

THE END OF THE DROUGHT AFTER ELIJAH'S CONTEST WITH THE PROPHETS OF BAAL: PROVING WHO THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD IS 1 KINGS 18:01–46

Introduction

Does God really exist? Is there truly a Supreme Being who is living and watching over us at all times? Have this earth and universe been created by a Being with unlimited power (omnipotence) and perfect knowledge (omniscience)? And if there is a true and living God, can we know Him personally? Can we really discover Him and learn about Him?

This much we do know: we cannot enter into the spiritual world, the spiritual dimension of being, in order to discover if God truly exists. We are physical, material beings; and no matter how far or fast we travel, no matter what our state of mind, we are still human beings in the physical world, the physical dimension. We cannot penetrate, go over into the spiritual world, not in these physical bodies.

Something else we know: if there is a god who has left us in the dark, ignorant of his existence, unaware of where we came from and where we are going, not knowing what is expected of us, he is a god of hate. We know this because these very actions would show his lack of attention, consideration and concern for our welfare. For this reason, we would be doomed to whatever fate he determined, without our ever knowing what to expect.

Conversely, if there is a God of love, He would enlighten us about our existence. He would reveal where we came from and where we are going, reveal what is expected of us. He would also reveal Himself to us, allowing us to know Him personally and to establish a relationship with Him. He would show us the way *through life* and the truth *about life*. And if there was something wrong with our lives, our society, our earth — which we know there is because of sin, lawlessness and violence — this loving God would provide a way for us to be saved out of the wickedness and death of this world.

There is wonderful news! The God of love *has* revealed Himself to us. He came to this earth in the person of the LORD Jesus Christ, in the form of human flesh, to reveal Himself to us. There is only one true and living God, the LORD God Himself (Jehovah, Yahweh) — the God of perfect love, mercy and justice. This is the great lesson of the present passage of Scripture. This is: *The End of the Drought After Elijah's Contest with the Prophets of Baal: Proving Who the True and Living God Is*, 1 Kings 18:1-46.

- I. The end of the drought promised by the LORD, not Baal: God alone has the power to meet desperate needs (v. 1).
 - II. The encounter between Elijah and Ahab worked out by the LORD, not Baal: God alone is sovereign (vv. 2-16).
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III. The vindication of the LORD, not Baal, on Mount Carmel: the LORD alone is the true and living God (vv. 17-46).

I. *1 Kings 18: 01 The End of the Drought Promised by the LORD, Not Baal*

The LORD God Himself — not the false god Baal — promised to end the drought and famine. And note, the drought and famine had swept over the land for almost three years. By now the entire nation was in desperate straits with many on the verge of starvation, and perhaps some had already starved to death (5-6; 17:12). But despite the severity of the drought and famine, Ahab and the people of the Northern Kingdom did not turn to the LORD for help. There is no record of their being willing to repent of their sinful, wicked ways; no record of their willingness to turn away from idolatry and false worship and to begin once again to worship the LORD genuinely and wholeheartedly.

Nevertheless, the LORD was ready to prove that He alone — not their false god — could meet their desperate needs. In mercy and compassion, the LORD commanded Elijah to go present himself to King Ahab, for it was time for the LORD to send rain upon the land. It was time for the famine to end and for the needs of the people to be met. In obedience to the LORD, Elijah left to confront the king.

Thought 1. A lesson that we must learn is this: the LORD alone can meet the desperate needs of man, the agonizing cries of the human heart when confronted with terrible crises. Medical doctors can usually help us when we are sick, even when facing a terminal illness. They can generally help ease the pain and frequently prolong our lives. But only for a while. Their help only delays, never stops, the inevitable day of death.

