

## Lessons from 1 Kings 18

Elijah lived in a time of religious and moral pluralism. Israelites were “tuned in” to what was politically correct (they CERTAINLY didn’t want to offend Ahab or Jezebel), and as a result their commitment to Jehovah was half-hearted. God sent Elijah to the summit of Mt. Carmel in Israel where he challenged Ahab and Jezebel’s prophets to a contest aimed right at the lukewarm hearts of Israel. Since we also live in a time where it seems that, “every man [does] that which is right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6), a careful study of 1 Kings 18 will reveal several truths that Christians living in such a pluralistic culture need to learn:

***Environment is not all-powerful (1 Kings 18:1-6)*** — We can live and work in the midst of an ungodly environment, and we must recognize the potential influence of that environment, but faith is more powerful than either “nature” or “nurture” (cf. 1 John 5:4). Obadiah the prophet was in charge of Ahab’s house (v.3). Though he lived and worked in such an ungodly environment, Scripture says he, “feared Jehovah greatly.” Certainly, our background and upbringing influence us, but genuine faith in God is more powerful than one’s environment, and Obadiah’s life proves that.

***Being “salt” and “light” to the world is not always easy (1 Kings 18:7-16)*** — Obadiah was accustomed to taking risks, such as when he hid God’s prophets from Jezebel (v.3-4), but his courage did not make it any easier to be a light to the world. When Elijah, who had been gone for more than three years, told Obadiah to go and announce his return to Ahab, Obadiah was afraid (v.11-12). Even the most devoted servants of God struggle with the temptation to find a somewhat “comfortable” place and stay there. As Jesus asked, “How can you be an effective light if you are hidden under a bushel?” (cf. Matt. 5:13-16).

***Those who reject the message often attack the messenger (1 Kings 18:17-19)*** — Ahab showed no respect for God, nor did he heed God’s message, and as a result he was angry when calamity fell upon his nation in the form of a three-year drought. Instead of coming to terms with his own sin, Ahab accused Elijah of being the, “Troubler of Israel” (v.17). Those who refuse to listen to God will often attack God’s people.

***God expects all men to make a clear choice in view of eternity (1 Kings 18:20-40)*** — Elijah gathered the people and the false prophets to Mt. Carmel, and demanded that they stop faltering between two opinions (v.21). Israel was playing at their religion. They brought sacrifices and offerings to Jehovah in His temple, but they also worshipped at the shrines of Baal and Asherah. Mt. Carmel is an enduring symbol of the fact that God sovereignly demands the exclusive rule of our hearts. We are to put Him first, forsaking all others (Matt. 6:33; Luke 14:25-33). Half-hearted commitment and lip-service religion is repulsive to God (cf. Rev. 3:14-22), so choose this day whom you will serve (Josh. 24:15).

***The way to relate to God is clear (1 Kings 18:36-38)*** — The true God is not far off, as some seem to believe He is. One who would relate to Him must do so personally. In contrast to the false prophets' 9 hour marathon of chanting and ritual mutilation, Elijah simply offered 63 sincere words to the God of heaven. Elijah also related to God in view of Scripture, addressing Him as the, "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." We are also to relate to God in humble submission. Elijah sought no glory for himself in this contest, but he sincerely wanted to see God glorified in Israel. What a prayer, and what an example for us! **—JB**