

ELIJAH REBUKES A NATION

TEXT: 1 KINGS 18

Introduction:

1. Following the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms.
 2. The northern kingdom, made up of 10 tribes, was known as Israel.
 3. The southern kingdom, made up of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and many from Levi, was known as Judah.
 4. Each of the kingdoms would be ruled by 20 different kings.
 - a. In Israel, all the kings were rebellious against God and wicked men.
 - b. In Judah, most of the kings were wicked, but at least 4 were good rulers and faithful men.
 5. During the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram, Elijah prophesied to the nation of Israel.
- I. Elijah: The Powerful Prophet
- A. The name Elijah means, "Jehovah is my God."
 - B. Elijah appeared upon the scene out of nowhere with a strong and direct message to the wicked King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1).
 1. Elijah promised that there would be no dew or rain for years until he gave the word.
 2. Of course, this power came from the Lord.
 3. The drought would prove that God was in control of His world and that Elijah was His prophet.
 - C. Following this, God told Elijah to go away and hide himself by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:2-7).
 - D. While at the brook, Elijah would learn complete dependence upon God.
 - E. When the brook dried up, God did not forsake Elijah; instead, he sent him to a new place of provision.
 - F. God told Elijah to move to the home of a widow in Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16).
 - G. Here, God miraculously provided for Elijah, the widow, and her son.
 - H. Soon, a seeming tragedy struck – the widow's son became sick and died (1 Kings 17:17-24).
 - I. Elijah took her son into his room, prayed to God, and raised him from the dead.
 1. Elijah did not understand why this had happened, and he expressed his concern to God in prayer.
 2. Then, Elijah prayed for something ***that had never been done before in the history of man!***
 - J. She declared, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."
 - K. In the third year, God commanded Elijah to go and show himself to King Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-16).
 1. The entire drought lasted for 3½ years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17).
 2. So, this may have been during the third year of Elijah's stay with the widow.
 - L. In fact, God informed Ahab where he was and the king came to the prophet!

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- M. Elijah proposed a challenge – he would meet the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves (Asherah) at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-19).
 - N. Ahab sent word throughout Israel, and the people and the prophets came to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:20-40).
 - O. Elijah presented the challenge to the people.
 - 1. “How long will you limp back and forth between two sides?”
 - 2. If Baal is the one, true God, they should worship and follow Baal.
 - 3. If Jehovah is the one, true God, they should worship and follow Jehovah.
 - 4. But they needed to make a choice and commit to it!
 - P. The people did not answer a word, so Elijah laid out the details of the challenge – highly favoring Baal.
 - 1. Both would place their offerings on the wood of the altar, but light no fire.
 - 2. The offering that was consumed by fire from God would prove the identity of the one, true God.
 - Q. The prophets of Baal called upon him from morning until noon but received no response.
 - R. They began to leap upon the altar and offer their own blood as an enticement but still received no response.
 - S. Elijah mocked them and their god as they continued calling upon Baal until the time of the evening sacrifice with no response.
 - T. Finally, it was time for Jehovah to manifest His power.
 - 1. Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord with twelve stones.
 - 2. He dug a trench around the altar and, after placing the wood and the offering upon the altar, he had 12 barrels of water poured upon it.
 - U. Elijah prayed to God and fire fell from Heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones of the altar, the dust (ashes), and the water!
 - V. When the people saw this wonder, they confessed the truth: “Jehovah, He is God!”
 - W. Having proven Himself to the people, God commanded for the prophets of Baal to face judgment – they were killed by the brook Kishon.
 - X. Thus, Elijah proved himself faithful to God and allowed the nation to witness the power of the Lord.
- II. Israel: The Faithless Failure
- A. The nation of Israel had demonstrated a lack of faith in God when the first asked for a king like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5-7).
 - B. Things became worse when Solomon introduced idolatry into the land through his many wives and concubines (1 Kings 11).
 - C. They had drifted further from the Lord when the kingdom divided in rebellion against God (1 Kings 12).
 - D. Both the leaders and people of Israel persisted in their idolatry and rebellion, progressively become worse.
 - E. In the time of Elijah, Ahab was by far the worst king that Israel had known (1 Kings 16:29-34).
 - 1. He married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians.
 - 2. He began to worship Baal.
 - 3. He even built an altar and temple for Baal in Samaria.
 - 4. He reinstated the “grove” worship of the Ashera with its prostitution.
 - F. To illustrate the attitude of Israel at this time, the Bible records the rebellious attempt to rebuild the city of Jericho.
 - 1. A man from Bethel, named Hiel, sought to rebuild Jericho.

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2. God had promised that anyone who tried to do this would be cursed with the death of his children (Joshua 6:26).
 3. This promise was fulfilled exactly in the deaths of Hiel's two sons.
 - G. The marriage of Ahab to Jezebel records the first time that wife of the King was emphasized (16:28-33).
 - H. Though Ahab was King, Jezebel was the power behind the throne – she ruled her husband and the nation.
 - I. Jezebel, through King Ahab, sought to destroy the true worshippers of Jehovah.
 - J. The prophet Obadiah hid 100 prophets from the Queen when she began to have them murdered (1 Kings 18:3-4, 13).
 - K. According to Elijah, the people agreed with Jezebel in this and may have helped her to kill God's faithful prophets (1 Kings 19:10).
 - L. Notice that the further the nation drifted from God the greater their oppression became.
 1. Obedience to God produces liberty.
 2. Rebellion against God leads to tyranny.
 - M. Following Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal, the people of Israel acknowledged the Jehovah is the one, true God of Heaven.
 - N. However, this confession should have been followed with genuine repentance.
 - O. Only by turning to the Lord could Israel become a blessed nation.
- III. America: The Healing Hope
- A. This country was founded upon Bible principles of morality and justice.
 - B. However, as often happens, men drift from those standards of right and wrong into wickedness, greed, and corruption.
 - C. When a person or a people depart from the teaching of Scripture they must be rebuked.
 - D. In fact, that is one of the duties of Christians (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; cf. Luke 3:19-20; Mark 6:17-18; Galatians 2:4-5, 11).
 - E. In this country, the freedom of speech is protected and must be used for the cause of righteousness.
 1. When unjust laws are enacted, we must speak out against them.
 2. When wickedness is encouraged, we must stand against it.
 3. When leaders go astray, we must vote for others who will uphold justice.
 - F. What God said to the nation of Israel still holds true for all people today: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (2 Chronicles 7:14).
 - G. Thus, America – or any country – can become a blessed nation.

Conclusion:

1. Elijah demonstrated the faith and courage needed to rebuke a nation that had gone astray.
2. All followers of God must possess this same boldness.
3. George Washington stated: *"Do not let anyone claim to be a true American who attempts to remove religion from politics."*
4. As free citizens, we must hold ourselves and our leaders accountable to the will of God.

"WE HAVE NO GOVERNMENT ARMED WITH THE POWER CAPABLE OF CONTENDING WITH HUMAN PASSIONS, UNBRIDLED BY MORALITY AND TRUE RELIGION. OUR CONSTITUTION WAS MADE ONLY FOR A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. IT IS WHOLLY INADEQUATE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ANY OTHER." - JOHN ADAMS