

Ignite Your Faith!

Part 4: Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal 1 Kings 18

In our world today “diversity” and “tolerance” are very popular buzz words. At their core value, they are in fact good attitudes. Unfortunately however, these same values can be misused or taken advantage of to allow evil or falsehood to exist.

This is very obvious in the arena of religions. “Tolerance” has been used to justify the proliferation of any number of false religions. Falsehood should be confronted, the truth should be told. Especially the truth about who God is. It should be told in love, but it should be told nonetheless. But in the name of tolerance, truth has too often been sacrificed.

Unfortunately, this is not a new phenomenon. This has been going on for thousands of years.

In today’s lesson we will look at one such example and see how God chose to deal with that particular situation.

1 Kings 18:20-21

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.

21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

Four things you need to know to understand this story.

Ahab- The king of Israel, ruled for 22 years, his wife’s name was Jezebel, he promoted Baal worship in Israel and diminished the worship of Jehovah God. He was a horrible King.

“the prophets” - 450 prophets of Baal (They’re the bad guys.)

Elijah - Jehovah God's prophet (He's the good guy.)

Baal - a false god of the canaanites A god of fertility and nature. (He's a phony baloney.)

Look again at verse 21:

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

Elijah challenges the people of Israel to make a choice: choose between Baal and the Lord God.

1. Choose!

Elijah said, “Choose between the Lord God and Baal.”

Make a choice! Don’t straddle the fence.

God does not tolerate the worship of false gods. He is offended by that.

Not only is that offensive to Him, but it is dangerous to you.

False gods, idols can’t answer your prayers. They can’t provide you salvation.

They can create a false sense of security for those who believe in them.

The bottom line is, God always wants what’s best for you.

Worshiping false god’s is never, ever what is best for you.

Baal worship is a classic example.

In Baal worship, oftentimes they would actually sacrifice their children, they would burn their children on the alter.

Others would engage in perverse sexual activities as an act of worship because among other things, they believed that Baal was a god of fertility. If they wanted better crops or more livestock or more

children.....various perverse sexual activities would be participated in, in the name of the god of fertility.

Another sad thing they did in the name of Baal was self mutilation. They would cut themselves with knives as an attempt to get Baals attention.

In the name of some false God, whether it's some form of self mutilation or the sacrificing of babies or the waging of war against others or just a false sense of security by praying to a rock.....choosing anything other than God is never good for you.

The Apostle Paul said,

1 Corinthians 8:4 "We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one."

Elijah said, "Choose!" Is it going to be Baal, or the Lord?
You have the same choice today.

I can't help but notice the similarities between Baal worship and Islam.
And I only point this out because Baal worship is not real popular right now, but Islam is.
Islam is the number one false religion of our day. But there are some similarities:

- Baal worship begins with an idol made by human hands.

- Islam is a theology made up by a human being named Mohamad.

- Sometimes Baal worship requires that you sacrifice your children.

- Sometimes Islam requires that you strap dynamite to your children and use them as a suicide bomber.

- The followers of Baal would claim that Baal is just another name for God. But it's not.

- The followers of Islam say that Allah is just another name for God. But it's not.

Baal is NOT just another name for God. Allah is NOT just another name for God.
Contrary to some opinions: God's Name is not interchangeable with the names of false Gods.

Jeremiah 10:6 "No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and your NAME is mighty in power."

Zechariah 14:9 "The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the ONLY name."

Jesus addresses this same issue in the start of the Lord's prayer:

Matthew 6:9 "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Hallowed means holy or sanctified.

God's name is holy!

As such, you can't just go calling Him by anything else.
You can't just call Him Baal, or Budha, or Allah, or Confucius or anything else.

He is the Lord God Almighty and He chose to reveal Himself to us when He became the person of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:19 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

That's why we read:

Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other NAME under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

It's critical that you get that name right if you want to go to heaven.

Philippians 2:10-11 "At the NAME of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Don't let anyone deceive you into thinking that the name is interchangeable.
You've got to get the name right.
You've got to make a choice between that which is false and that which is true.

Elijah says "choose!"
And the choice occurs on several levels.
The most fundamental level is the very existence of God:

A. Choose between God and no god.

Obviously the very first choice a person must make is to decide whether they believe there is a God or not. And although that seems such a simple and obvious choice to us, there are in fact many who don't make the correct choice.

