

A Prophet's Challenge (6/14/09)

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” – Joshua 24:15

I. “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord”

- a. Before his death, Joshua gave this challenge to the Nation of Israel
 - i. You see, Joshua was getting old in age and his time to lead the Nation of Israel was coming to an end – he had been a mighty leader...
 - ii. Therefore, he gathered the people together for one last time and gave them a final challenge
 - iii. A challenge to make a decision, ***“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord”***
- b. As a Christian, everyday you are challenged to make a decision on Christ
 - i. The decision on whether or not you're going to serve, honor, and obey the Lord Jesus
 - ii. To be a Christian is to make a decision on Christ everyday...
- c. And this decision is yours to make
 - i. No one can force you to make the right decision, no one can force you to serve, honor, and obey the Lord with all your heart
 - ii. You have to make that decision on your own (*you will be responsible*) – but a decision has to be made...
- d. And this morning, I want us to examine a story found in the Old Testament where the Nation of Israel were challenged by a Prophet to make a decision
 - i. I want us to look at the ***“Prophet's Challenge”*** found in 1 Kings 18

II. 1 Kings Chapter 18:17-18

- a. Beginning in verse 17, we are introduced to a King by the name of Ahab
 - i. Ahab was the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel
 - ii. He was a wicked King who had caused the nation of Israel to forsake the commandments of God and follow after Baal (*title of the false god*)
 - iii. The people believed that Baal was the ***“god of storm and rain”*** who was responsible to grant fertility to the land
- b. Therefore, because King Ahab, the Nation of Israel turned their back towards God and worshipped a false idol – “Baal”
 - i. Today, idols come in many different shapes and forms – it could be in the form of money, success, education, fame, a job, a relationship, etc.
 - ii. An idol is simply anything you place before God in your life, they will always bring *disaster* and *dissatisfaction* to your life

- iii. Therefore, always make sure to put God first in your life, you see, He is the only One capable of satisfying all your needs...
- iv. Ravi Zacharias declared, “*God is perfect and He wants none of us to give our lives to anything less than His perfection*”
- c. Therefore, we are introduced to King Ahab who was confronted by Elijah

III.1 Kings Chapter 18:19-21

- a. After Elijah confronted King Ahab, he commanded the King to gather all the people of Israel & the false prophets, and have them meet him on Mt. Carmel
 - i. And as the people were gathering on Mt. Carmel, Elijah challenged them to make a decision
 - ii. Elijah declared, “*How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal is God, follow Him*” (vs. 21)
 - iii. And this morning the Holy Spirit challenges every one of us with the same challenge, “*If Jesus is Lord, follow Him, but if He is not, don’t*”
- b. You see, like many people today, the Nation of Israel were indecisive in choosing who they were going to serve and follow
 - i. Some days they wanted to serve Jehovah, but other days they wanted to serve Baal – they were in between, in the middle, double-minded
 - ii. Serving the true God one day and serving false-gods the next day...
- c. Sadly, this is the condition of many people today (within the church)
 - i. They are standing in the middle with one foot in the church and one foot in the world
 - ii. They don’t consider themselves a bad person, however, they don’t want to be labeled a Jesus fanatic, therefore, they stay in the middle
 - iii. They stay comfortable, thinking they are ok, however, they are not ok...
- d. You see, the Bible teaches us that there are only two types of people in this world: Believers and Non-Believers (*Those Redeemed and Those not Redeemed*)
 - i. In **Mathew 12:30a**, the Lord Jesus declared, “*He who is not with Me is against Me...*”
 - ii. In **Revelation 3:16**, the Lord Jesus declared, “*Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth*”
 - iii. You are either for the Lord or against Him, you are either cold or hot, but there is no in between, no middle ground, no lukewarm Christianity
- e. That is why you have to make a decision to follow the Lord wholeheartedly – a decision to surrender everything to Jesus!
 - i. And this decision has to be made everyday of your life...
 - ii. No matter what happens, good times or bad times, you have to decide to stay faithful to the Lord and serve Him with all your heart
 - iii. You have to make the decision and boldly declare, “*Lord Jesus, I am going to love you, serve you, and live for you all the days of my life*”

- f. Therefore, we read of the challenge given by Elijah to the people, and this morning, the Holy Spirit gives us the same challenge, ‘Make a decision on Christ!’

IV. 1 Kings Chapter 18:22

- a. In verse 22, we see that the prophet Elijah was not afraid to stand up for God
- i. He was along against 450 false prophets, and yet, he still was not ashamed nor afraid to stand up for God
 - ii. We could all learn something from Elijah, “*Even if I’m all alone and nobody is with me, I will stake a stand for the Lord Jesus*”
 - iii. Even if nobody else in my school, in my family, or in my workplace is serving the Lord, I am going to serve the Lord and stay faithful to Him
- b. Now, in reality, Elijah was not alone because God was with Him
- i. And maybe this morning you feel like your all alone, well, I am here to tell you that you are not alone, God is with you Cf. **Hebrews 13:5**

