijah was deeply discouraged. But it wasn't long before God reassured Elijah and

sent him back to face King Ahab. Elijah was sent to deliver the message that Ahab and Jezebel would both die a humiliating death because of all the wicked deeds they refused to repent of (1 Kings 21:20-24).

- (7) **John the Baptist's Ministry Was Marked By 'The Spirit and Power of Elijah'** - We can learn about the message of the final Elijah by studying the mission of John the Baptist. Gabriel brought a message from God that a prophet was coming to announce that Jesus was the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. John the Baptist was the prophet, and Jesus declared that John was an Elijah-like figure, in addition to one who would come later (Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:12). An angel declared of John's mission: "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16-17). Ultimately, John the Baptist's ministry was marked by "the spirit and power of Elijah" fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6. James uses Elijah as an example of prayer in James 5:17-18. He says that Elijah "was a human being, even as we are: yet he prayed that it wouldn't rain and it didn't. Then he prayed that it would rain and it did. We see through this that the power of prayer is in God, not within our human nature.

Many people think that the prophets were morally or spiritually superior to us, and it's easy to think of Elijah in this way. But the truth is, he wasn't. Like us, Elijah needed correction, encouragement and the knowledge that other believers were standing against Baal too. Elijah wasn't exceptionally spiritual or superior. He was completely human. But what made Elijah extraordinary was his complete commitment to the Will of God. Elijah gave all his energy and heart so that the world would know the one true God. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary.



“Prove it to me!” Those have become household words in our own skeptical society. The time-honored virtues of trust and confidence are seldom to be found. This is not only true between two humans, but is also true between man and God. For centuries men have been saying that if God expects them to believe in Him, He must prove that He is, in fact God. This study is a splendid example of proof that God is real and worthy of our absolute trust. In 1 Kings 18, there is a showdown at mount Carmel between the living God of heaven and the idols of men on earth.

REVIEW OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO CARMEL (1 Kings 17:1-18:18)

An overview of the movements related to Elijah’s life that we’ve looked at so far in our study can be found in the following phrases...

Summing Elijah’s Life and Ministry in Key Phrases from the Bible:

- (1) **Judgement pronouncing** - “*There shall not be dew nor rain...*” (1 Kings 17:1)
- (2) **Command following** - “*Hide yourself...*” “*Show yourself...*” (1 Kings 17:3 & 1 Kings 18:1)
- (3) **Protection and training receiving** - Seclusion at “*Cherith*” and “*Zarephath*” (1 Kings 17:3-24)
- (4) **King confronting** - “*Elijah went to [show] himself to Ahab...*” “*Ahab went to meet Elijah...*” (1 Kings 18:2, 16)
- (5) **Name calling** - Ahab called Elijah, “*Troubler of Israel...*” Elijah called Ahab, “*Follower of Baal...*” (1 Kings 18:17-18)

PREPARATION FOR THE PROOF (1 Kings 18:19-21)

¹⁹ Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.” ²⁰ So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. ²¹ And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word. -1 Kings 18:19-21

At the front end of this event, we want to observe the follow elements of the story.

Key Elements to Elijah’s Confrontation on Mt. Carmel:

- (1) **The audience (vv.19-20)** – Two groups were represented at Elijah’s request...

2 Groups Represented:

1. **The Prophets of Baal and the Asherah (v.19)** – *¹⁹ Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”* Four hundred fifty were aligned with Baal; 400 with the Asherah. All 850 ate at the queen’s table... at the king’s expense. These prophets were promoters of idolatry in Israel. The upcoming challenge was directed specifically toward the prophets of Baal.
2. **The Sons of Israel (v.20)** - *²⁰ So Ahab sent for all the children [sons] of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.* These simply were Elijah’s countrymen who worshiped the idols of Baal and the Asherah. Remember that under the poor leadership of King Ahab, a wicked king, and Jezebell, a Baal worshipper from Sidon/Phoenicia, the people had been lead away from God into idolatry.

Let's talk about Idolatry...

What is Idolatry and Why Christians Fall into this Secret Sin of the Heart

I have been exploring what it means to conform to this world and what exactly that entails. Idolatry is one area that we Christians are guilty of holding onto this world. So, what is idolatry and if we are not bowing down to golden statues, what does this have to do with our relationship with God?

Perhaps it is time to take a closer look at our lives and the attachments we have. Maybe we aren't so unlike the Israelite of Elijah's day. Time to open our hearts and humble ourselves to set our hearts right with God.

What is Idolatry?

By definition, idolatry has two meanings.

