

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

1 KINGS 18

July 17, 2016

Introduction

The story is told about former president Ronald Reagan. He once had an aunt who took him to a cobbler for a pair of new shoes. The cobbler asked young Reagan, “Do you want square toes or round toes?” Unable to decide, Reagan didn’t answer, so the cobbler gave him one square-toed and one round-toed shoe! “This will teach you to never let people make decisions for you,” the cobbler said to him. “I learned right then and there,” Reagan said later, “if you don’t make your own decisions, someone else will.”¹

The 17th and 18th chapter of I Kings is filled with underlines, highlights and notes in my Bible. This is one of my favorite passages, about one of my favorite, beloved characters in the Old Testament: Elijah.

Elijah bursts onto the pages of scripture in the 1 Kings 17. We are told that he was a Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead and that is all. The first recorded words from him are: “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)

Elijah is a firebrand. He is bold, uncompromising and short on words, but heavy in action. He has the unbridled characteristics of the Apostle Peter: quick to action with an unwavering duty and love of God.

In the book, *Battle of the Gods*, Dr. Howard G. Hendricks wrote about this chapter. He introduced it by saying:

Elijah was a prophet God raised up to deal with Baal worship that had swept through the northern kingdom of Israel during the days of the divided monarchy. Baal was worshipped as a storm god who controlled nature and provided fertility to families, fields, and flocks. (Hendricks, 1972)

This chapter can be simply outlined as:

- Elijah confronts Ahab (18:1-19)
- The prophets of Baal defeated (18:20-40)
- God sends rain (18:41-46).

Ahab reigned 22 years in the Northern Kingdom. 1 Kings 16 defines this king's legacy.

1 Kings 16:30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

¹ Swindoll, Charles, *Today in the Word*, Moody Bible Institute, August 1991, 16

Bad Decisions for Ahab

Look with me at all the **bad decisions** Ahab made in these verses;

- He took a wife of the Gentiles, which was expressly forbidden.
- Left the worship of the LORD and served Baal and worshipped him. Baal is the Canaanite storm god, the god that they would pray for bringing rain.
- He built places of worship for Baal and groves for Asherah. Asherah is the Canaanite fertility goddess. The groves were poles placed for worship of Asherah.

Elijah Confronts Ahab

Elijah meets Ahab face to face and Ahab wastes no time in identifying Elijah as the “troubler of Israel.” He does not see that He is the real troubler for the people of Israel.

Elijah says:

1 Kings 18:18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Bad decision – When confronted with his own sin, he did not fall on his knees and seek God’s forgiveness right on the spot.

Elijah challenges Ahab to bring all the Northern Kingdom together at Mount Carmel along with the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.

Elijah Confronts the People

Elijah confronts the people of Israel:

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

Bad decision – the Northern Kingdom gave up their worship of the LORD God and served Baal and Asherah. They gave no regard to the LORD either.

Bad decision – indifferent, apathetic commitment is no commitment at all.

Bad decision – refusing to call upon the name of the LORD for salvation.

Elijah Confronts the Priests

Elijah gave the priests of Baal and Asherah every opportunity to show that their god was the true god.

Bad decision – the priests denied the LORD God and followed these false gods. However, much worse is that they practiced and taught that religion to the Children of God.

From the morning until noon, the priests called to their gods with no response. I am sure that they used the same words as found of Baal worshipers in Acts 19:34, “O Baal, hear us.”

Bad decision – no matter the genuine nature of their worship, worship other than to the LORD is false worship.

Elijah taunts them concerning their god. (18:27)

Elijah Prepares For the Sacrifice

Elijah repairs the Altar of the LORD that was broken down (18:30-32)

Lots of water is poured over the sacrifice, wood, stones

At the time of the evening sacrifice (from about 3:00 PM to nightfall), Elijah prays to God

“LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.” (1 Kings 18:36 & 37)

Jehovah Responds to Elijah’s Prayer

Fire from heaven falls upon the sacrifice of Elijah. The fire is so intense that it consumes the bullock, wood, stones, dust and consumed the water in the trough (18:38)

Good decision – the people fell on their faces and declared; “The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.”

Bad decision – the prophets of did not fall on their faces and pray for forgiveness. As a result, they were slaughtered, by those that they had been engaged with false teaching.

Conclusion

The following is a list of principles on which to rely and apply:

1. Indifferent, apathetic commitment is no commitment at all. (1Kings 18:21).
2. Refusing to call upon the name of the LORD for salvation is the greatest error (1Kings 18:24).
3. No matter the genuine nature of their worship, worship other than to the LORD is false worship (1Kings 18:25–29).
4. Yahweh alone is God and He alone is worthy of our worship (1Kings 18:39).

Question. Whom do you serve today? How many bad decisions towards the LORD are you guilty? The false prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth could have fallen on their faces and sought forgiveness but they did not. Will you continue to serve false gods today?

The LORD of all the universe stands ready this morning to hear your prayers and to bring you back into fellowship with Him.