

## **The Weapon of Prayer - Elijah - Part 4**

*Howard Hendricks*

### Introduction.

- A. Elijah has been called the greatest and loneliest man in Scripture.
  - 1. He had relations with only two people; the widow woman and Elisha.
  - 2. A leader's life is often lonely, especially in the spiritual realm.
  - 3. They may be compelled to stand alone for God, especially in time of apostasy.
  - 4. Some thought Jesus was Elijah.
  - 5. On the Mount of Transfiguration Elijah appeared with Moses.
- B. Tonight we want to look at a fantastic scene in Elijah's life.
  - I. 1 Kings has a clear outline
    - 1. Verses 1 through 15 we discover the event before the conflict on Carmel.
    - 2. In verses 16-40 we discover the events during the conflict.
    - 3. In verses 41-46 we discover the events after the conflict.
  - 2. Tonight we will look only at the events before and during the conflict.
- I. Before the conflict: How do you bring revival to backslidden people? (1 Kings 18:1-15).
  - A. The events before the conflict reveal three main characters.
    - 1. Elijah the man of God listens to God. (1 Kings 18:1)
      - a. He had been hiding himself, but now Jehovah tells him to show himself to Ahab.
        - 1. Elijah had probably grown close to the widow.
        - 2. Now he was told to challenge Ahab, who might take his life.
      - b. This must have been a challenge to Elijah's faith.
    - 2. Ahab is the second character here, a man who lived for this life only.
      - a. He had Obadiah hunting for grass. (1 Kings 18:5).

1. He was concerned not with his people but with the mules.
  2. His perspective was only horizontal, he had no vertical perspective.
- b. He also followed his wife's leadership.
1. Jezebel had introduced Baal worship to Jerusalem.
  2. Ahab was a pawn of the devil.
3. Obadiah is the third character here.
- a. I like him but he is perplexing.
1. He was the governor of the chief town, and he feared God greatly.
  2. I wonder, however, if he feared Ahab more than he feared God.
  3. He founded the society for the preservation of the prophets.
  4. He got along with people well, the Dale Carnegie of his day.
  5. He was well adjusted, but adjusted to whom—Ahab?
  6. He refused to disturb the status quo.
  7. I find there are a lot of Obadiah's in church pews and pulpits.
  8. There is a limit to their devotion.
- b. Obadiah greeted Elijah gladly but feared to obey the prophet out of fear for his life. (1 Kings 18:7-9)
- c. He accused Elijah of duplicity though he attests to his fear of the Lord from his youth. (1 Kings 18:12)
1. Some people testify only about what God did for them years ago, as an elder in my church use to quote from the same Psalm for 33 years.
  2. Elijah needed to swear by his word before Obadiah would obey him.
  3. Dedication with reservation is despicable.

## II. Events during the conflict.

### A. Elijah and Ahab meet and the sparks fly.

1. Ahab accuses Elijah of being the “troubler of Israel”.

2. Elijah returns the rebuke by pointing out the sins of Ahab, though the king had the power to kill him.
3. Elijah then issues a command for Ahab to assemble the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18:19)
  - a. This scene would be fabulous to paint.
  - b. It was a festival in Israel and the king would have been the center of attention.
  - c. The people would be excited and chattering with the splendidly clothed priests.
  - d. Elijah was a lonely figure in drab garments and long hair, yet he stood in the presence of God.
  - e. Elijah stood against the nation yet he stood with God.
4. Elijah speaks in seven passages.
  - a. In verse 21 he asks how long Israel would hesitate between two opinions, whether to serve Baal or server Jehovah.
    1. Elijah declared the exclusiveness of Jehovah.
    2. In Japan 50% of new converts are lost within one year; 90% are lost within ten years because they are troubled by the exclusiveness of Christianity.
    3. If Christianity were simple one of many religions it would flourish in Japan.
    4. Elijah tells Israel they need to decide between Baal or Jehovah.
  - b. In verse 22 Elijah points out that he stands alone in contrast to the 450 prophets of Baal.
  - c. In verse 23 Elijah sets the terms of his challenge.
    1. Two oxen are chosen for sacrifice and the one who responds by fire will be vindicated as true God.
    2. Baal was the chief god of the pantheon and called the god of fire, so Elijah called for a trial by fire, which seemed fair.
    3. The prophets of Baal and Elijah each prepare their oxen.
  - c. Verse 25 Elijah allows the prophets of Baal to call on their god first to consume the sacrifice by fire.
    1. No answer came through they cried out till noon.

2. Elijah mocked them, asking if Baal were on vacation, or sleeping.
  3. In response the prophets of Baal cried out more sincerely until evening, even cutting themselves with swords.
  4. Religious people can be sincere, but sincerely wrong.
- d. In verse 30 Elijah steps up and calls the people near to him.
1. He prepares the wood.
  2. He binds the sacrifice.
  3. Then he douses the sacrifice with water.
  4. Mt. Carmel was located on the edge of the sea, so salt water was plentiful.
- e. In verse 36 Elijah prayed that the people would know that Jehovah is God.
1. We need to pray long in private yet short in public.
  2. When Peter walked on water and began to sink he prayed a short prayer “Lord save me.”
  3. Elijah had spent much time in the presence of God and didn’t need to impress the Lord, but simply asked in faith that God would vindicate himself.
  4. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice.
    - i. Then the people confessed the Lord as God.
    - ii. The act of God got their attention.
- f. In verse 40 Elijah speaks judgment on the prophets of Baal.
1. He commanded they be seized.
  2. He slew them himself by the brook Kishon.
- B. In the morning Baal had the attention of the people yet now Jehovah had their attention.
1. How quickly the faith of the people turned.
  2. God’s people are disturbed over the events of today.
    - a. We should be disturbed but not shaken in our faith.
    - b. God can reverse the tide of events quickly.

- c. God is in control and he doesn't need to read the newspaper to find out what's happening.
- d. Trusting God always makes a majority.
- e. God is looking for a man who will commune with him as Elijah did.
  - 1. We are to have no rival in our hearts as did Obadiah.
  - 2. People who are afraid of their own necks will not lead revivals.
- 3. Some are saying: "What can one man do?"
  - a. Elijah is our example of what one man can do.
  - b. He was a man of like passions as us yet he heard God and obeyed God.
  - c. In our offices and churches we can do whatever God tells us to do.
  - d. As we are sold out without reservation to God can use us.