

Elijah meets Obadiah and Ahab

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Date: 21 February 2021

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to our service and as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing upon his Word. Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks unto thee for the great privilege that thou hast given to us when we can come together to meditate upon thine own Word.

And we acknowledge, O Lord, that without thee we can do nothing, so we seek the help of thine own Spirit to enlighten our understanding and to lead us into thine own truth, that we may come to see wondrous things from thy law.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for thy Word. As the psalmist said of old, the statutes of the Lord are right, and do rejoice the heart.

The Lord's command is pure, and doth light to the eyes impart. They more than gold, yea, much fine gold, to be decided are, than honey, honey from the comb that droppeth sweet and far.

[1 : 1 4] Moreover, they, thy servant, warn how he his life should frame. A great reward provided is for them that keep the same.

Oh, we give thee thanks, O Lord, for the preciousness of thine own Word. And we pray that through the work of thy Spirit, that thy Word would become a living Word for us.

A Word that would be applied to our hearts, where it would be lodged in our hearts and bring forth evidence in our lives, to the glory of thy name and to the eternal good of our souls.

So we seek the help and the power of thy Spirit to accompany thy Word, as it has been proclaimed throughout our communities this evening.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless all thy servants who proclaim thy Word. May they have the unction of thine old Spirit upon them. May they be enabled to proclaim thy truth with all boldness and confidence.

[2 : 2 2] We give thanks unto thee, O Lord, for all the tokens of thy goodness and thy kindness, that thou doth so abundantly outpour upon us, as we come before thee, O Lord, acknowledging our sinnership.

We give thanks for that great promise that thou hast given, that if we confess our sins, that thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the efficacy of the finished work of thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we give thanks for his continual ministry at thine own right hand, in the intercession that he makes on behalf of his people, and for the promise of his return, when he shall return to and gather his people, and to bring them to be with himself in the inheritance that he has prepared for them.

We seek, O Lord, thy blessing to be upon our homes and our families. Remember those who are ill. We pray that thine own healing hand may be upon them, and those who mourn the passing of loved ones.

O Lord, we pray that thine own comfort would be their portion. We seek, O Lord, thy blessing upon the gospel throughout our nation. We acknowledge that we have sinned against thee, that we have turned away from thy paths.

[3 : 57] But, O Lord, we pray that thou would have compassion and pity upon us, and that thou, O Lord, would grant that we would come as a nation to repentance, or where we would sorrow over our sin, and seek the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

Grant wisdom to those who are in leadership over us. O Lord, that they may seek that wisdom that cometh from thee. We pray, O Lord, thy blessing upon all nations of the earth.

Thou art the one who is sovereign. All things are in thine own hands. Thou art the one who ruleth in heaven and on earth. There is nothing hidden from thee.

Thou knowest the secrets of our hearts. O Lord, we pray that we would humble ourselves, that we would take that place that belongs to us at thy footstool, seeking, O Lord, that thou would be gracious to us.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless our young people and our children. O that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thine own name, and who would be witnesses for thee in this world.

[5 : 15] We pray, O Lord, for thy people. O may they be granted to be faithful witnesses for thee in this world, that their testimony may be blessed to all that comes in contact with them, that they may be as lights that would shine in the midst of the darkness of the world that is around us.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless thy word to us as we come to read thy word and to meditate upon it, that our faith may be strengthened, that we may be encouraged in our walk.

O Lord, we pray, O Lord, we pray that thou would continue with us as we come to wait upon thee, that it would please thee, O Lord, to presence thyself among us as we meditate upon thy word.

And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins and for all our shortcomings is in the name of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the Old Testament, in the first book of Kings, and chapter 18. And we'll read from verse 1 to 18.

[6 : 37] And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and it will send rain upon the earth.

And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab, and there was a sore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house.

Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly. For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets and hid them by fifteen a cave, and fed them with bread and water.

And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, into all fountains of water, and into all brooks. For adventuring we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him.

[7 : 55] And he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou my lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am. Go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.

And he said, what have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whether my lord hath not sent to seek thee.

And when they said, he is not there, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.

And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee, whether I know not. And so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me.

But I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord? How I had an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.

[9 : 03] And now thou sayest, go, tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here, and he shall slay me. And Elijah said, as the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

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 Balaam.

Now therefore send and gather to me all Israel into Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves for four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table, and so on.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to the beginning of chapter 18.

