**The Showdown on Mount Carmel**

**Text: 1 Kings 18**

As you all know, I have a good friend residing in Israel, Bryan Bond. Bryan is a missionary to Arabs and Palestinians who live in that country. Boy does he need prayer. I ask you to keep him in your prayers as he endeavors to do the work of God there.

Well I have been talking to Bryan and I found out he is living on a very well known mountain. Can anyone guess which mountain? By the title of the message you can see I’m speaking of Mount Carmel.

When Bryan first moved there I called him on Skype and if you’re familiar with Skype you know you can see the person on your computer screen as well as hear them. While we were talking I noticed that behind him was a light purple/pink wall and I commented on the color and he came to admit to me that he was living with Pastor Felip in his daughter’s room.

So here we have Bryan Bond living in a little girl’s room on Mount Carmel, decorated in pretty colors with frilly, girly things hanging on the wall… and then we have Elijah calling down fire from the sky on that same very mountain. If only Elijah could see what missionaries have been reduced to. (Ha, Ha).

***As a Child in Sunday school***

As a Child in Sunday school I was awed by this story.

* In my mind’s eye I could see the bravery of Elijah.
* I was personally an introverted child.
* I didn’t want to bring attention to myself, especially in a classroom setting, so I admired Elijah for standing up for God even though there was great opposition.

Let’s look at our text this morning… It’s found in 1 Kings chapter 18… and starting with verse 17…

**1 Kings 18:17-21 ( KJV )**
**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.**

***The difference between false and true prophets***

You may ask… What’s the difference between a true prophet of God and a false prophet who speaks lies?

1. False prophets work for political purposes to benefit themselves… True prophets work to serve God and the people.

2. False prophets held positions of great wealth… true prophets owned little or nothing… Jesus said of Himself…”The Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.”

3. The false prophet spoke only what the people want to hear. The true prophet of God speaks only what God tells them to say whether it is a popular message or not.

The false prophets were a terrible hindrance to the true prophets of God.

* Think of the messages of a false prophet and the sinful nature of man…
* Man wants to hear that he is good…
* man wants to hear that everything is alright…
* there are certain things that men try and justify as good when God sees it so much differently….

That’s why the bible says… ***“There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to destruction.”***

But if false prophets are out there scratching the itching ears of the people, then that makes it so much harder for the true prophet of God to speak the truth of God.

False prophets are not just an Old Testament problem…

* we have them around today…
* they sell special prayer clothes, and special water…
* and smile as if everything is OK.
* False prophets tell us that every religion leads to God.
* False teachers will not tell you that Christ Jesus is the only door to heaven.

Peter said this of false prophets and teachers…

**2 Peter 2:1-3 ( KJV )**
**1. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.****2. And many shall follow their pernicious *(destructive)* ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.****3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned *(insincere*) words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.**

So, what am I saying… I’m saying there are people out there.. (I hate to call the preachers but that is what they call themselves), that will make merchandise out of you…

* You say, “What does that mean?”
* It means they are only interested in your money and what you have to offer them
* and they will tell you what you want to hear to get it from you.
* I’m saying that they are not concerned in the least bit with the word of God…
* I say to you… BE CAREFUL!!!

***The Showdown at Mount Carmel***

In probably the world’s greatest showdown against false prophets, Elijah set out to prove to evil King Ahab and to the people of Israel that God was the only true and powerful God. That it was He and only He that is worthy to be praised and adored.

Let’s begin this morning by looking at verse 17…

**1 Kings 18:17 ( KJV )**
**17. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?**

***The True Cause of the Trouble***

Isn’t it amazing how the world can overlook their own sins against God and point to the Christians and blame them for social ills.

Look at verse 18…

**1 Kings 18:18 ( KJV )**
**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.**

Elijah boldly stands before the wicked king and declares the truth of God.

* What was the truth of God?
* It wasn’t he (Elijah) who was the troubler of Israel but it was the fact that the king (Ahab) and his family before him that had turned their backs on God.

And as a result, all of Israel had forsaken the Lord.

* They wanted to mix worshipping the true and only God with the worship of other gods.

