Study of Elijah - Part 4

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[0:00] Seeking God's blessing, we'll turn again to 1 Kings chapter 18.

And particularly verse 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. How long halt ye between two opinions? How long halt ye between two opinions? In the third year of the famine, the famine became particularly severe, especially so in Samaria.
And the Lord called Elijah to return and to leave the house of the widow woman in Sarephath and to present himself again for the second time before Ahab and his wife Jezebel.
[1:28] And however alarming that commandment must have been to Elijah and it must have been that Elijah again obeyed because he was a man of obedience and he went to present himself before Ahab.

Ahab was in a rage and in a fury by this time. We saw last week that he had sent messengers here, there and everywhere to try to locate this man to bring the famine somehow to an end.
And Elijah knows that Ahab desires really to kill him, but he knows that ultimately his life is in God's hand. And so he obeys the Lord and goes to present himself before Elijah.
And the scene then changes into Samaria itself, to the capital, where Ahab is a king perplexed, he's frustrated and angry.
And a large part of his anger is due to the fact that his army is in trouble. Ahab had a large collection of horses, foreign horses, prime specimens. One of the kings of Assyria, Shalamaneser III, tells us in his own writings that Ahab contributed 2,000 chariots to a coalition of kings that came against him.
[2:41] So secular history tells you there just how powerful and influential Ahab was and how much he prided himself on his horses and his chariots. And up to this point he had been able to find some fodder for them, but now that is proving difficult.

So he calls his steward, a man called Obadiah, who remarkably feared the Lord. Whoever he stayed in that position, I don't know.
We know in Paul's time that there were saints in Caesar's household. So the Lord must have had some way of protecting this man, Obadiah. You never know, maybe Ahab managed to keep him there for his own conscience.
We don't know, but in any case, his steward was a God-fearing man. And Ahab said to him, you go one way through the country and I'll go the other way and find some fodder for the horses, find some feed for them in case my army is decimated.
And so they do that. Obadiah goes one way and Ahab goes another. Obadiah isn't too long on his journey when he meets this figure with the leather belt.
[3:46] And looking at him, he can hardly believe his eyes. He doesn't know the whereabouts of Elijah. He doesn't know if he's dead or alive. But there's no mistaking the man who stood once in his own king's presence.

And he recognizes Elijah. And he said, are you Elijah? Or are my eyes deceiving me? And Elijah says, go and tell Ahab that I wish to meet with him.
And Obadiah is first of all fearful, but Elijah assures him that he wishes to meet with Ahab and that Obadiah's life won't suffer. And so Obadiah returns and tells Ahab that Elijah desires to see him.
And so Ahab goes out to meet Elijah. And notice their first meeting in three years in verse 17. And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him, art thou he that troubleth Israel?
Are you the troublemaker in Israel? Are you the one who caused the famine? Are you the one who caused all the hardship in the country? Are you the one who brought on us the desolation, the

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shame, the abandonment, the dryness, the hunger, the thirst?
[5:01] Are you the man? And this is remarkable in several respects. First of all, in light of the fact that Ahab himself appears to be completely insensitive to all that Elijah had told him three years ago.

Elijah made clear that this famine was coming upon the earth because of the worship of Baal and the departure from the house of God and the tearing down of the altars of God. And all these three years Ahab doesn't appear once to have thought, is it I?
Was it my fault? Have I done something wrong? Did I marry a bad woman? Does she have a bad sway over me? Am I doing what's wrong instead of doing what's right? It doesn't appear to have crossed his mind at all.
His first words meeting Elijah is, are you the troublemaker in Israel? Are you the troublemaker in Israel? And how many people there are who have exactly the same attitude today?
It appears that for some people that Orthodox Christians or Evangelical or Reformed Christians are the trouble in the country. For some people, if only Christians were more tolerant, or if Christians better than not even disappeared from the face of the earth, there would be no trouble in the world.
[6:16] It seems that some people would almost seriously suggest that there would be no murder, no cheating, no lying, no rape, no immorality of any kind, if only Christian people just sat down and if they were quiet, that the world would be at rest.

When the Lord says in the Word that the opposite is in fact the case. The very fact that the world stands at all today, the very fact that we are not at this moment hit by a bolt of lightning from heaven is by virtue of the fact that the Lord has his people still in the world.
Sodom would not have come under the mass of burning brimstone and sulfur had there been righteous people in Sodom. The fact is that the Lord's people are the preserving salt of the earth and that they are the light of the world.
Maybe God is keeping you alive because you have a Christian brother or sister or father or mother. Maybe God is keeping your house decent and in order because there is a Christian there or because there is a Christian praying for you.
Far from the Lord's people bringing trouble into a nation, it is that very presence that keeps a nation from utterly corroding and utterly decaying into a horrible abyss of immorality of all kinds.
[7:35] And that's why Elijah responds emphatically in verse 18, I have not troubled Israel but you and your father's house in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you have followed Baalim.

