

1 KINGS: ELIJAH'S VICTORY & DEFEAT

Saturday, March 14

Reading: 1 Kings 18-19

1 Kings 18:21 *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."*

In their 220 year history (c. 930-720 BC), the northern kingdom of Israel did not have one godly king. And Ahab was the worst (16:29-33). God sent the prophet Elijah to confront this wicked king and his pagan queen Jezebel. He boldly announced that there would be no dew or rain until he called for it and then disappeared (17:1). For three years Ahab has searched in vain to find Elijah, but God was protecting him (1 Kings 17). Finally Elijah reappears and challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest to prove once and for all who the is true God. The challenge will consist of which god can send fire from heaven to burn the sacrifice. The epic failure and mad frenzy of Baal's prophets proved that Baal was no god at all. Elijah's taunting of them was meant to show the people how silly it was to worship this false god.

Elijah's drenching the altar with water proved that he was not hiding fire or attempting to trick the people. In contrast to the loud screams and antics of Baal's prophets, Elijah's prayer is short and simple. It declares that despite their rejection, Israel are still God's people and that Elijah is only doing what God has commanded. His greatest desire is not to honor the name of Elijah, but that the people will know God and turn back to Him. When the fire of God falls the people fall on their faces in worship. At Elijah's command, they kill the prophets of Baal. Then Elijah once again prays and God sends rain to end the 3+ year drought.

Upon hearing that Elijah has killed her prophets of Baal, Jezebel threatens Elijah and he flees for his life. At the moment when the nation of Israel needed him the most, Elijah runs some 100 miles in the opposite direction. He sits under a small broom tree and begs to die. He is abandoning his ministry. Despite the prophet's deep depression, God provides strength for His servant and reveals Himself to Elijah at Mount Horeb.

Elijah had said "I have had enough" and believed his ministry was over. God now gives him a new mission to accomplish (19:15-17). Elijah complained that he was the only one left who was faithful to God. He is now told that there are 7000 in Israel "whose knees have not bowed down to Baal" (19:18). Elijah complained that he was all alone, so God gives him a companion to share his life and ministry (19:19-21).

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. An altar was a place of worship. Rebuilding the fallen altar of God was a picture of the rebuilding that needed to take place in the hearts of the people. Are their "altars" in your life that need to be rebuilt? Has your relationship with God fallen down? Have you deserted your time spent with God through His Word and prayer? The fire of God can only fall on your life when you are wholly dedicated to Him. He wants to use you to let others know that "the Lord is God!"
2. In seasons of depression, we need a time of rest. We need to look to God to refresh and sustain us. Like Elijah, we need a fresh vision of who God is! Up until now Elijah had lived the miraculous. But "the still, small voice" reminded Elijah that God most often works in the quiet, everyday course of daily life. What is your view/vision of who God is? How have you seen God's hand in the normal routine of your life?

READ THE NT: Luke 21