

## **Wicked**

### *The Showdown*

1 Kings 18:1-46

July 8, 2018 am

HDBC

**We learn** life lessons from all kinds of sources. Most often, we think of learning from the best. It is easy to learn from those who do it well. In fact, we tend to be drawn to heroes and to want to emulate them. There is nothing wrong with that. I say, *learn all you can from positive examples.*

**But we can also** learn valuable lessons from those who fail miserably. We can learn from Peter, who denied Christ, Jonah, who ran from God's plan, Nebuchadnezzar who defied the creator and believed he could be his own God. And . . . we can learn from one of the most wicked couples in the Bible. **Ahab and Jezebel**

**Ahab** was the 8<sup>th</sup> king of Israel during the time of the divided kingdom. He succeeded his daddy, Omri, who was more wicked than all the kings before him. In his 22 years of ruling, Ahab exceeded his father in wickedness. He married Jezebel, who made him worse, not better. He built a house of worship for Baal and led the people into gross idolatry. He created a climate that led to the rebuilding of Jericho that involved child sacrifice in hopes of appeasing a demon god. He and Jezebel were really bad people.

**So, we are** taking a look at some of the major experiences of their lives which are recorded in 1 Kings. These are included in the Bible for our benefit. Ahab and Jezebel were awful characters who did a lot of damage to their nation. But they had an antagonist, one who push back against their immorality and idolatry.

**His name was Elijah**, a prophet of God. While they were scheming evil, God was preparing to use Elijah to get their attention and call them to repentance. Ahab and Jezebel would be in constant conflict with God and Elijah. Though there would be times when I appeared the wrong side was winning, God ultimately was always victorious.

**This morning**, look with me at the first great showdown between these two opposing sides. One of the great Epic Events in the Old Testament. **1 Kings 18**

**Let me set the stage for you.**

**Ahab and Jezebel have led the people into gross idolatry.** Included child sacrifice and sexual immorality as a part of worship. God determined to bring judgment upon the nation. So, he sent Elijah to have a conversation with Ahab.

**1 Kings 17:1.** There would be a drought. God caused the clouds to stop their normal operations and it did not rain for 3 years. During that time God took care of Elijah, providing him with food and water, but the rest of the nation was drying up and dying.

**They were relying** on the false god, Baal. God of fertility and rain. In the fall they believed he died and went to Sheol. In the spring he would come back to life and bring the rains. Now for three years he has remained dormant. God is setting the stage to prove to the people that Baal is dead and never really lived.

**After three years of drought,** God will bring this to a stunning conclusion. It has been long enough. God chooses when to bring judgment and when to end it. He will send rain, but first he will humble this wicked ruler. God has Ahab and Jezebel right where He wants them. The people were hungry for the truth. God is about to reveal it.

**Two things** happened at the same time, independent of each other. Ahab called Obadiah, who was the overseer of his household and instructed him to go and search for water, that they might be able to save some of the livestock. **Obadiah feared the Lord** and actually had saved the lives of 100 prophets of God by hiding them from Jezebel, who wanted to kill them. He went one direction and Ahab another.

**At the same time** God called Elijah to go and visit with Ahab. (18:1) Along the way he met Obadiah, who reluctantly, left him there to go tell Ahab where Elijah was. He was afraid Elijah would disappear and Ahab would kill him.

**Note the conversation** between Ahab and Elijah. **(18:17)**

*Is it you, you, troubler of Israel!*

**Ever notice** how easily it is to blame others? Especially true of the wicked. **A.W. Pink put it this way. *Wicked men are generally great cowards: their own consciences are their accusers, and often cause them many misgivings when in the presence of God's faithful servants*** Herod feared John, Felix trembled before Paul, and here Ahab tries to cover his fear with blame.

**Elijah is quick** to respond with the hard truth. Ahab and Jezebel are the cause of the problem. They have ignored God's word Should have repented!

**Therefore**, an absolute challenge had to be offered. A showdown would reveal the truth. **Elijah, on behalf of God, draws a line in the sand.** He challenges Baal and Asherah, to a duel. They are represented by their 850 prophets. Elijah would be the lone representative for God. We will see once and for all who the real God is.

Note the details of this **Showdown!**

### 1. **The Declaration (21-24)**

The group assembles on Mt. Carmel. Rises out of the sea at the western end of the Valley of Esdraelon. To the east you can see Mt. Tabor and Mt. Gilboa. Not far to the southeast is Megiddo. In this declaration there are two things.

