

Date: July 3, 2016

Text: 1 Kings 18:17 – 24, 36 – 37

Title: What does the Prophet know?

Theme: When the prophet is surrounded by wickedness he puts his trust in the God who answers the one who calls on Him.

Response: Communion

Benediction: Isaiah 41:10

“When he 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. 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.

Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’S prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 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.”

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “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.””

(1 Kings 18:17–24, 36–37 NIV)

## **I. Introduction**

- a.** We are surrounded by evidences of the Fall and hardpressed by wickedness
  - i.** Ongoing personal suffering
  - ii.** Societal hostility and alienation
  - iii.** Political tyranny
  - iv.** National and international tragedy

- b. In the midst of these troubling experiences our hope in God is tested
    - i. We are afraid and waiver in our hope
    - ii. When push comes to shove will God answer us when and how we need Him to answer us?
  - c. We each need something to hope in in the midst of this fallen and wicked life that surrounds us
- II. In Elijah's sandals
- a. General background (2 kings 11 – 15)
    - i. The nation of Israel is divided into two kingdoms (1 Kg 12)
    - ii. The northern kingdom (called Israel) has had 3 dynasties, and 7 kings in the space of about 50 years. Of the 7 kings 1 committed suicide and 3 were assassinated by one of their officials. (1 Kg 12 – 16)
    - iii. Israel has rejected the Temple in Jerusalem and has set up high places to worship their golden calf. (1 Kg 12:25 – 33)
  - b. In Elijah's lifetime (2 kings 16 – 17). Israel has forsaken the worship of YAHWEH and has whored herself in idolatry to Ashteroth, Baal and other pagan gods.
    - i. An introductive Narrative chiasm (comparison)
      - 1. Ahab has become the worst king of Israel (and will hold that title forever). He marries a fanatical Sidonian princess and provides idols and temples for her. (1 Kg 16:29 – 32) \*This action puts Ahab outside the pale of what Jeroboam did, and sets a parallel between Ahab's sin and the sin of Solomon that divided the nation of Israel.
        - a. Jezebel The Sidonian princess and queen of Israel has killed off all of the prophets of YAHWEH that she can find and has set up a thriving temple industry of priests and prostitutes. (1 Kg 18)
        - i. Israel has rejected God's law and warnings (ex. Hial and Jericho 1 Kg 16:33-34)
          - 1. Elijah's first recorded mission is to tell the King Ahab that God is going to cause a drought in the land until Elijah tells him otherwise - securing his position as Ahab's favorite prophet. (1 Kg 17: 1)
        - ii. The ravens obey YAHWEH and bring Elijah food. (1 Kg 17:2-7)
      - b. The Sidonian widow trusts YAHWEH, shelters YAHWEH's prophet and has her son raised from the dead. (1 Kg 17:8-24)
      - 2. Obadiah (Ahab's palace steward) is devoted to YAHWEH and hides 100 prophets from Jezebel's vicious purge – providing them with food and water. (1 Kg 18:1 – 4)
- III. The Great Drama YAHWEH vs. Baal
- a. Pre-fight drama

- i. The face off
    - 1. Three years of drought have passed (1 Kg 17:1)
    - 2. Greeting and challenge (vv. 17-18)
      - a. “Is that you, you troubler (hexer) of Israel?”
    - 3. Rebut
      - a. Elijah “I’m not the curse – YOU ARE!”
  - ii. Stepping into the ring
    - 1. The arena (vv. 19-20)
      - a. Green lush vegetation – the power of life
      - b. The power of fire
    - 2. The ring - Carmel
      - a. Lush green mountain
      - b. The place where Baal’s power is always evident
      - c. The proof that Baal is strong and present
  - iii. In the corners
    - 1. Baal
      - a. Baal’s champion – king Ahab
      - b. Baal and his devotees – 450 prophets
    - 2. YAHWEH
      - a. Elijah the scruffy loner from Tish
      - b. Elijah the only prophet left
  - iv. Place your bets
    - 1. Ahab’s bet (vv. 18-20)
      - a. **Calls** for Israel to gather
      - b. They respond and gather
      - c. Israel’s bet (vv. 21 – 24)
        - i. Choose who you will serve (cf. Joshua’s same challenge)
        - ii. Israel **does not answer**
          - 1. Elijah sweetens the pot
            - a. Bring 2 bulls
            - b. You choose first
            - c. You go first
            - d. Call on Baal to answer by faire
          - 2. Israel **answers** “It is good”
- b. The Fight
  - i. Round 1 ([skipped] vv. 25-35)
    - 1. The Priests bet
      - a. The **call** on Baal
        - i. They **call** from morning to evening – all day long
        - ii. They **call** in in a frenzy dance to get Baal to answer
        - iii. They **call** by cutting themselves and shed their blood to get Baal to answer
      - b. Baal **does not answer**
  - ii. Round 2 (vv.36 – 37)
    - 1. Elijah handicaps YAHWEH

2. Elijah **calls** YAHWEH
  - a. "God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel"
  - b. "Answer me! Answer me!"**
  - c. "So that these people may know that"
    - i. YAHWEH is God
    - ii. YAHWEH is turning their hearts
  - d. YAHWEH **answers**
  - e. Because YAHWEH answers the people respond in trust

- IV. Back in Elijah's shoes
  - a. Outnumbered, outgunned, isolated with his back to the wall
  - b. But witness to God's faithful power and provision
  - c. Elijah put everything on the line and placed his hope in YAHWEH
  - d. He did not waiver (like the people, and the priests of Baal.
  - e. Elijah called and YAHWEH answered
    - i. Cf. Dan 3:17 – 18 the brothers
    - ii. Cf. John 6:68 – 69 Peter

- V. Where is the Gospel?
  - a. Elijah points us forward to the True Prophet who
    - i. Trusted God perfectly
    - ii. Proclaimed God's word perfectly
    - iii. Obeyed God's law perfectly
    - iv. Stood alone against the world's wickedness
    - v. Called out to God on our behalf for our sake
    - vi. Was Himself laid on the alter
    - vii. Arose from the dead out of the fire
    - viii. Laid waste to the power of Evil in the world
  - b. Because He did, we do not have to waiver and mutilate ourselves
  - c. Because YAHWEH answered Christ's petition, we too may now respond and put our hope in Him.