[10 : 07] 1 Kings chapter 18. And let us read again from the beginning. And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.

And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab, and there was a sore famine in Samaria. Elijah stayed in the widow's home, along with her son, for at least two years.

And all this time, he was waiting upon the word of the Lord to direct him. During these years, the Lord was preparing Elijah for future ministry.

The Lord blessed Elijah, and encouraged him for his future ministry, by demonstrating that he had power over death, in taking the widow's son back from the dead, in sustaining the whole household during the famine, and also by the testimony of the widow, when she said, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.

Maybe Elijah began to get comfortable with his present surroundings. It was certainly a more comfortable place than Kerith. But Elijah was a man who waited upon the Lord, and so we read that it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.

[11 : 59] There is no doubt that he probably had mixed emotions, for he knew that he was a sought-out man. And now the Lord was telling him to go, and to show himself into his arch-enemy, King Ahab.

So far in this narrative, we have come across these words on more than one occasion, and it came to pass. We have them in regards to the brook, Dreiah Batkerith, in chapter 17, verse 7, where it says, And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up.

And again in reference to the death of the widow's son, in verse 17, And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

Now last week we noted that these words were of reference to the blessings of the Lord, that Elijah had received at Kerith, and also in the widow's home. But I think they are also a reminder for us of the timing of the Lord.

As we noted last week, the Lord's timing is always right. For instance, we may ask, why the Lord didn't set the children of Israel free from their bondage in Egypt sooner?

[13 : 29] And the answer we have actually in the book of Genesis, and chapter 15, in the words that were spoken to Abraham. For the Lord said to Abraham, Know of assurity that thy seed shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge. And afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.

Thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

It is a reminder to us that the Lord works according to his own counsel. I think a New Testament equivalent would be, as found in these words, in the fullness of time.

We find these words in connection with the coming of Jesus Christ. For Paul says, But when the fullness of the time has come, God sent forth his Son.

[14 : 46] The coming of Jesus into the world was according to the counsel of God. In regards to the death of Jesus, we have told, Him being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

It was all done in accordance with God's timing, which is always perfect. And many, of course, people are aware of such in their own experience.

So when we have these words, And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.

It came to pass in accordance with God's timing. Now we see by his action that whenever Elijah received a word from the Lord, he always obeyed.

And so we read, And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. There was no hesitation whatsoever. There was no lingering whatsoever.

[16 : 08] When he was ordered by God to go and hide, he did so. And now when he is told to go and appear before King Ahab the second time, he is obedient.

This is a man whose life was steered by the word of the Lord. And then we find these words being added, And there was a sore famine in Samaria.

And we may ask, Well, why should this have been recorded? Well, you see, Elijah is now back in his own land of Israel.

And he is made aware of the extent of the famine. The land had succumbed to the drought, The ground and the fields were barren, The brooks and the streams had dried up, The livestock was dying, And the roads were dry and dusty.

And so we read in verse 5, That the king said to Abadiah, the governor of his house, Go into the land, into all the fountains of water, And into all brooks. Per adventure we may find grass, To save the horses and mules alive, That we lose not all the beasts.

[17 : 23] So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it. Ahab went one way by himself, And Abadiah went another way by himself. A.W. Pink notes here that, There is not a single syllable here about God.

Not a word about the awful sins, Which have called down God's dispressure upon the land. Fountains and brooks and grass, Were all that occupied Ahab's thoughts.

Relief from the divine affliction, Was all that he cared about. He wanted relief, From divine affliction.

But there was no word of confession of sin. There was no word of humbling himself, In the presence of God. There was no word of repentance.

There was no word at all about God, The true and living God. Does such action sound familiar to you in our own day?

[18 : 34] Is there any confession regarding the sins of our nation, Heard from our leaders during the present crisis? Is there a single syllable heard about God?

But let us not look merely to our nation and our leaders, But what about me and yourself? Do I and you go on and act as if everything was normal?

Where is my confession? Where is my repentance? And that is what each of us have to ask ourselves. Where is my confession of sin?

Where is my repentance? Also, at this time, Jezebel had started her persecution of the prophets of God.

And Jezebel believed that she was doing the most she could Against the God of Israel in killing these prophets. For as long as they lived, They were reminders of all for which Elijah stood.

[19 : 38] Now, whatever our opinion may be, Regarding Obadiah, We are told that he was a man who feared the Lord greatly.

