

The Lord is the Only God

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Date: 23 September 2018

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[0 : 00] Our Bible reading for this morning is taken from 1 Kings 18, verse 16-29. 1 Kings 18, 16-29, on page 359 of the Church Bible.

So Badiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, Is that you, you troubler of Israel?

I have not made trouble for Israel, Elijah replied. But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals.

Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel, and bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.

So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel, and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, How long will you waver between two opinions?

[1 : 08] If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal is God, follow him. But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has 450 prophets.

Get two bulls for us. Let Baal's prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it.

I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your God, and I will call on the name of the Lord, the God who answers by fire.

He is God. Then all the people said, What you say is good. Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first.

Since there are so many of you, call on the name of your God, but do not light the fire. So they took the bull that was given to them and prepared it.

[2 : 12] Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. Baal, answer us. They shouted, but there was no response. No one answered.

And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon, Elijah began to taunt them, Shout louder, he said. Surely he is God. Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling.

Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened. So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response. No one answered. No one paid attention.

This is the word of God. And if children want to come, if you want to bring a grown-up with you to help, then that's fine. I know we're just fixing the altar here.

[3 : 21] Thanks, Emily. We're fine. We're fine. We're doing fine. So, is everyone at the front who wants to be at the front?

Okay. We're going to ask for God's help as we turn to look at this bit of God's word together. So let's bow our heads, and I'll lead us in a prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that you have spoken to us about who you are in your word, the Bible. And we pray that you would help us to listen with ears that are ready, and you give us minds that can understand, and you give us hearts that are willing to accept your word.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Great. Well, last week in Big Church, we started a new series, and we've called it The Big Fight Live. And it's all about these two people called Elijah and Elisha.

But they weren't wrestlers having a big fight with each other. What happened was Elijah and Elisha were sent by God because God was fighting against Baal.

[4 : 30] Baal was a different God who his people were worshipping. And it all happened 900 years before Jesus was born. 900 years before Jesus even.

That the people were worshipping this other God called Baal. They were living in the promised land, Israel. God had taken them under the leader Moses into that land. Joshua had led them in.

And then they were living there. But they have a new leader, not Joshua, not Moses. They have a leader called King Ahab. And he's really bad. And he tells the people, stop worshipping the Lord, the God of the Bible.

Worship this other God, Baal. And his wife, Jezebel, is going around and finding prophets of the one true God and killing them. That's how bad it is.

Okay, so this big showdown on a mountain called Mount Carmel. And we're going to go there together. Okay, so here's a picture. It's still there in Israel. Mountains don't change a lot in 3,000 years.

[5 : 28] There it is. And we're going to go back in time. We're going to step into our time machine. And we're going to come out of our time machine and be back at Mount Carmel. I managed to find a picture without eroding.

You see what I did? So that we can see. This is it. It's 870 BC. And I need a volunteer. Somebody who can be Elijah. Anyone willing to volunteer?

Okay, Hannah is going to be Elijah. No? Okay. Right. Hannah's going to be Elijah. Elijah. I wouldn't normally just choose my kids, but we didn't actually have many volunteers there.

Okay? Just so we're clear. I can see my wife is looking on in despair. So here we are. Elijah. We'll deal with it at home. Here comes Elijah.

Okay? Now, Elijah, you need some sort of headgear. I think this might not be very comfortable, but we're going to try it. There we are. Elijah. Elijah. And, oh, we need good facial hair.

[6 : 37] Elijah had very good facial hair. There we go. This is Elijah. And I think our other children, you need to help Elijah, because we've got big jobs for Elijah today.

Okay? So what happens is, right, Elijah sends out a message to all the prophets, and all the people of Israel, and he says, come and meet me at Mount Carmel.

Okay? And there were 450 prophets for the other god, for Baal, and Elijah is the only one who comes following the Lord of the Bible. So we've got Elijah here, and what we're going to do is, you guys, if Michael just puts his hand up again from where you are, you see where Michael is, if you're in Michael's row or further forward, you are the prophets of Baal.

Okay? And anyone behind, you're the people. Right? And on the side aisles, you can be the people. All right? So the prophets of Baal are telling us to follow Baal, and you're the people listening in. So lots of audience participation from the crowd and the prophets. So Elijah... Elijah... Which God do you follow?

