

Elijah – Learning the Power of the Still Small Voice

2017 Whatshan Lake Bible School

1. Elijah: Yahweh's prophet

Great drama is connected with Elijah's work: ① resurrection of the widow's son; ② breathtaking events on Mt. Carmel; ③ the revelation of God's power at Mt. Horeb; ④ stunning fire from heaven that twice consumes haughty captains & their men; and ⑤ Elijah's dramatic departure "into heaven"

At a time when the people in Israel halted between two opinions, all knew, by his power, that this was God's prophet

2. Elijah had a zeal and love for God, for His truth and for His people

His single desire was to convert his people back to the Truth & be saved; he had no other purpose/interest in life

- Lives in hiding for 3.5 years while the famine intensifies, hoping for their repentance
- His expectations are high that the events on Mt Carmel will be the catalyst for a nationwide transformation
- When Carmel fails, he lapses into a deep depression because his foremost desire will not be realized
- After learning life altering lessons at Mt Horeb, he will devote his final 15 years to serving the 7000 faithful
- Jesus cites Elijah's example to explain the peculiar devotion of John the Baptist to saving people
- At Christ's coming, his initial responsibility will be to go out & complete his lifelong desire - to save his brethren

Elijah devotes himself to saving others, & in this process God transforms his character; a life lived in service to others is how the transformation takes place: God's instruction to the Lord was not "live a sinless life"; rather, "serve & save others"

3. Ahab has placed Israel in a spiritual crisis: Elijah is God's answer to the extreme wickedness engulfing the nation

He was personally committed to the nation's repentance and salvation

He had a deep & abiding love for God's people, being a righteous man who prayed earnestly for them to be healed (Jms 5:17)

He was jealous for Yahweh (1 Kg 19:10)

He was spiritually courageous, willing to take a stand for God, even at great personal risk

He was a humble man, calling down fire from heaven on Carmel, then prostrating himself to plead for rain

He was a spiritual watchman, who could see the dangers of a false religion & he spoke out against them

Above all, he had a zeal/passion for the Truth; it was far & away the most important thing in his life & he lived it with a passion: announcing no rain, pleading for the boy's life, praying for the fireball & rain; running before Ahab

We live in a world ruled by the ways of Jezebel; it is these characteristics that enable a disciple to remain faithful

4. God works with Elijah to save him and prepare him for a greater future work

God prepares him for his time with the widow by first sending the ravens to care for him

His life in isolation likely leaves him unable to interact one-on-one with others, so God sends him to live with the widow

He is despondent on his way to Mt Horeb, thinks all is lost, yet God sends an angel to strengthen him

He vocalizes his loneliness at Horeb, so God sends him Elisha to be his trusted companion for 15+ years

God's character (mercy, grace, longsuffering, etc) is repeatedly revealed in His care for Elijah, especially in his deep despair

How God continued to work with Elijah is how God works with us, sometimes in spite of ourselves, even against our own will

5. His faults are glaring and recorded in a way we cannot miss:

- a) On the day after Mt. Carmel, *he runs away*, fleeing from his brethren
- b) He asks God to *take his life* on his way to Mt Horeb
- c) At Horeb, he pleads with God to *destroy His people*
- d) He has a *spiritual blind spot* – prior to Horeb, he couldn't see the 7000 remnant

6. Despite his faults, God continues to work with Elijah

His glaring faults did not prevent God from working in his life; instead, they identified where divine help was needed

Elijah was teachable; he will learn from his mistakes and become a better servant of God as a result

God worked *with* Elijah, despite his weaknesses, while at the same time working *through* Elijah to save others

God doesn't first perfect us before He can use us to help save others; He uses us while we are making (even big) mistakes; and He uses others, despite their faults, to help save us

7. Elijah's prayers were powerful in how they were offered, and in their effect – Jms 5:16-17

He prays twice in ch 17: ① for no rain (unrecorded); ② raising the dead boy – 17:17 "he prayed with a prayer" (4336 & 4335)

He prays twice in ch 18: ① calling down fire from heaven; and ② pleading for rain

He prays twice in 2 Kg 1: asking God to intervene to save him from the arresting captains

8. He was in harmony with God's will in his thinking, & his prayers matched exactly with that will

His prayers weren't offered to *change* God's will but to *achieve* God's will

His prayers closed and opened heaven (Jms 5:17-18); God was still in control but used Elijah's prayers to achieve His will

Each time it was *God* who acted, but in response to Elijah's prayer, which aligned with God's will

There is great wisdom in our learning to pray earnestly for God's will; our prayers are added on top of the divine will

– It is not our prayers that bring about God's will; God's will is greater than our prayers

– *Our fervent prayers help us to make God's will our will; by aligning ourselves with God's will, we can be part of it*

Jesus had to learn to make God's will his own; he too prayed earnestly for that which God had already revealed (Lk 22:44)

9. God uses Ahab and Jezebel, in parable, to warn us about Sin & our response to it

God uses **Jezebel** to teach us about sin; how it thinks, plans, acts, manipulates others, & easily brings all under her influence

– She has no redeeming qualities recorded; everything about her is to be avoided; her seductions/enticements still exist today

God uses **Ahab** to teach us about *the rejected class*; he represents the goats who will be judged unworthy

– Ahab *knows* the Truth but can't bring himself to *live* it because of his greater love for pleasure; his repeated susceptibility to Jezebel's influence is God showing us how susceptible we are to sin

10. The idolatry of Baal (male god) and Asherah (female goddess) included and promoted sexual immorality

This was the reason for its popularity among Canaanite nations, and its unending appeal to Israel

When reading "Baal" in these stories, don't think of a figurine/statue; think "*a life lived for the gratification of the flesh*"