And we must accept that he did perform a very courageous act At a great risk to his own life, When he went and hid a hundred prophets by fifties in a cave And fed them by bread and water.

I think it may be quite significant that his name, Obadiah, That his very name, Means servant of Jehovah.

Now, it was while Obadiah was in the way that he meant Elijah. And he knew him and fell on his face and said, Art thou that, my lord, Elijah?

Obadiah could hardly believe his eyes, That he was in the presence of Elijah. And even more challenging for him were the words that came out of the mouth of Elijah, When he said to him, I am.

[20 : 49] Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. Now, Obadiah was reluctant to go fearing for his own life, For he was well aware of the bitter hatred that the king and his wife bore, Tells Elijah, Whom he called the Troubler of Israel.

So Obadiah said, What have I sinned that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, There is no nation or kingdom whether my lord hath not sent to seek thee.

And when they said he is not there, He took a note of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not. Elijah was the most wanted person in all the land, But he persisted in his request to Obadiah.

And he said, As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today. Obadiah's fear was what could happen after he would leave Elijah.

It shall come to pass, he says, As soon as I am gone from thee, That the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whether I know not. And so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find thee, He shall slay me.

[22 : 15] He was afraid that Elijah would disappear, And that King Ahab would pour out his anger on him and kill him. Nevertheless, In spite of all his fears, Obadiah obeyed for he said, But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him That he had met up with Elijah, And Ahab went to meet Elijah.

We are not told how Ahab responded to Obadiah For bringing him news of Elijah's whereabouts. Now, we may be rather harsh in our evaluation of Obadiah, A book that I mentioned at the beginning of our study by Leon Wood, And he tends to be very harsh on Obadiah, And so are other authors as well.

There are those who maintain that he was a man who compromised with the world, That his loyalty was divided between two masters, That he had no right to be found serving our wicked king.

He was given a particularly important position within the household of King Ahab. He was, as it were, the king's chief of staff. And also there are those who say that he could only have continued in that position By keeping silent as to his religious allegiance.

[23 : 50] Now Obadiah knew King Ahab. He knew that he was a wicked man. However, Obadiah was a faithful servant to the king, Because he knew that the king's authority was ordained by God.

He was acting on the principle of which Paul reminds us in the New Testament, As he writes to the church at Rome, In chapter 13 of his letter to them, he says, Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, For there is no power but of God, The powers that be are ordained of God.

In the New Testament, Paul exhorts us in Colossians chapter 3, Servants, Obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, Not with eye service as men pleasers, But in singleness of heart, Fearing God.

And for soever ye do, Do it heartily as to the Lord, And not unto men, Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, For ye serve the Lord Christ.

I think Obadiah is an example for us, How we are to be faithful to our earthly masters, And yet not compromise our allegiance to the living God.

[25 : 16] A.W. Pink reminds us that the Bible speaks of others who served and found favour with heathen kings, Like Joseph at Pharaoh's court, And Daniel at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, And how God's grace preserved their souls.

There is nothing wrong in a child of God holding a position of influence, If he can do so without the sacrifice of principle.

Some would say that Jezebel would not have permitted anyone in her employment whom she did not believe to be loyal to her programme.

Now that may be true, But our belief is in a God that can overturn the motives of men and women. The very presence of Obadiah's very name bore witness and testimony.

Jehovah is my Lord, Or I am a servant of Jehovah. I am a servant of Jehovah.

[26 : 26] His very name witnessed to where his loyalty and allegiance was, That it was to Jehovah. Again we notice here in this narrative, This very fact of the living God.

It is brought before us in the conversation that took place between Obadiah and Elijah in verse 10. As the Lord thy God liveth.

And again in verse 15 from the mouth of Elijah it says, As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand.

Elijah's courage at all times up to this point in his life was based on his faith in the living God. And this is the same God that Obadiah professed.

And there is no doubt in my mind that as the fact of the living God gave strength and courage to Elijah, That the reminder of that fact, That God is a living God, Gave strength to Obadiah.

[27 : 37] And that is to be the measure of our courage and strength as well. That our God is a living God.

It is to be the measure of our courage and strength. To be willing to do hard things that God calls us to do in spite of all our fears.

It was only right that Obadiah would be fearful. Ahab was a wicked man. Jezebel was a wicked woman. They were out to destroy all the witness and testimony of the living God.

