



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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The Prophet Elijah!

Lesson Text: 1 Kings 18:19-24, 36-40

Focus Verse: 1 Kings 18:21 - And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Truth About Covenant: God gifts us with people to call us back to covenant.

Covenant Context: During the dark days of the Divided Kingdom, the prophet Elijah lived as a Jehovah worshiper, even when the numbers seemed overwhelmingly stacked against him. His faithfulness to covenant often put him at odds with Israel's wicked kings but also inspired the Gospels writer to compare John the Baptist to him. The portion of covenant history shows that God was and is always calling us back to Him.

In today's lesson we will study an Old Testament figure who defied the expectations and outlook of his own day. As we will see, the Israel of the prophet Elijah's day was far gone in idolatry and corruption, thanks to the evil King Ahab and his pagan wife, Jezebel. The idea of a spiritual revival and renewal was a laughable absurdity; Israel's moral decay seemed unstoppable. But it only took one man—one prophet with a divine calling—to single-handedly tear down the stronghold of false worship that powerful King Ahab had raised up.

Ahab's idolatry was outright worship of a false god (Baal). He made no pretense; Ahab was not in covenant with Jehovah, the one true God. Baal was the chief god of the Canaanites, the very people God had commanded Israel to drive out completely and never to imitate (Numbers 33:50-56). Four hundred false prophets told the wicked king only what he wanted to hear (1 Kings 22:6, 11-12). **As we survey the leaders and influencers in our world today, the attitude of Ahab is alive and well.**

The one crucial fact about Elijah stems from his name: it means **"My God is Jehovah."** Surrounded by a world saturated with symbols of Baal worship, Elijah stood out because he worshiped the only one worthy of worship. He stopped the rain (1 Kings 17:1) and the heavens were drought dry for three years. However, Baal was the storm god, the one responsible for sending rain so their crops would grow.

Elijah proposed a contest between Jehovah and Baal, a once-and-for-all war of worship. The false prophets of Baal cried to Baal from morning until noon, but Baal did not answer. No response. No thunder. No lightning. No flame. Then Elijah took twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel and poured twelve barrels of water on the sacrifice. God sent a flame of fire from heaven so great it consumed the sacrifice and lapped up the water in the trench around it. Jehovah—the one, true, living God of Israel—had defeated Baal, and God's covenant people repented.

Worse yet, the false prophet's lies had been replaced by the false teachings of the scribes and the Pharisees. Into this spiritual mess, God sent one final prophetic messenger, the herald of the coming Messiah, John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7-8, 11-12). Although Herod eliminated John, Jesus picked up right where John left off. Jesus' message was also repentance (Matthew 4:17).

It isn't enough to simply "inwardly disagree" with unrighteousness and spiritual hypocrisy invading our culture. At some point, we must boldly take a stand for truth like Elijah, John, and Jesus stood. Yes, we risk being outcasts and even persecuted (a growing risk every day), but our mission is not to blend in and conform; our mission is to stand out and proclaim. In the parallel stories of Elijah and Elisha and John the Baptist and Jesus, we see a glimpse of a revival if we have the courage to reach out and believe God for it.

In Elijah's day, it only took one man to stand up for righteousness and refuse to compromise, and a mighty revival was sparked. Since God could do that in Elijah's day, imagine what would happen in our own day if each of us would take the challenge to stand for righteousness in their homes, neighborhoods, communities, on our job, in our school district, or in our city, state, province or nations. Perhaps our long-prayed-for revival is waiting on us to stand up and speak up.