Jeroboam set the pattern for leading the nation in wickedness,

* but each king of Israel bore personal responsibility for leading the nation to transgress God’s command and worship foreign gods.

***No rain***

Earlier in 1 Kings we find that God had shut up the heavens and there was no rain… why would God do that?

* He did it simply because the people had turned away from Him.
* He desired that the people should return so there would be no rain until the people and King Ahab heard the message of God.

Listen, sometimes God has to send a loud message that all can hear…

* and get the attention of everyone.
* When it stopped raining, and the barley and wheat stopped growing,
* when the hot days were made hotter because of the lack of water in the air..
* people should have began to take notice.

And Elijah was the only one whom God used to make this known to the people.

Look with me to verse 19…

**1 Kings 18:19 ( KJV )**
**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.**

The King and Queen had a different religion.

* They served and worshipped Baal.
* They had caused the people of Israel, who at one time had served the One true God to falter… to waiver and wonder who really was the true God.
* So it was important to confront and eliminate these prophets of Baal *before* God sent rain to the land of Israel.
* It was crucial that everyone understand that the rain came from The Lord, the God of Israel, not from Baal.

***Why did Ahab carry out the instructions?***

Elijah very plainly and very boldly gave an order to the king… He said… “**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.”**

You know it’s hard to know why King Ahab carried out the instruction of Elijah.

* Perhaps he thought the people would blame him for the last three years of drought
* and was sure in his own mind that the people would turn on him and maybe even kill him…
* the LAST STANDING PROPHET OF GOD.

And verse 20 verifies that he complied with Elijah’s request… look at it with me…

**1 Kings 18:20 ( KJV )**
**So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.**

***The Prophets of Baal Hated Elijah***

These prophets of Baal hated Elijah with a passion. Why?

* Over the last three years they had been severely humbled by Elijah and the drought sustained by his prayers.

Look at how it happened… Let’s look at 1 Kings 17:1-3…

**1 Kings 17:1-3 ( KJV )**
**1. And 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.
2. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,
3. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan.**

Why would he need to hide himself?

* Because you can’t just pronounce a curse on the weather like that and live in peace.
* Eventually people were going to take notice that there was no rain.
* They would undoubtedly remember the word of Elijah and blame him for it.

Especially the prophets of Baal, they hated him because the God of heaven was holding back the rain at Elijah’s word.

* And that their ***weather god*** ***“Baal”*** was not able to reverse the curse.
* For three years the false prophets had been praying with absolutely no results.
* I would say they were mad… they were mad at Elijah.
* That’s why he had to hide… and God graciously provided for him by a brook called Cherith.

And then in the very next chapter in verse 1 we have God speaking to Elijah again about the rain…

Let’s look at it together…

**1 Kings 18:1 ( KJV )**
**And it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.**

So again, it was crucial to confront the prophets of Baal so that the people would know that it was God who sent the rain and not ***“Baal.”***

***Elijah appeals to the people***

**1 Kings 18:21 ( KJV )**
**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.**

This is a very reasonable appeal. ***“If the Lord is God follow Him… but if Baal is God, follow him.”***

**Adam Clark** in his commentary has a unique way of looking at this…

**“How long hop ye about upon two boughs?”**

* This is a metaphor taken from birds hopping about from bough to bough, not knowing on which to settle.
* And this was exactly the state of Israel…
* They were in a lukewarm condition.
* What does God think about luke-warmness?
* We don’t have to speculate the Bible is clear when it comes to this subject…

Look with me to Revelation 3:16…

**Revelation 3:16 ( KJV )**
**So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**

Lukewarmness makes God sick to His stomach.

* Israel was in this state and God wanted that changed.
* He wanted His people to be anchored in the truth and that they not waver when it comes to faith in Him.
* So He sent a man named Elijah to make sure that the people of Israel would once again turn to Him.

So here is Elijah in the presence of the King, the prophets of Baal, and the children of Israel.

* He draws a line in the sand, so to speak and begins his attempt to bring the people back into faith in the one true God.

Look at the next verse…

**1 Kings 18:22-24 ( KJV )**
**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.**

Baal’s followers believed that he controlled the thunder, lighting and storms, and Elijah believed the same about God.