2 Meanings for Idolatry:

1. **The worship of a physical object as a god.**
2. **Immoderate (excessive/extreme/over the top) attachment or devotion to something**

As Christians, we would raise an eyebrow to any fellow Christian who worshipped a physical object as a god. This is the idolatry we see throughout the Old Testament, a wicked trap the Children of Israel fell into over and over. We see an example of this in our passage and in Elijah's time. The Bible clearly tell us that this isn't who God created us to be... He forbids it! Exodus 20:3-6, *"³You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."*

And Deuteronomy 27:15 goes further, *"¹⁵ 'Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.'"*

But this all comes from somewhere... it starts somewhere... in the heart of man, when man get an inordinate affection and attachment to something in this world. That the one I want to focus on. It is in all likely hood the idolatry we participate in and don't even recognize it. We may need to burn down some idols in our own life. These are the idols we struggle with today.

What is Idolatry in Christianity?

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus, Himself, said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This is the greatest commandment. Not only is it stated by Jesus in the New Testament, it is stated by God in the Old Testament (in Deuteronomy 6:5). This has not changed. We owe all of our allegiance and devotion to God, our creator.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)
Idolatry is anything we love more than God and it is different for each of us. It can also be challenging to identify.

Remember the story of the rich young ruler. The rich young man comes to God and asks what he need to do to be saved. Jesus asks him what he has learned. He quotes several of the laws laid out by God. He admits that he has kept these commandments. Jesus, knowing his heart and the idolatry found there, tells him to sell all he has and give it to the poor. The rich young man went away sad, because he could not depart with his wealth.

Now, let me be clear. I do not feel as if there is anything wrong with acquiring wealth. The man's sin was that he put it before God. This is where money becomes an idol. And while we are discussing wealth as an idol, what about those who have none but remain bitter and angry toward those who have. That jealousy is nothing short of coveting and also a form of idolatry. **Ephesians 5:5** says it, *"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*

Idol Worship Today

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:3, "For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." Besides physical idols and money, what else is considered idol worship today?

Four Thing That May Become our Idols Today: [4 Things That may Become our Baals Today]

1. **People as idols** - People can easily come between us and God. We may struggle with other relationships... a spouse, a boyfriend or girlfriend, placing them on a pedestal and revering them more than God Himself. We may so long so much for a relationship that we are willing to compromise our relationship with God to get what we want, desiring that relationship more than we desire God. Sometimes we can worship a charismatic leader, a preacher, or other leader... event to the point that our very faith hinges on that person more than on God. I've seen it when a preacher leaves a church, some fall away. Make you wonder who they were worshipping the preacher or God. Sometimes we revere and hold so tightly to our loved ones that when they pass away all hope is lost, our world falls to pieces, and beyond healthy grief despair takes that one to depth of despair that seem almost unexplainable. Could it be that love one was the idol of their devotion and they had not hope beyond, in a God who give us true hope and a future in Heaven with Him. So sometimes people may become an idol. ***Insight: Give... surrender all of your relationships to the Lord. The ones you have and the ones you don't. Commit to God that you will not put an one on the throne of your heart over Him. That He alone will be the ultimate adoration of your heart and soul. He can make your relationship what they ought to be and even give you the relationship you desire, but He won't share His glory with anyone.***
2. **Unforgiveness as an Idol** - Unforgiveness is another idol we often serve rather than God. We can easily justify this one. You know, that person was wrong for the way they treated you or acted toward you... they hurt you beyond imagination, betrayed you, embarrassed you, did the unthinkable. **Even if this is true, your reaction is your responsibility.** As Peter said it in **1 Peter 4:8**, *"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."* Jesus knew we battle with unforgiveness and what a trap it is. That is why he addresses it so plainly. Listen to Jesus in **Matthew 5:38-48 (READ: Matthew 5:38-48)** *"You*

have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Often times we harbor unforgiveness against those we love and respect. If Jesus instructs us to love our enemies, how much more should we forgive those close to us? ***Insight: I'd like to take a moment and talk about rejection for a second. Rejection is a terrible feeling and leaves us doubting who we are in Christ and our very self-worth. We often allow the cruel words and actions of others to come between us and God. It may create bitterness, resentment and an unforgiving spirit. It paralyzes our relationship with God and comes between us and God. Sadly, those feeling can be small idols we put up in our life and bow down before rather than turning them over to God and trusting these idolatrous feeling to Him and allowing Him to smash them to bits, as He reaffirms His love to us and our worth to Him who loves us and died for us.***

