

1 Kings 18:20-39
If God is God
WRCoB 11.05.23

There are times in the Bible
When God sets up these really lopsided contests
To prove without a shadow of doubt
That the LORD God
Is the one and only true God.

When Gideon mustered an army of 32,000
God told Gideon he had too many soldiers.

If they'd win the battle
They'd believe it was by their own doing.

So God chiseled Gideon's army
Down from 32,000 to 300
To face a force of 135,000 Midianites.

Gideon defeated them without the use of any weapons.

Today's lesson is another example
Where God uses a lopsided contest
To prove the same point

There is no other God than YHWH.

~~

It's been 100 years since King David
Ruled a powerful and united Israel.

That once great nation now divided
By the blunders of King Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

King Ahab is now the king of Israel.

Ahab's wife is the notorious Queen Jezebel.

Jezebel perverted and corrupted Ahab
Which really was none too difficult a task.

He was pretty much a rascal from the start.

She led him away from the LORD God
To worship both Baal the god of rain
And Asherah, the goddess of fertility.

Jezebel had killed most of God's prophets
Leaving Elijah as one of the few remaining prophets

Elijah was quite the bur in Jezebel's saddle.

She hated him and those feelings were mutual.

In chapter 17
God informed Elijah to inform Ahab
A drought was coming.

An in-your-face challenge to the god, Baal, the god of rain
~~
What followed was what Shontell read for us today.

You see, the situation had become like this.

That not only had Ahab
Combined both the faiths in God and in Baal

But that Ahab and Jezebel pushed all of Israel
To leave or at least dilute their faith in God
And adopt the faith in the god of Baal
And the goddess of Asherah.

But remember the LORD God does not have any patience
When it comes to worshiping others gods.

1

Exodus 34:14 “for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”

And so, Elijah asks the people of Israel

“How long? Really, how long will you keep going
Limping between two opinions?”

“If God is God, follow Him.
But if Baal, follow him.”

In other words, there is no neutral zone.

It's one way or another
You can't have it both ways
You can't try to please all the gods.

There is only one God you need to please.

You cannot live between God and things that replace god.

You MUST choose.
The LORD God demands total devotion.

2

Joshua 24:15 CEB

¹⁵ But if it seems wrong in your opinion to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve.

~~

We live in a time similar to this time in Israel's history.

We, too, are bombarded by multiple gods
Each vying for our devotion.

Like King Ahab and Queen Jezebel

We live in a society that is a pluralistic society.

There are all kinds of gods vying for our devotion.

In order for the people to consider other gods.

Faith in the LORD God has to be challenged

When a drought occurred back then in Israel's history

Ahab used the occasion to present Baal, the rain god.

Baal the rain god will bring rain.

Your god doesn't seem to answer prayers for rain.

We currently live in a society with multiple gods.

The thinking goes, all our needs can be met

By going to the different gods.

That I can take what I want from this god

And take from this other god

And blend it to make it my own faith

What are the false gods we seek and cling to

Our work, our careers, our hobbies, our bodies

We live for the gods of vacation and weekends

The god of fine dining, and expensive clothing

We worship the god of our material possessions

The god of our investments and retirement.

Anytime we worship things and not God

They end up taking the place of God.

And many things can become really addictive.

Things like drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex
All start out as things we worshiped.

They are false gods.

These are gods that take control of our lives
That have the ability to possess us spiritually
That damage our relationship with God.

~~

Take for instance the idea of the perfect body.

Everywhere, we are bombarded by images of perfect bodies.

Men and women pumping iron etc.

Now, not everyone can achieve this kind of body.
But we are led to believe we can.

The perfect shaped body becomes a false god
And lures us into thinking
We need to be like that!

This false god then takes control of our lives.

We become possessed.

We spend hours in front of the mirror
Hours at the fitness centers.
Hours fretting over a pound or two.

And this worship to a false god
Ends up destroying us with bulimia or anorexia
Or self-centered narcissism.

It becomes God's spiritual competitors.

And robs us of God's life-giving Spirit.

~~

Elijah comes along and says, "No! that ain't going to work."

If God is God, follow Him.

If Baal, then follow him.

Don't just limp along divided between devotion to God
And devotion to your false gods.

Call on the name of your false gods
And see what they'll do.

Let's just see.

3

1 Kings 18:24 CEV

24 Then all of you will call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers with fire—that's the real God!"

The God who answers with fire.

The prophets of Baal worshiped Baal from morning til night.

Nothing happened

They performed for their god.

They danced around their sacrifice
They cried, they moaned
They cut themselves

The DID what they thought would please their god.

Nothing happened.

Elijah prepared his sacrifice.

And Elijah prayed to the LORD God
The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

4

1 Kings 18:37 CEB

³⁷ Answer me, Lord! Answer me so that this people will know that you, Lord, are the real God and that you can change their hearts.”

And God answered with fire.

Ohhhhh my God answered with fire.

God sent a lightning bolt down on that sacrifice.

It struck that soggy hunk of meat
That soaked firewood
All that standing water

And consumed everything.

Nothing was left.

5

1 Kings 18:39 NRSV

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.”

~~

When John was baptizing people for the repentance of sins
He said

6 Matthew 3:11 NIV

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

~~

God answers with fire and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said

7

Luke 12:49 NIV

49 “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

Why?

8

Luke 12:51 NIV

51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.

Why would he come to bring division?

He came to divide the people between

Those who worship the false gods

With the ones who worship the one true God.

Why?

So that we may know the God that changes hearts.

~~

It was 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead.

People waited in prayer

9 Acts 2:2-4 CEB

² Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting.

10

³ They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them.

11

⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

~~

And the Lord answered with fire from above.

To bring division.

If God is God?

What?

If God is God . . . then follow Him

Choose this day whom you will serve.

You want to receive the fire from above?

The fire that changes hearts?

Then stop limping between two opinions.

Drop the false gods you currently worship.

They make you dance

They will make you cry

They will make you hurt yourself.

But not the true God.

The true God will fill you with the Holy Spirit.

He will change your heart.
And transform your life.

Pray like Elijah.

~~

I close with a prayer from CH Spurgeon.

Pray with me
With your palms turned up towards heaven.

O God, send us the Holy Spirit.

Give us both the breath of spiritual life
And the fire of unconquerable zeal

Till nation after nation
Shall yield to the sway of Jesus.

O Thou who are our God
Answer us by fire, we pray Thee.

Answer us both by wind and fire
And then we shall see Thee
To be God indeed.

The kingdom comes not
And the work is flagging.

Oh that Thou wouldst send the wind and the fire!

Thou will do this when we are all of one accord.
All believing
All expecting
All prepared by prayer.

Lord bring us to this waiting state.

God, send us a season of glorious disorder.

Oh for a sweep of the wind that will set the seas in motion
And make our ironclad brethren
Now lying so quiet at anchor
To roll from stem to stern!

Oh for a fire to fall again
Fire which shall affect the most stolid!

Of that such fire
Might sit first upon the disciples
And then fall on all around.

O Spirit of God!

Thou are ready to work with us today
Even as Thou didst then.

Stay not, we beseech Thee
But work at once.

Break down every barrier
That hinders the incoming of Thy might!

Overturn!, overturn, O Sacred Wind!
Consume all obstacles, O heavenly Fire!

Give us now both the hearts of flame and tongues of fire
To preach Thy reconciling Word for Jesus' sake!

Amen.