#### A. **Condemnation (21)**

The question that he asked condemned his hearers.

**Limping** means to hesitate or to vacillate. To stagger as a drunk person would.

**These people** were used to running from god to god, depending upon which one they thought would help them at the moment. The very question is a condemnation. Like **“When are you going to stop cheating on your wife?”** The very question condemns.

**Elijah was calling for a decision.** Make a choice. The time for riding the fence is over. Time for God to demonstrate His power and might. The fire is about to fall and when it does there will be no doubt about the real God.

**Interesting** that he called for them to make a decision before the demonstration of power. Jesus chided the religious cynics of his day for seeking after signs. Where is the faith? Even today God often calls upon us to trust Him long before the great manifestations of his power.

#### B. **The Confidence (22-24)**

Just me against you guys. 1 against 450. We know there were also prophets of Asherah were there as well.

**Simple contest.** Two altars, two sacrifices. No fire. The fire would come from somebody's God. The God who produced fire would be the true God.

**But why fire?** Why not water? That is what they really needed. Before the refreshing rains of blessing could come, the fires of judgment had to purge the people of their sins. The consumption of the sacrifice would also signify the acceptance of the sacrifice.

## 2. The Demonstration (25-39)

### A. The Disappointment of Baal (25-29)

Began early in the morning. It was not a pretty sight. Began softly to cry out to this demon god who had no power to answer. As the day wore on they began to cut themselves and to be worked up into some demonic frenzy in an attempt to get the forces of darkness to come to their aid. All the while the dark forces are being held in check.

*Walter Kaiser. It's embarrassing to have deities specializing in the stuff they cannot produce--not even for three years. Baal did nothing--he sent no rain, no dew, no thunder. What an absolute flop, a disgrace to organized religion! But the people refused to give up.*

**Late in the day Elijah began to try to show them the foolishness** of their actions. Suggesting that he was too busy, answering the call of nature, or on a journey, or asleep. At this the frenzy intensified. This went on all day. Finally even the crowds grew bored and stopped paying attention. The sacrifice on their altar remained cold, still, and very much unconsumed.

**Notice that Elijah is not afraid to let the prophets of Baal pray to their god.** Of course Baal was not real, but Satan was. You can bet Satan would love to have answered their praying and caused fire to fall.

**So, why did he not?** I believe there was war in the skies that day between Michael and his warriors and Satan and his demons. Each time a demon sent a fire bolt and angel of God would blow it out. What a scene!

### B. The Demonstration by God (30-40)

Note what Elijah did.

#### A. Repaired the Altar (30)

Beginning place of revival.

### **B. Prepared the People (33-35)**

Water on the altar. Make it tough on God. Silence the critics. But also required great faith and courage because water was in short supply. Only reason Ahab allowed it was because it was stacking the odds against Elijah.

### **C. Prayed to the Father (36-39)**

Simple, straight-forward, based on great faith.

**Always thought I would love to witness the lift-off of a NASA rocket.** I would love to witness, live, the impressive display of power, and to feel the ground rumble. Love to witness, at a safe distance the explosion of an atomic bomb. **You remember what the native American said when he first saw the mushroom cloud rising from the explosion of a test bomb? "I wish I would have said that."**

**That's probably what Satan said just after the fire fell.** He wished he had said that. It was a massive display of power. Thousands of people who have gotten bored during 9 hours of inactivity from the heavens. But then a short prayer and boom. It was as if **the sky blew apart and a huge torch lit the altar with a heat so intense** that everything was charred to a crisp, including the stones, water and dust. What a sight.

### **3. The Restoration (41-46)**

False prophets were killed. The rains returned. It had been a long trek through the desert, but now it was over. God was once more bringing the life-giving rains.

**I want to suggestion two applications:**

**First,** choose whom you will serve. Get off the fence. Decide for or against God. Go back to the declaration. **How long will you sit on the fence.** How long will you try to live your life in two worlds. If God is God, and He is, then serve Him. Are you trying to live with one foot in heaven and the other in the world? One foot in spiritual realm and the other in the flesh? It will not work.

**Seond,** realize that God and God alone is the source of blessing. We need revival and renewal at HDBC and indeed across the land. **Could be that we are looking in the wrong places.** Seeking to find the answers from all our man-made gods, rather than the only true God.