

Joke: A king held a contest for all the men in the kingdom and the winner would get his beautiful daughter as his bride.

He didn't say what type of contest it was but his daughter's beauty drew many brave contestants.

Once everyone had gathered in his castle, he revealed the type contest it was to be.

In front of the castle was a large moat filled with different types of creatures. There were snapping turtles, and alligators and many other terrifying beasts.

The king said, "The first man to cross the moat will inherit all my riches as well as my daughter. Who among you has the courage to claim your prize?"

All the men took one look at the creatures, thought about the challenge but no one thought it worth the risk of death and so they all began to back away.

Losing all hope, the king hung his head in disappointment and disbelief. Then all of a sudden there was a big splash.

Looking up he saw a man swimming with all his might as he fended off the snapping jaws of the deadly creatures.

And miracle of miracles he made it to the other side with only a few scratches.

"Congratulations stranger!" The king said. "Step up and claim your reward!"

His beautiful daughter flashed him a smile but to everyone's shock the man merely shook his head.

"If its not my daughter then surely you must want my riches?" The king said.

Again just another head shake.

"Tell me your prize and if it is in my power, I shall give it to you."

"I only want to know one thing." The man said as he regained his breath .

Yes what is it that you would like asked the king.

The man responded "Who pushed me?"

Elijah week 2

Today we are again looking at Elijah and we will begin in 1 Kings chapter 18.

Before we get started let me say this, God wants to have all of our hearts, our worship, and our focus. When Jesus was asked, what is the most important commandment, Jesus said, "Above all, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

God wants all of our hearts, not just part of our hearts. I hope you know that.

But Satan all throughout history has been trying to get people to worship and serve other gods, false gods and he has done that ever since he was kicked out of heaven.

And with that said, here's one of my key thoughts for the today. False gods promise what only the true God provides.

Let me give you an example, in our culture today, money is a pretty popular false god. What does money do? Money promises what only God can provide. Money says if you have enough, you'll be happy and secure.

That's what many people believe about the false god of money.

But how many of you know that it's the joy of the Lord with is our strength.

And the reality is, no amount of money helps when you get that diagnosis from the doctor that says the cancer has spread and he gives you about 6 months.

When you hear something like that you realize it doesn't matter how much money you have.

It's a false promise.

And during the time of Elijah, many people were living idolatrous lives.

They were worshipping and serving false gods.

And if you missed last week, let me give you the context, which will help us in understanding as we move forward with our study of Elijah. Elijah was called by God to confront a very evil king named King Ahab, who was married to a wicked woman, Jezebel.

Ahab was the nineteenth consecutive evil king. Nineteen, not just bad or ineffective leaders, but evil leaders. Scripture says that he did more evil in the eyes of God than anyone before him.

So, he was the worst of the worst, he had a long list of sins and wickedness under his reign, and in that list was the fact that he continued turning the hearts of the people away from the one true God toward the false gods of Baal and Asherah.

Baal was the sun god, or the fire god. Asherah was kind of like Baal's wife, and the people were no longer worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, they were worshipping these false gods.

The false gods promised, "If you worship me, we'll make your crops grow. If you worship me, then you'll have a better life."

False gods promise what only the true God provides.

So, God raises up Elijah, who confronts the king, and basically says, "Because of your idolatry, God sent me to tell you it's not going to rain until God tells me to pray and asks it to rain."

And that will be a while before that happens a few years actually.

So, there is this major drought. People are dying. No rain meant no food so there's also a famine.

And God sends Elijah into a period of hiding and preparation because king Ahab wanted him dead. But while in hiding as we looked at last week God did some work in him so that He could do more through him.

And so, God takes Elijah to this place called the Karith Ravine. And it was in that ravine where God developed him into even a stronger man of God.

God fed him in the morning and evening, by ravens who flew in, would drop bread and meat, and he could also drink water

because of the brook that sprung up. But one day, the brook dried up. And God called him to move on to a place known as Zarephath, where there was a widow, who God used to provide for him with just a little bit of oil and flour that miraculously never ran dry.

