

1 Kings Chapter 18 Commentary

1Ki 18:1 ¶ "And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. 2 And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. 3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: 4 For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)"

God tells Elijah to go tell Ahab that God will send rain upon the earth. This is in the third year. We shall find later in scripture that the drought was for three years and six months, confirmed in **Jas 5:17** "*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*" Elias is a variant spelling of Elijah.

We point out here that Obadiah, who feared God in the midst of all this ungodly idolatry, has hidden a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifties in caves. The relevance of this is later Elijah shall say I only am left a prophet in Israel, which is just what Elijah believes, seen in **1Ki 19:10** "*And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*" Elijah does not know that God has providentially saved other prophets alive, seen in **1Ki 19:18** "*Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*"

Sometimes when we think we are the only one with trouble, if we look around, we will find that we are not alone after all, that is, when God reveals the truth to us.

5 "And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. **6** So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. **7** And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? **8** And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. **9** And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? **10** As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. **11** And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. **12** And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. **13** Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? **14** And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. **15** And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him today. **16** So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah."

Ahab tells Obidiah to search one half of the land, and Ahab will search the other half, in search of grass to keep some of the horses and mules alive. As Obidiah goes forth to search, he meets Elijah, recognizes him, and falls down before him in obeisance. Elijah tells him to go tell Ahab that Elijah is here.

Obadiah is a man of great faith in God and has been since his youth. This points out the miraculous providence of God in Obadiah's life. Just as Joseph was placed second only to Pharaoh of Egypt, Joseph never forsook his belief in God, so Obidiah is protected by the hand of God. Just as Daniel was placed second only to Pharaoh of Egypt, yet he never forsook his faith and trust in God, so Obidiah is protected by the hand of God.

Obidiah tells Elijah how he has hidden one hundred prophets of God and fed and watered them. Obadiah knows the great search that has been performed to find Elijah. Thus, we see why God sent Elijah to live with the widow woman where Jezebel was from. Because they did not search there. He asks Elijah, what sin have I committed that you would send me on such an errand, believing that God would take Elijah away and hide him

again, and then Ahab would slay him. Elijah assures Obadiah that he will see Ahab that very day. So, Obadiah goes and tells Ahab.

We point out that the prophets of the Lord were slain by Jezebel. Jezebel is as seen of Babylon in **Re 18:7** "**How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.**" As we talked about in the last chapter, Jezebel was queen imminent and Ahab was just her stool pigeon. Jezebel cut off the sustenance of the Lord's prophets by killing them. God cut off the sustenance of Jezebel and Israel by sending drought.

"but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth." We are told here that Obadiah has been a child of God from his youth. Wherefore, we see that those who claim that you must be a certain age, and understand certain things, before you become a part of the New Testament Church, have got it wrong. Scripture, as seen herein, teaches that some are even saved in the mother's womb. Let us be very careful in rejecting children from fellowship in the New Testament Church.

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."

Ahab asks Elijah: art thou he who troubleth Israel? Elijah reminds Ahab that he and his fathers have turned to idolatry and forsaken God, and they are the cause of the trouble in Israel. This teaches us that as children of God, we are to point out that sin is sin, no matter who commits it.

Elijah tells Ahab to gather all Isreal to Carmel and bring the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 that sit a Jezebel's table. Ahab does as commanded and brings the 450 prophets of Baal, but Jezebel keeps here 400 prophets at home. When they are gathered; Elijah says to Isreal: why halt ye between two opinions, if God be God follow him, if Baal then follow him. Israel answers not a word.

On a historical note, Mount Carmel was a small mountain range in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is located in the southern part of the territory occupied by the tribe of Asshur. It ran from the Mediterranean Sea, eastward to the northernmost point of the border of Manasseh, and the southwestern point of the border of Zebulon. It was bordered on the northeast side by the valley of Jezreel.

Mount Carmel is not to be confused with the city Carmel, located in the land of Judah, about seven miles south of Hebron. It is the city where hard hearted Nabal lived, who died because of his affront to King David, and King David married his widow, Abigail. This is pointed out to sustain the fact that Elijah was not sent to the southern kingdom.

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."

Elijah tells Israel, I am the only prophet of God left in Israel, and there are 450 prophets of Baal. Since the four hundred that sat at Jezebel's table are not mentioned, we assume they were not called or did not come. Elijah says: we shall each choose a bullock and put it on wood, without putting any fire to the sacrifice. The prophets of Baal are to go first. Then the God that answers by fire will prove to be the true God. The people say that is a good trial for the true God.

We point out that all Israel had to do was to call to remembrance their history and they would have known who the true God was. How true this same principle is today, if all people would just look at creation, and remember that God created all things, they would know who the true God is, as we are told in scripture **Ps 19:1**-

3; 1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

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. 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."