Counsellors and friends can help us when we are facing disability, emotional difficulties, divorce, financial problems, guilt or some other severe crisis. But counsellors and friends can never bridge the gap of alienation between man and God. They can never grant to man the peace and firm assurance of never having to die. This desperate need for reconciliation with God — for being perfectly assured that we are acceptable to Him and will live with Him eternally — can be met only by God. Moreover, only God can meet the cry of the human heart for meaning and purpose and for a sense of security and fulfilment. A conquering, victorious spirit that triumphs over all the hardships, misfortunes and temptations of this life can come only from the LORD.

When we face the desperate situations of life, the LORD alone can help us. And the wonderful message is just this: the LORD will help us in our hour of need. This is the wonderful promise of His Holy Word:

John 1:12 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 12:46 *"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*

John 14:1-2 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."*

Rom 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Cor 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

2 Cor 12:9 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

Heb 2:17-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

James 4:7 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

1 Pet 4:12-13 *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

Rev 21:4 *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will 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.*

Psa 12:5 *"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."*

Psa 34:19-20 *A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all. He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.*

Psa 37:3 *Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.*

Psa 41:3 *The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.*

Psa 50:15 *And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.*

Psa 138:7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.

Isa 25:4 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.

Isa 41:17 "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them."

Isa 43:1-2 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

II. 1 Kings 18:02–16 The Encounter Between Elijah and Ahab

The LORD God Himself — not the false god Baal — arranged the encounter between Elijah and Ahab. For some time God had been moving events to arrange the encounter. By working things out for His prophet and the king to meet, God proved that He alone is sovereign, that He alone controls the events of this world and the affairs of men. Nothing happens that is beyond His control, that He does not allow. Scripture shows how God arranged the meeting between His prophet and King Ahab:

1. Sometime earlier God had placed Obadiah — a strong, faithful believer — in Ahab's court (vv. 2-6). Obadiah was manager of the royal palace, which meant that he was the chief administrator and steward of the king's properties. It was a position that could be termed *minister of state*, one who served as the personal representative of the king. Some commentators feel that this position was second in command to the king.

To stress Obadiah's commitment to the LORD, Scripture tells us that he had risked his life to save 100 prophets from Jezebel's bloody purge of God's servants (v. 4). Remember, the infamous Jezebel was the wife of Ahab. Apparently Jezebel had launched a murderous campaign against the LORD's prophets, seeking to kill them all in order to eliminate the worship of the LORD throughout the land. Doing all he could, Obadiah sought to save 100 of the prophets by hiding them in two caves, fifty in each, and providing food and water for them.

After almost three years, the effects of the famine were reaching into the royal court. For that reason Ahab sent Obadiah on a desperate search to find pasture land for the royal horses and mules to keep them from starving (vv. 5-6). Dividing the land between himself and Obadiah, Ahab went in one direction and Obadiah in the other.

2. God had arranged the events so Obadiah's and Elijah's paths would cross (vv. 7-16). As Obadiah was walking along, suddenly he saw and recognized Elijah approaching him. He could hardly believe his eyes. When they finally reached each other, Obadiah

humbled himself by bowing to the ground out of respect for God's prophet. With a sense of urgency, Elijah immediately charged Obadiah to go and summon King Ahab to meet him (v. 8). But stricken with fear, Obadiah sensed that Elijah's command would mean certain death for himself (vv. 9-11). Obadiah knew that Ahab might think he had been hiding Elijah from the king. For Ahab had been making a desperate and thorough search for Elijah, a search that had reached into every nation and kingdom. Obadiah also knew that the Spirit of the LORD might call Elijah to go elsewhere, and Elijah would not be there when Ahab arrived (vv. 11-12). The result would be catastrophic, for Ahab's anger would be aroused and he could possibly execute Obadiah.

Thus Obadiah pled with Elijah to excuse him from the dangerous task (vv. 13-16). He informed Elijah that he had already risked his life enough by saving the prophets from Jezebel's bloody purge. Pleading with all his heart, he told Elijah that if he reported the prophet's whereabouts to Ahab then failed to produce him, it would mean certain death for him (Obadiah).