Again Elijah stands fearlessly and says, the problem Ahab is yours and you are responsible for your bad example, you are responsible for leading people after you and however powerful your wife may be and whatever hold she has upon you, you Ahab are the king of Israel and you are largely answerable for the state in which your country lies.
And my friend we should always remember that when anyone is elevated into a position of rule or authority in the church and in the nation. The civil magistrate, not just according to our confession, but according to the scriptures, the civil magistrate is responsible before God.
Our cabinet, our prime minister, the queen, for every single law that is repealed and for every single law that is passed. And when they stand before the judgment seat of God, they will not just stand as individuals for themselves, they will stand and be examined on where they took the nation and what they did for the nation, what example they showed, what kind of laws they passed and what kind of laws they repealed.
And there are some people who say that the church should not enter into politics. What an utter absurdity that is. Can anyone honestly make a statement like that having read the Bible from cover to cover?
[9:12] Is the church not meant to preach to the politician as well as to everyone else? Is the word of God not applicable to every single person and to every single office which a person can occupy?

Is the civil magistrate somehow supposed to be in an isolated little corner where he doesn't have to obey the word of God at all? He does. And you who are in government, remember that you must agitate at every point and at every turn for the law of God.
And not just for the Sabbath day, but for the rest of it as well. And one of the things God willing we hope to do is to unfold gradually what this law of God requires. And the effect it ought to have upon us in our own society, in every institution and at every walk of life, the Lord will require an account.

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An account. Ahab is responsible. Have I troubled Israel? Elijah says, No, you have troubled Israel. It's easy to mistake a troublemaker.
Just because a person brings division doesn't mean that he's the troublemaker. That doesn't necessarily follow at all. Did Christ himself not bring division?
[10:22] Think not, he says, that I came to bring peace into the world. I came not to bring peace, but a sword. What's more explicit than that? He brought division. Was he a troublemaker?

No, he was not. He was a peacemaker. And there are people, and there always have been people, and I suppose there always will be people in the church who think that peace is the most important and the most noble end to aim at.
Well, it is not. And peace should never, ever, ever, in your personal life, or in your congregational life, or in a denominational life. It should never be put before truth.
Never. There is no peace without truth. Truth is even greater than love. It is even greater than love. What is love without truth at its foundation?
The Lord requires truth, his truth, his gospel, his truth, to be protected, to be vindicated, to be asserted, to be maintained, and to be defended.
[11:29] And if you find what we could perhaps call, for want of a better term, the ecclesiastical politician, defining that term as someone who puts peace before truth, stay away from that man, mark that man, that man is dangerous.

And if it is yourself, change your ways, and change them at once. Never put peace before truth, and the cause of God. Elijah didn't do that. Elijah went forward, and he did what had to be done.
Are you the troublemaker? No, he says, I'm not. But you are the troublemaker. Now, Elijah has a proposition to make, and he puts it to Ahab.
And the proposition is this, in verse 19. Now, therefore, send. Listen to the prophet of God, ordering the king. Now, therefore, send, and gather to me, all Israel, unto Mount Carmel.
And the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty. And the prophets of the groves, four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. Now, he has a proposition to make, and it's in the form of a contest.
[12:40] There is going to be an open display, of who is Lord, and who is king. And that display is to be openly, made on the top of Mount Carmel.

And Elijah, through Ahab, summons Israel, to gather, and to convene, around that mountain. Now, I want with you to look, first of all, at the assembly, on Mount Carmel.
Secondly, at the challenge, which Elijah issues. How long, halt ye between two opinions? Thirdly, the contest, where the two sacrifices are made.
And finally, the outcome, of the contest. Now then, we'll begin, with the assembly. And, what a fitting place, for it to take place in, on Mount Carmel.
At the Mediterranean Sea, right on the western coast of Israel, a mountain ridge, gradually, rises up, which makes its way down, south, east.
[13:47] And this ridge, rises, it's called the Carmel Ridge, and it rises, as it comes down, south, east. And it splits a plain, the famous plain of Estrela, and it splits it, into two.

