

HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

1 KINGS 18:17 – 46

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God will witness a highly emotional and fanatical event in this report. To all outward appearances, Elijah won't stand a chance against an overwhelming majority of four hundred fifty frantic false prophets of Baal, plus four hundred *more* from the groves. Well, as someone once said, "*one with God is the majority!*" Hopefully you will never have to stand against eight hundred fifty false prophets, but in case you do, let's learn a Godly guideline for it; and it applies to taking a stand against an angry boss, a hostile neighbor or even an unreasonable and contentious friend or church member. One thing I am sure of: this lesson will sharpen all of our faith in the power of God and cause us to grow through adverse circumstances and difficulty. There are many standing in faith around the world against treacherous and unimaginable circumstances right now. So, this report is for them.

In our previous report, we began to examine the account of Elijah's encounter with King Ahab and Jezebel. They were in the background, and almost passive. They'll get more involved in this report. This is a direct challenge of Satan contesting the Almighty, True and Living God. This is the standoff between the worshipper of God and the worshippers of Baal. We have Ahab and Jezebel and their myriad followers versus just one man, Elijah. We're going to stand with Elijah on this safari. Too bad we're so late. Of course, we know there were seven thousand hiding in the mountains who had never bowed their knees to Baal; but they didn't bend a knee to help Elijah, either – and they weren't doing anything else. Elijah didn't even know about them. How tragic for them....

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

~ The liberal custom in any contemporary church is to blame the fundamentalist when a problem occurs; it happens that way every time. The liberal will not accept blame for division, because they envision

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themselves to be super-duper saints. Laughably, old man Ahab blames Elijah for the problems Israel was experiencing. Well, Elijah believed the Word of God and spoke for God; and that will *ALWAYS* stir things up. Making a stand for the Lord, by de facto, demands a choice be made. When a light is turned on, the rats and the roaches always run towards the darkness....

18 And Elijah answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

~ Elijah spoke with a mannerism that could not be misunderstood – there's no double talk from him. Elijah walked in, told Ahab and Jezebel like it was - and walked away. It wasn't open for debate. So, here we have an assembly of many people who were pretending to worship the Living and True God, but they were just worshipping Baal and disguising it. That's the type of double-talk we have from most so-called Christians living double lives today. They are nothing but two-faced liars. This has become so prevalent in the modern church that it is accepted as normal behavior; and it is abhorrent. It is a stench in the nostrils of a Holy God, friends – you can just write that down a thousand times.

This is what turns people off to the church; and it is one of the main reasons *NO ONE* is being genuinely converted in our churches today. If the average unsaved man knew what I know about the church today, I have my doubts if *ANYONE* would ever darken the door of a church again. If there is any place where things should be made clear, simple and forthright through a Spirit-led and Spirit-filled teaching of the Word of God, it is in church. Unfortunately, the church has more hypocrisy and more compromise than any secular workplace, ungodly marketplace, or even in the home of unsaved people. Most so-called Christians can't seem to state the Gospel facts as they are presented in the Bible; but the secular man has no problem with straight talk that cuts to the core. What a tragedy we are experiencing as God's people....

19 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.

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.

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.

~ The reason no one dared answer Elijah was because they were as guilty as sin. It's no wonder Elijah felt all alone because he WAS all alone at this time! This is what I call the Elijah complex, and my friends, I have it. Maybe you feel like you are the only one left in your ministry who truly loves and believes God? Well, every time I begin feeling that way, I get the most sincere messages and words of encouragement from some dear saint somewhere in the world who truly loves and stands for God; and who is paying a bigger price than I have ever paid or will ever pay! All I can do is thank God that I know there are men who are standing for Him – although I know it's not very many – it's the quality that counts, not the quantity....

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

~ Well, if God isn't God, they wanted to know; and most of them were hoping God wasn't Who He said He is. Today, most people love the thought of Christ dying on the cross, because that means their sins are forgiven.

They don't accept the resurrection, though; because they need Jesus to stay dead, so they don't have to give up the sin in their lives. If the resurrection is true, then some will be raised to justification and some to everlasting damnation! That teaching of sound doctrine is where people begin to part ways with God. The Lord wants you to know He is alive and if you mean business with Him, then He will resolve all doubts in your mind. But you'll have to be honest, friends. Being honest means confession of sins in prayer – in detail! God already knows all about them anyways – why not just try telling Him that you know you are wrong? Faith is not some leap in the dark. If that's what faith seems like to you, don't leap. Faith means resting upon facts and believing those facts as the basis of salvation....

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

~ The phenomenon of self-cutting is nothing new today. It's Satanic. Men and women have practiced this psychologically confusing ritual since day one. It's quite a performance they are putting on in this passage. People *ONLY* do this because they have no regard for the *TRUTH*. People who do this are in so much psychological torment that physical mutilation is actually comforting. Well, there will come a time when even cutting won't suffice and, as God says in the sixteenth chapter of Revelation, that's when they will gnaw their tongues for pain. If that is not terrifying to you, then I don't know what would be? This is a dramatic moment in Scripture, to be

sure! Elijah is sitting all alone and all he can do is watch them go through their hellish gyration.

