

THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL

Once two gangsters were in a shoot out - gunfire blazing. One of the gangsters was hit, and died. The two gangsters turned out to be brothers, and the survivor was left with the duty of making funeral arrangements for his mother's son.

When he approached the pastor he told him, "Mr. Pastor, my brother really wasn't such a bad kid. Yes, he robbed banks, and shot up nightclubs, and was the policeman's worst nightmare - but he really wasn't a bad kid. And since mom is going to be at the funeral, I want you to say that my brother was a *real saint*."

The pastor was appalled, "You can't be serious! I'm a man of integrity. There's no way I'm going to stand in front of a group of people, and tell a bald-faced lie."

The gangster offered, "Well, Mr. Pastor, I understand, but if you can see fit to call my brother a *real saint*, I'll see fit to make a generous contribution to the church's building fund." He handed the pastor an envelope full of cash.

The pastor thought for a minute, "If you put it that way, I'll see what I can do."

At the funeral the pastor stood up in front of the congregation, and the grieving mother, and said: "Dearly beloved, we're here today to remember the life of one of the most low-down, despicable, unrighteous, law-breaking scum balls this county has ever seen... But compared to his brother... he was a *real saint*!"

Well, this is what the author of 1 Kings says about the 7th monarch of Israel, King Ahab. In 16:30 we're told, "Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him." In other words, the kings of Israel were scum balls, but compared to the evil King Ahab they were *all real saints*.

GOD'S MAN OF THE HOUR

But even in the midst of *the hell from Jezebel*, God sends a little heavenly power to earth. He raises up a prophet, through whom He works marvelous miracles. In Israel's darkest hour, God sends one of His brightest lights. 17:1 tells us, "And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

Notice, Elijah just springs on the scene. Without introduction, he *appears out the biblical blue*.

All we're told of his pedigree or background is he was a "Tishbite", from Gilead, east of the Jordan. "Tishbite" might be a reference to his family, or hometown - but we're not sure.

He appears already at work, confronting King Ahab. And notice, Elijah sees himself standing, not before Ahab, but before the LORD. He says in verse 1, "the LORD God of Israel... before whom I stand..." Ahab possessed a wild, violent temper. He could order your execution as easily as a pizza from Dominos.

This is why it took nerves of steel to confront this wicked king. It's been said, "Elijah saw only God, feared only God, and spoke only the words of God."

Yet, James 5:17 tells us, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours..." As we study Elijah, it's vital to re-

Ahab was awful, and the only person worse was the woman he married, Queen Jezebel. 1 Kings 16:31 says, "And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him." As we discussed last week the sin of Jeroboam was a subtle form of idolatry. It was what the occultist would call an "entry-point".

Like a Ouija board, gothic video game, or a child's book full of fairies and spiritism - it appears to be a harmless, innocuous fascination - but it can hook an innocent person, and become a gateway to further, more sinister stimulation.

The golden calves Jeroboam erected in Dan and Bethel may've intended to be representations of Jehovah, but that's not how the people of the northern kingdom saw them. They soon became objects of worship, and Jehovah called them idols.

And worse, Jeroboam's cows conditioned Israel to accept *Ahab's bull*. Literally, not only was Baal worship a lot of bull, but Baal was represented as a bull - or a man standing on a bull. Jeroboam's *heifer heresy* led to Ahab's *blasphemous bull*.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us it was Jezebel that taught Baal worship to Ahab. It turns out that Ahab had married the wicked witch.

Jezebel was a Phoenician princess, and her goal was to institutionalize the religion of the Phoenicians as the accepted state religion in Israel. Here you might say a *Phoenician blinds* Ahab spiritually, and it means *curtains* for Israel.

member that even though he was used by God to do the spectacular, he wasn't a spiritual superhero.

Like Hal Sutton said last week as he was beating the world's #1 golfer, Tiger Woods, in the Tournament Players Championship, "He puts his britches on one leg at a time, just like I do." Hey, so did Elijah. And before we're done tonight, we'll witness his humanness.

Elijah received power from God the same way you can. As James 5:17 puts it, "he prayed earnestly..." Elijah was *fearless before men*, because he *spent time before God*. Elijah was a man of prayer.

James tells us, "he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for 3 years and 6 months."

In Noah's day, God judged the world by flooding the earth over 40 days. Elijah tells Ahab, God will judge Israel by drying her up over 40 months.