It is a, or it would have been, without the famine, a lush, and fertile plain. And on this ridge, or standing on the top of this ridge, you can see far, north, east, and south.
Westerly, the ridge descends, into the Mediterranean Sea, and you can see the sea, apparently, to your left. But, the ridge descends sharply, and you can see to the north, and you can see to the east, and you can see to the south.
So it's fitting, because it is accessible, it is a gradual slope, up to the ridge, it's accessible, and it is good for visibility. From the top, you can see far, you could even see Nazareth, you could see the Sea of Galilee, you could see miles, in these directions.
And Elijah chooses, this mountain, and asks the people, to assemble there. And on the highest point, which is called Mount Carmel, which is over one and a half thousand feet high, there, is a ruined, decayed, old altar, that used to be used, in the worship of Jehovah.
[15:09] That altar is now cast down, nobody uses it. Very few people are bothered enough, to use it. Most people don't even seek, to use it in any way at all. It's scattered.

The stones, which constructed that altar, are scattered. And the altar lies, in ruins. Now, Ahab has to make a proclamation.
So you'll understand, that several days pass, between Elijah's call, to the mountain, and the people actually, assembling to the mountain, several days, must have passed.

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The king would have sent, messengers, north, south, east, and west, and told them to gather, at Mount Carmel. And as the people heard, that there was to be a contest, they would leave their work, they would leave everything, and they would make their way, from several towns, and villages, and cities, and they would all assemble, around this mountain.
I'm quite sure, myself, that Elijah spent the time, in prayer. As he always stood, before any great event, he would have spent, the time in prayer, and besought the Lord, to make his glory manifest, again, in the nation.
[16:18] And so the people, begin to gather. Until finally, one day, there is, a multitude, thousands, upon thousands, of people, on the slopes, of Mount Carmel, and on the top part, of the mountain.

And there are, three distinct parties there. First of all, there is, the people. The multitude, of people, from the towns, villages, and cities.
And you can describe them, as confused, wandering, lost. They are people, who can't forget, the past, on the one hand. They can't forget, what God did, for their nation, in the past.
They know about, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. They know, what God did, through Moses. They had heard, of the miracles. They had heard, of the blessings, and all these things. But, for some reason, that was, not too dominant, in their minds.
It still, pulled their heart, all right. There was an element, of that, wrestling with them. But, there was something else, blurring their memory. There was something else, that was taking away, these voices, that were speaking to them, from the past.
[17:28] And that was, the new religion. That was the easy, religion of Baal. The easy, religion, which Ahab, and Jezebel, had brought, into the country.

And that religion, made them live, much more at peace, with the surrounding nations. After all, that was the way, they were. The Phoenicians, worshipped Baal. The Syrians, worshipped Baal.
So, it was quite easy, for them to worship Baal. It brought them, more in line. They didn't stick out, like a sore thumb. They didn't become, the object of people's wrath, and contempt, in the same way. Everybody, was worshipping Baal.
So, why shouldn't they, worship Baal? And as I said, the religion was cheap, and it was easy. It involved, indulging the flesh. Sexual immorality, was a large part, of this religion.
So, it was easy. Didn't make the demands, which the old religion made. And so, they seemed to be, a people, who were, pulled, in two directions. Pulled, in two, very different, directions.
[18:31] They had one party. The second party, stand, arrayed like that together. The 450 prophets, of Baal, and possibly, the 400 prophets, of Ashtaroth.

I say possibly, because, they were invited, but it's not clear, from the rest of the narrative, whether they came, or not. I would probably, assert that they did, that they were, in fact, there.
So, you probably, had near a thousand. You had 850 prophets, 400 belonging to Baal, and 4, 450 belonging to Baal, and 400 belonging, to Ashtaroth.
Own gorgeous vestments. They were the powerful people, in the land. They were the influential, people in the land. They were high, in government. They ate, at Jezebel's own table.
But more importantly, than not, my friend, they were responsible, for bringing Israel, into the gutter. They were responsible, for that. They first of all, mixed the true religion, with the false.
[19:41] And once that had, weakened the true religion, they then went on the offensive. They began to persecute, and they introduced, the full blown, orgy, and worship, of Baal, and Ashtaroth, into Israel.

Now, it's worth, bearing in mind, what kind of religion, and what kind of, worship, that was. The symbol of Baal, was the bull, and was the bull, for fertility.
And the consort, of Baal, or the one who accompanied, him, was the female goddess, the Ashtaroth. In other words, they were both. One was a god, and the other was a goddess, of fertility. And that was an essential part, of the religion, and it was an essential part, of the cult. And even their temples, had ritual prostitution, taking place, around about them.
Now, it's interesting, that when people, lose sight of God, they focus on nature, on the environment, or the sun, the moon, the stars, the grass, or the trees.
[20:51] The problem is, or the fact is, that man has a sense of awe. You have a sense of awe. It is a religious sense, that is inside you. It is there. God himself, planted it in you.

It is a fundamental, essential, constituent part, of your human nature. The need to worship. The need to hold, something in awe. The desire to venerate.