**Psalms 18:14 ( NKJV )**
**He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe,    Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.**

\*\*\* And also Psalm 29:3-9…

**Psalms 29:3-9 ( NKJV )**
**3. The voice of the Lord *is* over the waters;    The God of glory thunders;    The Lord *is* over many waters.****4. The voice of the Lord *is* powerful;    The voice of the Lord *is* full of majesty.****5. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars,    Yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon.**

**6. He makes them also skip like a calf,    Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.****7. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire.****8. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;    The Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.****9. The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth,    And strips the forests bare;    And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!”**

\*\*\* Listen to Psalm 104:3…

**Psalms 104:3 ( NKJV )**
**3. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,    Who makes the clouds His chariot,    Who walks on the wings of the wind,**

So here we have the proposal… Elijah says in essence,

“You think Baal will answer since you believe him to be the controller of the lighting and thunder, and I’m telling you I believe the One True God will answer because I believe Him to be the controller of such things. So enough talking… let’s put Baal, and The Lord God to the test… He that answers by fire, Let Him be God.”

This would prove to be a fair test to show who was God.

***The Contest Begins***

Look with me to verse 25-26…

**1 Kings 18:25-26 ( KJV )**
**25. And 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*.****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.**

The sacrifice was now prepared and dressed and all that needed to happen now was to call on Baal. They thought, “Surely he’ll answer…”

* But I want you to notice something…
* Elijah was so sure of the outcome that he became dramatic in poking fun at them while they were doing their Baal thing.

Look at verse 27 with me…

**1 Kings 18:27-28 ( KJV )**
**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.**

Now look at verse 29…

**1 Kings 18:29 ( KJV )**
**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.**

\*\*\* Listen to how the Holman Christian Standard renders this verse…

**1 Kings 18:29 ( HCSB )**
**29. All afternoon, they kept on raving until the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no sound, no one answered, no one paid attention.**

The fact that there was no response indicated Baal’s powerlessness and really Non-existence.

Listen to what Jeremiah said of idols such as Baal… Look at Jeremiah 10:5…

**Jeremiah 10:5 ( NKJV )**
**5. They *are* upright, like a palm tree,    And they cannot speak;    They must be carried,    Because they cannot go *by themselves.*    Do not be afraid of them,    For they cannot do evil,    Nor can they do any good.”**

Here is this, what was thought of as a great weather god… but he turned out to be nothing more than an idol that needed to be carried…

* He was something that was feared…
* but now his true face is shown, that there was absolutely nothing to fear for he didn’t even exist.

I can imagine the weariness in the false prophets.

* They stood still with open gashes in their flesh…
* their voices were probably hoarse like after watching a real good **DALLAS COWBOY GAME!!!**.
* Anyhow, they are beaten, knowing that Baal will not answer.

***Elijah’s Turn***

Look at verse 30 with me…

**1 Kings 18:30 ( KJV )**
**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.**

Verse 30 says that ***“he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.”***

* In turning to Baal, the people had destroyed the altar on which sacrifices had once been offered to God.
* How sad to see that the altar needed repair…
* It means that the people at one time had turned their hearts from God.

There are many altars that have been broken today that need to be repaired. I’m not talking about physical altars but lives that used to worship God **now missing church**, **not reading the Word**, **not praying**, **not having family devotional time**… we’ve broken down the altars, so to speak… building up new ones,,, like watching the god of TV… Books… Football… Anything that takes first place in your life ahead of God is your Baal.

You need to have your own contest…

Who’s there for you in the doctor’s office?

* Football?
* Jay Leno, or your favorite soap opera (novella) star?
* Or is it **ALMIGHTY GOD** who is ever present in every place… there for you at any time?
* Maybe it’s time for you to repair some altars of your own.

At any rate, Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord and beginning in verse 31…

**1 Kings 18:31-39 ( KJV )**
**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.**

If the Lord be God then follow Him.

* Follow Him with your life.
* Is God calling you to salvation?
* If God is God then follow Him to the cross where His precious blood was spilled.
* Is God calling you somewhere?
* Then follow Him and do not hesitate.

Let me simply close with the words of Elijah… **“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him.”**

**\*\*\* Prayer and Invitation**