And note, Elijah tells the king there'll be no shortcuts out of his dilemma. The road to repentance will pass through Elijah. The prophet tells him, it won't rain again, "except at My word..." James 5:18 adds, "he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain..." Elijah was big and bold for God. One of the mightiest men of God in Scripture.

Bible Scan - 1 Kings 17-22

ELIJAH AND OBADIAH

Elijah was hiding from King Ahab - Obadiah was working for him. 1 Kings 18:3 tells us Obadiah was "in charge of (Ahab's) house". Obadiah had a high level post. Yet we're also told, "Obadiah feared the LORD greatly..."

Interestingly, both Elijah and Obadiah lived in an apostate time. They both were faced with an ungodly culture, but their witness for God took different forms...

Elijah stood on the *outside of the culture* - he hid by the brook, then lived in exile in Sidon - until God uses him to prophesy against the ungodliness.

Whereas, Obadiah works from *within the culture*. He serves God in the king's court. When Jezebel orders the execution of God's spokesmen, Obadiah comes to the rescue of 100 prophets. He hides them, feeds them, and protects them.

I believe this is a good model for believers today. God calls some of us to a ministry of confrontation. We're involved in supernatural showdowns - where we point out the ungodliness of the culture, and call people to repentance. While other believers work behind the scenes - permeating the ungodly culture with a godly influence. We shine our light, and do what we can for God within the system. God used Elijah and Obadiah. He uses both *confrontation* and *infiltration*.

CONFRONTATION ON CARMEL

After all the people of the northern tribes of Israel, and the prophets of Baal arrive at Mount Carmel, Elijah challenges the crowd. In 1 Kings 18:21 he asks, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." The word translated, "*falter*", means "*limp*". Israel was a wet noodle with no backbone.

Their loyalties were based on convenience rather than commitment. Elijah is drawing a line in the sand. Dante wrote, "The hottest place in hell is reserved for those who, in times of crises, preserved their neutrality." Spiritually, you can't ride the fence forever. Remember the only things in the middle of the road are yellow streaks and dead skunks. There comes a time for each one of us to choose who we will serve!

Understand this is one man and his God versus 850 Baal-worshipping prophets and their god. On the surface of the situation, you'd think Elijah was outnumbered, *but you'd be wrong* - God more than makes up for the deficit.

In 1 Kings 18:23-24 Elijah constructs the test. Let's see whose God can send a little fire from heaven? The prophets of Baal go first. They cry out from morning until noon, but no fire. They're dancing about, and chanting and wailing, trying to get Baal's attention.

The Living Bible paraphrases verse 27, "Elijah began mocking them. 'You'll have to shout louder than that...' Perhaps he is talking to someone, or is out sitting on the toilet, or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be awakened." In contrast, Psalm 121:4 says of the true God, "He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber or sleep."

After Elijah mocks them, the prophets of Baal get desperate. Verse 28, "they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them." They continued until the time of the evening sacrifice, or about 3:00 pm. They'd been at it for 9 hours and Baal had not even flicked a Bic, not even a spark.

Now it's Elijah's turn at bat. Elijah repairs the altar of the Lord, that's suffered from neglect. He cuts a trench around it, and pours water over the sacrifice, and the wood. Three times he drenches the sacrifice, and fills the trench with water. God is about light the barbecue, and Elijah wants there to be no doubt as to the source of the miracle.

In verse 36-37, Elijah prays a simple prayer. No dancing, no chanting, no slashing - just a prayer. And we're told in verse 38-39, "Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!'"

Devotion Box - God's Desire

In 1 Kings 17, when the brook dries up God speaks to Elijah, and tells him to go to Zarephath - in the land of Sidon.

In Luke 4, Jesus tells us why Elijah was sent to the gentile land of Sidon. God wanted to do a miracle. The 40-month drought had created a severe famine, and God just couldn't stand it any longer. God wanted to bless somebody, but not a person in Israel had faith enough to ask for His help.

This is a problem God often faces. God gets antsy. He loves to pour out His provision, and lavish His blessings on people who are humble enough to ask. But he looks around at our proud, self-sufficient faces, and gets discouraged. "*There's nobody here I can bless. I'll have to move somewhere else.*"

God is knocking at your door to heal, forgive, and bless you - but if you're too proud to open up to His blessing - then He'll move on.