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That is inbred, in you. And if through sin, it is taken away, from the Lord, it is invested, into something else. And you may just, focus all your energy, and all your attention, upon nature.
And these things, can suddenly become, gods and goddesses, to people. The trees, can become more important, than people. Have you ever met, a person like that? Have you ever met, a person who thinks, more of a tree, than he does of another person?
There are such people. People who get caught up, with the importance, and the beauty, and notice the words, they use, the grandeur of nature. They speak of the, awesomeness of nature, or the glory of the sun.
[21:58] That is exchanging, the glory of God, into the glory of the creature. Worshipping, and serving the creature, rather than the creator, who is blessed over all. And, you'll notice, what happens then.

What is the most, significant aspect, of the whole system, of nature? nature. Well, it is the power, of reproduction. That is the height, of its mystery. The way, in which nature, is able to reproduce, itself. And that becomes, the focal point, of their attention. It is the most, awesome thing, of all. And that becomes, through of men, and women, the attention, which they are, to give to the Lord, is gradually given, to the flesh, and to the indulgence, of the flesh.
And you'll find, in societies, that are turning away, from God, that the sexual act, itself, is elevated, gradually, in the minds, and in the imaginations, of these people, to assume, an almost religious, central, significance.
It becomes, the center, of everything. The focus, of attention. What fills books, what fills magazines, what fills television, programs. The soul, is not thought of, the body, is thought of.
[23:13] How can I make, myself more beautiful? How can I make, myself more fit? How can I make, myself more athletic? The physical things, all focusing, around the central, act, become more, and more important, more, and more worshiped.

In other words, the picture, I'm painting to you, of Israel, here, is just different, in degree, from ourselves, and not in kind. There's no point, in sitting down, and saying, oh well, how can people, worship bulls?
If they're, worshiping bulls, then that's got nothing, to do with me. If you think, that is the way, idolatry works, you haven't understood it yet. You haven't understood it yet. Idolatry is subtle, it is a device, of Satan, which focuses, your heart, and your energy, and your whole being, on something else, usually, finding its focus, on the desires, and the lusts, of the flesh.
and it found, its full-blown, display, here, in the open worship, of Baal, and Ashtaroth, in the worship, of Israel.
Now that is a sad, picture, but it's a picture, that we see, around about us, today, very, very, clearly. It seems, that these things, that I've spoken about, are the center, of the universe.
[24:32] others. Everything, revolves, around that. And the most important, thing is, in the minds of some people, that they be free, and they call it freedom, and you call it freedom, and you think, this is freedom.

You fool. You poor fool. If you think, that to liberate, what was it, Mr. Jenkins called it, the permissive age, dawning.
If you think, the permissive age, or the age of license, is the age of your liberty. It is not. It's the age of countless, souls, damnation. It is as simple as that.
It is the exchanging of God, for the worship, of the creature. For the worship, of the creature. And many people's agenda, just consists of this, the freedom to indulge, in any act, which they want to. Anytime, any place. And the more, that is allowed, by all, our poor, pathetic governments, the more, the judgment of God, is going to be, poured out, upon the land.
[25:39] It is as simple, as that. God will not, allow these things, to go unchallenged, and in your life, it is the same. Never, catch yourself, fighting against the law of God. You unconverted person, in here, never catch yourself, doing that.

Never fight, against the law of God, in case God, lets you go, and lets you slide, into an abyss, from which you will never, ever recover. But there is a third party, on the mountain.
The vacillating people, the prophets of Baal, the ones who are promoting, the agenda, all the time. And then, there is, Elijah. He stands calm, he stands dignified, he stands unruffled, he knows what it is, to be beside the cherith, he knows what it is, to live in Sarephah.

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He is a man of prayer, and a man of supplication, he does so fervently, he does so diligently, and he is at rest, and at calm, when everyone else, is losing, or about to lose, their own heads.
And he comes forward, he called the challenge, so he speaks first, and his challenge, is very simple. He first of all, addresses the people, and he addresses them passionately, and you can hear him, shouting at the top, of Mount Carmel, to the whole multitude, thousands of them, convened around, and he says, how long, he says, are you, going to halt, between two opinions, if God is God, follow him, but if Baal is God, then follow him.
[27:09] How long, hulk ye? It means literally, to limp along, or to waver, or to vasily, between two things. How long, he says, are you limping, undecided, which way, you should go, how long, are you going, to vacillate, between these two things, how long, are you going, to waver?