Finally, Elijah has had enough. He unleashes biting sarcasm, relentless taunting and ceaseless cynicism. These false prophets begin jumping up and down on their altar – and that means they have become fanatical, of course; it’s all about emotion to them now. The mob has gone into a deadly frenzy. Honestly, I think Elijah had a field day of fun at this point. The northern kingdom had made a wholesale departure from God at this time, and Israel was either in total apostasy or near total apostasy under the rule of old man Ahab and Jezebel; and I feel Elijah was sick and tired of it.

Elijah is standing against calf worship and against the so-called new morality Jezebel had introduced into religion. I’m sure her Baal worship included hard rock music in the church of Bethel, and that was just one of the things Elijah took exception to. Elijah refused the smallest of compromises with the false prophets; and, as they wrote a new confession of faith rejecting the authority of the Word of God, Elijah opposed that, too. Jezebel was not pleased.

Dr. Wilfred Funk said the most bitter word in the English language is the word “*alone*” – and Elijah stood alone here, friends. Elijah was no echo resounding public sentiment; no parrot promoting personal prose and he was certainly no politician. Elijah was more concerned with pleasing God than he was with his own life. He sought divine approval as opposed to public applause. This is no clown in a town parade, but he was seen as a fool in the public eye for God’s sake. Elijah’s voice was a solo in the wilderness of the world. He carried out full blown warfare against Satan and his entire host of minions. Elijah stood alone on Mount Carmel and made a dramatic stand against devil-worshippers in the Name of the True and Living God.

The place Elijah chose has a dramatic view, too, by the way. This location overlooks the Bay of Haifa and the blue Mediterranean Sea. It is a very long ridge with Megiddo to the east; where Armageddon will be fought in the valley of Esdraelon. I think Elijah became bored to tears after only a few minutes of taunting the false teachers. I’m sure an ironic smile came across

his face as acidic sarcasm could not be contained any longer. The rapier of ridicule and the teasing taunt jeered these people with scathing scorn for what they were doing. With that background, Elijah simply waves them aside. Well, if you're going to do that, you're going to have to depend on God; or you are going to lose every time, trust me on that....

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

~ The most offensive thing Elijah did was cement the altar back together. Our nation is divided today by one basic thing: a departure from the Word of God. I realize there are many explanations offered for our disintegration as a nation, but it all comes back to a total break down of the truths found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a time when Americans had some measure of unity in the fact that we stood under the flag of a Living God. It is written into our Constitution that we are responsible to Him. We seem to overlook that obvious fact. When we began to pervert the Word of God, we began our downward spiral and, today, we have hit the ground. Currently, we sit in the flaming human wreckage of despair and disaster. The words I am writing identify the hypocrisy of the crowd that say, "... let's get together" while already hopelessly divided.

A native walked through the jungle of Africa and came across an elephant. The elephant asked, "where are you going?" The native said, "I'm not going anywhere." The elephant said, "neither am I; let's go together!" The only way we seem to come together today is to agree on nothing. Well, that's a ridiculous losing proposition. Elijah repaired the altar because that was the only place available for unity; and until we come back together in the Word of God, we will remain as divided as a railroad restaurant pie....

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

~ Verse thirty-one reveals there will be reunification of Israel. They will be *ONE* nation again *IN THAT DAY*– under the True and Living God. Well, it was quite a distance to the water Elijah drenched the altar with. If you stand in the place Elijah stood, you’ll realize it must have taken a long, long time to get those barrels up the side of the mountain three times. See, Elijah was in no hurry! He poured water on the altar to prove nothing was impossible for God. A sopping wet altar wasn’t going to stop fire from Heaven! Elijah has learned to depend on God now. Elijah now knows that if anything is going to be done in his life, God Himself is going to be the One to do it. I wish we could get a hold of that truth in our own lives today, friends....

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

~ So, that brief little prayer in verse thirty-six is succinct. Notice Elijah didn’t say “....Abraham, Isaac and JACOB....” – because God is going to be the God of one nation – not twelve tribes. Let’s make sure that which we

are doing today is according to the will of God, my beloved. Most people do whatever they want to do, and they expect God to bless it. Well, that won't work out for you. God doesn't respond to our whims – you may want to write that down, too. We either follow Jesus on His route or we go our own way. There's no other way to receive the blessing of God. This idea of claiming things like healing and prosperity is Baal worship disguised as worshipping God – and it will net *NO* good results. God demands things from *US* – not the other way around. Alright, our next verse is praying for the glory of God, friends. This is the prayer that will move the arm of God in your life....

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

~ Verse forty was brutal; but it ended the hypocrisy, apostasy and heresy, did it not? The church today needs to refuse to compromise with those who reject the authority of the Word of God. It's deadly serious. We live in the days of apostasy New Testament writers warned us of. See, when we turn to God is when the blessing of rain comes. Water always denotes the Word of God in Scripture. Elijah was a great man, to be sure. Our Spiritual Safari spent a lot of type and space in this chapter because I think it's pretty important. In the next leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God, we're going to see Elijah as a very human being. I hope you'll come with us ~