Devotion Box - A Never Ending Supply

When Elijah gets to Zarephath, he finds an impoverished widow gathering sticks for her last meal.

Her cupboard is almost bare. Just a handful of flour, and a few drops of oil are left. But Elijah promises her that if she'll put another person's need before her own a miracle will occur. If she'll bake him a cake with what she has left, God will see to it that she and her son will have more than they need for the rest of the famine.

And that's what happens - though she never replenishes her bin or jar, they never empty until the famine has ceased.

There's an important lesson here. God's miracles don't happen for selfish people. There's a never ending supply of resources only for the people who share, not the people who hoard!

How many of you want to see a miracle?

Here's what you do... go home - get your flour and oil - and start giving it away as the Lord directs. Try to give it all away! I'll bet you can't. I'll bet God replaces it a hundredfold.

Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom."

KINGS OF ISRAEL

Jeroboam	931-910	22 years
Nadab	910-909	2 years
Baasha	909-886	24 years
Elah	886-885	2 years
Zimri	885	7 days
Omri	885-874	12 years
Ahab	874-853	21 years
Ahaziah	853-852	1 year
Jehoram	852-841	11 years
Jehu	841-814	28 years
Jehoahaz	814-798	16 years
Jehoash	798-782	16 years
Jeroboam II	793-753	40 years
Zechariah	753-752	6 months
Shallum	752	1 month
Menahem	752-742	10 years
Pekahiah	742-740	2 years
Pekah	752-732	20 years
Hoshea	732-723	9 years

KINGS OF JUDAH

Rehoboam	931-913	17 years
Abijam	913-911	3 years
*Asa	911-870	41 years
*Jehoshaphat	873-848	25 years
Jehoram	853-841	8 years
Ahaziah	841	1 year
+Athaliah	841-835	6 years
*Joash	835-796	40 years
*Amaziah	796-767	29 years
-*Azariah	792-740	52 years
*Jotham	750-732	18 years
Ahaz	735-716	19 years
*Hezekiah	716-687	29 years
Manasseh	697-643	55 years
Amon	643-641	2 years
*Josiah	641-609	31 years
Jehoahaz	609	3 months
Jehoiakim	609-598	11 years
Jehoiachin	598-597	3 months
Zedekiah	597-586	11 years

+ mother of Ahaziah
 - also known as Uzziah
 * good king

Devotion Box - Need for Fellowship

Even if it's just the feeling of being alone – the perception - it can get you down.

In 1 Kings 19:14 Elijah complains to God, "I alone am left." But God tells Elijah he's wrong about being Israel's only faithful prophet. In verse 18 the Lord says there's 7000 men who've not bowed their knee to Baal.

Sometimes we get discouraged, and assume we must be the only Christian in the high school... of the company... or the neighborhood... but perhaps not. Ask God to provide some fellowship, and He may open your eyes to a fellow believer.

WITH A NATURE LIKE OURS

It's been said, "God knows the best of men are but men at best." And in chapter 19 Elijah proves he has clay feet like the rest of us. He was a mighty man for God, but he was just that "*a man*"... as James put it, "with a nature like ours". And Elijah is vulnerable to the same discouragements, and despair, as we are.

In fact, we can hardly believe the turnaround that occurs in chapter 19.

Verse 2 tells us that when Jezebel hears how Elijah has executed her state clerics... Ahab's *darling* starts *snarling*, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." The prophet has just faced off with 850 false prophets, and remember they all had knives... But now he's threatened by one vile and vicious woman, and he bolts.

Elijah runs away... to Beersheba (the southernmost site in Judah). Then he leaves Beersheba, a day's journey, into the wilderness – and just plops down under a broom tree. There he asks God if he can just die. Read his words in verse 4, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

Amazing, in a matter of hours, Elijah has gone from *fearless* to *fearful*.

I imagine, Elijah expected his victory at Mount Carmel to solve the problem permanently. He wasn't ready for just how entrenched the resistance would be. On the heels of a enormous victory, he sinks into a deep and dark despair.

According to legend, the devil had a garage sale. One man was browsing through some old tools. They were all for sale, except one worn-out, beat-up looking implement. The man asked the devil why that tool wasn't also for sale.

