

SHOWDOWN ON MT. CARMEL. 1 KN. 18:17-40. 3/5/23. #49.

¶Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" ¶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. ¶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." ¶So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. ¶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. ¶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. ¶Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. ¶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." ¶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." ¶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. ¶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." ¶So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lancets, until the blood gushed out on them. ¶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. ¶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. ¶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." ¶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. ¶And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four ~~water~~ vessels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." ¶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. ¶So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. ¶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. ¶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." ¶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. ¶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!" ¶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.

1. Troubler of nations

- a. Ahab greets Elijah as the "troubler of Israel"
 - a1. Ironic that the real troublemakers of mankind accuse the godly of being the trouble
 - a2. Those who introduce & promote evil destroy society (Gal. 6:7-9)
- b. Elijah identifies Ahab & his father's household as the real troublemakers of Israel
 - a1. Those of project on others their own evils never acknowledge their own guilt
 - a2. Through leading Israel to worshipping the Baals (Baal & Asherah), the kings brought on their nation the judgments of Dt. 28

2. The challenge

- a. Elijah challenges Baal's prophets to a contest on Mt. Carmel (450 prophets of Baal; 400 of Asherah)
- b. Elijah tells Ahab to invite all of Israel
 - a1. Whichever God answers the call of the prophets will show he is the real God
 - a2. Tangible evidence is tangible proof, no matter if it is believed or not
- c. Ahab accepts the challenge & makes preparation

3. Mt. Carmel drama

- a. By accepting the challenge, the prophets & people agree to accept the results of the challenge
- b. Before the contest Elijah asks the people how long they are going to vacillate between God & Baal
 - a1. Israelites were syncretists, trying to worship both God & idols (like modern Hindus), in violation of Ex. 20
 - a2. El. informs them that they must choose between God & Baal (not worship both)
- c. Since there were 450 Baal prophets, they provided the bulls (God uses their bull as an extra irony)
 - a1. Each one was to prepare a bull
 - a2. Elijah allows Baal's prophets to go first
- d. If sincerity is faith, Baal's prophets had it
 - a1. They called upon Baal to respond to their pleas while dancing & cutting themselves
 - a2. All morning they chanted, implored, & begged Baal to answer their call
- e. At noon Elijah begins to mock them
 - a1. Perhaps, Baal is busy or on a trip
 - a2. Perhaps, Baal is asleep & needs to be awoken by louder calls (Buddhists ring a gong to awaken their god before entering a temple)

4. God reveals himself

- a. Elijah prepared the altar
 - a1. Baal's prophets stomped around on it & broke it down
 - a2. El. takes 12 stones for 12 tribes to build it
- b. El. has a trench dug & 12 jars of water poured on it
 - a1. God still claims wayward Israel (12 tribes)
 - a2. The soaked offering is like rebel Israel
- c. El. calls upon God to bring down fire
 - a1. Fire consumes the meat, wood, & stones
 - a2. Immediately, Israel cries out in fear, "The Lord is God" (change is not permanent)
- d. Elijah orders the execution of the prophets of Baal
- e. The evidence is irrefutable, but the heart is stiff