

Show down at sun down 1 Kings 17-18

There comes a time in life in certain situations and sometimes individuals must be confronted. We are told in the scripture to be longsuffering, we are told to be patient, but there are also times of confrontation.

God always demonstrates long suffering, patience, and gentleness with us, but then there is always that time of confrontation. In the book of 1st Kings, we get a glimpse into that. It appears to be the foreshadowing of what this world will face at the tribulation. The nation of Israel had turned rapidly from the worship of God to the worship of baal led by the notorious Jezebel and her husband, Ahab.

We are abruptly introduced to Elijah in 1Kings 17:1, whose name means “The Lord is my God.” Elijah immediately prophesied a drought that would last 3 ½ years (half of the tribulation period). In the 17th chapter, we watch him miraculously provided for by God at the brook, Kerith, for approximately 2 ½ years...then miraculously, by a widow and her son for the remaining year. In the latter part of that chapter, we watch him miraculously resurrect the widow’s son back to life. The famine did not turn Israel back to God, if anything – it hardened the heart of Ahab and made him more determined to seek after other gods. How has America responded to the crisis we have walked through in the last few years? What is our attitude? What did 9/11 do? Was it positive or negative spiritually?

1 Kings 18:1-46 (NIV) ¹ After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

“After a long time” – it is showdown at sundown. Even though there is a confrontation, God has given the nation of Israel one more opportunity to repent – through the showdown.

² So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria, ³ and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD.

Here we are introduced to Obadiah – his name means “servant of the Lord”, he is a devout believer. In verses 4-6, we see his allegiance is greater to God than it is to Jezebel.

⁴ While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) ⁵ Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals." ⁶ So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another. ⁷ As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, "Is it really you, my lord Elijah? ⁸ "Yes," he replied. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"

God is identifying Obadiah with Elijah – what is Obadiah’s response? Are you willing to be identified with God’s work or God’s spirit?

⁹ "What have I done wrong," asked Obadiah, "that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? ¹⁰ As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you.

¹¹ But now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' ¹² I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the LORD since my youth. ¹³ Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. ¹⁴ And now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' He will kill me!"

Obadiah knows of God's faithfulness to Elijah, but he has questioned the faithfulness of God in his own life. Do you believe that God will be as faithful to you as he is to others?

¹⁵ Elijah said, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today."

Elijah's response – Quit being so self centered, stop worrying (I will never leave you nor forsake you). Elijah's word was enough:

¹⁶ So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷ When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler (trouble bringer) of Israel?"

Isn't it ironic – those who cause the trouble always transfer the blame to someone else. Ahab was more responsible for the famine than Elijah because he had led the nation away from God (he broke the covenant). Elijah will not accept the blame.

¹⁸ "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD's commands and have followed the Baals.

Elijah is fed up.

¹⁹ Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

Bring it on! This invitation is also to get them in one location, because Elijah knows it is going to go beyond a confrontation and end up being an annihilation. Ahab is not able to see the future, he is so caught up in the present.

²⁰ So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

Here is the showdown

Waver: to dance – same word as in verse 26

TO worship baal, you were permitted to have other Gods. Worshipping baal and Jehovah – they were ok with and didn't fully understand why Elijah wasn't. But Jehovah (God) does not allow you to worship him and any other god. Why??

Exodus 20:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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 on the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me,

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

²² Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.

There are 400 additional prophets that eat at Jezebel's table. A total of 850 to 1. You make think those odds are not fair – no they're not. Because when God is on your side, it's a slam dunk.

Now he is going to give them instructions:

²³ Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire-- he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

They will get the first opportunity to prove baal is God.

It is said that both the Lord and baal were said to ride the thunderstorms as their divine chariots. (Psalm 104:3)

Thunder was their voice (Psalm 29:3-9) and

Lightning was their weapon (Psalm 18:14)

They took the scriptures that were attributed to God and also made them applicable to baal.

²⁵ Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire."

Elijah now will mock them

²⁶ So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. ²⁷ At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." ²⁸ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹ Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Leviticus 19:28 & Deuteronomy 14:1 forbids the mutilation of the body. This is God's chosen people, ordained and called by God – violating the scripture by lacerating their bodies as a blood sacrifice to call upon another god.

But according to verse 29 there was no response and no one answered and no one paid attention. There comes a time in life that God not only says He is God, but He proves He is God.

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins.

Step 1: repair the altar of the Lord – which is in ruins.....

³¹ Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel."

Elijah is calling attention to the covenant that God made with Israel, even though this concerns the northern 10 tribes he is addressing – this concerns the whole nation.

³² With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood." ³⁴ "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

Explain the water. The tricks false prophets had used in the past – and they still do today.

³⁶ At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

We see a 60 word prayer, but it was supported by 3 ½ years of communion, prayer, and trust. When you walk with God and you face the enemy, it doesn't take a long prayer, because you have been praying without ceasing.

³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

This fire is not from below – the fire fell from above. That precipitated verse 39:

³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

The emerging church – the church of the 21st century – the seeker sensitive church – the contemporary church – in the midst of our change and transition, must not forget: The Lord – He is God!

Elijah will seize the moment, he will not let this great opportunity pass by, look at verse 40...

⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. ⁴¹ And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain."

How odd that he would warn Ahab

⁴² So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

One turns to carnality, the other turns to the spiritual.

⁴³ "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

Elijah is looking for a sign. The number seven is symbolic of completion.

⁴⁴ The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"

That's all he needs.

⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

From Carmel to Jezreel – Elijah outruns a 2 horse drawn chariot. This is approximately 10-25 miles.

What do you need to confront in your life?

Is it time for a showdown?

Is your future frozen because your present is paralyzed by the past?

- Because of a bitter divorce – you are unable to move on in life
- Because of a failed relationship – you have permitted satan to convince you that you are a failure
- Because of what someone said or did to you that devastated you – you now find it very difficult to move on in life...

Let's have a showdown today!

Is divorce God?

Is failure God?

Is rejection God?

Is what someone said God?

Or is God, God?