

Survey of the Bible part 17

1 Kings 18:1-14 ^{NAU} Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." ² So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine *was* severe in Samaria. ³ Ahab called Obadiah who *was* over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; ⁴ for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.) ⁵ Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle." ⁶ So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself. ⁷ Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is this you, Elijah my master?" ⁸ He said to him, "It is I. Go, say to your master, 'Behold, Elijah *is here*.'" ⁹ He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death? ¹⁰ "As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, 'He is not *here*,' he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you. ¹¹ "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*.'" ¹² "It will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although *I* your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. ¹³ "Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water? ¹⁴ "And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your master, "Behold, Elijah *is here*"; he will then kill me."

So, the famine in the land has been going on for about how long?

Two plus years, maybe three.

And the Lord makes it clear that it's time to bring rain on the earth, which suggests what as to who has total control over every aspect of care for the earth?

God the creator of the earth is the one who determines how the earth, or any part of the earth, will be cared for according to His will and good pleasure.

The first mention of rain is a reference to a phenomenon that God would bring about specifically to take care of the earth, and by extension, man.

Genesis 2:4-6 ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

The next time that the word rain is used it's in reference to the destruction of the earth.

Genesis 7:1-4 ^{NAU} Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous before Me in this time. ² "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; ³ also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴ "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

And so, what conclusion do we come to as to who causes rain and for what reasons?

And so, here in the case of Israel and Ahab, God's will is being accomplished as He now decides in the third year of the drought to bring rain once again.

In the midst of this God uses a man by the name of Obadiah who is an insider regarding the reign of Ahab.

What is it that we are told about Obadiah?

He feared the Lord greatly.

And how did he serve the Lord in the midst of this corrupt reign of Ahab?

He hid 100 prophets and hid them by 50's in caves.

Now, why do you suppose Obadiah did this?

Because prophets have a role in speaking forth the word of the Lord. But it appears that the word of the Lord was put on hold for these three years because we're given no indication that they are prophesying for this time.

Why would they not do this?

For the same reason that Elijah, who is also a prophet, didn't speak to the nation for those years. Part of it has to do with God's judgment on the land and part of it has to do with God protecting the prophets until which time He decided to have them speak.

Sometimes God will not allow His word to go forth. Sometimes God's spokesmen are told to be silent. But when God speaks things happen, but they will only happen on His timetable, according to His purposes.

And so, Obadiah is told to go to Ahab and announce that Elijah is back.

But, there's a problem with this according to Obadiah, and what is that?

Anyone associated with Elijah is suspect of collaboration and would be found guilty of treason and subject to death. And this is why Obadiah responds the way he does.

1 Kings 18:9 ⁹ He said, "What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab to put me to death?"

Ahab was serious about finding and killing Elijah and why is that?

Because he associates Elijah with the shutting up of the rain and the consequent drought.

But where is Ahab's flaw in thinking here?

It's not Elijah who has turned off the rain, it's God. And it's not Elijah who wars against Ahab, it's God. And you can kill the messenger, but the One who sends the message will kill you.

And still, Ahab doesn't make this connection. And now, there is about to be a showdown between the gods of Ahab and Jezebel and the One true God and creator of all.

So, this troubler of Israel, according to Ahab, is about to get answer from Elijah, which is the word of the Lord Himself.

1 Kings 18:17-20 ¹⁷ When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?" ¹⁸ He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals. ¹⁹ "Now then send *and* gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, *together* with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." ²⁰ So Ahab sent *a message* among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

After almost three years of Ahab hunting down Elijah, Elijah actually delivers himself to the King on God's timetable and we are about to see why God has done all of this.

There has been judgment on the land and now this will be the final judgment on the real problem and that is a forsaking of the one true God. And what better way to do that than to eliminate the one's who are propagating this false worship; the prophets of Baal and the Asherah.

By the way, who are all of these false prophets directly associated with according to our text, (verse 19)?