Then one day, the widow's son died. And this growing man of faith took the son up to the upper room, called out to God, and God raised this boy from the dead.

And we see the prophet developing into the man of God that God wants him to become.

So, he's been in hiding, went through a season of preparation and we find out now, God wants him to go and confront the evil king, and that's where we pick up the story.

We are about three years into the drought, and in I Kings 18:17-18, we see these two guys together again. Scripture says,

1 Kings 18:17–18 (NIV): When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” 18 “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.

The Hebrew word that's translated as troubler can also be translated as snake, or viper.

So, the greeting may have been more like, “Hey, you no good, low down snake.”

Ahab is saying, it's your fault all this is happening. People are dying because of this drought, because of you, Elijah.

Elijah basically says, no sorry dude got your wires are crossed it isn't my fault it's yours.

Again verse 18. . .

1 Kings 18:18 (NIV): 18 "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.

In other words, you've abandoned the Lord's command and you have followed the false gods. You are putting false gods ahead of the one true God. You brought the people into idolatry it's not my fault it's yours.

And Elijah was confronting the idea that some in our western culture still believe today and that is that there are many gods.

Let me share two words with you that you probably don't use to often in conversation monotheism and polytheism.

What do those words even mean pastor? Great question. . .

Monotheism Is the belief that there is one God. As Christians, we are monotheistic in our beliefs.

Isaiah 43:10–11 (NLT): But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the Lord. "You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God— there never has been, and there never will be.

11 I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Savior.

And then in Romans we read this. . .

Romans 3:30 (NLT): There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

Polytheism on the other hand is the belief that there are multiple gods, and Elijah was confronting a very polytheistic culture, where they would worship multiple gods.

Now let me pause here for a moment and say this. I know a lot of people in the body of Christ who would say they are monotheistic. That they believe in the only one true God.

But even though they believe in one true God, they live polytheistic lives.

They believe in God, but in reality, worship and serve false gods.

Now to be honest most people I know aren't worshipping the false gods of Baal or Asherah.

In reality, the false gods today that people worship and serve are much more socially acceptable.

A lot of people worship the false god of money. What's in their bank account

Or the false god of material possessions. What's in their driveway.

Others it's their image, their look.

It could be your favorite sport or your career.

And the truth is, not one of those things are in and of themselves bad. . .but

When you elevate anything into the rightful place of the one true God and put anything on the throne of your life besides God, that is idolatry.

So, let me pose this question to you today.

What are the false gods that you serve?

And listen if I'm being honest there have been times that I've made the church, the ministry, what I do, the number one most important thing in my life.

I'll do it in the name of God, but if I'm not careful it can become my god. Grow the church. Serve the church. And I have at times sacrificed my free time, my family, my prayer and study time and neglected to spend time with the one who called me to do those things in the first place.

I've also at times put my family before God.

And hear this church, family is good and I need to love my wife and my kids, but the truth is I've put them at the number one spot in my life at times.

So, I'd ask you to be honest. What are some of the false gods you've elevated and erected in the place of the one true God?

Sure, we're monotheistic in our beliefs, but sometimes our practices, our lifestyle, are polytheistic.

So, Elijah, the prophet, steps into this polytheistic culture and he makes a very prophetic and strong statement.

If you are taking notes, I could summarize this story in this one statement.

He looks at them as they are going back and forth, and he says, "People, it is time to quit wavering. Quit wavering between the gods. Quit going back and forth."

And then he says, “We are going to have a good old-fashioned showdown.”

Watch what he says to the king in verse 19-21.

1 Kings 18:19–21 (NIV): 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.” 20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 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.” But the people said nothing.

Elijah is asking how long will you do this? If God is God, follow him. If Baal is God, follow him.”

And I wonder if Elijah were here today, would he be saying the same thing to us. “Quit wavering.

Because I have met some in the body of Christ that are saying, “Oh, God, hear my prayer and bless me, but I don’t want to obey your command.”

“God, I want all of Your good things, but I don’t want to stop my bad things.