3. **Disobedience as Idolatry** - Choosing our own way is another form of idolatry. The Bible is full of such stories, but I'd like to share these verses from 1 Samuel. King Saul had been chosen by God to lead his people as their first king. He was humble and obedient in the beginning, but somewhere along the way his heart began to change and he fell into disobedience. God had instructed Saul to destroy the Amalekites. He was very clear that he wanted all people and animals destroyed. It was important to remove all heathen... the idolatrous from the land. Saul wins the battle as God is with him and yet doesn't follow through. He allows their king to live as well as keeps all of the livestock alive. Probably a bit of pride and greed here. God is angry at his disobedience and Samuel speaks harshly to him. Saul tries to defend his disobedience, saying that the sheep were saved to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel replies, ***"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king."*** (1 Samuel 15:22-23) Too often, we work for the Lord, but do not follow his instructions the way we should. We cover this sin up with "good works" and yet our disobedience remains. Is God impressing something on your heart and you are not listening? Stubbornness and rebellion are idolatry. Disobedience is idolatry because it is us saying our way is better than God's way and we bow to our way, wants, wishes and desire rather than God's.
4. **Productivity as an Idol** - I am a planner by nature. I am also very goal oriented. This can be good because I am productive, get a lot accomplished in a short amount of time, and focus on a task until it is complete. This can also be bad because I become so focused on my task that other priorities slip. I find great satisfaction in a completed to-do list and will beat myself up when I am not able to complete it. Immediately, the word "failure" comes to mind and before you know it, I'm in a "mood." This brings us back to the well known story of Mary and Martha. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus absorbing his words and dwelling in the presence of God

while Martha is busy preparing food and checking things off the to-do list she created to care for her very important guests. You can read more on Mary and Martha and my take of it (because Martha often gets a bad rap). Just like Martha, who was doing something good by preparing food and accommodations for Jesus and his disciples, we can allow productivity in our world of ministry to become an idol. Doing good replaces the one we are doing good for. “Do You Worship at the Alter of Productivity?”

Now that we’ve discussed what is idolatry, how do we remove it? Of course, we’ve only discussed a few things we could possibly hold up as idols before God, but now that we’ve answered the question “what is idolatry?” what do we do about it? Here it is! Repent!

Yes, come to God, ask forgiveness, and remove the idolatry from your life. This might mean physically removing an item (such as a cell phone or social media) or it might mean distancing yourself from a person. David is our best example of repentance and if you are struggling with the concept I encourage you to read Psalm 51 and David’s prayer of repentance for forgiveness.

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- (2) **The plan (v.21)** – Notice verse 21 of our passage in 1 Kings 18, ²¹ *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.* Elijah’s objective was to get the people to make up their minds as to which... Baal or Jehovah... was actually God. They were “faltering (wavering, hesitating) between two opinions.” The plan was for the benefits of the people rather than the priests, whose minds were already firm.
- (3) **The appeal (v.21)** - ²¹ *And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.* Notice the last part of that verse... *“If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him...”* I think of the similar appeal Joshua made to the ancestors of these very people of Israel in Joshua 24:15 as they stood poised to take possession of the land God had promised them. He said, ¹⁵ *And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of 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.”* We are faced with the same choice today. When we speak of “Elijahing” your life... it must be that we take a stand, choose Him and His way over the gods of this world. Never has the world needed it more, for believer (like you and I) not to waver indecisively between two opinions... one foot in the church and one foot in the world. We must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10) like Elijah.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROOF (1 Kings 18:22-38)

²² *Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. ²³ Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God. So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.” ²⁵ Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.” ²⁶ So they took the bull which was given them,*

and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, ²⁶hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they ²⁷leaped about the altar which they had made. ²⁷ And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry ²⁸aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." ²⁸ So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with ²⁹knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. ²⁹ And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. ³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to 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, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." ³⁴ Then he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time; and he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time. ³⁵ So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench 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 Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. -1 Kings 18:22-38

Elijah, God's only prophet represented, declared war against the 450 prophets of Baal.

3 Parts in the Contest on Mt. Carmel:

- (1) **The proposition (vv.22-24)** – Two oxen were to be procured. The prophets of Baal were to have first choice of the animal they wanted to "cut up" for the challenge. The meat was to be placed upon the wood, unaccompanied by fire. Elijah in turn would do precisely the same. The prophets of Baal were then to call on Baal's name in order for him to ignite the fire under their sacrifice. Again Elijah would do the same... only he would call upon his God, Jehovah. The one who answered by fire would be recognized as God. The people accepted the proposition.
- (2) **The prophets and Baal (vv.25-29)** – The prophets began. From morning until evening they called to their god, ²⁶*So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. A Humorous Observation: Elijah's confidence showed through (v.27). He began mocking the prophets who, hard at work, failed to arouse their god. Verse 27, ²⁷And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." Their appeal intensified. The volume in their voices increased. They "cut themselves" until they were bleeding to get Baal's attention, maintaining their frenzy until the time for the evening sacrifice. Still, they were met with silence. Verse 29 says, ²⁹And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. How painful and humiliating... but it's about to get much, MUCH worse for them.*
- (3) **The Prophet and Jehovah God (vv.30-38)** – With the prophets off to the side... some bleeding, all exhausted... Elijah stepped forward and called the people to himself. With twelve