He answered, "I can spare my other tools, but not this one. It's my most useful implement. With it I can pry into hearts that otherwise would be inaccessible. It's called *discouragement*." Elijah had become weary in well doing – tired of the fight. He was hoping Mount Carmel would be the battle to end all battles.

Guys, at the base of Mount Carmel is a huge valley, called Armageddon. There the nations will gather to fight against Jesus when He returns. That's the battle that will end all battles... in the meantime, life is full of skirmishes between good and evil. Our struggle against the world, the flesh, the devil is fought every day.

ELIJAH... ON THE RUN



Bible Scan - 1 Kings 17-22

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - April 2, 2000

4/3-4 - Mon - Tue - High School Retreat - sign-ups today

4/4 - Tue - NO AM OR PM LADIES' BIBLE STUDIES

4/20-21 - Thu - Fri - Good Friday Walk-Through

SUNDAY NIGHTS

4/9 - CCSM Mission's Report - Updates from Mexico, Haiti, and India

4/16 - Passover Pot-luck

4/23 - Movie Night

PRAY FOR JAMES AND RANDY THIS WEEK AS THEY MINISTER AT A PASTORS CONFERENCE IN HAITI

Next Bible Scan - April 30 - 2 Kings 1-13

Devotion Box - The Still Small Voice

"How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." - 1 Kings 18:21

Bible Scan Memory Verse

In 1 Kings 19:9 Elijah spends the night in a cave, but in verse 11 we're told, "And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

Elijah was used to the Lord revealing Himself in spectacular, star-spangled, attention-demanding means. But "fire from heaven" is the exception rather than the rule. If we look for God only in the wind, and earthquake, and lightning we'll live most of our lives without hearing from Him. More often than not, God speaks to us just as he did to Elijah... through a still small voice. God communicates through inner breathings - soul whispers. He impresses our desires and instincts.

This is why you have to quiet your life, and slow down your pace, to hear from God. So often, Jesus went on top of the mountain by Himself to spend time with God. It was for this very reason: Jesus was listening for God's still small voice.

The devil has made certain our world is filled with distractions. We're bombarded with different voices all day - every car has a radio, we keep a telephone strapped to our belt, most homes have a television in every room, our computer is hooked to the internet and an endless stream of information - a million opinions from a million sources. And with so many voices, the one voice that matters gets drowned out.

I'm sure you heard this past week about the tragic accident near the Georgia - Tennessee line. A school bus was hit by a train killing 3 of the children on the bus. By Friday a preliminary investigation indicated the train had sounded its whistle, but the driver may not have heard it because of the noise on the bus. A videotape revealed the bus driver was subject to several conversations and a radio.

It seems the noises on the bus drowned out the train's whistle. The same scenario can put us in danger. When the noises of life become so loud that they drown out the still small voice of God we're also headed for a serious wreck.

If you and I are serious about walking with God, and knowing His will, we need to find a Horeb where we can slow down, and listen... really listen.

Devotion Box - Jesus, Lord of All

In 1 Kings 20 the Syrian strategists conclude the God of Israel must be Lord over the mountains, but doesn't have jurisdiction over the flatlands. Thus, they plan a retaliatory attack for the spring where their troops will march across the plain. Of course, this is silly. The true God is Lord of all the universe.

You'd think we moderns would see through the silliness of the Syrian's argument, but we make a similar mistake. We assume God is Lord over Sunday, so we go to church, and serve the Lord on the mountains. But the other six days don't concern God. While we're in the valley of midweek we can do as we please.

God is Lord over all the earth... and all 7 days of the week.

AN UNEQUAL YOKE

Ahab is wicked. He knows the Syrians have targeted the Israelites. That's why he tells Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes into battle. Ahab knows the Syrians will mistake Jehoshaphat for himself. That's why he goes into battle wearing a disguise. But you can't fool God. Verse 34 tells us, "Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor." God took control of the arrow and guided it to the hole between Ahab's armor.

Through it all, Jehoshaphat learns an important lesson...

In verse 49, when Ahaziah, Ahab's son, suggests another joint venture with Judah, Jehoshaphat declines. Ahab's double-cross has taught him the dangers of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever - *even if the unbeliever is a relative*.

Enter a joint venture with a person who serves a different God, and holds different values - and you'll get burned.

Jehoshaphat made peace with his northern neighbor, but he avoided future entanglements. That's a good policy for how we should handle our relationships with unbelievers.