- the problem was not in the figurines, but the evil thoughts/behaviour they led to, enticing primitive human sexual desires

It didn't encourage people to *crucify* the flesh; rather to *gratify* the flesh, inciting lusts in the name/form of religious worship

This is why when Ahab made a grove/Asherah (1 Kg 16:33) it provoked God to great anger; the idolatry led to immorality

God's anger is not like ours; it's a righteous anger; He becomes angry over situations that prevent Him from saving His people

– He can't save people who worship idols because they remove Him from the centre of their life & discard His teachings

Idols & their places of worship were to be destroyed (Dt 12:2-3); idolatry caused Israel to cast God behind their back (1 Kg 14:9)

When Ahab introduced Jezebel's idolatry, God knew it would cost many in Israel their eternal life

11. The Danger of Idolatry today

While the worship of literal idols (Baal/Asherah) doesn't exist today, we face the same danger associated with idolatry

There are forces today that, if we allow ourselves to come under their influence, cause us to cast God behind *our* back

The world's entertainment methods (TV, movies, internet, music, romance novels, video games) carry a deadly spiritual

impact because they carry an enormous pre-requisite – *that we be willing to forego our allegiance to God!*

Technology is making access to this deadly entertainment increasingly easier; God's warning to rid our life of idols still stands

Idols continue to be deadly for God's people today because they:

- a) cause us to divide our allegiance; we no longer serve God with 100% loyalty
- b) cause us to defile (compromise) our conscience, in seeking after personal gain and pleasure
- c) confuse us regarding what is right and wrong
- d) excite our natural lusts with their enticements
- e) play upon our natural weaknesses
- f) leave us wanting more, never providing any lasting satisfaction or contentment

Multiple scriptural examples warn that idol worship leads to all kinds of sin

Ex 32 – worship of golden calf Ezek 16:36 – thy nakedness...and idolatry

Num 25 – worship of the Baal of Peor Ezek 23:37 – they have committed adultery with their idols

Rev 2:14, 20 – still a problem for believers in 1st century

Rom 1:23-32 identifies how idolatry leads to immorality and the specific impacts upon a person

- 1) it requires a person to give up God & His glory – that's its pre-requisite (v23)
 - 2) one's resulting behaviour is called unclean: moral impurity & vile affections, including homosexuality (vv24,26,27)
 - 3) the heart's natural lusts are unleashed (v24) & burn with desire (v27), taking the place of God's righteous ways
 - 4) God's truth is abandoned and called a lie (v25)
 - 5) it's the flesh that's worshipped (the creature), not the Creator (v25)
 - 6) the resulting mind, dominated by its own natural lusts is "reprobate", causing one to do things they ought not (v28)
 - 7) the list of specific sins (vv29-31) are a description of the content comprising today's entertainment world
- We must keep such latter day idolatry & its evil influences out of our own lives & the lives of our families*

12. Mesha stone – 9th century BC – King Mesha (2 Kings 3:4) of Moab

Memorializes king's victories over "Omri king of Israel" and his son

Bears what is thought to be the earliest reference to 'Yahweh' (YHWH) outside the Bible

Mentions "the house of David"; discovered in Jordan in 1868; housed in the Louvre Museum

13. God's assessment of Ahab – 1 Kings 16:30-31

Ahab did more evil than all before him; it was a light (nkj: trivial) thing to follow Jeroboam's sins; he sought to exceed these
The record emphasizes the link between father & son; both did worse than all their predecessors (vv25,30,33)

Omri measured greatness by how far he exceeded the evil of previous generations; this served as Ahab's motivation too

- Not surprisingly, Ahab taught Ahaziah, his son, to do the same (1 Kg 22:52-53)

Ahab pursued evil: ①married Jezebel; ②served Baal; ③made Baal an altar; ④built him a temple + ⑤made a grove/Asherah

He didn't purposely take a wife who would dominate & manipulate him & cause him to cower before her, subservient to her every wish as putty in her hands; but such was the result when the full force of her character was imposed upon him

Ahab shows, especially for young men, that we can make bad decisions, at a young age, that have lasting repercussions

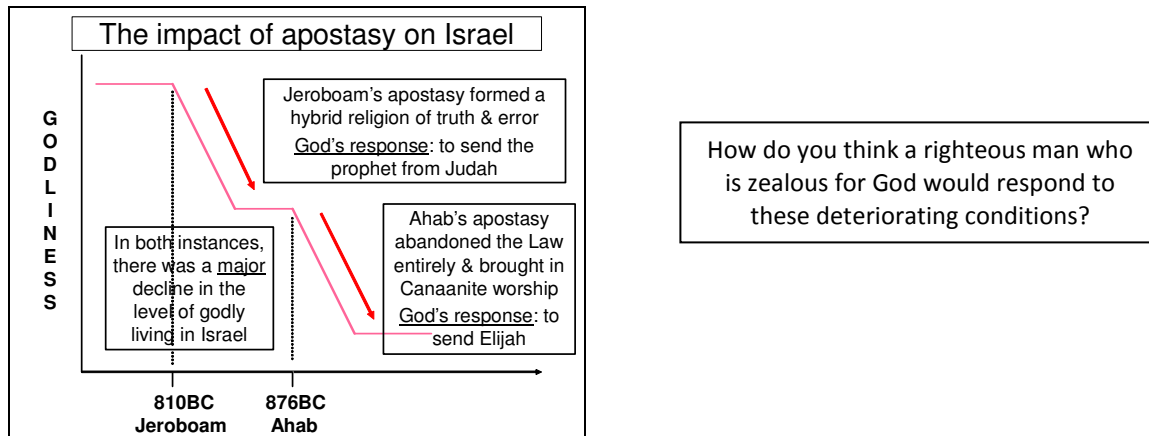
14. Jezebel – a literal and spiritual harlot who is grossly immoral