[8 : 01] Now you have to say, you have to say this, okay? If I'd known it was you, we could have practiced. This is you. This is you. The Lord, he is God.

Brilliant. The Lord, he is God. And the rest of us, okay, because the people, we're drawn in by the prophets, we shout, we love Baal. Okay?

That's who we're after. So Elijah is completely on his own. No idea where I am. Here we go. Right. So, right.

Elijah has a plan. Okay. He says this to the crowds. He says... There. Yeah. How long will it take you to make up your mind?

If the Lord is the one and only God worship him. But if Baal is the one and only God worship him. Okay.

[8 : 56] It's a good idea, isn't it? And the people didn't say anything at all. So it's all quiet. And Elijah has a plan. He says, let's get two bulls. And he says to the prophet, you can choose your bull.

And you can prepare it. And put it on your altar to Baal. And then you call on the name of Baal. And I'll call on the name of the Lord. And whichever God answers by fire, that's the God we should serve.

And it seems like a good plan to everybody. So the people say it's on the screen. What you are saying is good. So we say that together. What you are saying is good.

We agree with the plan. Okay. So the prophets of Baal have got their altar. And they choose one of the bulls. So here we go. So which of these bulls do you think is most likely to catch fire?

We need to give Baal a chance. Okay. Which one do you think? You think this one. Brilliant. Okay. Well let's go with this one. For Baal. Give him a chance. Okay.

[10 : 01] And we have to cut up the bull. I think I'm just going to tear it apart with my bare hands. This bull. I know we had scissors. But I've done it now. Okay.

And we're going to place the bull on the altar. So could two of you do that for me please? Is that alright? Okay. You two. Okay. So just peeling that. And when you peel the...
Not the whole thing. There we go. There we go. Like that. And then it sticks on. Okay. Brilliant.
Okay. So we just stick that up there. So we've got the meat.
And we've got the stones that were artistically provided by Emily. And we've got the sticks that were provided by Storm Alley this week. Okay. So they cut it up. And then we have to shout.
From morning to lunchtime they shouted. That's a long time isn't it to shout? And they shout. Baal!
Answer us! Baal! We do that. Answer us!
[10 : 54] Baal! Answer us! Baal! Answer us! Ours. But there's no answer. Okay. There's no answer. So Elijah says this.

Oh hang on. Baal! Shout louder. Surely he is a god. Maybe he's deep in thoughts. Or maybe he's on holiday.

Or maybe he's on the loo. Or maybe he's fallen asleep. Wake him up. Okay. That's what Elijah says. He actually says maybe he's busy. But it's a euphemism.

So here we go. So we go again. We go again. We're not having that mockery of our god Baal. So let's go. Baal! Baal! Answer us! Baal! Answer us!

Baal! Answer us! No response. So we try something else. We try something else. Especially the prophets. But we can all join in. They dance. Alright. So can we all stand up?

[11 : 51] And while we're shouting we have to dance. Now there is no special Baal dance. It's freestyle. Okay. Can we have the music please? Y'all ready for this? Baal!

Answer us! Baal! Baal! Answer us! Baal! Answer us! Not you, no. Okay. That's enough. That's enough.

That's great. Well done everybody. But it doesn't work. It doesn't work. Okay. So they try something else.

The next thing they do is they slash themselves with swords and spears until they're bleeding. Because they think that Baal might answer them if they start bleeding for him. Now we're not going to try that one.

But we get the final response. And it's verse 29. It's on the screen. But there wasn't any reply. No one answered. No one paid any attention.

[12 : 47] Now here's the thing to think about. Why didn't it work? Why didn't it work? Can anyone have a think? Yeah, go on. Because Baal isn't real. Brilliant. Brilliant. Dad, my hair came off.

Okay. You hang on there. It didn't work because Baal isn't real. That's why it didn't work. That's it. Because there's nobody in heaven by that name.

By the name Baal. And that's our first point this morning for us to remember. We've got two to remember. And the first one is don't follow other gods. None of them is real.

Baal isn't real. But the thing is that on that day at Mount Carmel. Baal looked very real before that day. Because you looked around you in Israel. And everybody worshipped Baal.