We're told they eat at Jezebel's table. They answer to her.

Now what is about to happen is that the truth is about to become crystal clear as to who the one true God is. And this is an issue that every believer has had to deal with since the beginning.

I'm sure that the prophets of God and Elijah had opportunity during their ministries before the famine and drought to voice who the one true God was, but it fell on deaf ears.

And you and I have had opportunity to voice who the one true God is with it falling on deaf ears as well. But when God decides to get the attention of the world He can do it in a variety of ways and here will be a unique approach to accomplish His will.

1 Kings 18:21 ²¹ Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

We've heard this language before as it was delivered up to Israel by Joshua.

Joshua 24:14-15 ¹⁴ "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

This exact same message is being delivered to the world today as well.

Luke 4:6-8 ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." ⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

Luke 16:13 ¹³ "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

There is a choice to be made between truth and the lie. The world prefers to believe the lie and the ultimate liar. And this is why Elijah doesn't back down, and this is why we shouldn't back down. God is on the throne and as Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

God is the truth and when we faithfully represent Him His will will be accomplished as He desires.

In the case of Elijah God brings judgment upon the false prophets.

1 Kings 18:22-40 ²² Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. ²³ "Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire

under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.²⁴ "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."²⁵ So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*."²⁶ Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.²⁷ It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."²⁸ So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.²⁹ When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down.³¹ Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."³² So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.³³ Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid *it* on the wood.³⁴ And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour *it* on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.³⁵ The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.³⁶ At the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.³⁷ "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again."³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.³⁹ When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."⁴⁰ Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

But the question we need to ask is, if the truth does not show itself to be all powerful and convincing at any particular point as we share it, does it make the truth any less powerful?

Often we want to see fire coming down from heaven to prove our point, we want God to show Himself in an unmistakable way, but God will only act in the way He chooses for His good purposes and will.

The truth remains the truth no matter what, and it should be declared as truth in love to a dying world.

Isaiah 55:10-12 ¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it. ¹² "For you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands.

Isaiah 46:10 ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

So, don't ever not give the truth in love even if it's not accepted. Just give it and trust that it will not be empty as God is accomplishing whatever purpose He has in mind at the time.

1 Kings 18:41-46 ⁴¹ Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a *heavy* shower." ⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back " seven times. ⁴⁴ It came about at the seventh *time*, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare *your chariot* and go down, so that the *heavy* shower does not stop you.'" ⁴⁵ In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

Now, keep in mind that Mt. Carmel is on the coast of the Mediterranean on what would be known today as the west bank of Palestine. This is why when Elijah went up on top of Mt. Carmel and asked his servant to look toward the sea for clouds, they could literally see the Mediterranean. Jezreel, as the crow flies, is about 25 miles due east.

And so, Elijah tells Ahab to head toward Jezreel quickly before the rains engulf him.

But notice, what mode of transportation does Ahab use to quickly get to Jezreel?

Horse drawn chariot.

But who gets to Jezreel first?

Elijah. And what mode of transportation does Elijah use?

He runs. Now this is no small feat. A marathon is 26.2 miles. The fastest marathon was run in just over 2 hours and 3 minutes. But that was on level ground. Elijah is essentially running a marathon in mountainous terrain and he's going to get to Jezreel before Ahab who is traveling in a chariot.

As a side note the fastest a human being can run is between 23 and 25 mph for about 100 meters. The average pace of an average runner in a marathon is 5 mph which results in finishing a marathon in about 4 hours and 45 min.

To run at a 2 hour and 3 minute pace you need to be traveling between 8 to 12 mph throughout the race.

I'm guessing the fastest marathon ever run has never been recorded or acknowledged taking place some 2900 hundred years ago by a man who didn't train a day in his life for such a feat. Way to go Elijah.

Next time we're going to see how this amazing run took quite a lot out of Elijah to the point to where he's ready to lay down and die.