Elijah assured Obadiah by swearing an oath that he would remain there to confront King Ahab that very day (v. 15). Being assured, Obadiah carried the challenge to Ahab and the king accepted the challenge. He immediately went to confront Elijah, the LORD's prophet (v. 16).

Thought 1. The LORD alone is sovereign. He alone has the power to move events to accomplish His purposes. He alone can work things out to fulfil His promises. God has absolute power throughout the universe, controlling all events, including all the affairs of men. Therefore nothing happens that God does not allow to happen. But in thinking about the sovereignty of God, we must remember three facts: God also gave us a free will. God allows us to exercise our free will, to do what we want when we want. But our free will, our action, is limited. God allows us to go only so far before He steps in and stops us. This means that every movement, every thought, every event that happens to us — although known to God — is not minutely, actively caused or manoeuvred by God. Again, God allows us to exercise our free will, to think, to reach out our arms at any given moment, to act within the bounds of our capabilities. But the very source of our mind and body is God. God gave us the mind and the body we have and the free will to do with this body what we desire.

We must remember another fact as well: in the exercise of our free will, we bear the consequences of our actions. One of the basic principles of life ordained by God is this: we reap what we sow. God is in total control, but He has ordained that we have a free will and that when we exercise our free will, certain consequences do occur. Simply stated, God has ordained a framework or bounds within which our free will works.

But in dealing with the sovereignty of God, there is a wonderful truth that God has revealed to us in His Holy Word: that is, He is working out all things for our good, for the good of all who truly love and follow Him (Rom 8:28). And God is moving

the whole universe toward the climactic day known as The Great Day of Redemption. This is the climactic day when the present heavens and earth will be remade into the new heavens and earth, recreated to be the perfect, eternal home of all believers who truly love and follow the LORD.

God is moving events and working all things out for the good of His dear people. No matter what confronts a genuine believer — hardship or trial, misfortune or accident, disease or suffering — God will strengthen and help His follower. He will work all things out for the believer's good. The sovereignty of God is one of the great truths of this universe. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about His sovereignty:

Mat 5:34 *"But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne."*

Mat 6:13 *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

Acts 17:24 *The God who made the world and everything in it is the LORD of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.*

Rom 8:28-29 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers.*

Rom 9:19-21 *One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?*

1 Cor 15:25 *For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

1 Tim 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Rev 15:3 *And sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of ages."*

Rev 19:6-9 *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, "Hallelujah! For our LORD God Almighty reigns."*

Rev 20:11 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.*

Exo 15:18 *"The LORD reigns for ever and ever."*

Deut 4:39 *Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.*

1 Chr 29:12 *Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.*

2 Chr 20:6 *And said: "LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you."*

Job 12:19 *He leads priests away stripped and overthrows officials long established.*

Psa 10:16 *The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land.*

Psa 22:28 *For dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.*

Psa 24:10 *Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty — he is the King of glory.*

Psa 29:10 *The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.*

Psa 45:6 *Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom.*

Psa 47:2 *For the LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.*

Psa 59:13 *Consume them in your wrath, consume them till they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob.*

Psa 67:7 *May God bless us still, so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.*

Psa 72:11 *May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.*

Psa 83:18 *Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD — that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.*

Psa 93:1 *The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and is armed with strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.*

Psa 103:19 *The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

Psa 135:6 *The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths.*

Prov 21:1 *In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.*

Isa 9:7 *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

Isa 37:28-29 *“But I know where you are and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.*”

Isa 44:24-25 *“This is what the LORD says — your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense.*”

Isa 66:1 *This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?”*

Jer 23:5 *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.”*

Dan 2:20 *And said: “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.”*

Dan 4:35 *All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”*

Dan 4:37 *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

Dan 5:21 *He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.*

Dan 7:14 *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Thought 2. In the commentary *Mastering the Old Testament*, Russell Dilday has an excellent application dealing with Obadiah that is worth quoting in its entirety:

Obadiah has been described as a good man in a bad place. His firmness and religious zeal did not prevent him from retaining his place of honour and dignity in the royal court. Should godly Obadiah have resigned his post in the wicked court in protest? That is the action some righteous people take as they confront evil situations, but the New Testament makes it clear that at times disciples are to remain in an imperfect environment in order to be salt and leaven for good. Jesus prayed, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Sometimes Christian boldness necessitates a costly withdrawal,

the resignation from a high-paying job, the cancellation of a contract, the refusal to join a certain organization. But sometimes Christ-like valour means sweetening the sour situation by staying. Like Obadiah, some are called to be "good people in a bad place." (Russell Dilday. *1, 2 Kings*, pp. 208-209)

III. *1 Kings 18:017–46 The Vindication of the LORD on Mount Carmel*

The LORD God Himself — not the false god Baal — vindicated His existence on Mt. Carmel. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel is an exciting, suspenseful story that is high drama at its best. It is a well-known story among Christian circles and its importance cannot be overemphasized. The purpose of the confrontation between God's prophet and the prophets of the false god Baal is a critical lesson for every generation to learn: to prove that the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) is the only living and true God. Scripture gives a descriptive account of the contest:

1. Elijah's confrontation with Ahab paints a picture of judgment due to sin (vv. 18-20). As soon as the two men met face-to-face, Ahab angrily and sarcastically charged Elijah with being a *troublemaker*, the person responsible for the severe drought and famine sweeping the land.

By taking the initiative, Elijah fired back at Ahab that he was really the *troublemaker*, the person who had brought famine upon the land. It was Ahab and his descendants who had sinned, forsaking the commandments of the LORD and committing idolatry and false worship, following the false god Baal (v. 18). Then giving Ahab no time to respond, Elijah challenged the king to summon the people to a contest on Mt. Carmel, a contest between himself and the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah (v. 19). Note that 450 of the prophets served the false god Baal and the other 400 prophets served the false god Asherah. Ahab accepted the challenge, no doubt thinking this would be the one way he could get rid of the troublesome prophet and eliminate the worship of the LORD once and for all (v. 20). Completely deceived by his faith in and worship of the false god Baal, Ahab excitedly sent word of the contest throughout all the Northern Kingdom, summoning the people to attend. Obviously, there were multiplied thousands who gathered together to witness the contest.

Thought 1. The confrontation between Elijah and Ahab is a clear picture of judgment due to sin. Drought and famine had stricken the land because of the sin and wickedness of both Ahab and the Israelites. Through chastisement or discipline, God was seeking to lead the Israelites to repentance, to arouse them to turn away from lives of wickedness. He was seeking to turn them from false worship and idolatry back to Him.

So it is with us: when we sin, God chastises us just as a parent does when his or her child misbehaves. Through the chastisement, God hopes to arouse us to turn away from our sin and back to Him. If we continue in sin, we will eventually harm ourselves or damage the lives of others. Thus God disciplines us to keep us from destroying our selves or others. This is the clear teaching of God's Holy Word:

John 15:2 *“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”*

1 Cor 11:30-32 *That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.*

Heb 12:5-6 *And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”*

Rev 3:19 *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

Deut 8:5 *Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.*

Psa 94:12 *Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law.*

Prov 3:11-12 *My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

2. As soon as all the people and false prophets had gathered, Elijah stood before them and presented his challenge, explaining the contest (vv. 21-24). But first he rebuked the people for wavering between two opinions. No longer could they debate who the true and living God was. No longer could they claim that all gods were equal, that all gods represented the one true and living God. No longer could they serve both the LORD and Baal. It was time to make a decision, time to make a forceful and conclusive declaration that the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) was the only living and true God. All other *so-called* gods were false, just the creation of man’s imagination. The people could no longer straddle the fence, engaging in the worship of both Jehovah and false gods, no longer limp along between two opinions. They must now decide, take a stand for the LORD and declare the truth, that He and He alone was the true and living God.

