

# The Christian Arsenal

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## 1 KINGS 18:1-46

Last week we saw Elijah confront King Ahab of Israel and tell him that there would be no rain on the land except by his word. We also saw that God hid Elijah away at the brook Cherith. Then, we saw that God hid Elijah away at a widow's house in Zarephath.

But, I want you to look at

### **1 Kings 18: 1:**

God's will is not static. God's will for us at one point in our lives might be different than it was for another point in our lives.

There are times when it is the will of God for us to hide ourselves and there are times when it is the will of God for us to show ourselves. Usually when God hides us away it is to prepare us for those times when He is going to show Himself to others through us.

Unfortunately, there are too many times we try to show ourselves when we haven't first been hidden away in the Lord. And usually all we really do is show ourselves!

In the first part of this chapter, which we'll not take the time to read, we find something interesting happening.

Three years have gone by and indeed the famine and drought that Elijah had promised would happen **had** happened. Not a drop of rain had fallen on the land. Can you imagine the devastation that had come upon the land without rain for three years? We get an idea of it by looking at

### **Verse 5...**

See, most of the horses and the mules and the cattle had already died because of the drought. And the king was desperate to save those few remaining.

So, Ahab decides to enlist the help of the man who was over his household...a man named Obadiah. Now, this is not the prophet, Obadiah. This Obadiah was a man who greatly feared Jehovah, but he was also a member of Ahab's cabinet. And Ahab decided to divide up the land and he would survey part of it and Obadiah would survey the other part.

What were they looking for? **Verse 5** tells us they were looking for water! But, King Ahab had also been looking for Elijah!

King Ahab didn't think much about Elijah when Elijah told him about the drought in the first place. But, now that the land was in serious trouble and the animals and the people were suffering because of it, he was interested in finding Elijah, wasn't he?

Ahab had married a pagan woman named Jezebel. But, Ahab was a Jewish man. He was supposed to be a believer in Jehovah...the God of the Jews. But he had long since departed from his believe in the Lord.

Ahab was the leader of the people of God. He had the responsibility and obligation before God to worship at the altar of God and to pray to the Lord God of Israel.

But, Ahab had allowed his heart to be turned toward idols. He talked about Baal, not about God. He prayed to Baal, not to God. He prayed to and talked about gods that didn't exist.

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**And as a result, Jehovah had sent judgment on the land.**

See, you can't insult the holiness of Almighty God and get by forever! The God we serve is a jealous God. God had said, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

And when someone who is supposed to be a believer in God turns and worships idols and leads the nation to do the same thing, God won't sit idly by and let that go.

This passage tells us that as Obadiah went looking for water, he ran into Elijah. Elijah told Obadiah to go tell Ahab that he had come to see him. Well, that greatly upset Obadiah.

Obadiah told Elijah that Ahab had gone to all the nations and kingdoms around looking for Elijah. Obadiah also told Elijah that he was afraid that if he went to Ahab as Elijah had asked him to that the Spirit of God would take Elijah away and then Ahab would kill Obadiah because Elijah was gone.

Obadiah was a believer. Obadiah had done some good things. Obadiah had saved the lives of 100 of God's prophets when Jezebel tried to kill all of them. But, even though Obadiah feared God, Obadiah also greatly feared King Ahab.

Elijah assured Obadiah that he wasn't going to go away...that he fully intended to meet with Ahab.

Elijah gives you and me a great lesson in obedience. No matter what God told him to do, he did it! **And every time he obeyed God, God blessed him!**

**God told him to go the brook Cherith and he did and there he was fed water from the brook and meat and bread by the ravens.**

**God told him to go to Zarephath and there he was fed by the widow from the supply of flour and oil the Lord provided for her.** (The widows of Israel didn't want to be fed by God's word, so the widow of Zarephath was fed by God's word and God's food.)

**God told him to go to Ahab and God also said that rain would come on the face of the earth.**

God deserves our obedience whether there's anything good that comes as a result of it or not. It's just a matter of grace that He rewards obedience. He could just demand absolute obedience and giving nothing in return and have every right to do so! But, out of His great love and grace He has chosen to bless those who obey Him!

**Verses 16-17...**

The first thing I want us to see in this passage of Scripture is

## **1) The unrepentant heart of Ahab**

What did Ahab say to Elijah? "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"

Elijah wasn't the troublemaker...Ahab was. Ahab was the problem. But, instead of repenting and confessing that the nation's drought and devastation was his fault...Ahab blamed Elijah for it.

