

Elijah vs. The Prophets Of Baal – Standing Up For The Name Of God

Biblical Setting: King Solomon's idolatry led the nation of Israel to be divided with 10 states (tribes) going to the North with Jeroboam and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin going to the South with Rehoboam. Their wickedness only increased the plunge Israel took into deep sin. Both Kings were removed from their thrones and died. They were followed by a line of even more evil kings. And soon a pattern emerged: when spiritual leadership is bad, the people care less about God, which leads to more sin and even more evil leaders. And it continues like this. The Lord was no longer being consulted by the Kings of Israel and Judah. This was a problem! And soon a King came onto the throne who was going to take sinning to the next level - and his name was Ahab.

1 Kings 16: ²⁹And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. ³⁰And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

³¹And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. ³²And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. ³³And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

1. Name 3 sins Ahab committed in the passage above? _____

2. Why was his marriage a bad thing? _____

Who is Baal?

-- He was the god of the Canaanites, enemies of Israel since the days of the Exodus.

-- He was worshiped as "the Life giver." The people who followed Baal believed he controlled rain and thus, when crops grew and plants were in bloom, it was all because of Baal, who had all power over rain. So, they prayed and sacrificed to him often.

-- When praying and making offerings to Baal, the goal was a good harvest, more children, and anything related to increasing wealth.

King Ahab's wife: Jezebel

King Ahab, married a woman who so deep into witchcraft and sorcery, that God-fearing people were scared of her. Her name was Jezebel. Once she became queen, she instituted massive Baal worship all over the country. Human sacrifice was done all over the nation, religious prostitution was required, and children were to be killed and placed in the blocks used as the foundation of the building. Soon idolatry among the people became popular.

3. Jezebel may not have known it, but she was following some of the key points of Satan's agenda with humanity. Satan wants rebellion, perversion and corruption of society. Do you think this still happens today? _____

4. What are ways Satan is achieving this agenda today? _____

The Confrontation Begins

As the whole country was being swept up in Baal worship, the people cared less and less about God. Soon Jezebel removed all the prophets of God out of the capital and was hunting and killing the rest of them. In their place she set up her own "priesthood" with 450 prophets of Baal! The Prophets promoted idolatry, sin and greed to the people (can you think of some examples of people like this today?). This was outright rebellion against The Lord who had done so much for the nation of Israel. God took them out of Egypt with Moses, he fought their battles to get into the Promised Land with Joshua. He protected them from the Philistines and Goliath with David. And now the people turned their back on God. The nations of Israel and Judah were falling apart. But not everyone was falling for the hype. Elijah, a prophet, was faithful to God and was not going to get involved with the idolatry of Jezebel.

1 Kings 17: ¹And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. ²And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, ³Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

It was dangerous enough to approach a King with bad news in ancient times. That alone could lead to serious trouble. But Elijah came with a prophecy from God -- the True God of the Bible. He informed King Ahab that there would be a 3-year drought.

5. Was Elijah brave by giving this message to the King? _____

6. Elijah was preaching God's Word when it was not popular and when no one wanted to hear it. How much do you feel like your friends today want to hear about God's Word (on a scale of 1-10)? _____

7. How often do you share God's Word even though you *think* they do not want to hear it?
Very Often Often Sometimes Rarely Never

8. What is something you can talk about with your friend to help them know God's Word? _____

9. Why do you think God chose to punish the people with a drought, as opposed to a different type of punishment? _____

10. Why did God tell Elijah to hide in verse 3? _____

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After the 3 years, Israel did in fact have a drought. But this did not stop King Ahab and his wife Jezebel from worshipping Baal and slaughtering God's people. After hiding out for 3 years it was time for Elijah to return. Even though he was basically a fugitive, he once again, went before the King.

¹⁷And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? ¹⁸And 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.

¹⁹Now 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.

²⁰So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. ²¹And 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.

²²Then 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. ²³Let 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: ²⁴And 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.

So, the challenge was on. On the top of the mountain, Elijah was would enter a contest with the 450 prophets of Baal. They would take 2 cows for a sacrifice lay them on an altar of wood and call for fire from Heaven. Whoever's God was able to send fire down on the sacrifice was the true God. Elijah was putting it all on the line with the people of Israel all in attendance.

11. Why was Elijah so confident? _____

12. In verse 21, why did the people not answer Elijah? _____

²⁵And Elijah said unto the 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. ²⁶And 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.

²⁷And 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. ²⁸And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. ²⁹And 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.

13. Was Baal effective in this contest? _____

14. Why did the prophets of Baal start cutting themselves with knives? _____

When it was Elijah's turn, he not only put the cattle on the altar, he pour water on it and then dug a moat around the altar for even more water. He was not taking any chances with people calling this a hoax or a trick.

³⁵And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷Hear 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.

³⁸Then 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. ³⁹And 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.

15. God once again got the victory! But what was the most important effect of the contest?

16. The lesson of the day is not to tarry between two gods. Make your decision. You will often be put into situations where you must choose God or the devil. Who do you choose? Rate your % of choosing God when challenged.

100% 90% 75% 50% 30% 20% 5% 0%

17. What makes it difficult to choose God in tough situations? Circle the 3 things you think are most relevant

I don't want my friends to think bad of me Fear I could lose out on \$\$

Sin is fun sometimes *People will laugh at me*

I just forget about God's word at times Anger

My desire for revenge *Peer pressure* *I like the people promoting sin (actors, singers, etc)*

Whatever your reasons are, these are things you need to pray about. Do you want to take a stand for God? Do you want to be able to prove your faith? Start by praying to God for faith. During this week, pray to God about the 3 things you circled and ask God to help you overcome these obstacles so that you can serve him better.