But note the response of the people: they stood silent. They said nothing, not a single word. They were completely unwilling to respond to Elijah’s challenge. They were unwilling to make a decision for the LORD.

Having presented his call for a decision, Elijah then presented the proposal of a contest to the people, a contest to prove who the true and living God was (vv. 22-24). He instructed the people to secure two bulls, one for him and one for the prophets of Baal. Once secured, he and the Baal prophets would prepare their bulls for sacrifice and then place them on the altars. The Baal prophets would then call upon their god and he would call upon the LORD, and whoever sent fire down to consume the sacrifice would be the true and living God (v. 24).

Keep in mind that Baal was thought to be the god of fertility and production, the god who controlled the weather, including the clouds, rain, storms and dew. Of course, if the god of the storm were really the true and living God, he could call down lightning upon the sacrifice to consume it.

Thought 1. Note the picture of indecision on the part of the people in this point. This is a strong challenge to us to make a decision for the LORD — in particular if we are engaged in false worship or are attending a church where the LORD Jesus Christ is not honoured or the Word of God is not preached. The call of God is for us to make a decision for Christ and to study His Holy Word, learning His commandments and growing into mature believers. God will not tolerate indecision, not for long. It is now time to make a decision for the LORD and to become a follower of His.

(1) God warns us against indecision.

Mat 12:30 *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”*

Luke 9:62 *Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

Luke 11:23 *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.”*

Luke 16:13 *“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*

James 1:8 *He is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

James 4:8 *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

1 Kng 18:21 *Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.*

2 Chr 25:2 *He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not wholeheartedly.*

Hosea 10:2 *Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will demolish their altars and destroy their sacred stones.*

(2) A decision must be made for the LORD. Now is the time to step forward, professing the LORD and taking a stand for Him.

Mark 10:21 *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

John 6:67 *“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.*

2 Cor 6:2 *...now is the time of God's favour; now is the day of salvation.*

Deut 30:15 *See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.*

Deut 30:19 *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.*

Josh 24:15 *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”*

3. Once the bulls had been brought, Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal to choose one of the bulls and to prepare it for sacrifice, but not to light the fire under the sacrifice. Accepting the challenge, the false prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice first then began to pray. Calling on their false god Baal to light the fire, they danced around the altar from morning until noon (vv. 25-26). But there was no answer, no response to their prayers. The false god Baal was silent.

Sometime around noon, Elijah began to mock and taunt the false prophets. He suggested they shout louder, for perhaps Baal was meditating, busy at some task, traveling or off sleeping someplace and needed to be awakened (v. 27). Becoming somewhat frantic in their ritual, the false prophets began shouting more loudly and following the ritual custom of cutting themselves and letting their blood flow. This was a symbol of self-sacrifice, which they hoped would arouse their false god Baal to take action. Note that the mutilation of the body, cutting oneself to let the blood flow, was prohibited by the LORD (Lev 19:28; Deut 14:1).

As midday passed, the false prophets continued their frantic, feverish raving until time for the evening sacrifice (v. 29).

Thought 1. This is a clear picture of the futility of idolatry and false worship. The prophets of the false god Baal prayed and did all they could to arouse him to action. They even went so far as to mutilate their bodies, shed their own blood in an attempt to propitiate or satisfy the false god Baal. Hoping that the sacrifice of their own blood would make them acceptable to Baal, they continued to mutilate their bodies from noon until midday.