Baal had a temple. He had altars everywhere. He's got loads of people speaking about him. You talk to your friends. They talk about Baal. Your family. They talk about Baal. Everyone goes to worship Baal.

[13 : 46] Your friends worship Baal. And for you to decide Baal's not real. Well, I'm not going to worship him. For you to do that would mean you were totally on your own. By yourself. And it's a little bit like that today, isn't it?

Because there are people around us all worshipping other gods. You might be in a school where most of the people in your school are Muslims. Or your best friend might be a Sikh or a Hindu. And it's very important for us to love people who are in other religions. Jesus called us to really love our enemies. They're not our enemies. Love everybody. To love everybody.

So it's very important that we love them. But we must remember that none of their gods are real. They're like Baal. Allah in the Quran, he's not real. And he won't answer us because they're not real.

And lots of grown-ups. For us as grown-ups. We have people around us who maybe they're not a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh. But they've made up a new kind of God.

[14 : 45] And they might think something like, well, I think there's a God. But he's going to accept everybody into his heaven. Everybody. No matter what they've done or what they believe. Or I'm going to believe in a God that says, as long as you're not a really, really bad person.

As long as you're quite a good person, by my reckoning. Then you'll get into his heaven. And that God, he's not real. He's not real. Now, I know that's hard because we see people spending so much of their lives devoted to religions for different gods.

Like Allah and Krishna and Vishnu. And we learn about them at school or in the papers. But those gods are not true. And God says, don't follow other gods. None of them is real.

So what happens next? Well, the first thing Elijah does is he makes his altar. So we're going to finish off. There's like a broken altar and he makes it.

So can people help me? Is that all right? We've got some stones here. And we can help Elijah. So we just peel that off to make it sticky.

[15:50] Someone has not done it yet. Have you done one yet? Are you happy to do one? Okay. Well, I don't think we can do that one, actually. Here we go.

You can do that one with Emily. Great. Now, why is he having to build the altar? Do you know why? Because it was the altar to the God of the Bible. So it had been smashed. It had fallen down.

That's how alone Elijah is. The whole country is against him. And if you wanted to be popular, you worship Baal. And here he is. And he's making the altar again to the Lord.

And he looks like a fool. And he builds his altar. Well done, guys. That's brilliant. And it's to the Lord. So let's put this on as well. Can someone help me do this? Yeah, great.

Okay, let's do this. Because he wants people to know that he's worshipping the Lord. Okay, that one's ready. Okay. Okay.

[16:49] Okay, let's go and stick that up. Let's come and stick that up. Can we stick that up here, do you think, on that side? Let's push it down. Okay.

So he builds his altar, right, to the Lord. And we need to get our bull again, don't we? The one that was not likely to catch fire.

And we're going to stick our bull on. He cuts it up. Okay. He gets them to prepare it. Okay. Let's stick that on the altar.

Okay. Okay. Brilliant.

Thank you so much for your help. That's brilliant. Okay, should we sit down again? And Elijah, you stay here. Okay. And then he builds a ditch. He digs a ditch around the altar.

[17:42] And then he does something really weird. Okay. This is not what you would do if you want fire on an altar. He gets water. He gets four big jars of water.

And he makes them pour water all over the altar. Okay. And then do you know what he does? He does it again.

He does it again. Four big jars of water. And he has it poured all over the altar. And then do you know what he does? He does it again. He gets four big jars of water.

And he pours them on the altar. So that the water goes all around the altar. And it fills the ditch all around the sides of the altar. And then do you know what he does next? He doesn't shout.

And he doesn't dance. And he doesn't cut himself. No, he says a prayer. He says a prayer. And I'll just read this prayer for us. It's on the screen. He says, Lord, you are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

[18:47] Today, let everyone know that you are God in Israel. Let them know I'm your servant. Let them know I've done all these things because you commanded me to. Answer me.

Lord, answer me. Then these people will know that you are the one and only God. They'll know that you are turning their hearts back to you again. That's all he says.

And do you know what happened? Fire came down from heaven. It comes down.

And it burns up the stones. And all the water comes off of steam. It's amazing. Fire comes from heaven and dries everything up. It's a miracle. And the people see it.

And they fall on their knees. And they have a new shout. They say, The Lord, he is God. Let's do it together. The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God.