She is fiercely devoted to her false religion, having been raised by a father who loved Baal (Eth-Baal)

She blatantly ignores the Hand of God: the famine, Mt. Carmel, the warning of her gruesome death, have no impact on her

She is ruthless & a murderer of God's prophets & servants (1 Kg 21; 2Kg 9:7); she slays those who stand in her way

She is a domineering woman who plays upon people's weaknesses to gain what she wants



15. Elijah is appalled at what he sees happening; God didn't have to tell him what was wrong!

His life doesn't begin in ch17; his family life, how he developed his single godly focus & God's instructions are not recorded
Elijah explodes upon the scene bearing God's message; he's personally outraged over Ahab's actions

Elijah's presence would have shocked Ahab's court; his uninvited entrance would have been stunning!

- He defines the issue: "It is Yahweh, God of Israel who lives" (not Baal)

- "but according to my word" shows Elijah is personally involved; he is not just God's spokesman

- "there will be no rain nor dew *these years*" a direct challenge to Baal (controlled nature); famine would be long

The Law of Moses warned of an outcome of drought in the event of Israel's disobedience (Lev 26:19; Dt 11:16-17; 28:23)

While it was God's message he bore, it was his own heart that he spoke with conviction!

Being zealous – on fire – for God, is a state of mind the faithful develop when they have put God first in their life

- Christ was zealous for God; "zeal for thine house hath consumed me" (Jn 2:17; Mk 11:17)

Those who are zealous for God maintain a wall of separation between themselves & the wickedness of the world

We need to teach our children/young people to be zealous for God; they must see it modeled; it can't be taught in a class

16. Flees to Cherith and is fed by ravens – a miracle twice/day

Job 38:41 – ravens are notoriously poor at feeding their young; Luke 12:24 – it is God who feeds the ravens

Though under the Law the ravens were unclean, Elijah would have developed an affection for them

God purposely introduces events into our life to change/broaden our thinking in order to expand our outlook

- this is done, not to sacrifice first principles, but to encourage our acceptance of fellow believers not of our culture

- Elijah would have been unwilling to accept the widow absent God's instructions; just as Peter with Cornelius

- both the widow and Cornelius believed the same Truth as Elijah & Peter; saving doctrine was not compromised

- this principle is most obvious in the mission field & when new members join the ecclesia through the Seminars

The real lesson for Elijah was not about the ravens, but to accept the gentile widow; he wasn't prepared to in v5, but is by v9 God *commanded* the widow to *sustain* Elijah (v9); the same words in v4 (commanded/feed); she was specially selected by God to care for Elijah because of her outstanding faith (Lk 4:25-26), even though she resided in Jezebel's home land God could have sustained Elijah for the duration of the drought at Cherith, but he needed to meet the widow (& she him), not to *convert* her, but to *see her faith*, which she quickly expresses during a major trial upon their initial meeting

17. The widow's loving and faithful character

She is collecting sticks for her final meal & stops to help a stranger! That's her character – a person under severe trial does not suddenly develop a new character; she is already a caring person & not pre-occupied with her own needs The request for a drink tested her *hospitality*, but the request for a meal (v11 cp. Gen 18:5) tested her *faith* She initially declined Elijah's request for a meal (v12) because she lacked sufficient food to honour his request It was an incredible request, given her dire situation; Elijah links it to faith – “fear not” (ie. have faith God will sustain you) Elijah had evidently been instructed by God beforehand, as he could not promise such a miracle on his own Her very first recorded words, “as the LORD thy God liveth” was a declaration of her faith in Yahweh (proof = v1 and 18:10) She was spiritually on the same page as Elijah! She didn't need Carmel to convince her to believe in Yahweh & not Baal; neither was she halting between two opinions as Israel was; she may not have had any *food* left, but she still had her *faith*! She didn't know Elijah was coming (despite v9: “I have commanded”) or that God would sustain her; if she did know, Elijah's request is meaningless as is his plea “have faith”; it would have been faithless (& a complaint) to talk of her last meal

18. Her faith preceded Elijah's arrival, and reveals her spiritual character

She understood the famine was from God, but retained no bitterness for the trial it brought – she & her son are near death! There is no reason for her to cite Yahweh living unless this is her belief & manner of life; she wasn't ashamed of her faith Her severe trial had not driven her *away* from God; it brought her *closer* to Him - contrast her faithful response to the drought with Ahab & Israel's response – they remained loyal to Baal She doesn't become a faithful person because of Elijah's visit; she is already faithful Don't enter her life at the point Elijah does; begin months earlier when their food began to be depleted God has been working with her throughout the whole time He's been working with Elijah She's been watching their food be depleted & at some point began to ration, then had to ration the rations! It's a slow process to run out of food, but the day finally arrives when she is down to their last meal *God had brought her to what appeared to be the end; this is how He saves us, by teaching us to trust Him*

19. Her faith, tested under extreme conditions, becomes a model for the nation to follow

Wake up with her that morning, go out and collect the sticks for what will be the last time The widow and her son likely hadn't eaten for one or more days due to the self-imposed rationing Surely she's been praying for help; surely an angel's been present (Ps 34:7); Elijah is sent in response to her prayers (Lk 4:25-7) On this final day a stranger approaches & asks for a meal, encouraging her to place her faith in the LORD She hears the Word of God, believes (despite life-threatening circumstances), and obeys! Based upon her belief! Her actions were Godly love: putting others' needs before her own, by faith, trusting God would care for her & her son There are multiple contextual parallels with her situation & Israel's on Carmel (meal offering, barrel, wood, etc.)