All false gods are just this: false. They are nonexistent, not really living, not possessing life. They are powerless, unable to respond. Being lifeless, they cannot hear prayers nor reach out to help us in our desperate hours of need. False gods are totally incapable of being present with us as we walk day by day. They are unable to guide us or to fulfil any promise ever made by a false prophet. Listen to what the Holy Bible says about idolatry and false worship:

Acts 17:29 *“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by human design and skill.*

Rom 1:22-23 *Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

1 Cor 8:4 *So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.*

1 Cor 12:2 *You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.*

Deut 4:28 *There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.*

Isa 40:20 *A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot; they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.*

Isa 44:10 *Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing?*

Isa 45:20 *“Gather together and come; assemble you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.*

Jer 10:5 *Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field, their idols cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. Do not fear them; they can do no harm nor can they do any good.*

Jer 51:17 *Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. The images he makes are a fraud; they have no breath in them.*

Hosea 13:2 *Now they sin more and more; they make idols for themselves from their silver, cleverly fashioned images, all of them the work of craftsmen. It is said of these people, “They offer human sacrifices! They kiss calf-idols!”*

Hab 2:18 *Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman? Or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak.*

4. Before nightfall, the priests of the false god Baal stepped aside and allowed Elijah to come forth to make his approach to the LORD. Walking to centre stage before the massive crowd, Elijah gave a stunning, dramatic vindication of the LORD. He proved that the LORD alone is the living and true God (vv. 30-46).
 - a. Calling the people to come as close as they could, Elijah rebuilt an altar on Mt. Carmel that had been lying in ruins (vv. 30-35). Most likely it had been an altar built to worship the LORD Himself, but it had been destroyed during Jezebel's purge. Whatever the case, Elijah chose twelve stones to represent or symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, and he used the stones to build the altar. Note that he dug a large trench all the way around the altar (v. 32). He then piled wood on the altar and cut up the bull and laid it on the wood. With this, the sacrifice would normally have been ready to present to the LORD. But in this case, Elijah surprised the crowd by ordering

some men to fill four large water pots and then pour out the water over the offering and the wood. Then, when the men had finished, Elijah instructed them to repeat the procedure. And as if that were not enough, he had them do the same thing a third time. All together, twelve large pots of water had been poured out on the offering and on the wood (vv. 33-34). So much water had been poured that the entire altar was soaked and the trench was completely filled with water (v. 35).

- b. Once the men had completely doused the sacrifice with water, Elijah stepped forward and began to pray to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or Israel); that is, he prayed to the God who had given the covenant to the patriarchs of old (vv. 36-37). Note the three things he prayed for:

=> for the LORD to prove that He alone is God, the God in Israel, the God whom the people of Israel should be worshipping and serving.

=> for the LORD to prove that Elijah was God's true servant who had been appointed to predict the drought and to presently stand before the people to prove that the LORD was the true and living God.

=> for the LORD to hear and answer his prayer so the people would know that his God was the living God and be stirred to repent.

- c. Suddenly, dramatically, fire fell and consumed not only the sacrifice but also the entire altar, lapping up even the water in the trench. In the most dramatic way possible, the LORD had heard Elijah's prayer and was proving that He and He alone was the living and true God.

Witnessing the astonishing miracle of the LORD, the people were stricken with a terrifying fear. Falling prostrate upon the ground, the people cried out: "The LORD — He is God! The LORD — He is God!" (v. 39).

- d. Elijah immediately commanded the people to seize and execute the false prophets of Baal (v. 40). Why execute them? Because their terrible sin and evil had ruined the nation and brought catastrophic suffering upon the people. No doubt the prophets were so given over to their false beliefs that they would never repent, never change by turning to the LORD. Instead, they would continue to pollute the land with false beliefs and false worship, deceiving the people and leading them to suffer terrible consequences and eventually eternal doom, (see notes, Deut 7:1-26; 13:1-18; 17:2-5.)
- e. At long last, the drought and famine were to end, for Elijah began to pray fervently for rain (vv. 41-43). He instructed Ahab to go off to the side someplace to eat a meal, for there was the sound of a heavy rain off in the distance. While Ahab did as instructed, Elijah climbed to the top of Mt. Carmel. There he bowed down to the ground and put his face between his knees, praying and crying out to the LORD to send rain to end the drought (v. 42). Arising, Elijah sent his servant to look toward the Mediterranean Sea for rain clouds. But the servant saw no cloud (v. 43). But note

what Elijah did: he did not give up; rather, he continued fervently in prayer (v. 43). Seven different times he bowed down to the ground and put his face between his knees and continued to cry out to the LORD for rain, to end the drought and famine.