[19:43] The Lord, he is God. Okay. Because the Lord is the one and only God. It was brilliant. It was a brilliant day. So our second point is this.

Serve the Lord because he is the one and only God. Here is a nation that had completely turned away from God. And God showed up that day and he met with them before their very eyes on Mount Carmel.

Because he wants them to know who he is. And then as the crowd sees God and turns back to him, Elijah has to deal with the prophets who had lied to the people.

And he has to, these people had led the people away from God. So let me read verse 40. So they grabbed them. Are we okay? You're doing such good listening, guys.

Can we just keep listening to the end of the story? So about the prophets, it says, So they grabbed them. Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley. There he had them put to death.

[20 : 42] So those are difficult verses for us today. You might want to talk to them afterwards with your family if you're a child here. But God had said that Israel were to be his special people. And the whole world depended on them.

Because if they worshipped God properly, the whole world would come to see that Yahweh, the Lord of the Bible, is the one true God. And so God had warned, If anybody turns my people away from me to other gods, they'll have to be put to death.

And that's hard for us today. But it shows us that we're not messing around here when it comes to God. There will come a day of judgment when God will say he won't accept people turning from him any longer.

And at the same time, God is saying here, by coming to his people that day, people who rejected him, that anybody can turn to him. So that for the crowd, it was the most wonderful day, the most incredible day, as God showed up and showed the people before their very eyes that he is the one true God.

And you know what? We have something even more amazing for us today. You see, we might think, Oh, I wish I'd been there on Mount Carmel when the fire came from heaven. Then I'd really know that God is God.

[21 : 54] But God sent them a fire, and God has sent us his own son into the world so that we can know. Not to Mount Carmel, but to a different mountain, Mount Zion in Jerusalem, where he did things that only God can do.

And they had an altar with a bull on it to sacrifice to God. But God has now given us his own sacrifice, that Jesus came and died on the cross so that we can come back to God.

And they saw fire come, and it burned up the stones. But you know, when Jesus died, God moved the stone from the tomb and brought Jesus back to life. And he didn't just smash stones to bits, he smashed death to bits so that we can see Jesus alive again after he died and know the God of the Bible is the one true God, and I can trust him.

And Jesus came to more than 500 witnesses so that people could see him alive and tell us the good news. And we today, we have the Holy Spirit who's come to be with us so that he changes our lives.

And from that, we can know that the God of the Bible is the one true God. So serve the Lord because he is the one true God, the God who is really there. So what are we going to do about it? Well, as you came in, hopefully, you got given some flames, some red and yellow sheets.

[23 : 14] And at the central side of every row, there were some pens in the Bible boxes as well, if you need those, or you might have a pen with you, that would help. And we're just going to think a bit about what we want to say to God because of what he did that day at Mount Carmel.

So three questions for us, and they're on the screen. The first one is, what was your favorite moment in the story? And I'd love you to talk about that. Talk about that as a family.

Talk about it with your neighbor. What's your favorite moment in the story? And secondly, what do you want to say to God because he showed up on that mountain or because he showed up as Jesus?

And thirdly, why not think of the name of somebody that you want to write down as a prayer to God, somebody you'd love to come to see, that the God of the Bible is the one true God.

So we're going to have a few minutes now to think about that together. Favorite moment of the story, what we want to say to God, who we'd love to hear this great news. Just a few minutes now to do that. Bear with us.

[24 : 22] What was your favorite moment in the story? Someone happy to tell us? What was your favorite moment? Maybe someone down here. What was your favorite moment? The fire. The fire.

The fire, brilliant. Yeah, was it the same for you or was it something different? The fire, brilliant.

Yeah, wasn't it amazing? The fire came down and it was a great thing. What about you? Yeah, over here. The fire. Yeah, brilliant. The fire was a great moment in the story, wasn't it?

Okay. Brilliant. Well, hopefully you've thought about things you want to say to God as well about that. But we're going to talk to God together and respond to all that God's done. So let's pray.

Let's say a prayer. Wow. Father God, we thank you that you have shown the world that you are the one true God. That you showed it that day with great fire from heaven and you've shown it in sending Jesus, your son, who came down from heaven not to send fire but to rescue us from our sin that we can know you through him.

Wow. Amen. Well, we're going to sing together now and we've thought about how we can know God's truth.