20. The tragic death of her son – a careful reading is needed to avoid any personal bias

While we might have responded to such tragedy with resentment & anger, this was not the widow's response The widow and Elijah are united in: ①their response to the death (both are left confused, perplexed); ②seeing God's hand in the event; ③their appeal for God to raise the boy; and ④their faith the lad could be raised - They think the same *thoughts*, believe the same *hope* & pray the same *prayer*! The widow links the tragic death to her own sin; a hallmark trait of the faithful (to look inward & not blame God); cp Est 4:1 'Mistress' only used 2 other times; both linked to witchcraft (1 Sam 28:7; Nah 3:4); *possibly* showing her past idolatry She doesn't lash out at Elijah; “*what have I to do with you*” shows her humility (2 Kg 3:13; 16:10; Mk 5:7) The answer to her dilemma will not be found by turning on God, but turning to God, which she does A person in distress doesn't turn to a new religion; she turns to Elijah & to God, confessing her sins & unworthiness She is understandably confused/perplexed, but so is Elijah, “*hast thou also brought evil upon the widow...by slaying her son?*” They shared the same belief that God could raise the boy, evidenced by Elijah's prayer & her faith noted in Heb 11:35 - She is deeply distraught, yet believes that her son can be raised - even though no one had ever been raised before!

21. Heb 11 – Faith must precede the outcome for it to be faith – “Women received their dead, raised to life again...”

Heb 11 describes the outcome of faith, the impact faith has in believers’ lives; but in each case, *faith precedes the outcome*

- Because of faith, Noah built an ark; Abraham left Ur; their faith existed before (not after) the incident cited (cp v33)

Faith has no meaning in v35 if the widow’s faith occurs *after* her son is raised; no faith is required once the outcome is

witnessed; but to believe while the son is still dead – that’s faith!; (see also the Shunamite woman’s situation in 2 Kg 4:23)

The widow is holding her dead son in her bosom, yet believes he can be raised; she speaks her faith, not her desperation

We must put the pieces together: ①she knew God caused the death; ②she concluded it was linked to her own sins; ③she expresses her humble position; and ④she believed her son would be raised

She hadn’t lost her faith in God when her son died, just as she hadn’t lost it when they were down to their last meal

When adversity occurs we don’t anticipate, it can be called a “violation of our expectation”, which the widow experienced

- *how we respond in such situations reveals a lot about our character & where we are in the development of our faith*

She didn’t turn against Elijah or God, nor did she blame God, though she knew He was responsible; instead, she turned to Him

- she wasn’t just a frantic unbelieving mother who prematurely lost her son – she believed he could be raised!

God doesn’t bring trials (that violate our expectations) so we’ll turn against Him, but to draw us closer to Him

When Elijah saw her faith while holding her dead son, it was infectious; he asks for her son because he could see her faith

Twice she faces death in this chapter, and both times she retains her faith – it’s why Jesus sites her great faith in Lk 4

22. Further evidence of the widow’s faith

The death of the boy unites Elijah & the widow; they’re of 1 mind in their confusion, perplexity & anguish, but also their faith

Elijah realized the boy didn’t die because of any past sin; he wouldn’t call the death “evil” (v20) if it was warranted

- nor does God reach into our past & punish us for former sins, as she feared

- Elijah doesn’t tell her she must repent before the son can be raised, nor does God make this a requirement

It’s not her life that needed to change; God is enlarging her faith; the boy isn’t raised because she repents, but due to her faith

23. Elijah pleads for the boy’s life in a very touching and moving scene that occurs in the loft

The death of the lad whom he loved had taken Elijah by surprise; he turns to prayer in his time of need

Though not recorded in words, only in deeds, he clearly loved this boy; don’t hear his prayers without also hearing his love

3 times (resurrection) he cries to God (7121 - Vines: to call out loudly to get one’s attention; cp. 6 times in 18:24-28)

Elijah prays his heart out, by faith, pleading for God to intervene – we are witnessing his character

The first two prayers produce no response; God is deepening his faith, just like He is the widow’s

This righteous man doesn’t know God’s will in the matter but prays effectually & fervently; because his prayers are consistent with that will, God is pleased to raise the lad, working in conjunction with the prayers of His prophet

True to her character the widow’s immediate response is to God (v24); *“now, by this I know that thou art a man of God...”*

- *“and that the word of the LORD is truth”* – truth = *emeth*: trustworthiness; cp Ex 34:7 – God is reliable, He does what He says

- her son’s unexpected death had caused her to momentarily doubt God’s trustworthiness; his restoration removes any doubt

Imagine the reverential celebration occurring in their house that night! And her hugs & kisses for her son for months to come!

The unending meal/oil was a daily reminder of God’s gracious hand; now her living, breathing son was added on top

God used the same event to deepen the faith of a Jew & Gentile – both sharing a common faith & love

Elijah’s stay (2 years approx.) strengthened each other’s faith & commitment to righteousness – the aim of Godly friendship!

Her faith was exhilarating; God knew Elijah needed a home, not just to eat/sleep, but where his faith would be strengthened

In the ecclesia we don’t all look or think alike, nor do we share the same background, but through our common faith in God we can be helpful to each other, especially in times of great trial; we can pray for one another & be edified by each other!