Wouldn't it have been something if Ahab had fallen on his knees and confessed his failure as a godly king and leader of the nation?

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**But, there was no confession! There was no repentance!**

Think about this...

What was so special about David? I mean, David did some terrible things in his life. He committed adultery with another man's wife and then had the man killed to try to cover up his own sin.

**But, what made David a man after God's own heart is that he had a repentant heart.**

**It's interesting to know that 2 Samuel 21 tells us of a time when David also faced a three year famine in his country...and he didn't go out searching for water...he went before the Lord!**

What makes the story of the prodigal son so memorable? Why did the Holy Spirit choose to tell us about this son who demanded his inheritance and then went off to a foreign land and squandered his father's hard earned money?

**It was because in the end...this son came to his senses and repented and sought his father's and God's forgiveness.**

And here is a king who could look around and not see one flower budding. He could look around and see every tree twisted and dead. He could look around and see not one blade of grass. He could look around and see dead animals. He could look around and see his people starving for food and water.

You would think that the people who were suffering because of Ahab's sin would have rebelled against him, wouldn't you? Doesn't it remind you of the people of Iraq who have undergone such persecution at the hands of Saddam Hussein and done very little if anything to put an end to it?

But, with all that...there was no remorse and no conviction and no confession because he had an unrepentant heart!

Not only do we see the unrepentant heart of Ahab, but we also see

## **2) The uncompromising word of Elijah...**

**Verse 18...**

Elijah knew why God had judged Israel. And he didn't hesitate to tell Ahab, did he? He told Ahab that there were two reasons for the drought and devastation in the land of Israel and they could both be laid at Ahab's feet.

The first reason was that he had turned his back on Jehovah and His commandments!

"Ahab, you have ignored God! You have ignored His commandments! You have ignored His Word. And you cannot do that and get by with it!"

The second reason was that he had followed after the Baals.

"Ahab, you not only have failed to follow after Jehovah, but you have chosen to follow after a god that doesn't even exist! You cannot do that and get by...there is a price to pay!"

And this brings us to

## **3) The unavoidable confrontation with the prophets of Baal**

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## Verse 19-21...

Elijah was saying, "Now we're going to get this thing settled! You're going to have to decide if you're going to serve Baal or Jehovah! You're going to have to choose this day whom you will serve!"

And what did the people say? They didn't say anything! Doesn't this all sound familiar? Doesn't this sound just like so many people in our day in our country? Folks are so busy serving gods that don't exist and when they're confronted they don't say anything.

**I stopped by the church this week and a friend and I were discussing preparing this lesson and she said, "You know, as I read this I kept saying, 'why, these folk were just heathens...' but," she added, "these folks were God's people...they were His covenant people and they should have known better!"**

And she was right...they should have taken a stand for Jehovah...they should not have allowed their leaders to take God's Word and God's worship away...but they just kept silent!

I watched Patricia Ireland (past president of NOW) this past week on Bill O'Reilly's show on Fox. She has just been named the CEO of the YWCA. Bill O'Reilly asked her if she is a Christian...the point being that the YWCA is the Young Women's **Christian** Association.

Well, Patricia Ireland hemmed and hawed around and said, "Well, I come from a Christian background..." And I have to hand it to O'Reilly...he said, "Ms. Ireland, a Christian believes that Jesus is God! Do you believe that?" And he never got an answer from her. I wonder why...

But, the silence of these folks didn't discourage Elijah, did it?  
He said, "Now, this is the plan...We're going to build an altar.  
Your side is going to have a bull and my side is going to have  
A bull. And I'm going to let you go first.

I want you to take the bull and kill it and cut it in pieces and lay the pieces on the altar. But I don't want you to set fire to it. I want you to pray to your god and let him send fire. And if your god sends fire, then he is worthy of worship."

And the people agreed to that. In fact they said, "**That's a good idea!**"

They sacrificed a bull. They put it on the altar. They prayed...all morning. From early morning until noon they prayed! For hours they prayed! And nothing happened!

## Verse 27-28...

You've got to love Elijah. He's over there mocking them...and they don't have sense enough to realize they're being mocked, do they?

So, they jump up on the altar and they take knives and they begin to cut themselves. I mean surely their god won't let them all bleed to death.