Oh, God, I. . .you fill in the blank” And all the time the voice of Elijah keeps crying out, Quit wavering.

Quit being a Christian on Sunday and something different on Monday. Quit claiming Christ and then living like you don’t know him. Just quit wavering.

Take a side.

Let me try to conceptualize Elijah's message to us today.

Here's what I think he would say. He's not going to say, "Hey, if Baal's. . ." because most of us would say, "Baal, who?"

But I think he would say. "If your false god, little 'g', whatever it is, really is God, then sell out to it.

If material possessions and money, if they're really the most important thing, then quit just sort of accumulating them, but go for it. Work more, neglect God. Go into debt and accumulate. Don't ever give again. Don't ever do anything generous, because that would diminish your ultimate goal of accumulating stuff and storing up your treasures.

So, if material possessions and money, if that is truly your God, then go for it.

If your image, if that's truly God, then don't just kind of do it. Get in the gym a few hours a day. Buy whatever clothes you need and go for it.

If sexual pleasure is your god, go for it. Don't let something as small as marriage hold you back. And if you are married then step outside of that marriage.

If you like to play on both sides of the street, who am I to judge?

Do whatever you want. Go for it. If that's your god, just go for it.

But if Christ, the Son of God, is the one true God, then quit your wavering. Serve Him with all of your heart. Don't just claim Him and then live as if He doesn't exist.

The truth is church I can see Elijah looking directly at me and saying, “George, quit wavering.”

Maybe your hearing the same thing, “How long will you waver between two opinions?”

So, what did Elijah do? He has a showdown, and he goes and says, “Get two bulls, one bull for you, one bull for me. We are going to build a couple of altars, and we are going to sacrifice these bulls upon those altars. And we’re going to call on your god, and I will call out to my God, and we’ll see who really is God.”

So, let’s pick up the story and see what happens.

Verse 24, he says this.

1 Kings 18:24 (NIV): 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.”

I can imagine them thinking. “You idiot. Do you know who you are dealing with? We’re going to call on Baal and Baal is the sun god, sun hot, fire hot. You’re going to get smoked dude, you silly prophet.” Trix are for kids. Plus your outnumbered by a bunch.

Since we we have Baal on our side, and more prophets crying out to our god what you say is good. Let’s do this.

Then we read in verse 26. . .

1 Kings 18:26 (NIV): So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

They're dancing around, going, 'O Baal, answer us!' and they shouted. But. . .the Bible says there was what? There was no response; no one answered.

And let me say that this was not just some sort of worship dance. It was a full body, jumping up and down. It was twisting around. It was shouts and shrieks to their false god. . .and nothing happened.

Baal, send fire and nothing.

And I love this, Elijah starts messing with them. This to me is so funny. This is a man of God, and he's going to mess with them.

Here's what he does.

1 Kings 18:27 (NIV): At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."

I love that, surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or he's busy, or he's traveling. Maybe he's sleeping and somebody needs to go wake him up.

What's he doing? He's messing with them. I know he's a god, but maybe he's on vacation. Maybe he's taking a little siesta.

Now, I'm just picturing this. You got Elijah, the man of God, and he's going, "Shout louder!"

And I can just hear him saying to himself, "Keep a straight face dude. Don't you laugh Elijah I know it's funny but keep your composure."

But he keeps messing with them. Maybe he's on vacation Maybe he's in deep thought. And he's taunting them. Where is your god? Maybe he needs to put down the newspaper, whatever it is, he's busy.

And if you read on, verses 28 through 35, what'd they do? They shouted louder. They danced around more. They went crazy trying to their gods attention. They started to cut themselves.

And scripture says they shouted all day long.

And the sad thing is church some of us in the body of Christ, dance for the false gods in our life as well. Not just all day long, but many of us do it all lifetime long. Dancing, praising, pursuing, serving, and worshipping the false gods that promise, but never deliver and we do it, not just for the day but all our life long.

So finally, at the end of the day, they danced, cut themselves, and nothing happened. And then Elijah does this.

Verse 36. . .

1 Kings 18:36 (NIV): At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "Lord, the 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.