The word, that he preaches, is stark, it's simple, it's clear, it's unmistakable, you couldn't, come away, and say, well, I don't know, what Elijah, was talking about. He asks them bluntly, he says, look, if God is God, follow him, and if Baal is Baal, then follow him.
Let this be, the moment, of decisiveness, in your experience, Israel. Let this be, the moment, of decision. Let this be, the time, choose ye, this day, whom you will serve, God on the one hand, or Baal, on the other.
And that is, the stark choice, that he puts, before them. Are you for God, or are you against him? He that is not for him, is against him. He that doesn't gather with him, scatters abroad.
Now, you like a person, who's out and out. I like a person, who's out and out. We all like a person, who's out and out. You like a person, who is earnest, a person, who is a hundred percent, what he is.
[28:29] You like to know, what a person means, and what a person says. Everybody likes that. You like it, in your dealings, with people, just to know, what they are, and to be able, to read them, to read them decisively, and to read them clearly.

It's no different, in the things of God. No different, in the things of God, the Lord himself, desires us hot or cold, not lukewarm. Do you suppose, if you are wavering, between Christ and the world, that the Lord is pleased with that?
I dare say, that you yourself, aren't even pleased with that. I can put this question, to you in many different ways. How long are you going to hold, between Christ and the world?
You've got one foot, with the church, as it were, and you have one foot, with the world. One minute you appear, to be seeking the Lord, and the next minute, you're not.
And you're neither this, nor that. You're neither here, nor there. You're not one thing, and you're not the other. You're somewhere, in between. And Elijah says, how long, is it going to be like that?
[29:37] Do you think, you have all the time, in the world? Do you think, life's going to last forever? Do you think, that at the drop of a hat, you're going to have the desire, just to go down, at the right way? How long?

Let the test be now, or let the moment be now. Cast in your lot, with Christ, or else go the other way. You must be one thing, or you must be the other.
And that is the message, that Elijah, himself, gives them. Now, for all I know, you could even be, a professing Christian, in here. And you may have been, professing for a while.
Maybe even for many years. But you're yoked to Christ, and you're yoked, to Mammon. And you no longer, have any idea, what you should be.
You can hardly, for yourself, distinguish the world, from Christ, because your witness, has become smudged, it's become confused. You compromised, one day, with the world, and you found, that your whole life, is now a compromise.
[30:41] And not only, are other people, finding it difficult, to tell whose side, you're on, you're finding it difficult, to tell yourself, whose side you're on. You can't see, anything, clearly, anymore. Get out of that.

Get out of it, at once, and be one thing, or the other. For any favor, my friend, be one thing, or the other.
If you, during the times, of the prayer meetings, are finding yourselves, in places of amusement, and entertainment, it is time, to choose, between the two things.
It is time, to choose, between the two things. Is your heart, with the people of God, where the people of God, meet, and where prayer is offered up? Or do you rather, be in the company of the vain?

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Do you rather, be in the company, of those people, from whom you sometimes, hear a swear, escaping their lips? Is that the voice, you rather? Can you tell me, quite honestly, that you prefer, to be in that company, than in the company, of the Lord's people?
[31:43] Well do you expect me, to believe, that you're out, and out the Lord's? No my friends, I issued to you, right away just now, the challenge, and it applies to many, many people, today, professing, and not professing, choose this day, whom you will serve.

You're halting, between the two. Are you out, and out, following Christ, or are you half-hearted, in it? Watch it, for the sake, of your own soul, and for the sake, of others, be out, and out, for Christ. Does it not even worry you? Let's say, for the moment, that you are a Christian, and let's say, for some reason, that some of these things, have got a hold of you, that you're, giving a bad example, sitting watching the television, and watching unacceptable things, on the television, when other people are seeing you.
If it doesn't make your own soul, tremble for yourself, which you do, what does it do, for your children, or for your family, or for the people, who are seeing you? Is it not a thought to you, that your own, careless indifference, and your lack of zeal, and your lack of earnestness, for Christ, your lack of being out, and out, for the Lord, is causing another person, just to go, in a blind, slothful stupor, into hell itself?
Should there not be, something in your life, that is urging people, to move heavenward, fast, quickly? Should there not be, a difference about you, a resolute standing, against compromise, against what is unclean, against what is impure?
[33:13] I mean, I so often hear, the defense on the lips, of some people, that they watch certain things, on the television, or they hear the name of God, taken in vain, and they can take it, because they know the context, or whatever.