The Bible talks about such a person:

Psalms 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

An atheist and a Christian were having a discussion and the atheist was complaining. He said, "You know, it's not fair. You Christians have all the good holidays. You have Christmas, you have Easter. But atheists don't have any holidays." To which the Christian replied, "Sure you do, you have April 1st." (April FOOLS Day)

Psalms 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

The evidence is all around you! Its so obvious! Only a fool would say there is no God. Look at the universe, look at the world, look at the animal kingdom, look at all the plants, look at humanity, who created all of this? Obviously there is a Creator God.

Romans 1:20 "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Creation presupposes a creator!
God's existence is revealed by that which He has created. Choose to believe in God.

B. Choose between God and false gods.

There are many throughout history who claim to be divine but there is only one true God. God has proven himself many different ways but the ultimate proof is in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being"

Colossians 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh and there is no other God and there is no other way to Heaven.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

You've got to choose. He is not one of many options, he's not just your best option, he is the only option.

C. Choose between God and other gods.

There is a difference between false gods and other gods. Let me explain:
False gods would be things like Baal, Allah, Buddha, of Confucius, or any other of the many false Gods.

An example of "other" gods would be if you worship at the alter of materialism.
Perhaps your "other" god is: Money. Pleasure. Popularity. Lust.
Lots of things can become the god of your life.

The question is: What IS most important in your life? What DOES control your life?
What is REALLY the Lord of your life?

Matthew 16:24-26

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

What has first place in your life? What do you really worship? What do you really serve?

Elijah says, "Choose!" No god at all, false gods, other gods.....or the one true God.
You make a choice every day by the way you live your life. Are you choosing God?

2. Stand

Take a stand for God! Stand up for what you believe in!
Speak up for what you believe in. Don't be afraid. Don't be intimidated. Don't be insecure.
Be bold! Take a stand for God.

1 Kings 18:22-24

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.

23 Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it.

24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire-- he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

Elijah put it on the line, he took a stand for God, even though he was in the minority.
The lesson we learn from Elijah is: Don't be silent. Speak up!
Stand up for what you believe in!!

Joshua 24:15 "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Like Joshua, like Elijah.....Stand up for what you believe in! Take a stand for God.

How many of you ever played hide-and-seek when you were younger? When I was a child we used to play hide-and-go-seek. We'd count to one hundred and then say, "Ready or not, here I come." After we'd found as many as we could, when we wanted those still hiding to come in, we'd holler, "Ollie, Ollie, in-come free. Come out, come out where-ever you are."

It seems to me that there are too many Christians who are playing a game of spiritual hide-and-seek. They are not willing to take a public stand for Jesus. We need you to "come out, come out where-ever you are." We need you to take a stand for Jesus.

Someone has said, "There is no such thing as secret discipleship. For either the secrecy destroys the discipleship, or the discipleship destroys the secrecy."

Billy Graham said,

"The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is crucial; every generation is strategic. We have our generation! God will hold us responsible at the Judgement Seat of Christ for how well we fulfilled our responsibilities and took advantage of our opportunities."

Just like Elijah in his generation, we need to stand up for the Lord in our generation!

3. Obey!

I think this is a critical part of the story. Why did Elijah do what he did?

What prompted him to issue such a challenge?

Where did he come up with such a radical idea? Let's find out:

1 Kings 18:26 So the prophets of Baal took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

1 Kings 18:36-39

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD-- he is God! The LORD-- he is God!"

Key verse is 36. Elijah said, "I am thy servant. I have done these things at thy word." Elijah didn't make up this incredible contest. He did it at the Lord's instruction. Remember, he is a prophet of God. God communicated directly with Him. He did this at God's leading.

He obeyed God.

Obeying God is something we all need to work on.

Sometimes making a choice and standing for God means choosing his leading and sacrificing your own selfish desires.

In Disney's The Lion King, young Simba's vision of the future is revealed in his song, "I just can't wait to be king."

No one saying, "Do this."

No one saying, "Be there."

No one saying, "Stop that."

No one saying, "See here."

....free to do it all my way.

Oh, I just can't wait to be King!"

That's our society in a nutshell. Be your own boss. Have it your way. Look out for number one. Be your own man. Don't answer to anyone. Complete independence.

But Jesus says,

Matthew 16:24, "Deny yourself. Take up your cross. And follow me."

Matthew 23:11 Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant."

So what's it going to be?

Elijah obeyed God.

The proof of your relationship with God is in your obedience to God.

1 John 2:3 "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

Who are you obeying?

Who is Lord of your life?

Is it time for you to choose God?

Is it time for you to take a stand for God?

Is it time for you to obey God?