"Surely this will capture the attention of our god. Baal, look at us. Baal, we're bleeding to death down here. Baal, you better do something quick." **But still there is no answer!**

## Verse 29...

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Well, the sun begins to go down. There's no voice left in them. There's not much blood left in them. And old Elijah said, "Are you guys through?"

They're through.

And the next passage tells us the first thing Elijah had to do was rebuild the altar. They had pretty well torn it up. He rebuilt the altar and took his bull, sacrificed it, cut it in pieces and laid them on the altar.

Then, he says, "Dig a trench around the altar and I want you to pour twelve pitchers of water on the offering and the wood." (My NAS says pitchers...the KJV says barrels of water.) And the water flowed around the altar and the trench was filled with water.

Now, Carmel is right next to the Mediterranean Sea, but it would still be a long trip to haul 12 pitchers or 12 barrels of water from the sea to Mt. Carmel.

## **Verses 36-40...**

Elijah asked God to send fire and the fire fell. Eight hundred and fifty prophets all day long had screamed and shouted and cut themselves and got no answer from their god.

But, God answered the prayer of one lone prophet, Elijah. The fire fell and consumed the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench.

Two things happened as a result of the fire falling...

- 1) The people fell on their face in repentance and in confession that Jehovah alone is God.
- 2) The false prophets were gathered and carried down by the brook Kishon and Elijah killed them there.

This fulfilled the word of God back in Deuteronomy when God said false prophets were to be put to death.

God gives each of us the freedom to make choices. We can choose to serve Him...or we can choose to follow after gods that don't even exist.

But, when we choose the wrong way, there are consequences to pay. Those prophets chose to serve Baal and it cost them their life. It cost them their eternity with God!

"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him. But if Baal is god, follow him." It's a choice each of us must make. But remember, choices bring consequences. It's important to make the right choice!

Let's spend the time we have left this morning seeing some of the effects that followed the confrontation at Carmel...

## **4) The undeserved grace of God shown to Ahab and Israel...**

### **Verses 41-46...**

Now, let me ask you...did you really expect Elijah to tell Ahab to go and eat and drink...

I mean, after all that Ahab has done to bring this drought on...do you believe he deserved to eat and drink?

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Do you think Ahab deserved fair treatment from Elijah or from God after he had blamed Elijah and called him the “troubler of Israel”?

No...if you and I were honest this morning, we would say Ahab didn't deserve any of this and we would be right. I believe without a doubt this is simply another picture of the grace of God...the undeserved favor of Almighty God.

And when you think about it, **we** don't deserve any goodness from God either, do we? I'm so glad that His goodness is based on His grace...we don't have to deserve it to get in on it!

I think what Elijah does in this passage is very interesting, don't you?

First of all Elijah tells Ahab that there is a **sound of the roar of a heavy shower**. It doesn't say “a sound of the roar of thunder...” it says, “a sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”

Now, folks we've had some very heavy showers lately. Tell me when you heard them. Usually it's when you can **see** them, isn't it? I mean, even if it's dark you can turn the lights on outside and **see** them at the same time you **hear** them, can't you?

But here, Elijah heard the heavy shower before he could even see a cloud. I think God was simply letting Elijah, by grace through faith, hear that a heavy shower was indeed on its way...that He would keep His promise that the drought would end.

Sometimes we can **smell** rain in the air, but Elijah **heard** the roar of a heavy shower before he smelled the rain.

Sometimes we can **see** the sky getting darker and darker, but Elijah **heard** the roar of a heavy shower before the sky got dark.

Sometimes we can **see** the clouds as they get thicker, but Elijah **heard** the roar of a heavy shower before the clouds even appeared in the sky.

And God allows you and me to know our prayers will be answered before we actually see our prayers answered. And He does this by giving us faith...

*“Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the assurance of things not seen...” Hebrews 11:1*

But, notice what Elijah did next. **Verse 42** tells us he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

This is a picture of prayer. This man had just come from one of the greatest displays of ministry in the history of the world...calling fire down from heaven...and here he doesn't take the credit. He doesn't claim the glory. He simply goes to God in prayer.

**How do we know Elijah was praying? I mean, it doesn't say he was. Maybe he felt faint and he put his head down between his knees...**

No, the book of **James** tells us **“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.**

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***And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”***

We mentioned this last week...but real prayer is persistent prayer. Did you notice that Elijah sent his servant to look toward the sea for any sign of rain...how many times? SEVEN!  
And I believe Elijah was praying each time his servant went out...

