

1Kings 18:1 ¶ 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.

1Kings 18:2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

In this chapter we come to the great showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal or actually between the LORD and Baal.

After a long period of time, the LORD came to Elijah telling him to go and see Ahab again. It was time for him to provide relief from the drought. So Elijah set out to meet with Ahab when the famine was most extreme in Samaria.

1Kings 18:3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:

1Kings 18:4 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.)

1Kings 18:5 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.

1Kings 18:6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Meantime, Ahab had commissioned Obadiah, the man in charge of running the king's house, to go throughout the land in search of water and grass in hopes of saving the horses and mules. Stands out to me that he was more concerned about saving the animals than the people. Sadly, that seems to be an attitude embraced by many in America today.

Ahab and Obadiah divided the land between them and set out in different directions to find water and/or grass.

It seems that Obadiah was one of Ahab's most trusted servants. This is quite interesting since we are told that Obadiah "feared the LORD greatly." He did not support the idolatry of Ahab. In fact, when Jezebel tried to get rid of all the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah gathered together 100 prophets, hid them in caves and fed them with bread and water.

1Kings 18:7 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?

1Kings 18:8 And he answered him, *I am*: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

As Obadiah was searching out the land, he encountered Elijah. Obadiah immediately recognized him. He fell prostrate before the prophet (in fear? Out of respect?) and asked him to confirm that he was Elijah, which he did. Elijah then told Obadiah to go and tell Ahab that he was here.

1Kings 18:9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy

servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

1Kings 18:10 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.

1Kings 18:11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, *Elijah is here*.

1Kings 18:12 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.

Obadiah immediately expressed his fear of giving Ahab such a report only to find that Elijah had disappeared again. He noted that Ahab had searched everywhere for Elijah and had even had the leaders of the surrounding kingdoms and nations take an oath to affirm that they were telling the truth when they said they did not know where he was. If he were to tell Ahab that he had found Elijah only to let him escape again, he feared Ahab would kill him.

Obadiah then told Elijah that he had feared/reverenced the LORD since he was a young boy. Knowing that those words probably rang false since he was of such high rank in Ahab's court, he offered proof of his claim.

Interestingly, Obadiah's name means "servant of the LORD."

1Kings 18:13 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?

1Kings 18:14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, *Elijah is here*: and he shall slay me.

Obadiah then told Elijah how he had rescued and provided for 100 of the LORD's prophets when Jezebel sought to kill them. He then reiterated that Ahab would surely kill him if he told them that Elijah had been found (and he had escaped yet again is implied).

1Kings 18:15 And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

1Kings 18:16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

1Kings 18:17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*

Elijah assured Obadiah that as sure as the LORD lives, the LORD that he serves, he would present himself to Ahab that very day. So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah was there to see him, and Ahab went to meet him. When Ahab saw Elijah, he asked him if he was the man that was causing Israel such trouble.

Guzik provides this insight: "Ahab believed that Elijah had angered the sky-god Baal and therefore Baal withheld rain. Ahab probably thought that Baal would hold back the rain until Elijah was caught and executed."

1Kings 18:18 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.

1Kings 18:19 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.

1Kings 18:20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

Elijah did not fear the king. He declared that he wasn't the one that had brought trouble upon Israel; Ahab and those of his father's house had. They had forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. The word "Baalim" is plural and references more than one false god.

Elijah told Ahab to call for a gathering of the people of Israel to Mount Carmel. He also wanted present the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets that oversaw the groves and were supported by Jezebel.

Amazingly, Ahab did as Elijah asked. Can't help but wonder what he was thinking. Did he realize that Elijah was proposing a challenge between Baal and the LORD God of Israel?

JFB provides this note on Mount Carmel: "...is a bold, bluff promontory, which extends from the western coast of Palestine, at the bay of Acre, for many miles eastward, to the central hills of Samaria. It is a long range, presenting many summits, and intersected by a number of small ravines. The spot where the contest took place is situated at the eastern extremity, which is also the highest point of the whole ridge. It is called El-Mohhraka, "the Burning," or "the Burnt Place." No spot could have been better adapted for the thousands of Israel to have stood drawn up on those gentle slopes. The rock shoots up in an almost perpendicular wall of more than two hundred feet in height, on the side of the vale of Esdraelon. This wall made it visible over the whole plain, and from all the surrounding heights, where gazing multitudes would be stationed."

Dr. Thomas Constable provides this insight as to why Elijah may have chosen Carmel for this showdown. "...because it stood between Israel and Phoenicia geographically, neutral ground between Yahweh's land and Baal's. Furthermore the Phoenicians regarded Carmel as a sacred dwelling place of Baal. Storms with lightning and thunder were common on Mount Carmel, and Baal worshippers viewed them as manifestations of their deity."

