

Subject: *Let the Fire Fall*
Scripture: *1 Kings 18:17-40*

Elijah was a prophet, a spokesman for God. Four times the Bible says, “the word of the Lord came to Elijah” (18:1). Chapter 18 records Elijah’s public ministry on Mount Carmel, the contest between the false god called Baal and the one true God, and the prophet’s challenge to serve the one and only true God. Generally speaking, our culture celebrates diversity and promotes tolerance. Society is only intolerant of those who insist on absolute truth and complete allegiance to the one true God and His Son, Jesus. Elijah faced a similar situation in Israel. This thrilling story is well known and still relevant today.

ELIJAH SPOKE TO KING AHAB (vs. 17-20)

Ahab was king of the Northern Kingdom and he was an evil man. What made things worse for Ahab was being married to a woman named Jezebel. There’s a reason why parents don’t name their daughters “Jezebel.” She was meaner than a junk yard dog. In these verses Ahab and Elijah confront each other. King Ahab said, “Elijah, you’re nothing but trouble. You are the problem.” Elijah was in good company because Jesus and His disciples were accused of being troublemakers. Ahab blamed Elijah for the drought. But Elijah was not intimidated, “No, king, you’re the problem.” Elijah blamed Ahab and his family for committing two evils:

- King Ahab and his family had forsaken the Lord’s commandments
- King Ahab and his family had followed false gods

The problem was not lack of rain, but lack of obedience to God. The drought had lasted for 3 ½ years, but it takes more than suffering to break proud hearts. Elijah asked Ahab to gather all 850 state-supported false prophets to meet him on Mt. Carmel. This area was associated with Baal worship for a long time. Elijah gave these false prophets “home-field advantage.”

ELIJAH SPOKE TO THE PEOPLE (vs. 21-24)

The preacher’s assignment is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. Elijah was faithful to his calling.

- Elijah asked a question

How long do you halt (lit., limp along) between two opinions? The people were divided. They had not totally rejected God, but they tried to worship the true God along with Baal. God is a jealous God and will not allow any other gods.

- Elijah issued a challenge

If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. The people were not committed either way. They were trying to ride the fence. They didn’t know which way to go. They didn’t know right from wrong. They couldn’t decide which god to serve because they weren’t sure which god could do the most for them. The issue was and is, “Whom will you follow?” It was time to make a decision. **Joshua 24:15** *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were*

on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

- Elijah proposed a contest

Elijah challenged all the prophets of Baal to a God contest. The God that answered by fire would be the winner. This wasn't Elijah's idea. It was God's idea. The contest was not between Elijah and Ahab or between Elijah and the false prophets. The contest was between God and Baal.

ELIJAH SPOKE TO THE FALSE PROPHETS (vs. 25-29)

Elijah told the prophets of Baal to go first. They called on the name of Baal from morning until noon and nothing happened. The worship of Baal and other false gods often described them as being involved in human activities. Elijah mocked the false prophets, suggesting that Baal was in deep thought, he was busy (this may mean going to the bathroom), traveling, or sleeping. Elijah knew that our God, the true God, is never busy, absent, or tired. He is always available, present, and able. The prophets of Baal appeared foolish and frustrated. They firmly believed in Baal, but the test was whether Baal was real. All false gods and idolaters are foolish (see Ps. 115:1-8; Isa. 44:9-20; Jer. 10:1-5).

ELIJAH SPOKE TO THE LORD (vs. 30-39)

Elijah had exposed the worship of Baal as foolishness, but that was only half the job. Then he convinced the people to worship Jehovah as the one true God.

- Elijah prepared an altar in the name of the Lord (vs. 30- 32)

Who had originally built this altar and why was it now broken down? The altar had 12 stones, which represented Israel's 12 tribes. The nation was divided, but the tribes were still one nation in God's plan and purpose. The trench contained about 4 gallons.

- Elijah poured water on the altar three times (vs. 33-35)

Pouring water on the altar made it impossible for any man to light the fire and it proved that only God can do the impossible. Elijah intentionally gave the prophets of Baal some advantages in this "god contest."

- Elijah prayed for God to reveal Himself (vs. 36-37)

In contrast to the constant shouting of the false prophets, Elijah's prayer was short and simple, but it was sincere. His prayer was motivated by a passion for God's glory. He prayed for turning back of the people to God.

- The fire of God consumed everything (vs. 38)

The fire consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the water. God showed everyone that He didn't come to take sides. He came to take over.

- The fire of God convinced the people (vs. 39)

When the fire fell, the people fell on their faces. They confessed that Jehovah is God. What is it going to take to convince people today? God is going to send fire one way or the other: will it be the fire of revival or the fire of judgment?

- The people executed the false prophets (vs. 40)

Elijah ordered that the false prophets and those who participated in idolatry should be killed in keeping with the law that demanded this kind of action (Deut. 13:1-5).

APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LIFE:

- We should take a bold stand for the Lord.

Even if we are outnumbered, we must stand up and speak up for the Lord. If God be for us, who can be against us?

- God will allow no rivals and accept no compromise.
- We should desire to honor God and reveal His glory.
- If we truly honor the Lord we will also hate evil and remove it.

***Psalms 97:10** Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*