24. Obadiah’s character & faith under trial

His faithful obedience under trial mirrors that of the widow of Zarephath; he took great personal risks to save his brethren

He had nothing to gain personally (naturally speaking) and everything to lose in hiding the 100 prophets

His faith and love grow; what began as fearing God in his youth becomes a willingness to risk all later in life

It is because he is faithful (in hiding the prophets) that the severity of his trial (danger he faces) increases

Life in Ahab’s house would have been difficult given Ahab & Jezebel’s flaunting of idolatry and immorality

As governor of Ahab’s house he held a privileged position & responsibility, but his loyalty to God came first

Jezebel’s death sentence placed upon Yahweh’s prophets heightened his danger, yet increased his faith & love

- he put the needs of the endangered prophets before his own at great personal risk, on a daily basis

Though God likely placed him in Ahab’s house to save the prophets, he still had to have the faith to fulfill this role

25. Obadiah “feared Yahweh greatly” (v3)... “from his youth” (v12)

To “fear” God does not mean to be afraid of Him; it is to reverence Him, to place Him foremost in our life, above all else. His close relationship with Ahab didn’t cause him to abandon his loyalty to God; v10 declares his loyalty to God not Baal. Obadiah shows it is possible, at a young age, though surrounded by apostasy & immorality, to live apart from the evil. It was because Obadiah learned to fear God as a youth that God was able to later use him for the critical work in Ahab’s house. Obadiah could not have been helpful to the prophets if he participated in the evil of his day.
Living in evil times, we too need to live apart from the evil if we are to be helpful to others

26. Obadiah’s zeal for God matched Elijah’s, and was equally powerful; both men:

- a) were willing to risk everything - even their life - for God’s work
- b) feared God, putting Him first in their life, above all else
- c) shared a common hatred of the idolatry & evil it brought to Israel
- d) had a deep yearning to save their brethren
- e) lived for the future Kingdom, not for the present

It was their zeal for God that helped both men live apart from the evil of their day

Obadiah didn’t suddenly lose his faith when Elijah instructs him to arrange a meeting with Ahab; Obadiah knows Ahab is ruthless (3 times in 6 verses: “he will kill me”); Elijah has a reputation for God whisking him away at a moment’s notice.

27. Ahab’s character revealed by the drought

He cares more about his animals than the people; material possessions dominate his life (cp 21:6 – his vegetable garden). During the drought he refuses to repent or to accept responsibility for the divine punishment brought upon Israel. Instead of repenting, he seeks to circumvent the drought by finding the last vestiges of water; instead of searching for Elijah to seek his counsel to gain God’s favour, he seeks his *death*! The famine led him to *vengeance*, not *repentance*. Though Ahab blames Elijah for the famine, *he* was the real ‘troubler of Israel’, ‘forsaking God & following Baal’ (v18). While preposterous to blame Elijah, God shows how Jezebel/Sin can deceive, make us believe a lie & blame others for our sins. “Sore” (v2) is same as 7:17 – God brought Ahab to the same point as the widow; she acknowledged her sin, Ahab denied his – God was trying to save Ahab, as with the widow; He sent his prophet & severe trial; both witnessed His miraculous work. After 3½ years, the royal couple rejected all divine chastening; v4 describes Jezebel’s response to the famine; v5 is Ahab’s.

28. Four different reactions to the same famine reveal the character of each person

Widow – faced death, yet her faith grew!

Obadiah – despite his privileged position, put his life in jeopardy to save others

Jezebel – rebelled against God, despised His chastening, resented His Word & slew His prophets, trying to eliminate the Word

Ahab – his foremost concern was for his possessions (his ‘net worth’); he cared little for the suffering of those around him

How we respond to our trials reveals our true character

29. The contest on Mt Carmel was exactly what the people needed given their ‘confused’ state of mind

The idea of holding a contest on Mt. Carmel didn’t originate with Elijah; he is under God’s instructions (v36).

It was an ideal location for thousands to witness the miracle; it was important for all to *see* what happened, not *hear* of it later – you wouldn’t have to invite anyone twice; with no rain for 3 years & news of Elijah’s return, all would be in attendance.

The pressing issue of the day: who was God? Yahweh or Baal? Israel halted between 2 opinions/2 minds (heb: a divided mind).

“Halt”: to hop, skip over, hesitate; they were ‘sitting on the fence’, hopping between their two minds, seeking God & pleasure.

To have a divided mind doesn’t mean God is removed from our life; just that other things are placed alongside Him – trying to simultaneously walk after the spirit & the flesh; God can’t save a person who seeks Him & Baal (sin’s pleasures) because He can’t transform their character; only a single devotion (loving God with all our heart/soul/strength) will transform us

There is ample scriptural warning about the dangers of a divided mind – Jms 1:8; 4:8; Matt 6:24; Rev 3:15-16

30. How do we get off the fence?

1. Make a public commitment to serve God alone, which will support a private need to hold ourselves accountable for doing so
2. Get rid of the idols in our life – the influences that we know, from experience, incite our lusts to evil
3. Make holiness our standard of conduct – when we fall short, take responsibility for the sin, but don’t lower the standard
4. Find friends who don’t sit on the fence – who have put God first in *their* life & who are not fence sitters
5. Pray daily for God’s help to sustain our commitment

31. The contest purposely pits the power of Yahweh against the power of Baal to determine “Who is God?”

Elijah is not only looking for the people to choose Yahweh, but, just as importantly, to reject Baal

By Elijah requiring the people to first agree to the terms, they become *participants*, not just *spectators*; he wants them to take ownership for their Baal worship & to experience the futility of Baal worship; he wants Baal to let them down

- he addresses the people in v22-24 before turning to the prophets in v25

Put yourself there! Baal's prophets are given every advantage: they go first; there's been no rain for 3½ years; all is tinder dry

- he is the sun god, with the sun blazing down from a cloudless sky; the tiniest of sparks will ignite his altar

- a frenzied scene unfolds: 450 prophets leap about the altar, calling for a voice to respond & for fire from heaven (v24)