“Lord, please let my servant come  
back to me with a report of rain...”

**And on the seventh time the servant said, “Well Elijah, I don’t know if it’s worth mentioning, but way off in the distance I see a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.”**

Well, that’s all the weather forecast that Elijah needed. He didn’t need Doppler Radar, or NexRad or SatRad , or all the rest of those things our TV weathermen use. The word of his little servant was good enough for him. And he told Ahab he better get on home because the rains were coming.

**Verse 45-46...**

“The hand of the Lord was upon Elijah...”

The Bible speaks a lot of “the hand of the Lord”. Sometimes the hand of the Lord is **against** somebody. That’s not good. That means judgment has come upon that person. I don’t want the hand of the Lord against me.

The Bible also speaks of the hand of the Lord being **under** you. God’s Word tells us that the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord and He turns it as He would a stream of water. This means He can direct as He wishes.

But here the hand of the Lord is **upon** Elijah for power and strength. It’s a picture of the Lord touching the life of someone to do His will in His way.

And when you think about it...we can’t do anything at all for God unless His hand is upon us.

The hand of God can be **against** you. The hand of God can be **under** you. The hand of God can be **upon** you. In a sense the hand of God can even be **around** you. Jesus said that nothing shall pluck you and me as believers out of His Father’s hand.

And the hand of God can also be **over** you. Peter tells us,  
“Humble yourselves therefore **under** the mighty hand  
of God, that He may exalt you in due time.”

This speaks of preparation. **“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...”** WHY?  
**“That He may exalt you in due time.”** We’ll never be exalted unless we are humbled first.

Well, **verse 46** tells us that Elijah outran Ahab’s chariot to Jezreel. Why did he do this? I don’t know.

I read commentators this week that told me that the king always had a servant run before his chariot and this was what Elijah was doing.

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I read that he was so excited about all that God had done that he got carried away.

I read that he ran the six miles back to the city to give Ahab one last chance to repent before he saw Jezebel again...

Sometimes I don't understand commentators! I don't guess it's real important to know why. I think the important thing to know is that the hand of God was upon him as he ran!

I believe this gave Ahab yet one more visible evidence of the power of Elijah's God...

Well, let's just make a few observations and then we'll be through.

I believe we see from this chapter that

- 1) God wants all people to see the proof that He alone is God, and He will go to great lengths to do this.
- 2) The contest on Mt. Carmel was really between God and Satan...between the worship of idols and the worship of Jehovah.
- 3) One plus God is a majority. I believe it was Martin Luther who first made this statement...and it's still true today.
- 4) Not all people will accept the fact that the Lord our God is the only God. The prophets of Baal didn't, did they?
- 5) God did the supernatural for Elijah and He can still do that today.

I believe God longs to do the supernatural in the lives of all His children, to show Himself mighty on behalf of all His children. We just need to take some lessons from Elijah...lessons in prayer and humility and obedience.

All throughout Israel's history, God had shown that He was the Lord of all creation. He is the Lord when it rains and He is also the Lord when it doesn't rain.

All throughout Israel's history, God's people longed for a God who would show Himself mighty on their behalf in the physical realm. And He did that...over and over and over.

But, their problem wasn't a physical problem...it was a spiritual problem. God finally sent His Son...not just to perform mighty physical works, which He did...but to perform mighty spiritual works...the last one being to take the sins of the world upon Himself on the Cross.

But, as surely as Ahab and the prophets of Baal rejected Elijah's message, the people of Jesus' day rejected His.

And people are still doing this...they still would rather see a physical healing than a spiritual healing. They still would rather see a manifestation of being slain in the spirit or speaking in tongues or some other physical sign than the simple spiritual sign of salvation and sanctification!

**We need ministry to our spiritual beings far more than ministry to our physical beings...we need the Word far more than we need works...**

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The old prophet Amos wrote many years ago...

***“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God,  
when I will send a famine on the land,  
not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,  
but rather for hearing the words of the LORD.***

***And people will stagger from sea to sea,  
and from north even to the east;  
they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD,  
but they will not find it.”***

**As I said, may we take a lesson from the pages of Elijah’s life...and may we hunger and thirst for the God’s Word right now, while we can still find it!**