

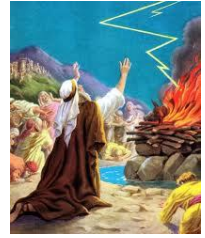
Old Testament Stories

"Elijah's Contest" (part 2)

1 Kings 18:1 - 19:21

☞ What would you like to praise God for today?

☞ Pray for God's guidance as you study



1. Things had gotten critically dry over the past three years. What were King Ahab and Obadiah doing when Elijah went out to meet them? 1 Kings 18:5

Does King Ahab indicate any repentance when he again meets Elijah? What does Ahab say? 18:17

2. Elijah orders King Ahab to a contest. Who all is to come?

Who doesn't come?

What is the purpose of the contest? 18:21

3. Why might Elijah have allowed the prophets of Baal to go first?
 - a. They were more numerous
 - b. He was being nice
 - c. To discount Baal, Elijah needed first to show how powerless he was; to shatter their false faith
 - d. He wanted the fun of watching them make fools of themselves.
4. Describe the Baal portion of the contest. What did the prophets of Baal do to try and get their god to show himself?

How long did they try to get a response from Baal?

Finally, Elijah puts an end to the Baal portion of the contest. He calls them to another portion of the summit where he rebuilds a Jewish altar. Notice he uses 12 stones for the 12 tribes of Israel. Currently Israel has been divided into two countries: Israel (the 10 northern tribes) and Judah (the 2 southern tribes). In this act, Elijah is reminding the people of their historic past as God's people. "Just as Samuel called the people to recommit themselves to Jehovah at the coronation of King Saul, so Elijah is looking for a new pledge of allegiance after 400 years of darkness and backsliding."

5. After rebuilding the altar, Elijah slaughters a bull for the offering. Why did Elijah choose to sacrifice a bull and not a goat? Read Lev. 16:6; 11 and 15.

"As John Barr says, 'The Cross won't cover what we won't uncover.'
There is a sense of sovereignty about the will of a human being."¹

6. What else did the people do to make the contest more telling?

To further highlight God's involvement in this event, Elijah waits until "the time of sacrifice" (18:36). This was the traditional time for afternoon sacrifices in the Temple. Why do you think Elijah went to the effort to use these symbolic ties (12 stones, bull sacrifice, time of sacrifice) to Israel's past? What does this say about God's passion for His wayward children?

7. Finally Elijah steps forward and prays. 18:36-37. Describe the result to the sacrifice?

Why did the people fall prostrate? 18:39

Are you wavering between two opinions" right now with regard to obeying God's will?

Why were they willing to kill the prophets of Baal? 18:40 (Hint: Child sacrifice and cult prostitution were an integral part of Baal worship.)

How important is repentance to having a true faith in God?

8. Elijah's day wasn't over. What does he do next? 18:41-44

How many times does Elijah pray for God to act during the contest? _____

How many times does Elijah pray for the drought to end? _____

Read James 5:15-18. How does this story provide a challenge for us in our own prayer life?

9. Elijah was so empowered by the Lord that he outran King Ahab's chariot on his return to Jezreel. It had been quite the day. What changes in Israel's national policies might Ahab have expected because of the victory at Mt. Carmel?

What actually did happen? (Refer to 19:1-2)

10. What was the impact on Elijah when his expectations weren't realized? (19:3-9)

11. What were contributing factors to Elijah's depression?

How would you have counseled him?

12. What was God saying to Elijah through the wind, earthquake, fire and whisper?

13. The Apostle Peter once betrayed Jesus three times. Afterwards Peter returned to his profession as a fisherman. It is there that the resurrected Lord found him and spoke with him. Read John 21:15-19. What parallels do you see between God's conversation with Elijah and Jesus' conversation with Peter?

14. How is God trying to communicate to you right now? What's the message of the "gentle whisper"?

Prayer: For one another

LIFE GROUPS

A safe place to build friendships and grow spiritually.

- L** ♦ Learn..... applying Biblical truth for everyday living
- I** ♦ Invite.....welcoming others to our fellowship
- F** ♦ Fellowship.....nurturing Christ centered caring relationships
- E** ♦ Evangelism..... reaching others with the hope of Christ



DID YOU KNOW?

Elijah did not fulfill all of God's instructions. The first thing he was *supposed* to do was to anoint Hazael king over Aram.

"Whether Elijah realized it or not, this was designed to solve the problem of Ahab and Jezebel. The Arameans were called to wage a war upon Israel behind which flashed the judgment of God; a war in which the king of Israel would be killed, and Israel would receive punishment for their awful, heartless, and idolatrous crimes. Hazael would become nothing but a puppet to fulfill the will of God. If Elijah would obey, then the plan would be set in motion."

Second, he was to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to become Israel's next king. Perhaps Elijah decided he was already in enough hot water without committing treason. Regardless, he chose NOT to do this.

In fact, the only part of God's instructions that Elijah fulfilled was God's order to anoint Elisha as his successor. I love the words in 1 Kings 19:21: "Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him(NASB)." Elisha became the teammate that Elijah so desperately needed. In fact, the two men were never apart until the end and Elijah left his legacy of ministry and faith written on Elisha's heart.

"History shows... Elijah could never know, except by faith (what would happen to Israel). He didn't obey God's first two commands. "He didn't know that Jehu was a man with a heart for renewal and revival. He didn't know that Jehu was destined to give the order for Jezebel to be thrown out of a high window to her timely death. He didn't know that Jehu was destined to be the man who oversaw the systematic execution of every single one of Ahab's seventy surviving male descendants, so that the cursed dynasty would never rise again. He didn't know that it would be Jehu who would throw Tyrian Baal out of Israel, and that even though Jehu would later compromise himself, he was the instrument of God to bring about a massive reform in Israel."

Instead, due to Elijah's disobedience, Ahab continued to rule until finally killed by an Aramean arrow (1 Kings 22:29-40). Ahaziah took over and ruled another two years, following Baal just as his father had (1 Kings 22:52). He fell from a balcony and died (2 Kings 1:1-17). His brother, Jehoram of Israel replaced him. His 12 year reign went a little better, but not by much (2 Kings 3:1-3).

Finally, it was Elisha that fulfilled God's commands. 2 Kings 8:7-15 tells of Elisha's anointing of Hazael to become the king of Aram. The following chapter (2 Kings 9:1-13) tells of Jehu being anointed to overthrow Ahab's evil lineage and become the reforming king of Israel. Unfortunately *because* of Elijah's disobedience he never saw the fulfillment of either prophecy and Israel suffered additional years under the evil of idolatry.

Excerpts taken from: Elijah Stressed & Anointed by Jeff Lucas