My friend, that is all nonsense. Nonsense. If you sit, allowing a program, to filter in your eyes, and ears, and you accept, the abuse of God's name, because of the artistic, content of the program, you're in trouble.
What kind of soul, have you got? What kind of priority, have you got in this life, when artistic content, matters more than the abuse, of the name of Jehovah? Is it any reason, that the witness, of the church, is damp, and ineffective?
Why are we surprised, at these things? We sometimes, only have to look, at our lives, to discover, why the church, is what it is. Look to yourself, and me to myself. It's as simple as that.
Let us look, and search, and try our ways, and turn to the Lord, and maybe the Lord, will be gracious, and maybe the Lord, will repent, and maybe, and maybe, he will turn. It's not Christ, and mammon.
[34:23] It is Christ, or mammon. Christ, comes with a cross. Mammon, comes with ease, and with a smile. And remember that, you choose tonight, one or the other.

And don't halt, any longer, between two. And then, Elijah, issues, his contest. And it goes, essentially, like this, and you know it, for yourselves, fairly well.
They are to prepare, two sacrifices. A bullock is to be prepared, a bullock is to be dressed, the wood is to be cut up, it's to be put in order, it's to be laid, upon the altar. But no fire, is to be put near the altar.
And then each party, 450 on the one hand, or perhaps even, a thousand on the one hand, and Elijah on the other, are to call, respectively, upon the names, of their gods. And the God, who answers by fire, let him, be fire.
And Elijah is gracious, in the matter, and he says, there are many of you, I am only one, you go first. And so they go first, and they dress the bullock, and they put it on the wood.
[35:28] And then, the ritual begins. The wail begins, the song, and the dance, and the frenzy, and the calling, upon the name of Baal.

Baal, hear us, Baal, answer us. On and on they go, dancing with their, prescribed rituals, for three whole hours. And you picture that, assembly at Mount Carmel, waiting for three hours, while these people, dance their way, through a meaningless, series of routines, to try and get their God, to listen to them.
Three hours, the people waited for that, until it was noon. Until the sun, was high in the sky. And that was supposedly, when, Baal was especially, to be worshipped.

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Because the sun, of course, is so important, for people like that. The sun is central as well. So when the sun, is high in the sky, it is time to fall down, and acknowledge, the giver of all, that we've got. And the sun is worshipped. That's when Elijah, lets loose, and he says, call a little louder, he says. Maybe your God, is asleep, or maybe he's taking a walk, or he might be on a long journey. [36:38] Perhaps he's just fallen asleep, and if you shout a little louder, you might wake him up. Some people have seen, his irony out of place. It's not. There is an element, of the ridiculous, in idolatry.

It is evil. It is vile, and detestable. And so it is ridiculous. It is absurd, that such a thing, could be so. The fool, saith in his heart, there is no God.
Are we not told, that he that sits, in the heaven, shall laugh? The Lord, shall scorn them all. The Lord, shall have them, in derision. And that's what Elijah does.
He's trying to point out, to them, the utter futility, and vanity, of their whole way of life. The way it is centered, on the flesh, and centered, on the present world.
Call a little louder, and the Son, might help you. Shout a little louder, and the Son, might save you. And the fools do that, and they take the knives, to themselves, and they cut themselves, with knives, and lancets, and the blood, is flowing, to try and get fire, down, upon the altar, for another three hours, until three o'clock, in the afternoon, this goes on, six whole hours, this process, continues.
[37:55] Elijah, obviously, desires, to bring them, to exhaustion, to bring them, to utter exhaustion, you imagine, moving like this, and shouting like this, for six hours, they were on the verge, of collapse, they probably did collapse, when Elijah, stepped forward.

God, when he's going to, rebuild his church, or when he's going, to restore a nation, he allows the folly, of its ways, to be made manifest. He brings to exhaustion, the opposing powers.
He brings the darkness, out into the open. He shows the wound, he shows the impurity, and then, the healing, of it begins. And he exposes, the folly, of this way of life.
And Elijah waits, until it's empty, before he steps forward. And that can happen, in people's lives too. And perhaps, there's a Christian, mother or father here, who is, despairing, at the way, their son or daughter, is going.
Perhaps it may be, that the Lord, allows, that to go, to exhaustion, before he, answers your prayer, by fire. And by that fire, I mean the fire, of the Holy Ghost, scattered into a person's heart.
[39:08] Very often, a person is brought, to an extremity, before the Lord, rescues it. To show his glory, who could after all, pick out, out of that pit? Who could have rescued, out of that miry clay, but the Lord, and the God, who answers by fire, he is God.

You show me, another religion, or you show me, another philosophy, or a psychology. Show me anything, that can do, for a person, what the spirit of God does. And I will say, he has answered by fire.
But I tell you, only one God, has ever answered by fire, and only one God, can answer you by fire, my friend. And that is, the God of heaven. And if you are far astray, I pray, that you are being emptied, and brought to exhaustion, so that the Lord, may cast his fire, into your heart.
And Elijah, goes forward. And he has a work to do. He gathers the stones himself. At least I believe, he gathers them himself. He puts them up.
The old stones, of the altar, that were scattered, he finds them. I don't know, maybe he had spent, the three or four days, while the people, were gathering. Maybe he had spent, those days, gathering these stones.
[40:18] Taking them back, to their place. But now, he builds the altar. And a trench, is dug around about it, a deep trench. And he issues the command, strange to the ears, of the people, fill four barrels, with water.

