

1 KINGS 18

ELIJAH - PT. 2 - "IF?"



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Today we continue for the 2nd week our study of the prophet Elijah. What a great man of God of Elijah was and we will see that today. But last week I remind you that Elijah's faith and power was the result of his willingness to let God take him through a season of preparation. And that involved Isolated Pain, leading to Total Dependence, leading to Unconditional Obedience.

As we begin this study of 1 Kings 18, let me say this one thing that is so important to God. **Above all things God wants us to have an undivided heart.** He desires All of our hearts, all our worship, all our focus, all our adoration. God wants to be number one.

- The very first of the 10 Commandments says *"You shall have no other gods before me."*
- When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus said, you're to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart mind and strength."*

God wants ALL of our heart not just some of our heart.

So if you were Satan and you wanted to thwart God, what would you do? You would try to divert people to worshipping false gods.

Now here's the key thought for today. Write this down.

FALSE GODS PROMISE WHAT ONLY THE TRUE GOD PROVIDES.

For example, money is a pretty popular false God. (If you agree, say yes.) What does money do? Money promises what only God can truly provide.

- Money promises *"If you have enough, then you will be secure."* But even with a lot of money if you find out that you have cancer and you're going to die in 30 days, there goes your security.
- Money says *"I will you will be happy."* If you find out that your child is dying, there goes your happiness. It's a false promise. It's a false God.

BACKGROUND. In Elijah's day, many people were worshipping false gods. Remember, Elijah was called by God to confront a very evil King, Ahab. He was the 19th of very wicked Kings. In the Bible says he was the worst of the worst- that no one before him had done as much evil in us Ahab.

Two of the false gods elevated were Baal and Asherah. He continued turning the hearts of the people away from the one true God. These false gods promised *"if you worship me, your crops will grow," "you'll have a better life."* (Baal was the Storm-God, the Fertility God.) They promised things only the true God can provide.

So in chapter 17 God told to Elijah declare a drought over the land as an act of judgment. And then, for over 3 years while the drought is in effect, he sends him into a time of preparation. And we saw the prophet developing into the man of God that God wanted him to become.

NOW we're more than 3 years into the drought, and God now wants Elijah to confront the King.

1 Kings 18:1 *¹After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."*

1 Kings 18:17-18 *"When (Ahab) saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"*

"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals."

Let's stop. Elijah was confronting the very popular idea, especially then (also now) that there are many gods.

Monotheism—belief there is one God.

Polytheism—belief there are multiple gods.¹

Elijah was confronting a very polytheistic culture, worshipping multiple Gods.

Now Christians are monotheistic, believing that there is only one God. But, *practically*, although we may believe in one God, yes in reality we may live polytheistic lives. We may worship and serve many

¹ Archaeologists have discovered rock carvings of Baal holding a club in his right hand and a lightning flash with a spearhead in his left. These identify him as the god of rain and storm.

Baal and related deities are also portrayed as a mating bull, symbolizing fertility.

The goddess *Asherah* was portrayed as the wife of El (or sometimes Baal) in Canaanite mythology.

false gods. Many false idols. (Believing they will give us what only the true God actually can.)

Now, I want to contextualize what we are reading in our Bibles. No one I know is worshiping the false gods, Baal and Ashorah, but instead today we are worshiping other subtle and more socially acceptable false gods. Right? Let's be honest, a lot of people worship the false god of money, or material possessions - your house, your car, your image, your career, your hobby, oddly enough it could be your children.

"How can that be?" Not necessarily bad things, but anything that you can put on the throne of your life above the one true God becomes a false God. That's why I would ask you today to try to identify, "What are the false gods that you serve?"

A few false gods in my life, I'm not proud of them, but I know they are there... I've made the church no 1 at times, even before God, ... materialism.

I'd ask you to be honest. What are the false gods that you have elevated, erected in the place of the one true God? Our beliefs are monotheistic, but often our practice is very polytheistic.

Elijah steps into this polytheistic culture and makes a very strong, prophetic statement.

"PEOPLE, IT IS TIME TO QUIT WAVERING."

Quit wavering between the gods. Make a choice. Quit wavering.

Watch what he says to the King next...

1 Kings 18:19-21 *Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 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.

I can guarantee you if Elijah was here today, he would say the same thing to you and me. "Quit wavering."

- "Yeah, I want God to keep out of hell and get me into heaven. But I still want to do the things that I want to do."

- "Oh God, Hear my prayer and bless me, but I don't want to obey your commands."
- "Oh God, I want all of your good things, but I don't want to stop my bad things."

'Quit wavering! Quit being a Christian on Sunday and a heathen on Monday. Quit wanting the benefits and being unwilling to sacrifice.

Pick a side.'

I'm trying to contextualize Elijah's message to us today. Here's what I think he would say. "If your false god really is God, then sell out to it."