V. 1 Kings Chapter 18:23-24

- a. Now, as the people gathered on Mt. Carmel, Elijah offered them a challenge
- i. And this was the challenge, one bull would be given to the false prophets and one bull would be given to Elijah
 - ii. Then, each of them would cut the bull in pieces, lay the pieces on the wood, but put no fire under the wood
 - iii. Then, each of them would call on their God and the God who answered with fire would prove that He is truly God – the people accepted!
- b. Now, this challenge by Elijah was appropriate
- i. You see, the people had a belief that the false god Baal was able to shoot lightning from the sky (*he was the good of storm and rain*)
 - ii. So, when the false prophets heard the challenge, I’m sure they must have been thinking to themselves, “*This is going to be easy...*”
- c. Therefore, the challenge was given and the showdown was about to begin
- i. In one corner, you had Elijah, the prophet of the true and living God, and in the other corner you had the 450 false prophets of Baal
 - ii. “*Ladies and Gentleman, Boys and Girls, let’s get ready to rumble!*”

VI. 1 Kings Chapter 18:25-29

- a. Now, because there were more of them, the false prophets went first
- i. They took a bull, cut it into pieces, and placed the pieces upon the altar
 - ii. Then from morning till noon they began to cry out to their god, “*Baal, Baal, hear us, hear us Baal,*” however, there was no voice or answer
- b. And as the false prophets continued to cry out to their god, Elijah began to mock them and make fun of them
- i. He began to tell the false prophets that they needed to cry out louder...
 - ii. Elijah told them, “*Cry louder, maybe your god is busy, or on a vacation, or sleeping, wait, I know, maybe he is using the bathroom*”

- iii. So, the false prophets began to cry out louder, and even began to cut themselves, but there was still no answer, no one paid attention...
- c. You see, the false prophets were in need of a miracle (fire), but they were looking for it in all the wrong places
 - i. Instead of taking their need to the true and living God, they took their need to a false god, and they got no response
 - ii. And I ask the question, “*Where do you go in time of need? Who do you take your problems to? Who do you cry out to? Run to?*”
- d. God desires for us to run to Him when we are in need (*He is not intimidated*)
 - i. **Psalm 50:15** declares, “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me*”
 - ii. **Proverbs 18:10** declares, “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and are safe*”
 - iii. If you are here this morning and are going through a trial, a problem, or a difficult time in your life, I would encourage you to run to Jesus...
 - iv. Jesus is waiting for you with open arms Cf. **Mathew 11:28-30**
- e. Therefore, the false prophets cried out all morning, but there was no response!

VII. 1 Kings Chapter 18:30-35

- a. Now it was Elijah’s turn to show the people once and for all who is the true and living God
 - i. Elijah called all the people to himself and the first thing he did was repair the altar of the Lord that was broken down (*very significant act*)
 - ii. You see, the altar was the place of worship and fellowship w/ the Lord
 - iii. And it had been broken down and neglected by the people, and the first thing Elijah did was repair the Altar
 - iv. Elijah needed to spend time in the presence of the Lord...
- b. And this morning I ask the question, “How is the Altar in your life?”
 - i. Is it broken? Does it need to be repaired? Do you spend time in the presence of the Lord? Do you spend time fellowshiping w/ God?
 - ii. If the Altar is broken in your life, this morning is the time to fix it – Your greatest need is the presence of God...
 - iii. In His presence is the fullness of joy Cf. Psalm 16:11; Acts 3:19
- c. Now, after Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord, he dug a trench around the altar, then he placed the wood and sacrifice upon the altar
 - i. Then, Elijah commanded the people to bring four water pots of water and to pour them on the altar, a second time, a third time...
 - ii. When the people were finished, the water soaked the altar, the wood, and the sacrifice, and filled the trench which surrounded it
 - iii. I’m sure the people were probably thinking, “*Elijah has lost his mind; he has spent too many hours in the sun*”

- d. However, Elijah hadn't lost his mind, but he simply wanted to remove all doubt in the hearts of the people concerning who was the true and living God

VIII. 1 Kings Chapter 18:36-38

- a. After Elijah prepared the altar, he began to call out to the Lord
 - i. And unlike the false prophets, he made sure that he was calling out to the true and living God
 - ii. Elijah declared, ***“God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, hear me, O Lord, hear me, let it be known this day that You are God”***
- b. And as Elijah was calling out to God, God answered him with fire...
 - i. The fire fell down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water
 - ii. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Bible, proved once and for all that He is the only true and living God
 - iii. There are many false gods in the world, but there is only one true and living God, and He is the God of the Bible who answered with fire...

IX. 1 Kings Chapter 18:39-40

- a. As the people saw the fire fall down from heaven and consume the altar, they fell on their faces and declared, “The Lord, He is God, Jehovah, He is God”
 - i. The people finally made a decision – no longer would they be double-minded, in the middle, but the Lord was God & Him they would serve
- b. After their decision, Elijah commanded the people to capture all the false prophets and have them executed
 - i. You see, Elijah understood that the decision the people made had to be followed by a change in lifestyle
 - ii. They had to “execute” and “remove” everything from their life that was dishonoring to God
 - iii. When you make a decision to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, your life has to change (*Must be Repentance*)
- c. Everything in your life that brings dishonor to God and keeps you from serving Christ must be removed – “Lay aside every weight and sin” Heb. 12:1

X. And so, in conclusion, I end this morning with a challenge, “Choose for yourselves this day who you will serve”

- a. Make up your mind that no matter what happens you are going to stay faithful to Christ and serve Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength
 - i. Be a Joshua, who declared, ***“As for Me and my house we will serve the Lord”***
 - ii. You see, the Lord is looking and searching for someone who will take a stand for Him in the midst of a fallen world...

- iii. One person can make a difference: they can change a home, a home can change a family, a family can change a neighborhood, a neighborhood can change a city, a city can change a state, a state can change a country, and a country can change the world
- b. And the question is, “Will that someone be you?” – I sure hope so...