And pour it, into the trench. And that's done, three times, so that, four, three times, so that twelve, barrels all together, or three and four, I'm not sure which was, which was the three barrels, four times, or the other way around.
But anyway, there were twelve barrels, that were poured, onto the sacrifice, drenching it, saturating it, with water. Until the situation, looked absolutely impossible, which is the way, the Lord, very often likes, to work.
And all that, is important. All that, is significant. After that happens, he prays. And once he prays, the fire, comes down.

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What does the altar, represent? Well, we don't have to stretch it, it is straightforward. The altar, represents the worship, of God. And it's broken, and it is scattered, because that has gone, from the lives, of the people.
[41:34] And notice, it was first, abused, and then, disused. That's the way, it always is. It is first, abused, and then, disused.

Jeroboam, tried, to make the worship, of Jehovah, more pretty, and more easy. By the time, that was finished, there was hardly, any worship, of Jehovah, left.
The worship of God, is always abused, before it is, disused. And this broken, altar, speaks of a church, as sleep. A church, that is, spiritually, slothful.
A church, that needs, to be reawakened. Let me put it, this way to you. In the next chapter, the Lord tells, Elijah, that there are 7,000, who haven't bowed, the knee to Baal.
Well, that's all very well, but where are they? Where are they? And where is their voice? Are they on Mount Carmel? Surely, when they heard, that there was to be, a challenge, between the prophet of God, and the prophets of Baal, surely, they would be the first, to lend their support.
[42:40] So then, you suppose, they're on Mount Carmel. But why, when Elijah, issues the challenge, how long, between two opinions, if the Lord be God, follow him, if Baal followed him, the people answered, not a word.

If they're on Carmel, where are they, or where is their voice? The church is asleep. The altar is broken. The prayers are few, the prayers are fragmentary.
And when Elijah, is putting, the altar together, it speaks, of rebuilding, and reuniting, the church of God.
Seeking God, in worship, seeking God, in adoration, so that he will respond, with refreshment, and with power, and with revival.
You'll notice, there are twelve stones, one for each tribe. The kingdoms, had been divided, before this, but he wishes them, brought together, in a oneness, and he wishes them, brought together, in a unity.
[43:43] And he says, all that the Lord's people, would all come out, and come out openly, and gather together, as one, and that they would, worship the Lord. For then surely, the fire of God, would come down.

Now my friends, please notice this, please notice this. The twelve stones, in the altar, were, unfinished stones.
By that I mean, that they were not, touched, with the hand of man. God had given, specific instructions, in Exodus 21, that when an altar, was to be built, of stones, no man's engraving tool, was to come upon it.
It was to be found, rough and ready as it was, and put into the altar. Before I go on, to the teaching of that, I know, that that's the way, this altar was, because God sent the fire.
God is very jealous, about his commandments. Uzzi touched the ark, and he was struck dead.
These stones, must have been uncut, and unpolished, for God to acknowledge, the altar, and for God, to send the fire, down upon it.
[44:54] Now what truth, is taught, by the uncut, or the unfinished stones? It is this, that God, desires this worship, spiritual, he desires it pure, he doesn't want, the inventions of man, added into it, he wants it, as he has stipulated it, and he wants it, as he has said, that it should take place.

In the New Testament worship, we find, prayer offered, in the synagogues, and in the early Christian synagogues, we find these prayers, led by the males, 1st Timothy chapter 2, the word is males, although it's men, in the authorized version, it's males, so we have prayer, led by males, in the early Christian synagogues, we have the singing of psalms, and psalms alone, in the early Christian synagogues, you have a sermon, offered by a preacher, of the gospel, in the early Christian synagogues, you have a benediction, offered at the conclusion, of a service, in the early Christian synagogues, and that is what the Lord, desires, he has left us, a pattern, of how worship, is to be conducted, what I want to emphasize, is this, today, around me, in Scotland, or in our church, there is a dissatisfaction, on the part of many people, without form of worship, there is something wrong, with singing psalms alone, we are told, and by the way,
I find that especially tragic, when I came from a continent, where there were people phoning me, from Texas, right the way through, to the north of America, asking me where they could find, a church that sang the psalms alone, that's why I find it sad, I find it sad, because there were

