

1 Kings 18 - Thursday, December 10th, 2015

1 And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." 2 So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria.

- There's something I want to point out here right at the beginning and it has to do with how God has Elijah hide for 3 1/2 years.
- In chapter 17, God tells him to go and hide himself and here in chapter 18, after three years God tells him to present himself.
- The reason I point this out is because often times God will do the same with us, in the sense that He may hide us for a season.

3 And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. 4 For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) 5 And Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock." 6 So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. 7 Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?" 8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" 9 So he said, "How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. 11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here' '! 12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. 13 Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD's prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.' ' He will kill me!" 15 Then Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

- In all fairness to Obadiah, he has every right to fear for his life given that he understood just how evil Ahab and Jezebel were.
- However, the problem is that Obadiah, as godly and righteous as he was, is more focused on Ahab and Jezebel than on God.
- This is true for us, such that, we're prone to look at the evil and become fearful instead of focusing on the Lord Who is faithful.

Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV) — 3 You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

Philippians 4:6–9 (NIV) — 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

17 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" 18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. 24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

- Couple of thoughts here the first of which has to do with the importance of knowing that Elijah is obeying the command of God.
- In other words, he's not cleverly coming up with this idea for a contest with the prophets of Baal on his own it came from God.
- We do err greatly when we try to come up with clever ideas of ourselves instead of waiting on the Lord to direct all our steps.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV) — 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 4:10–13 (NKJV) — 10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. 11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. 12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. 13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.

- The second thought has to do with what I like to call the “why” behind the “what,” namely, why God has Elijah do what he does.
- I’m of the belief that God has Elijah do this so that when rain starts coming down after the famine ends only God gets the glory.
- It’s important to understand the false god of Baal, was the god of storms who had power over lightning, wind, weather and rain.

25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.” 26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. 27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” 28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

- While I realize this is a firm grasp of the obvious, it needs to be said none-the-less. There’s no answer because Baal is no god.
- The reason I mention this is because often times, we are just as prone to look to false gods for answers, but no answer comes.
- The only true answer comes only from the true and living God, who hears from on high and hearkens unto the voice of our cry.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So all the people came near to 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, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.” 32 Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. 33 And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, “Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.” 34 Then he said, “Do it a second time,” and they did it a second time; and he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time. 35 So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench 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 Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!” 40 And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

- Lest one think the people who fell on their faces saying, “The Lord, He is God,” repented, let me hasten to say, it’s not genuine.
- This is textbook when it comes to the sorrow of being caught as opposed to godly sorrow that leads one to genuine repentance.
- Suffice it to say, it’s not the latter as one commentator noted, “the people were decidedly persuaded, but not lastingly changed.”

41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.” 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked, and said, “There is nothing.” And seven times he said, “Go again.” 44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, “There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” So he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’” 45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

- There’s something here that is not so easily seen at first read and it has to do with it taking the seventh time to come to pass.
- Here’s what I’m thinking, Elijah prays one time, and fire comes down instantly prior, but here a total of seven times is required.
- This speaks to the paramount importance of persistence in prayer, this because, God cannot be put into a formula, as it were.

James 5:16–18 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Luke 18:1–9 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ 4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” 6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”