

# Elijah's challenge on Mount Carmel

## 1 Kings 18v17-46

17 ¶ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

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."

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.

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

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."

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."

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."

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."

25 And Elijah said unto the

**v17-18 troubleth** - Achan the "troubler" took the garment from Jericho: **Josh 7v1; Josh 6v26-27; 1 Kings 16v34**. Ahab was misusing Scripture. Ahab was in fact the troubler, as he authorised Hiel to rebuild Jericho. **Baalim** = a multitude of Gods.

**v19-20 Gather all Israel** - This is Elijah's life mission. Christ will be the one to gather all Israel: **Gen 49v10**. Elijah will play a crucial part in that. **Carmel** - "a fruitful field, a park, a garden." **Jezebel** ("God sows") was in front of Carmel. But here is a drought due to apostasy. This mountain range was important for Baal worshippers. God was to plant his seed through the work of Elijah. Elijah's work is yet future when he will sow God's word in their hearts so they will become a fruitful garden: **Isa 32v15-16; 35v2**.

**v21 Key verse: The issue in life.** If the gospel really is the Truth, then it is only logical that we **give our life** for God and this wonderful hope. Halt = to hop or limp. Israel was like a silly dove that hopped from Egypt to Assyria for help: **Hos 7v11**. Yahweh must not be served with divided attention: **Josh 24v15; Matt 6v24**.

**v22** Elijah was mistaken in saying "I only". But imagine being him in this situation! He puts enormous trust in God here.

**v23-24** A **bullock** was the national sin offering because of its size. This was for the nation: **Lev 4v13-15**. The high priest lay it on the wood in **Lev 1v4-9** to make atonement. Burnt offering was totally consumed, representing our love for Yahweh with all our heart, soul and mind: **Deut 6v4-5; Mk 12v32-33**. The **Name of Yahweh** speaks of God purpose, to fill the earth with His glory- Christ and the saints.

**Who do we serve?** Yahweh or Baal? The ultimate Baal is ourselves. Christ in the wilderness temptation was faced with a choice of serving God or self. **There are only 2 options**. The devil said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me": **Matt 4v8-10**. Jesus responded: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" Jesus quotes **Deut 6v13** (cp. **v4,5**) using a theme of **Dan 3 (v12,14,17,18,28)**. The golden image in **Dan 3** represents the pride of flesh. We are made in the image of God that we might reflect **His glory**, not our own.

**v25 ye are many** - Big challenge for all of us! To stand against popular opinion for Christ's sake: **Matt 7v13**.

**v26 which was made** - RSV "which they had made". Jezebel introduced a new religion in Israel. This is in contrast to the hope of Israel. So too in the 1st Century.

**v28** Pagan religion, cp. **Deut 40v1**. Paganism is the foundation of many church doctrines today. True atonement is through faith in Christ: **Gal 2v20; Heb 4v12**.

**v30** Elijah reminds them of their **forefathers** in direct contrast to the prophets of Baal! Elijah **repaired** the old altar. "repair" means "to heal, make whole" Elijah restores the "old paths": **Jer 6v16**, a type of Christ, "repairer of the breach": **Isa 58v12**. Jesus quotes **Jer 6v16** in **Matt 11v28-30**: "Come unto me ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" The hope of Israel gives true rest. A 12 stone memorial was at the crossing of the Jordan to remind Israel that in **unity** salvation would be achieved through Christ: **Josh 4v1-8**. The crossing of Jordan was a type of baptism into Christ on the way to the Promised Land: **1 Cor 10v11**.

The **number 12** represents Israel and the "Israel of God" (the saints) who Christ will shepherd in the Kingdom age: **Rev 7v4-17**.

**v31** Moses had **12 stones** set up on **Mt Ebal** (Mt of cursing, cp. Mt Gerizim = blessing) upon which the law was inscribed: **Deut 27v2-13**. **Ebal** and **Gerizim** symbolised the **choice** to be made. In Ebal was an altar made of whole stones, representing Christ. No iron tool was to carve those stones because Christ is the stone that will strike the Iron: **Dan 2v34**. Christ and the Saints will destroy the latter-day Jezebel system: **Rev 2v27; 19v15**. **Israel thy name** - Jacob's name was changed to Israel in **Gen 32v24-32**. Jacob learnt to trust in Yahweh rather than in his own strength. "Prince with God" - future!

**v32** This amount of seed was sufficient to sow a parcel of ground. Beneath them lay the valley of **Jezebel** (ie. "God sows") cp. **Jer 31 v27-28** where Yahweh will "sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah." In those days Yahweh will make a new covenant with Israel and Judah and He "will put His law in their inward parts". All these events point forward to Elijah's future work: **Mal 4v4-6**.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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:

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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,

**v44-45** Rain a symbol of the Kingdom age: **Psa 65v9-13**

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.

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 now.

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.

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.

**v33-34** 12 Barrels (4x3) reminds us of Israel again. The water would totally saturate the sacrifice and the altar, a symbol of Israel being one day identified with their saviour, Jesus Christ.

**v36** This was an effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man: **Jms 5v16**. He calls on Yahweh with the **covenant title** associated with the fathers: **Ex 3v15; 34v6-7**. Jesus directed his audience to these 3 men in **Lk 13v28; 20v37**.

**v37** The one fervent desire of Elijah, but one which will only be accomplished in the future, **Mal 4v4-6**. **Is this our one desire?**

**v39** Meaning of Elijah's name!

**v40** cp. **Psa 135v1-7,15-18**. Type of Christ & Saints: **Rev 17v14; 19v20**

**v41-42** A fellowship meal. Ahab appears to repent and turn to Yahweh. Elijah now prays in thankfulness to his God. **He is a humble man**. **Psa 145v14-20** applies to this situation! Without **humility** God's blessing will never be upon us. **We must always remember to thank God!**

**v44** In God's plan, the rains come on the 7th "day", the Millennium, at the 7th trumpet: **Psa 72v6; Deut 32v2; Rev 11v15; 20v4**. **Hand** - Heb. "the hollow of the hand". The hand was **upside down**, as Yahweh **opened** His hand to feed all flesh. On that hand was **5 fingers** (by grace we are saved). All it required was Yahweh to open his hand.

**v45-46** Will Jezebel repent? God gives the wicked opportunity: **Rev 2v 21; 9v21**. Elijah runs before Ahab as a sign of respect in him as King.

**Colour code:** Blue (God & Jesus); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (Israel and return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation). Prepared for Study Week 2008.

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