



Elijah Series #5 “Lessons at Mount Carmel”

Introduction

Observing God’s interaction with Elijah and Elijah’s spiritual journey in his day provides insight and principles for us in our day which is not unlike what Elijah faced. The transitions in Elijah’s life follow a definite instruction from the Lord.

“And the word of the Lord came to Elijah”

There is much to learn from Elijah. So far, some key elements to Elijah’s life is his bold prayer, his listening ear, his prompt obedience, his contentment to serve wherever God put him.

I. Lessons from the Palace where Elijah boldly announced God’s judgment for sin. 1 Kings 17:1

II. Lessons from the brook where Elijah learned to trust God in obscurity and isolation. 17:2-7

III. Lessons from Zarephath where Elijah learned to trust God in ministry 17:8-24

IV. Lessons from the Palace Part two where Elijah confronted Ahab again Kings 18:1-19

God’s assignments are not always comfortable but critical.

God strategically places His “agents” everywhere.

God connects resources along the way of obedience

Only a renewed awareness of God’s perspective and presence can overcome

Tough assignments are not punishment for sin.

God is perfectly able to protect His children.

Much of the troubles in our life are the result of our rebellion.

God often calls on us to boldly confront evil and speak truth.

It is clear that Ahab had much greater concern for the economic consequences of the extended draught than the spiritual defection that precipitated it.

V. Lessons from Mount Carmel where Elijah confronted Baalism 18:20-41

Life is full of choices. At times I just hate making another choice in the day. Americans are super spoiled with the number of choices we have available. Some choices are insignificant, other choices have the potential of effecting the course and direction of the rest of our life. Today, we track Elijah up Mount Carmel where he solicits a significant choice from the people of Israel and provides a very powerful incentive to make the right one. The people of Israel had readily embraced the shallow sensual gratification of Baalism over the internal spiritual obedience to Yahweh which held the promise of both temporal and eternal blessing. Every time the people shifted their focus from the eternal God to some devil-designed power, they plunged into sensual and sexual addiction. Elijah nursed a compelling drive and passion to eliminate this destructive evil influence on the people of God.

The people gathered on Mount Carmel, thought to be a sacred site of Baal worship who was supposed to bring fertility to his worshippers, he issued a clear challenge to the people. It is interesting the prominence of mountain top experiences.

Moses on Sinai.

Elijah on Carmel.

Jesus Moses and Elijah on the “Mount of Transfiguration.”

Jesus will return to a mount to rule the world.

A. Elijah challenged the Israelites to follow God

So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel, and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. 18:20-21

Everyone gathered at Mount Carmel by the king's command. The distance to Mount Carmel from Samaria is 57 miles, about a good day's walk. Mount Carmel rises up to a height of 1,791 feet from a 24-mile-long mountain range along coast.

God will not share loyalty with anyone.

We must serve one or the other. We can't have it both ways. Some think we have three options.

1. Follow God and God alone.
2. Follow the World and the world alone.
3. Embrace the best aspects of Christianity and the world.

God unequivocally declares that we must choose one or the other. To choose a mediating position is to choose against God. The response of the people is disheartening. Rather than choose one or the other, they refused to make a choice. The word here means to "skip", hesitate, be lame. They refused to commit one way or the other.

B. Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people answered and said, "That is a good idea."

Majority doesn't always mean right or truth.

As we will see later, Elijah didn't have an accurate perception.

The reality is that Obadiah had saved hundred prophets and God informed Elijah later that he had 7000 that hadn't bowed their knee to Baal. In this case, God declared His truth through the one lonely voice of a choice prophet against the 450 voices of Baal's prophets and the silence of the thousands of uncommitted Israelites. Who knows where the 400 prophets of Asherah went. The proposed test revolved around the ability of the one true God to respond to the trusting prayer of his followers. It says the people thought it was a good idea. The implication is that both the prophets of Baal and the Israelites agreed to the challenge.

C. Baal's prophets accept the challenge 18:25-29

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls, and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood." So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noontime, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced, hobbling around the altar they had made. About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!" So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response. 1 Kings 18:25-29

Elijah gave them all the advantage. It should have been an easy contest given that Baal was also considered the god of sun and fire.

Following is a description of a common fest to Baal.

Now commenced a scene which baffles description. Ancient writers have left us accounts of the great Baal-festivals, and they closely agree with the narrative of the Bible, only furnishing further details. First rose a comparatively moderate, though already wild, cry to Baal; followed by a dance around the altar, beginning with a swinging motion to and fro.

The howl then became louder and louder, and the dance more frantic. They whirled round and round, ran wildly through each other's ranks, always keeping up a circular motion, the head low bent, so that their long dishevelled hair swept the ground. Ordinarily the madness now became infectious, and the onlookers joined in the frenzied dance. But Elijah knew how to prevent this. It was noon—and for hours they had kept up their wild rites. With cutting taunts and bitter irony Elijah now reminded them that, since Baal was Elohim, the fault it must lie with them. He might be otherwise engaged, and they must cry louder. Stung to madness, they became more frantic than before, and what we know as the second and third acts in these feasts ensued. The wild howl passed into piercing demoniacal yells. In their madness the priests bit their arms and cut themselves with the two-edged swords which they carried and with lances.

As blood began to flow the frenzy reached its highest pitch, when first one, then others, commenced to "prophesy," moaned and groaned, then burst into rhapsodic cries, accusing themselves, or speaking to Baal, or uttering incoherent broken sentences. All the while they beat themselves with heavy scourges, loaded or armed with sharp points, and cut themselves with swords and lances—sometimes even mutilated themselves—since the blood of the priests was supposed to be especially propitiatory with Baal.