- as the day unfolds, Elijah mocks them for their belief in a god that doesn't exist & goads them to intensify their efforts

- he wants all Israel to see that every opportunity was given to Baal, every ounce of energy was expended to garner a response

- the prophets spend all afternoon in a frenzied, frantic appeal – this is Baal worship to the max, in all its gory details of cuttings, wailings, gushing blood & bodily mutilations – all done in futility

- they didn't invent new rituals that day; this was how they worshipped Baal; in extreme cases children were offered (Molech)

32. This scene is why God hated idolatry and found it so abhorrent

Physical frenzy was the foundation of paganism; bodily mutilation was a sign of devotion (cp Lev 19:28)

Such 'worship' did nothing to transform people into new men/women, to change/transform their lives as Phil 3:2 warns

God wants people's hearts/minds, devoted to His righteous ways, who approach Him in contrition and humility

There's no value in gushing blood, frenzied chants, frantic displays of meaningless, self-mutilating rituals which do nothing to crucify the flesh or promote righteousness

It was appropriate that Elijah mocked the prophets (cp Ps 2) who blasphemed God & promoted idolatry/immorality; as leaders of the apostasy, they were responsible for its destructive influences; what began as mocking will end in their death (v40)

33. Baal's prophets are left defeated

After more than 6 hours they are left exhausted, bloodied, defeated & in absolute humiliation

Without knowing it, they were demonstrating the utter foolishness and worthlessness of their religion

All the rituals, emotional outbursts, mutilations & savage-like behaviour were meaningless, pointless & powerless

By the time they finished, the futility of Baal worship was evident for the nation to see, & the 450 prophets were failures

Remember this scene! God was teaching Israel (& us) just how futile, worthless, senseless & hopeless a life is, lived for Baal

- for us, it is a life given over to pursuing the pleasures of the flesh

- in the end it will leave us exhausted, humiliated & without hope – and for what? For nothing! Fit only for death

The prophets of Baal were fully defeated and Yahweh had not even lifted a finger!

34. Elijah then steps forward in quiet reverence & addresses the people – it's a great moment in Israel's history

With Baal's religion failing miserably, the people draw close to him (v30)

He isn't there to condemn them but to appeal to them to change their ways & allegiance; his desire is for them to be healed

– he repairs the altar of Yahweh (v30); heb. for 'repair' = to heal/cure the sick; heb. for 'trench' = bandage/healing

He also seeks to unify the nation; 12 stones, barrels of water; he reminds them of their divine heritage & the promises

Saturating the altar means no human fire could consume it; he makes the sacrifice impossible to offer by humans means

His prayer isn't just for God to send fire, but salvation! He exhorts the people to be converted, but it's wrapped in a prayer

Out of the twilight sky comes a fireball, in God's blazing glory! In answer to Elijah's prayer – a spectacular sight!

Yes! God did hear his prayer & yes, Yahweh was God, & yes, He did want the people to turn their hearts back to Him!

What followed was just as breathtaking as the fireball; the people prostrate themselves in humility & declare their allegiance!

- Yah, He is God – Elijah's very name; an incredible outcome to a miraculous event!

35. Elijah then acts quickly – Baal's religion must be extinguished (v40)

Ridding Baal worship begins with the extermination of the priests; the cleansing will occur on the heels of the conversion

It's unlikely Elijah slew all 450 prophets (too much time required); likely he had Israel participate, not just observe

- a large multitude of people would be needed to coral & then slay the prophets, who, though weak, wouldn't succumb easily

See the grisly yet triumphant scene! Earlier they were exhausted, bloodied & broken, now they lie dead at the Kishon River

- *God is vividly illustrating once more the end of a life devoted to the worship of Baal – a life lived for the pleasures of sin*

By the next morning, following the torrential rains, the bodies will all be gone, swept out to sea

Some time elapses as Ahab & Elijah re-ascend Carmel; Ahab enjoys a celebratory meal, Elijah goes to the top to pray for rain

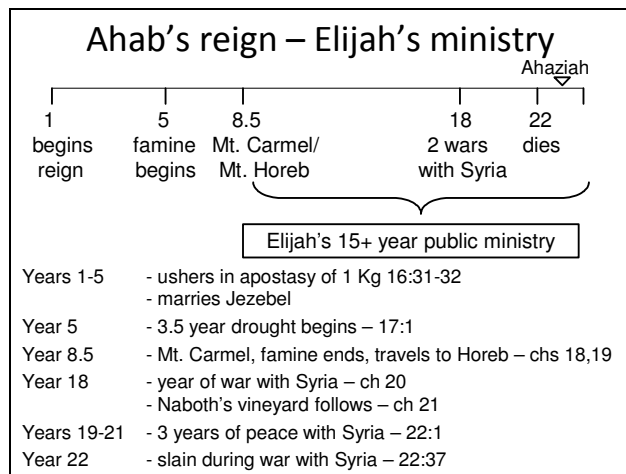
In sharp contrast to the frenzied Baal worship, Elijah quietly & humbly prostrates himself & pleads to God, who again responds
God's loving character is still trying to reach/save Ahab through the revelation of His power that day

- three times God's power was on display for Ahab: ① the fireball; ② the rain and ③ Elijah racing down the mountain

- the great tragedy for Ahab is that when he reaches the bottom of the mountain, he's going home to Jezebel