What did he do. . .he prayed.

He didn't dance, shout, cut himself, and do everything he could to get God's attention. He just prayed.

Next week, we are going to look at the faith and the prayer life of this man of God in detail.

But he 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 I have done all these things at your command.

Then it continues. . .

1 Kings 18:37 (NIV): Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

Can you see the power in those statements? “Answer me, Oh, Lord. Reveal yourself. Show us who You are. Let us see You. Reveal Yourself to us by fire.

Hear this church, prayer is powerful.

1 John 5:14–15 (NIV): This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Look at verse 15. . .if we know. **(talk about knowing)**

And then we read this in Isaiah. . .

Isaiah 65:24 (NIV): Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

And Elijah says, show us who You are. Why? So that You may turn the hearts of the people back again, because they used to know You. They used to walk with You. They used to serve You. They used to worship You, but now these false gods have taken Your place. So, God I’m asking you to turn their hearts back again.

And as I read that, I can certainly relate, because I know some people that walked with Him but then chose to walk away, they put some false god or maybe even a combination of false gods on the throne of their life.

And if that's you here today or watching online I want you to understand that God is trying to reveal Himself to you. Why? So you can turn your heart back to Him again.

And look happened when he prayed. . .verse 38

1 Kings 18:38 (NIV): Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

And when God revealed Himself to the people Scripture tells us. . .

1 Kings 18:39 (NIV): When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!"

And that would be my prayer for our church, that we would see Him for who He is and when we see Him for who He is our hearts would turn, our hearts would be renewed, and all the false gods would fall far away in comparison to the one true God, and we would turn back to Him and say, "The Lord, He is God."

And listen church if I'm being honest. If God did something like that I'd be thinking I'm impressed and I would definitely take notice and realize that indeed He is God.

And if that's so,powerful to get people to fall prostrate then why doesn't God do that today? Why doesn't God show Himself like that?

And hear this I still believe He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He s still a miracle working God.

But the truth is God has actually showed Himself to us in an infinitely more beautiful way today then that fire from Heaven in the days of Elijah.

2000 years ago God left Heaven, became one of us in the person of His Son, Jesus and He who knew no sin became sin for us and died on a cross and then three days later rose again so that we could know Him.

He has revealed himself to us in the love he has shown us.

So, if Elijah were living today, I think he'd say, "George, quit wavering."

And church I've learned that if you know God for who He is, you will never be tempted to serve the false gods which our culture tempts us with, because the one true God is so much greater. And I know it's in Him we live and move and have our being.

Not my bank account, my house, my bling, or any other possessions I obtain in this life. It's in knowing the One who saves.

So, Father I pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to us today and show us where we have placed things or people in place of the one true God and that we would dethrone all the idols that are standing in the place of where You want to be.

Papa help us to stop wavering between two opinions.

God, You've revealed Yourself by fire before. I pray You once again would reveal Yourself by the fire of the Holy Spirit, that You would become so real to us right now.

And Father I pray that we would worship, love and serve You with all of our hearts, all of our minds, all of our soul, and all of our strength.

In Jesus name I pray.

And church I know we just finished praying but let me say this in closing. . .

There may be someone here or watching online or hearing this message a week from now and your a Christian in name only.

You're a good person, contribute to society, try not to do bad things, and go to church occasionally. You believe the things about Jesus, but not so much that it's changed your life.

You're wavering. You may believe in a monotheistic God, but you live in a polytheistic way. The Spirit of God is saying to you today to quit wavering.

Don't be kind of, sort of, maybe. Be all in, full-blown, not halfway, not on the fence, but full on for Christ.

And there may be others of you that has never tasted and seen that the Lord is good. You sense something drawing you but your not sure what it is.

Well let me tell you what that is.

That's God drawing you. That is Him loving you through the Holy Spirit. Pursuing you, calling you to come to,Him.

God is not mad at you but loving you it's the goodness of God that draws people to repentance. And it's His goodness that you feel. His love that He desires to bestow upon you, and His Spirit that He wants to place inside you so that you can walk in righteousness and truth.

Pray again.