Two more hours had this terrible scene lasted—and their powers of endurance must have been all but exhausted. The sun had long passed its meridian, and the time of the regular evening-sacrifice in the Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem had come. From the accounts of Temple-times left us we know that the evening sacrifice was offered "between the evenings," as it was termed—that is, between the down going of the sun and the evening. Bible History Old Testament.

D. Elijah took up the challenge

1. The first task was to repair the long abandoned altar.

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 which had been torn down. 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." So 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 measures of seed. 1 Kings 18:30-32

Elijah gave the people a front row seat to the coming demonstration. No tricks. No frenzy. No hype. Just a powerful answer to prayer from the true God.

2. Elijah prepared the sacrifice 34-35

Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And 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. And the water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.

Water perhaps came from the sea or some propose a nearby spring.

3. Elijah called out to God.

All along, Elijah demonstrated confidence in his God and courage to take a stand against the crowd. He developed a habit of talking to God from the first time we met him. His prayer focused on the reputation and character of God.

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel..."

His prayer touched on the authentication of the messenger.

and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.

His prayer finished with the longing for revival.

"Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." 1 Kings 18:36-37

Elijah's focus again is on the eternal God who has all power. Revival is realizing anew the majesty of God and the magnitude of our sin and the marvel of His presence. Elijah realized that it is God that turns the heart. We are still responsible to follow that drawing.

E. God responded to Elijah's prayer

1. God's demonstrated His power

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

2. The people's heart moved

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."

3. God implemented His judgment 18:40

Then 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 slew them there.

The physical reality of this verse is gruesome. The mass execution of 850 men and women would generate a high voltage jolt to any society.

Possible universal principle from Carmel #1

The majority is not always right

So be willing to courageously stand alone for the truth.

God always maintains a believing remnant. Don't assume you are alone. Dare to stand alone if necessary.

Live to demonstrate God's glory. Live as a representative of God. Live that others may know that God want to change hearts.

Standing up to opposition stirs fear in our heart. God knows that. Peter urged his readers not to fear or be intimidated.

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:13-16

Jesus encouraged his disciples to not fear conflict.

When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Matthew 10:19-20

Just be sure God is calling you to the confrontation.

Be sure your motivation is love not something else.

Possible universal principle from Carmel #2

God demands absolute fidelity to Him

So get off the fence

Moses called the people to decide.

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deuteronomy 30:19-20

God longs for relationship with us. As long as we insist on meeting those needs through fleshly means it is as painful as adultery. The gentle shepherd stands at the door longing for close relationship.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. Rev 3:20

God longs for exclusive relationship.

Joshua exhorted the people to choose you they would serve, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking to his reward. "Well done!"

Paul chose to count all things loss yes even garbage in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ and gaining Christ.

It is a choice that confronts us daily. If God is God, follow Him. Stop halting between two opinions. Make a choice. Again. Again.

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.

"And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. "And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. James 4:4-10

Get off the fence regarding who you will serve. How long will you try to stand on middle ground? If God is in charge – we must follow His ways. If this devil-directed world is more desirable – we will obey him.

"But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17

Make every effort to come to me (Paul) soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 2 Timothy 4:9-10

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. Colossians 3:1-2

Boldly declare, "The LORD, He is God, the LORD is God."

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God." 1 Kings 18:39

There are plenty of passages to ponder regarding this principle. Where do we derive our sense of satisfaction and wholeness? Wherever we turn when life gets rough is where we expect to find relief. Is it God or something else? If we related to our spouse the way we relate to Christ i.e. time, energy conversation, intimacy, priority, would the relationship last?

Read Jesus' expectation recorded in Revelation 2:1-6

Possible universal principle #3

Regular interaction with God is essential for our spiritual health

So keep your "altar" in working condition

Regular time with God is usually the first thing to go before a slide into mediocrity.

Things are fine, we are feeling fine. We have no sense of our need for God. The altar is the place where we go to meet God and demonstrate our devotion to Him and He manifests His presence to us. It is a meaningful place of worship. It represents regular interaction and response to God through His word.

Do you have a special place, time, practice where you connect with and interact with God? Place is not essential but sometimes it brings special meaning. I could even be an imagined place where you meet God and He meets with you. Your altar is a regular practice of focusing on your relationship with God. Think about establishing one. It is from there that you may experience God doing some extraordinary things.

Possible universal principle #4

God doesn't require a wild frenzy to answer pray and move hearts

So come to him with an honest contrite heart

In contrast to some of the stuff on religious television, God is not impressed with the frenzy of our external actions but the faith of our hearts.'

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Psalm 51:15-17

Some people think unless they get warm tingling down their spine or a spiritual sensation of some sort or feel carried away in ecstasy that their interaction with God is second class. Consider again Elijah's calm conversation with God in contrast to the out of control frenzy of the prophets of Baal. This calm interaction seemed to be the habit or norm for Elijah. That is not to say there aren't other places in Scripture that describe other experiences. Just don't downplay yours because it is not like someone else.

Possible universal principle #5

God intervenes in the world in response to our prayer

So develop a habit of bold prayer

Elijah continually grew in his prayer life. I wasn't just what he did, it was who he was. This principle runs throughout Elijah's life. We will explore it more fully a bit later. James points him out as an example of an effective prayer. Elijah had developed a habit of bold prayer through a working "altar".

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:16-18

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and

Just take a bit of time to evaluate your prayer habits. We will deal with the subject more later. Open your heart to what God is saying to you today.

ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21