36. Run down the mountain with Elijah that evening! Feel the spiritual exhilaration racing through his mind & body

- ① The nation has (seemingly) been redeemed with the people all declaring, "Yahweh, He is God"
 - ② The 450 prophets of Baal are all dead!
 - ③ Ahab has (seemingly) been converted, given his blessing to the death of the prophets & enjoyed a meal of celebration
 - ④ The rain is coming with a vengeance, the drought is over, both naturally and spiritually
 - ⑤ His life's mission has been accomplished & God's hand is upon him as he outraces Ahab's chariot to Jezreel
- What joy must have flowed through his mind & heart; his expectations were sky-high
 There was a crescendo of positive spiritual events which occurred that day & God had contributed to each
 God was blessing the events because He knew Elijah's greatest trial was about to unfold



The exact placement of some events is not known

- The 5 year date for the start of the famine is approximate, as is the famine ending at 8½ years – these dates could vary by several years, in either direction
- The final 4 years are identified by the 1 year war with Syria (ch 20) followed by 3 years of peace
- Naboth's vineyard likely occurs during the 3 years of peace due to ch 21's placement after ch 20
- Ahaziah reigns 2 years, then Elijah taken – 2 Kg 2
- Elijah's principle public ministry begins after Mt Carmel

37. A review of the strengths of Elijah's character prior to Horeb

1. He has a zeal for God
 2. He is jealous for God, serving only Him
 3. He loves God, evidenced by his faithful obedience
 4. He has spiritual courage to stand up for the Truth and denounce the wickedness of his day
 5. He is a righteous man (James 5:16)
 6. His prayers are powerful in how offered and in their effect (Jms 5:16)
 7. He is teachable, receptive to divine instruction & to altering his outlook
- It's important to have these strengths in mind because in ch 19 his weaknesses become glaringly obvious

38. Mt. Carmel's short lived impact

Elijah – is greatly encouraged by: the people's response; the slain prophets; & Ahab's apparent newfound obedience to God; there is every indication the nation will be healed & turn back to God

Ahab – enjoys a meal of celebration on Carmel; is glad to see the rain; impressed by the miracle & saw futility of Baal worship

Jezebel – unfazed by the events; hatred of God & Elijah intensifies; issues a death sentence against Elijah; is unconvertible!

Jezebel's dominating influence over Ahab is again evident at a critical stage in his life; there was still time to repent, God had given him a golden opportunity to reform; he had the capacity to be a faithful believer, but lacked the inner conviction

Ahab, spiritually energized by Horeb, should have gone home and made wholesale changes in support of the Truth; instead, still halting between 2 opinions, he yields to Jezebel & forfeits his salvation because he feared her more than God

- within a single conversation she will undo all the good God was trying to achieve; she was more powerful than the fireball

- Ahab woke up that morning a follower of Baal, then became a follower of Yahweh, then returned back to Baal – all in 1 day!

39. Jezebel's destructive impact on Elijah is a warning to us regarding Sin's destructive impact

- ① She slew God's prophets; Sin's desire is that we not listen to God's word
 - ② She murdered her enemies; Sin would have us hate our enemies
 - ③ She advanced a religion that encouraged gross immorality, catering to & promoting the cravings of the flesh
 - ④ She could turn Ahab from the path of good to evil with only a few words, showing Sin's ability to quickly alter our thinking
- We can read these stories & think to ourselves, "Ahab, you fool", but must remember how susceptible we are to Sin's influence*
Jezebel is a warning to young men: be very careful who you find attractive + who is attracted to you & who will be your spouse
She is also a warning to young ladies: don't be lured/enticed by outward beauty or play upon a man's weaknesses; a woman can have great power & influence in her husband's life – make sure it is a power for good

Why didn't God remove Jezebel & her wicked influence? Why permit her to gain an entrance into the household of faith & to wreak such havoc? God doesn't shield us from Jezebel/Sin; it's a power each believer must learn to overcome
Her death sentence had a crushing effect upon Elijah – mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically
She's not interested in killing him (if so, why warn him?); her real goal was to publicly discredit him and his God (v2)
- she wants him to flee! To flee his God, his people & his responsibilities

Elijah runs, fearing for his life; her fireball has more power than Yahweh's; his fear of her is greater than his fear of God
Within 24 hours, all the potential good of Carmel is lost; he goes from the spiritual heights of Carmel to deep despair
She drains him of his faith, hope & love; & his desire to save his people & his commitment to serve his God; gone was his zeal

God is teaching us that if we give ourselves over to Sin's power (& walk in the flesh), it will:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ① rob us of our spiritual purpose in life | ⑤ cause us to lose our hope in things eternal |
| ② rob us of our ability to think clearly in spiritual matters | ⑥ take us in a downward spiral of despair & depression |
| ③ rob us of our willingness to serve others | ⑦ cause us to question God, even challenge Him |
| ④ cause us to be pessimistic, especially in ecclesial matters | ⑧ rob us of our will to live |

When Elijah fled, he wasn't fleeing from Jezebel's power, he was turning himself over to it, letting her dominate him; but she only had power over him because he allowed her to

His expectations had been seriously violated when he saw the apparent failure of Carmel & heard of the threat on his life
- but unlike the widow, he didn't turn to God & plead for His help; he turned to Sin & fled

40. In despair, despondent and deeply depressed, Elijah flees from Jezebel

God doesn't criticize Elijah for his lack of faith; instead He seeks to restore him, after his weaknesses are exposed; He does so because this is His character; His focus is on saving, not on condemning

We need to remember this when a brother (young person) is overcome by Sin's influence: seek to restore, not to criticize

Elijah's failings need to be exposed so God can rightly deal with them & Elijah can grow beyond them

A wave of absolute discouragement sweeps over his mind & fills his heart with abject depression – all is lost!