The prophets of Baal do as commanded, and they do everything in their power to get Baal to answer, by sending fire upon their altar of sacrifice. Elijah mocks them terribly to really excite them, with their utmost powers, to cry to Baal and get his attention. Why would Elijah mock them?

Because Elijah knows, as we all know, no false idol can do anything. There was absolutely no answer of any kind from Baal because Baal is man's creation. It says they cut themselves after their manner. It was a custom of all the false religions to mingle their own blood with the blood of their sacrifices; thus, they cut themselves. They do this all day until the time for the evening sacrifice that was commanded to be made to God daily.

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."

As the time for the evening sacrifice nears, Elijah calls Israel to himself and rebuilds an altar of the Lord, from times long past which was previously called the altar of Carmel. Elijah uses twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel, and named his altar Israel. This was to confirm that all of Israel was to be worshipping God, not some idol. He makes a great trench around the altar, puts the wood in order, puts the sacrifice upon the wood, and had them pour twelve barrels of water upon the sacrifice. So much water that the trench was also filled with water.

Now, Elijah prays to God to hear his voice and prove to Israel that God is the Lord of Israel, not Baal. Notice that Elijah prays to the "**LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel**," reminding Israel that their ancestry also worshipped the true God. Elijah also prays that God's people Israel may know that he is God the LORD and return to worshipping God only. God answers, immediately, by sending fire from heaven and consumes the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, and the water in the trench. When Israel saw this, they fell on their face and proclaimed the Lord he is God, The Lord he is God. We point out that the fire of the Lord fell from heaven. This was obvious so that there could be no claim made that Elijah had somehow, in the sight of all Israel, hidden fire under the sacrifice. Notice also, the order in which the consuming took place: first the sacrifice which was on top, then the wood that was under it, then the stones of the altar, and the dust under the stones, and then the

water in the trench. This would further confirm the fire came from heaven, because the sacrifice was consumed before the wood.

We point out that Ahab is not named as one that fell on his face and proclaimed; the Lord He is God. What a sad thought; that in the face of such a miraculous display of the power of God, it is unmoving to one who is dead in trespasses and sins as Ahab is. So very different from the response of Saul of Tarsus when he met Jesus in the way, and proclaimed; **Ac 9:5-6; 5 "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."** May our lives be so affected by the Word of God, that we do as Saul of Tarsus, and turn to the Lord with our whole heart.

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, 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 not. 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."

Elijah commands Israel to take the prophets of Baal and slays them by the brook Kishon, admonishing them to be sure that none of them escape. These must pay the judicial judgment price of the law for being, and spreading, idolatry, as the law stated that every idolator was to be put to death.

Take that thought and apply it to your life. Where do you stand? Are you involved in idolatry? or is your life consecrated to the Lord?

Elijah tells Ahab to eat and drink because there is the sound of an abundance of rain. Ahab eats and drinks, and Elijah goes to the top of mount Carmel and prays. Notice that Elijah takes the posture to pray to God. Notice, Elijah must pray for the rain. Why? Because God had said **1Ki 17:1 ¶ "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."** Elijah sends his servant to go look for signs of rain. When no rain is seen; he tells him to go again seven times. On the seventh time, he returns and says, there is a cloud about the size of a man's hand afar off. He sends the servant to tell Ahab to get down from the mountain, because there is a great storm coming. Ahab starts toward Jezreel in his chariot and Elijah runs before him, in the strength of the Lord, to the entrance of Jezreel.

God has just proven to Israel, and Ahab, that there is only one God by this miraculous event. Elijah has all the servants of Baal slain, as to begin purging the land of idolatry. We shall find in the next chapter that even this great miraculous event is not enough to convince Israel and Ahab to serve God only.

This gives us a picture that when Jesus came to earth, in his prepared body, and performed all the miracles that he did, it still did not convince the world, nor all of Israel, that there is only one God to worship and adore. This demonstrates that the deceptiveness of the devil is very strong and great. Without the intervention of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, we too will be deceived and fall into the snares of Satan and his minions. May God help us to believe with all our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies that Jesus is the Christ and our Saviour and Lord, who will deliver us, from this world of sin and sorrow to the land, of that eternal place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us.

We ask each individual person: how many miracles must Jesus perform in your life, before you will believe that the Lord is the only God, and Jesus is the only Christ, and the only way to heaven and immortal glory? Please fill us with thy Holy Spirit power, oh Lord, to read and study thy word, the King James bible, and gives us the ability to believe the truths that are recorded therein. We pray in the name of the beloved Son of God, Jesus the Christ, Amen!