- In other words if material possessions is your main thing, then go for it. Get as much as you can. Steal if you have to. And don't ever give again or do anything generous, because that would diminish your God-goal.
 - "If appearance-image is your God, then go for it." Go to the gym 3 hours a day, work out. Tan it, tone it, tweak it, tuck it, lift it, color it. Do whatever it takes! Just ignore the fact that you're going to get old, wrinkled and flabby and eventually die.
 - "If sexual pleasure is your God, go for it!" Don't let marriage hold you back... If that's your God, go for it!
 - Your house, is that your God? Remodel it, Landscape it,
 - **BUT if Jehovah is the one true God, and Christ is the one true Saviour**, then *quit your wavering*. Serve him with all your heart. Don't just claim him and then lives as if he doesn't exist, SERVE HIM!
- I can feel the power of Elijah looking at me and you and saying, "Quit Wavering."
- Some of you, you know it, inside you are living two lives. You have put your faith in Jesus Christ, but the idols of your life have prevented you from giving him your all.
 - In fact, some of you have not even been willing to become a member of his church. You're a Christian "in name" but you don't want to get involved. You'd rather keep your options open. I can hear Elijah saying, "quit wavering."
 - Perhaps some of our young people who just came back from Crosswalk, heard God clearly telling you "it's time to walk the walk and live out what I believe." Already now that your home you're not sure. "Quit wavering."

Here's the sad thing. When Elijah called on the people to choose, they just sat there. Look at the end of verse 21. It says, *But the people said nothing.*

THE SHOWDOWN

- So what does he do? He has a showdown.

1 Kings 18:24 *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."* (There thinking "Maybe Elijah doesn't realize Baal is the Storm-lightening God" (he holds lightning bolts in his hand)— "he's good at this...you're gonna get smoked")

1 Kings 18:26 *So they 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.*

So Elijah starts "messaging with them" (trash talking)...

1 Kings 18:27 *At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy (lit., relieving himself), or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."* (

1 Kings 18:28-29 ²⁸*So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.*

So they shouted all day long. Unbelievable.

Think about it. Many of us don't dance before the false gods all day long, we do it all lifetime long. Before the false gods who promise but never deliver...

After nothing happens, Elijah has his turn...

Preparation – vv. 30-35 (12 stones, wood, bull, WATER (3 times)

1 Kings 18:36-37 *At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed (next week the faith and prayer life of Elijah): "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. 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."

Can you see the power of what he says... *turn them back*. They used to serve you they used to worship you but they left. Turn them back again. They walked with him, but then they took in false gods on the throne of their life, and they walked away.

It happens today. Maybe it happened to you? Today God is trying to reveal himself to you again, and he's saying "IF God is real...Worship Him!"

Watch what happens...

1 Kings 18:38-39 *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. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord-he is God! The Lord-he is God!"*

And that would be my prayer for our church. **That we would so see him for who he is, that all the false gods would fall far away in comparison to the one true God.** That our hearts would be turned back to Him and we would say "*the Lord, he is God!*"

CONCLUSION

The first time I read this and I saw the fire God sent and I thought, "*Man, if God sent fire like that, that's impressive. Who wouldn't change their mind?*" Maybe you're thinking that too. But since in the Bible this was a one time deal, that's probably not going to happen today.

But then I thought some more and realized in so *much of a infinitely more beautiful and powerful way*, just how God showed us to himself 2000 years ago when he left heaven, became like us. And then Jesus died for us on the cross for our sins so that we could know him.

And when you do know him through Christ, how all the false gods will begin to melt away.

So if Elijah was here today and he would say Dave, quit wavering. If you know God for who he is you'll never have be tempted to serve the false Gods, because the one true God is so much greater.

Let's pray. (Close eyes, bow heads). *Lord, in the spirit of repentance we would dethrone all the false idols that come into our life.*

Are you wavering today? If you would say yes, but I want to turn my heart fully back to God today.

If it is to, would you raise your hand right now so I can pray for you.

Can't we just humbly pray and ask that you would drive us to yourselves God so we can begin to pursue you and know you so that the sense of idolatry will break in our life.

God we confess the sin of idolatry to you and ask you to forgive us. Lord, reveal to us the fire of your Holy Spirit that you may become so real to us that the power of false idols would break in our lives.

Are you a nominal Christian? Meaning a Christian in name only. You're a good person, contribute to society, go to church occasionally, believe the things about Jesus. But not enough to change your life or your lifestyle. In other words cannot seeking God through the Scripture for direction. You are not praying about being a wise steward of what God is giving you. It hasn't changed the way you handle money, material possessions, anger, sexual temptations or such. You're a nominal Christian.

Surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Quit wavering.

God is drawing you. He loves you. There is no way we can work ourselves to God. That's why God sent Jesus - he came for us. He came to make a way for us to get to him. If that's your prayer, would you lift your hand right now.

Invitation – music....

Prayer. Heavenly father. I am a sinner. I need a savior. Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God who died for me and rose from the dead to introduce me to the one true God. Be the Savior of my life. I put you on the throne. I now belong to you. Take all of my life from this point forward. I am yours. Thank you for new life. In Jesus name amen