He asks to die! Because he is so discouraged; there were 'good' reasons for his despondency; there almost always are
- Apostasy is entrenched; Jezebel is too strong/Ahab too weak; his life's work is a failure; the people are beyond salvation

He speaks his failure, "it is enough": I am finished! & no better than my fathers

This is the mental outlook & the words of a broken, discourage man; he falls asleep & doesn't want to wake up

Being in deep despair, he was not in a good place: *good thoughts don't happen there, good actions are not taken there, good plans are not made there, good conversations don't occur there & good counsel cannot be given there*

41. God responds marvelously, sending an angel to comfort and nourish Elijah

Elijah craves sleep (typical of severe depression); an angel gently touches & wakes him (twice), showing God's tenderness

God knows Elijah wants to argue with God & plead his case against Israel at Mt Horeb; so God strengthens him for the trip

With mercy, grace, longsuffering, lovingkindness and faithfulness God responds to a believer who is at his lowest point

Elijah will be sustained 40 days to travel only 200 miles; he will walk the same desert as Israel after the Exodus

- Elijah had placed himself with the *fathers*; God instead places him with the *children* who wandered 40 years in the wilderness

42. Elijah's mind upon arriving at Mt Horeb: Israel should be destroyed! - Rom 11:2-4

Paul reveals Elijah was no longer in a right frame of mind since he "made intercession (prayer) to God against Israel"

God would never cast away His people & Paul cites Elijah's wrong attempt (his plea for God to do so) to prove his point

James 5:17-18 reveals Elijah's outlook at Carmel; Rom 11 reveals his outlook after Horeb; at Carmel he had sought Israel's

salvation, at Horeb he sought their destruction; he was no longer in step with God's will & was now praying against it!

He states his evidence & thinks he has an airtight case against the nation, but his 'zeal' is based upon a wrong understanding

Elijah also violated a fundamental principle of spiritual shepherds – they *never condemn the flock (leave that to God), give up on the flock, or abandon the flock; instead they do all they can to save the flock*; Elijah is no longer a shepherd, but a judge

43. At Mt. Horeb, Elijah will learn a life altering lesson

To dramatize the need for Elijah to change his thinking God sends him a personal miracle, in four stages; the fireball on Carmel paled by comparison to what Elijah witnessed on Horeb

Elijah stood on Carmel & challenged the people to change their thinking/ways; God does the same at Horeb; the wind picked up & smashed boulders against the mountainside, which then shook Elijah within, before fire enveloped the mountain

God's power was in all 3 manifestations, but not His power to save; that didn't come until the still small voice (SSV)

It was a gentle whisper, so quiet Elijah could hardly make out what it said

God doesn't tell Elijah about the SSV, instead He demonstrated its power, giving Elijah a Bible class on the subject

- it causes us to search our conscience, asking probing questions, challenging our wrong thinking & conduct
- "What are you doing here?" is an example of the SSV
- it is powerful because it enters our mind like a gentle whisper & has the ability to penetrate deep into our hearts/minds; it can get to places the wind, earthquake and fire cannot reach;
- it has the power to expose sin & to arrest sin's hold over us & turn us back to righteousness
- it can become a power in our life greater than the power of Jezebel/Sin, but only if we seek it out

The beauty of God's approach is that He used Elijah's own life experiences to teach him the supreme value of the SSV

- God used the very occasion when Elijah was far over the line of right thinking/conduct to show him its power & wisdom
- The Bible class on the mountain had a life altering effect upon Elijah & became the turning point in his life
- he will spend the rest of his life faithfully serving the remnant, evidenced by the subsequent events in his life

44. We need to teach our children about the SSV so it can become a power in their life

How do we take the Bible & turn it into a power in our life? A power that:

- a) motivates us to do (the right) things we don't want to & not to do (wrong) things we desire
- b) we learn to rely upon & to search out & to be guided by & to put our faith in
- c) we use to make decisions in our life
- d) we learn to reflect upon & put into practice & meditate upon so that it can become an even greater power

It takes a spiritual skill to learn to tap into the power of the SSV; it won't happen naturally or automatically; it isn't magical or mystical & certainly doesn't happen as the result of the frenzied worship of Baal

- It's not the Holy Spirit, it's the Word of God (v9 proves this) – the divine principles we reflect upon internally, that challenge our natural thinking, that replaces our thoughts with God's thoughts
- It's a skill that divides the sheep from the goats, for the latter never learn it
- Jesus rebuked the men of Nazareth (Lk 4) because they rejected the SSV, asking instead to see a miracle

God took the outcome of Carmel & its devastating impact on Elijah – so depressed he wanted to die – and used that to teach Elijah about the real power that saves, winning him back to right thinking

45. The last thing God reveals to Elijah is the presence of the 7000

News of this faithful remnant would have stunned Elijah (like a 2x4), but immediately restored his hope & life mission; God couldn't have told him any more exhilarating news

God sent him back to Israel & told him not to worry about the unfaithful, but to focus his efforts on saving the remnant

It was the SSV that had saved the 7000, not the fireball on Carmel, further showing the supreme value of the SSV

God had successfully restored His prophet & cured him of his malady, not by condemning him or by rendering judgment against him, but by opening his eyes to the small multitude of faithful & encouraging him to serve their needs

- Elijah had come to Horeb feeling sorry for himself & suffering deep depression; God's prescribed treatment was to encourage him to go & serve the 7000

- serving others may not help treat depression in every situation, but it was the right course of treatment for Elijah

When Elijah leaves Horeb he will put the SSV to work in Israel; shown by the fact that when John the Baptist came "in the spirit & power of Elijah", he was but a voice, crying in the wilderness, who did no miracle, yet convincing multitudes to repent by asking probing questions that exposed their sin & challenged their wrong thinking/conduct

At Christ's return, God will use this very man, who once vehemently sought her destruction, to save Israel (Mal 4:5-6), & the means Elijah will use to bring about such a massive conversion will be the power of the SSV