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congregations, phoning here, there, and everywhere, sprouting up, with people gathering, wishing to return, to the reformed faith, and the purity of worship, as was practiced, in Switzerland, in France, and in Scotland, and to a perhaps, lesser degree, in Holland, they wish to return to that, and, we are dissatisfied, are we, or we wish to depart from it, or wish to change it, well let me tell you this, I would assert, that to keep, our worship simple, is the most Catholic thing, we can do, and by that I mean Catholic, in the good sense of the term, it is universal, it is an open door, the moment you add, to what God has put, in the word, you're dividing the church, I confess, it took me a long time, to understand that simple principle, but I hope by God's grace,
I have understood it, and I hope it will stay, in my heart forever, that the minute a person, adds to the word, he is dividing the church, can you see how that works, if you keep to the simplicity, of what's in the Bible, that is an open door, for everyone to gather around it, but if you say, well we are going to add this, or we are going to add this, to what is being done, in the church, you are dividing, because that is going to be, an offense to the conscience, of some person, must necessarily be so, the more simple the worship, the more universal, or Catholic, it must be, and that is why, I still believe, that the simplicity, of the purity of worship, once practiced, in all these countries, that I mentioned, will yet return, to be the glory, of the reformed church, will the Scottish, ever accept the English hymns, will the English, ever accept the American, no, the more man, adds in to the thing, the more divisive it becomes, the more we realize, that God has kept it simple, to gather his church, around that simplicity, the stronger it will be, so by all means, pray for the 12 stones, but remember, that, this simple faith, of the reformation, is the altar, which we wish to erect, and that will gather, from the north, from the south, and from the east, and the west, and will usher in, by God's grace, a millennial glory, yet to come, and then again, you'll notice, just remember that formula, people who add, divide, people who add, divide, then again, you'll notice, that he is praying, and he pleads, to the God of the covenant, the God of Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob, and he pleads, that God, would make his glory, manifest, that is the prayer, that he puts up, let it be known, this day, that thou art God, in Israel, and that I am thy servant, that this people, may know, that thou, art the Lord, God, and there's a silence, and suddenly, there's a bolt, from heaven, and the fire, falls down, in a thunderous fury, not just to consume, the bullock, but it consumes, the wood, and not just the wood, but the stones, and the water, in the trench, it is all, licked up, by the powerful fire, of God, and the result is, that the people, all fall down, on their faces, and they said, Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God, and you'll notice, it all happened, at three o'clock, in the afternoon, now the time is, passing me by, but let me just say this, at three o'clock, in the afternoon, we're told, in verse 36, that that was the time, of the evening sacrifice, now look at that, verse 36, and it came to pass, at the time, of the offering, of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah, the prophet, came near, in other words, in Jerusalem, at this point in time, the lamb was offered up, and the lamb was slain, as a type, of the Lord Jesus Christ, at that same hour, the fire, comes down from heaven, in Carmel, and consumes, the sacrifice, what's that telling us, it tells us, yes that God, will remember his covenant, it tells us, that God will send the rain, and he will revive the church, but for Christ's sake, he will do it, not for mine, and not for yours, but for Christ's sake alone, at the hour, when the lamb is slain, at the hour, when we have the typical, foreshadowing, of Christ on the cross, then the fire, comes down, and after that, the rain, pours down from heaven, it is all, on Christ's account, and it is all, for Christ's sake, notice again, that the Lord, he is God, that's the meaning, of the name Elijah, the name Elijah,
[51:17] El, and Yah, means, the Lord, is God, Jehovah, is God, I think that tells us, that this was the crowning moment, in Elijah's life, when everyone, as it were, said his name, Elijah, the Lord, he is God, now Cherith, was worth it, now Zarephath, was worth it, when they acknowledged, that Jehovah, was the great God, and the great king, finally, let me say this to you, that the fire of God, always precedes the rain, God's fire, always precedes, the rain, God always, visits in judgment, before he visits in blessing, the 400 prophets, of Baal, had to be slain, before the rain, would actually come, you must do your part, and I must do mine, to build up, the broken wall, of Jerusalem, and it is that, that the Lord blesses, and he will cleanse, the church, and judgment begins, at the house of God, and that is why, we should never be, too disheartened, when we see judgment, because it may, it may be, the precursor, of rain, and may God pray, that through all the troubles, which we ourselves, pass through, that there may yet be rain, waiting, to descend upon us, from heaven, the fire comes, before the rain, don't waver, my friend, before the God, of fire, don't halt, between two opinions, kiss the sun, lest in his wrath, you perish from the way, this what wants his wrath, begin to burn, blessed all, that on him, stay, may you come, to Christ, and be

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saved, and be saved,

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