stones (representing the tribes of Jacob) he built his altar *“in the name of the Lord”* (v.32), surrounded by a trench. When he’d placed his sacrifice atop the wood, he ordered four pitchers (or literally barrels) of water to be poured over the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones... everything soaked thoroughly. This occurred three times... the soaking. The run-off water lay in the encircling trench. The prophet stepped up to the altar (without great display, or fanfare, or flare which had characterized the other [false] prophets, and said in verses 36-37, *“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 Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.”* Result? The fire of the Lord fell. The wood, the sacrifice, the stones, and dust were consumed in the fire... even the water itself that had filled the trenches was “licked up.” God had responded to Elijah’s fearless demonstration of faith.

RESPONSE TO THE EVENTS OF CARMEL (1 Kings 18:39-40)

³⁹ Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!” ⁴⁰ And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.-1 King 18:39-40 Thanks to the writer of this historical narrative from the life of Elijah and Israel story, we can see just how God’s people and His prophet reacted. Let’s look at it by focusing on these players in this narrative...

Two Reactions on the Mt. Carmel:

- (1) **The people of Israel ... they worshipped God(v.39)** – With tangible proof before them, they fell on their faces declaring, “The Lord, He is God” The Lord, He is God”
- (2) **The prophet Elijah ... they destruction of idol worship (v.40)** – He ordered the weary prophets of Baal to be taken to the brook Kishon, where they were slaughtered. This mass annihilation removed a spiritual malignancy from the land of Israel.

FOUR CONCLUDING TRUTHS TO BE OBSERVED

This encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, orchestrated by God, has a handful of insights that should spill into our own experience today. Not them carefully.

4 Important Truths to be Observed: As observed from this encounter between Elihah and the prophets of Baal

- (1) **When we are sure that we are in the will of God, we are invincible** – Note that each time Elijah spoke, he did so in a commanding tone, *“Therefore let them give us two bulls, and let...”* (v.23); *“Then you call on the name of your God...”* (v.24); *“Come near to me...”* (v.30); *“Fill four waterpots with water, and pour I ton the burnt sacrifice and on the wood...”* (v.33); *“Seize the prophets of Baal!”* (v.40). Interesting! This no-name-man, unknown, from unknown origins, and from no-place (of significance, Tishbe) is all the sudden powerful, full of vim and vigor, and seemingly invincible... with the confidence of a super-man! When we’re sure we’re in the will of God, we’re invincible, because we know we have, serve and worship an invincible God whose ways will not be thwarted, mocked or failing. What are some ways to know you’re in God’s will? Have you ever been outnumbered 850 to 1 like Elijah? Share some “outnumbered” experiences Christians/believers may face today. How does God bring glory

to Himself through these kinds of situations? What are some practical ways to fight intimidation?

- (2) **Divided allegiance is as wrong as open idolatry** – Verse 21 of our passage says, *“And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered not a word.”* Why? Divided allegiance! And divided allegiance is as wrong as open idolatry. How has our society taught us to be indecisive? Mediocre? Does James 1:7-8 apply here, *“For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”*? In what ways? Have you been guilty of this duplicity lately... where your allegiances are divided? How is this like idolatry?
- (3) **In the final analysis, our most effective weapon is prayer** – Verses 36-37 of passage says, *“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 Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.”* In the final analysis, prayer is our most powerful and effective weapon. Let’s get gut-level honest... do you pray? Really pray? When? How? If you struggle with this (as so many do), why? What is it that hinders us most often in praying? How can these obstacles be overcome?
- (4) **Never underestimate the power of one totally dedicated life** – Consider how this chapter resolves around the effective work of one man standing alone against 450 prophets of Baal and numberless “sons of Israel.” Again, never underestimate the power of one totally sold-out and dedicated life. As D.L. Moody said, *“The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him. By God’s help, I aim to be that man.”* That is a great quote, and I love the commitment, determination and sentiment behind D.L. Moody’s saying it, but the truth is Elijah was just such a man, and the world of his day saw first what God did with a man fully consecrated to Him. The same is true today, for that life fully dedicated/consecrated to God to use for His glory. Could you be described as that one life? If not, what is that stands in the way? Pray that God might use you, like he did this one totally dedicated life!