- f. After seeking the LORD for the seventh time, Elijah was dramatically heard. The LORD answered his prayer. When the servant returned for the seventh time, he reported that a cloud as small as a man's hand was rising out over the sea (v. 44). With this news, Elijah warned Ahab to rush back to the palace before the torrential downpour caught him. As he was speaking, dark clouds began to appear and strong winds began to blow (vv. 44-45). Ahab and the massive crowd on Mt. Carmel were witnessing another proof of the LORD's power and sovereignty: the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) was the only living and true God.

Note that Ahab had jumped in his chariot and headed off toward Jezreel. Running ahead of the chariot was Elijah, who had been energized by the LORD. And he ran all the way to Jezreel which was a distance of thirteen miles. In the words of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

*What a momentous day it had been for the king! How his head must have reeled with the thoughts of the contest: the pitiful screams of Baal's helpless priests, the calm yet awe-inspiring petition of Elijah, the terrifying and spectacular holocaust that followed, the repentance of the people, and the execution of the pagan prophets! As Ahab rode along through the gathering downpour, the spirit-empowered prophet through whom God had effected his great triumph ran ahead of the royal chariot like a spectre (v. 46). (Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel. *1, 2 Kings*, p. 146)*

Thought 1. There is no other God but One: the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) is the only living and true God. All other gods are false, nonexistent, helpless and powerless to hear prayers or to answer prayers or to move and act on our behalf. If we are engaged in worshipping false gods, we are left all alone in this world to face the problems and trials, the hardships and misfortunes, the temptations and seductions. We are left all alone to face these difficulties by ourselves. Naturally, if the god we are worshipping is only the god of our imagination, nothing more than a thought in our mind, then that god is lifeless and helpless, unable to save or deliver us in this life and unable to give us life eternal in the next world.

But the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh) is the living and true God. We know this, for the LORD loves us so much that He has revealed Himself to us. He did not leave us groping and grasping about in the dark, wondering if there really is a true and living God. The LORD is not a God of hate; He is a God of perfect love. And being perfect in love, He has revealed Himself so that we will know the truth, the truth that He exists and has provided salvation for us. God has revealed Himself through the LORD Jesus Christ, by sending Him into the world to save us and to teach us how to live.

Yet God has given us even more than Christ, who is the Living Word. God has given us the written Word, the Holy Bible, which tells us how to live holy and righteous lives. But even this is not all that God has given us: He has also given us His very own Holy Spirit to live within our bodies, once we have accepted Him as our Saviour and committed our lives to follow Him. In addition to all these evidences and proofs of the LORD, the LORD has given us changed lives, the testimony of millions of people down through the ages who have been truly and genuinely saved. Millions have experienced a radical change from lives of total wickedness to lives of holiness and righteousness before God.

There is only one living and true God, the LORD Himself (Jehovah, Yahweh). Listen to what the Holy Scripture says:

Mat 26:63-64 *But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Acts 14:15 *"Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."*

Acts 17:24 *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands."*

1 Th 1:9-10 *For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*

Heb 10:28-31 *Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Heb 11:3 *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

2 Pet 1:11 *For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Rev 1:8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Deut 32:40 *I lift my hand to heaven and solemnly swear: As surely as I live forever,*

Deut 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'*

Neh 9:6 *You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

Job 12:9 *Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?*

Job 26:7 *He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.*

Psa 8:3-4 *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*

Psa 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Psa 42:2 *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

Psa 84:2 *My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.*

Psa 102:25 *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.*

Psa 135:13 *Your name, O LORD, endures forever; your renown, O LORD, through all generations.*

Psa 139:14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Psa 145:13 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.*

Eccl 3:11 *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

Dan 6:26 *I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ■*