1Kings 18:21 ¶ 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.

1Kings 18:22 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.

1Kings 18:23 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*:

1Kings 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.

Once everyone had gathered at Mount Carmel, Elijah spoke to the people. He basically told them they had to make a choice between serving Baal or serving the LORD; one cannot do both. The people had no answer; they knew he was right. Elijah then declared that he was the only remaining prophet of the LORD present, but there were 450 prophets of Baal. (No mention is made of the 400 prophets of Baal that served at the groves.)

Elijah called for the prophets of Baal to get two bulls and choose one for themselves to cut up into pieces and lay it on wood in preparation for a sacrifice to Baal. They were to put no fire under it. Elijah would take the other bull and do the same. The prophets of Baal would call out to Baal to provide fire for their sacrifice, and Elijah would call out to the LORD. The “god” that answered will be proven to be the one true God. The people agreed to this proposal.

1Kings 18:25 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*.

1Kings 18:26 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.

The prophets of Baal went first. They called on Baal from the morning until noon, but there was no answer of any kind.

Based on the Hebrew, different translations offer reasonable possibilities for helping us understand the last sentence of v26.

ESV – “And they limped around the altar that they had made.”

CJB – “...they jumped around on the altar they had made.”

NIV – “And they danced around the altar they had made.”

1Kings 18:27 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.

1Kings 18:28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

1Kings 18:29 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.

Finally, at noon Elijah began to mock them. He loudly asked if Baal was busy talking to the other gods or in meditation (both acceptable from the Hebrew), or in a private place and not to be disturbed, or on a vacation, or possibly even asleep and needed awakened.

The prophets of Baal then called out even more loudly to their god and cut themselves with knives and lances until their blood was flowing freely. They continued on until the time approached for the offering of the evening sacrifice. Still there was no answer from Baal of any kind.

I liked Guzik's comment: "This is the sad result of worshipping an imaginary god or the god of our own making. We may dedicate great sincerity, sacrifice, and devotion to such gods but it means nothing. There is no one there to answer."

1Kings 18:30 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.*

1Kings 18:31 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:

1Kings 18:32 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.

1Kings 18:33 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.

1Kings 18:34 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.

1Kings 18:35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

Elijah then called for the people to gather around him. He repaired the broken altar of the LORD that was there. He took 12 stones, one for each of the sons of Jacob that had fathered the tribes of Israel. He rebuilt the altar in the name of the LORD. He then dug a trench around the altar that was deep and wide enough to hold two measures of seed. Elijah then put wood on the altar and cut the bull into pieces that he then placed on top of the wood. He asked for men to fill four barrels with water and pour it over the wood and the sacrifice; he then asked them to repeat the process three more times. The water soaked the altar and filled the trench.

1Kings 18:36 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.

1Kings 18:37 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.

At the time that the LORD had designated for the evening sacrifice, Elijah called

out to the “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel.” He asked that it be made known that very day the He is God in Israel and affirm Elijah as His servant that was acting in obedience to His command. He asked the LORD to answer his prayer so that the people would know without a doubt that He is the LORD God and would turn their hearts back again (to following Him is implied).

1Kings 18:38 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.

1Kings 18:39 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.

The fire of the LORD fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and even the water that was in the trench. When the people saw it, they immediately fell on their face and declared the LORD as the one true God.

1Kings 18:40 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 called for the people to take hold of the prophets of Baal and not let one of them escape. They did so and followed Elijah down to the brook Kishon where he killed them.

The IVP Commentary provides more information about the Kishon: “The Kishon River flows northwest from the northern end of the Jezreel Valley to the Mediterranean just east of Haifa. It is fed from the mountains in the Carmel range and from the hills of Galilee around Nazareth.”

1Kings 18:41 ¶ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

1Kings 18:42 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,

1Kings 18:43 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.

1Kings 18:44 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.

1Kings 18:45 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.

1Kings 18:46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah then told Ahab to go and enjoy and good meal because he heard the sound of abundance of rain. Ahab left to do just that. Elijah then went up to the top of

Mount Carmel and knelt down on the earth with his face between his knees. He sent his servant to look out over the sea. The servant did as he was asked but came back to report that he saw nothing. The prophet gave this instruction seven times. Finally, on the 7th time the servant reported that there was a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea.

I think it is important to note that Elijah didn't get discouraged when the LORD didn't respond with the rain as quickly as He responded with sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. Elijah was confident that the rain would come—in God's timing. I think the personal application is obvious.

Elijah told the servant to go and tell Ahab to get in his chariot and go home quickly before the rain could stop him. Meanwhile, the heaven became black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. Ahab rode quickly to Jezreel, about 15 miles from Carmel.

The hand of the LORD was on Elijah and gave him special strength so that he was able to precede Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.