

## LET THE FIRE OF THE LORD FALL

[jkroberts\\_us@yahoo.com](mailto:jkroberts_us@yahoo.com)  
[www.pacolethillsbaptist.org](http://www.pacolethillsbaptist.org)

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1 Kings 18:20-24

1. Most of us are familiar with the Biblical account of Elijah the prophet and his confrontation with the prophets of Baal that took place on Mt. Carmel.
2. The religious life of Israel (Northern Kingdom) was at an all time low.
  - a. Ahab, the son of Omri, was the king.
    - “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him.” 16:30
    - “Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel before him” 16:33
  - b. To complicate matters Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal (Baal is alive) king of the Sidonians.

**NOTE: Do the people in your life advance or hinder God’s plan and purpose?**

3. Jezebel was a worshipper of Baal and strongly promoted Baal worship in the palace and nation of Israel.
  - a. The word Baal means lord or master.
  - b. Baals were regional gods who, it was believed, controlled the productive forces of nature and fertility.
  - c. Baal worship involved a great deal of sensuality.
  - d. Baal worshippers believed that their god was able to shoot lightning flashes from heaven.
  - e. Baal’s wife was believed to be Asherah, and Ahab erected a wooden symbol in her honor.
  - f. According to 1 Kings 18:19 Jezebel fed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah at her table.
4. Enter the prophet Elijah who announced to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, **before whom I stand**, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” 17:1

**NOTE: Those who stand before God can and will stand for God.**

5. Elijah then disappeared for over three years while a terrible drought began to take its toll on the land and its people.
  6. Ahab searched for Elijah but could not find him until God told Elijah, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.” 18:1
  7. When Elijah and Ahab met Ahab said, “Is this you, you troubler of Israel.” 18:17
- NOTE: Those who stand before and for God will be falsely accused by those who are promoting a godless agenda.**
8. Elijah responded, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals.” 18:18 (You have embraced the gods of this world.)

9. There is one important point we must not miss and that is the fact that everything Elijah did he did under God's direction.

- a. Note these words in his prayer, "Today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and **I have done all these things at Your word.**" 18:36
- b. One righteous, praying man or woman can make a difference. James 5:16-18  
The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

### **I. A call to congregate. 17-19**

A. Elijah told Ahab to call a great assembly on Mt. Carmel that was to include all Israel, the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of the Asherah.

B. God often chooses to manifest His power in what we would call a group setting.

NOTE: The modern American church knows little of the true manifestation of the power of God and has substituted manipulative methods and means to fill the void.

### **II. A call to commit. 20-21**

A. Elijah approached the people of Israel and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." **But the people did not answer him a word.**

NOTE: Elijah's challenge to choose is found throughout the Word of God.

1. Joshua challenged the people to choose. Josh 24:14-15

"Now, therefore, **fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth**; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, **choose** for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but **as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**"

2. Jesus stated why we must choose. Matt 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

3. James stated the consequences of not choosing. James 1:5-8

"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

B. The people of Israel would worship Jehovah to please prophets like Elijah and Baal to please the palace.

C. Elijah's words remind me of the Lord's message to the church of Laodicea.

Rev 3:15-16

15 "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

NOTE: George Barna's studies have revealed that professing Christians make up 82% of our population. 66% are what Barna calls "Casual Christians" and 18% are what he calls "Captive Christians." He defines the difference in the following paragraph.

**"The lives of Captive Christians are defined by their faith; their worldview is built around their core spiritual beliefs and resultant values. Casual Christians are defined by the desire to please God, family, and other people while extracting as much enjoyment and comfort from the world as possible. The big difference between these two tribes is how they define a successful life. For Captives, success is obedience to God, as demonstrated by consistently serving Christ and carrying out His commands and principles. For Casuals, success is balancing everything just right so that they are able to maximize their opportunities and joys in life without undermining their perceived relationship with God and others. Stated differently, Casuals are about moderation in all things while Captives are about extreme devotion to their God regardless of the worldly consequences."**

NOTE: Casual Christians are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot. They will be rejected in the end.

### **III. A call to contest. 22-29**

- A. Elijah suggested that a contest be held between him and the 450 prophets of Baal.
- B. Each side would prepare an ox as a sacrifice, lay it on wood, but put no fire under it.
- C. Then the prophets of Baal would call on the name of their god and Elijah would call on the name of the Lord and whichever deity answered by fire would be deemed to be God.
- D. All of the people were able to agree and said, "That is a good idea." 18:24
- E. The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifices and then began to call upon their god.
- F. As the hours passed their pleading and efforts became more frantic and sacrificial.

**NOTE: Notice Elijah's mocking words in verse 27.**

- G. "They raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention." 18:29

- H. Note the following quote from a sermon by Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.

**"At this point in the familiar account, one cannot help but notice some striking similarities to the church in our day. By and large, we are not lacking in activity, fervor, or attempts to obtain spiritual power. To the contrary, our church calendars are bulging with services, retreats, conferences, and programs. We are making lots of noise. We are busy, earnest, and perhaps sincere. But still there is a deafening silence in the heavens. There is no fire. It's not that we are not trying. We are. But apparently, all of our programs, promotions, meetings, buses, budgets, baptisms, committees, and conventions have failed to produce the one thing which we most desperately need-fire from heaven. And while the spiritual leaders and activists are busily trying to produce sparks, the average church member sits back with the rest of the world-waiting, watching, and wondering. Oh yes, theologically they know that Jehovah is the only true God of fire. But can they be blamed for asking deep within themselves questions they would never dare to verbalize. Is God really as powerful as their pastor claims He is? After all, they've never seen anything**

**truly supernatural or unexplainable. Most of the “spiritual” results they have seen can be accounted for in purely human terms.”**

#### **IV. A call to come near. 30-40**

- A. Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down.
    - 1. He built the altar according to God’s directions.
    - 2. He built the altar in the name of the Lord.
    - 3. He made a trench around the altar.
  - B. Once the altar was repaired he prepared and arranged the sacrifice and the wood on the altar.
  - C. He then had water poured on the altar, the sacrifice, the wood until the water even filled the trench around the altar.
    - 1. Water was the most precious commodity available at the time, and had you asked anyone present what was the great need of the hour they would have replied that what they really needed was rain.
    - 2. Elijah knew that what they really needed was to experience the supernatural power of God so that they would turn to God with their whole hearts and cleanse the land and their lives of every evil influence.
    - 3. Might I suggest that what the church needs more than anything else today is for God to send down fire from heaven. We need an extraordinary outpouring of God’s Spirit and the powerful manifestation of God’s presence in our midst.
- NOTE: For that to happen we need some men like Elijah.**
- D. Elijah then prayed a simple but profound prayer, and the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. 36-38
  - E. Confronted by the reality of God’s presence and power the people fell on their faces and declared, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.” 39

#### **APPLICATION**

- 1. John the Baptist declared that when Jesus came He would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Matthew 3:11
- 2. Not only would Jesus’ followers be filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit, but God would manifest His presence and power in their lives and assemblies.
- 3. What is missing today is the manifest presence of God—there is no fire from heaven.
- 4. May God let it be known that He is God and that we are His servants.
- 5. May God take control of our lives to the point that we would do what we do at His word and under His direction.
- 6. May God send the fire that multitudes will acknowledge that He is God, genuinely repent, and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- 7. May God send the fire in order that we might fall on our faces before Him in worshipful awe.