It was only right that Obadiah would be fearful. Yet the fact that of his knowledge that God is a living God, Encouraged him and strengthened him to do hard things.

That God through his servant was calling him to do at this time. To go and to say to Ahab, Behold, Elijah is here. You see, Obadiah did not compromise his loyalty to the Lord.

[28 : 50] When things got tough with Jezebel's persecution of the prophets, Obadiah shone out with his loyalty and commitment to the Lord When he hid God's prophets in a cave and fed them with bread and water.

Obadiah was a time when he could have been tempted to compromise his faith. But when it came to the crunch point, He took his stand for God.

Although he was sometimes very fearful. And can we not follow that experience ourselves? Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him that Elijah was here.

And Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

Ahab did not give any friendly welcome to Elijah. Instead, he accused him of being a troublemaker. Maybe a person would reasonably think that after King Ahab's first meeting with Elijah and the message that Elijah gave to him, that he would have relented when he saw that the word of the Lord through his prophet had come to pass.

[30 : 14] That he would be humbled and confess his sin and repent. But instead, Ahab held Elijah responsible for the devastation that had taken place upon the land.

Despite the opportunities that was given to Ahab, he was warned by the prophet of the consequences of continuing in sin. And he had it demonstrated right before him that the Lord's words are true.

That what the Lord says will come to pass. He had it demonstrated before his very eyes that the Baal idols had no power to produce the rain that the land and the people so much needed.

Yet, Ahab remained a man totally unrepentant, unremorseful, unapologetic, completely defiant and shameless.

Well, what about yourself tonight? Have you responded to the message of the gospel? You have received the warnings, the truth of God's word, which has been demonstrated to you again and again.

[31 : 29] You know that the idols upon which you place so much of your time shall never bring satisfaction and true peace into your life. At the end they shall remain what they are, idols, dead and done.

Maybe God has touched you. It might not be through drought or famine, but perhaps in a more personal way. Maybe your husband or wife or some member or members of your family have been converted and their lifestyle has changed and that has touched you.

Maybe that in which you gloried in and boasted about has been taken away, whether it be your wealth or your home or your family or your health, whatever it was, it has been taken away from you.

How have you responded? Have you responded like Ahab, unrepentant and totally defiant, even perhaps showing and demonstrating bitterness towards God and the church?

This kind of vendetta shown by Ahab against God's prophet Elijah should not surprise us. The unbelieving world always has a vendetta against God and his church.

[32 : 51] They always look upon God and the church as a great troubler of the land. The world in the day of Jesus thought that he was a troublemaker and such has been the world's view of God and the church down through the centuries.

Jesus said in his discourse to his disciples in the upper room after he told them that he was going to leave them, If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love a sword, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord.

If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my saying, they shall keep yours also. But all these things will they say unto you, For my name say, because they know not him that sent.

Therefore we should not be at all surprised at the persecution that the world has towards God and his church, God and his people.

[34 : 11] Maybe you are saying tonight, Well, that may be true in other places and among other people, but I have no vendetta against God and the church. Ahab was fully convinced that he was not the troubler of Israel, but that Elijah was.

He was fully convinced that he was not the one that caused trouble in Israel, but Elijah had to correct him. And Elijah said to Ahab, 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 Balaam.

Elijah points out to Ahab two kinds of sins which he and his father's house was guilty of. That is the sins of omission and the sins of commission.

The sins of omission is something we did not do that we should have done. Ahab and Israel had forsaken the commandments of the Lord.

They were not doing what they were supposed to be doing, that is, following the commandments of the Lord. The sins of commission are something we did that we should not have done.

[35 : 38] Ahab and Israel were doing what they were not supposed to be doing, and thou hast followed Balaam. But instead of repenting, he was trying to go through this divine judgment in his own strength.

Instead of repenting, he was going through the land looking for grass to feed his animals. Instead of repenting, he was blaming God and Elijah for the devastation that had come upon the land.

Now we are all guilty before God for both sins of omission and sins of commission. But how do we respond?

It might not be so public like Ahab and his vendetta and blame flowing, but we are in the same bad spiritual state as Ahab if it does not bring us to repentance and crying to God for mercy.

You may not be outwardly in a vendetta against God and the church, but how are you before God? How are you inwardly? How is your heart before God?

[36 : 56] Are you still unrepentant? Ahab can be contrasted to another great king of history, King David.

And in his days the land also fell under divine judgment. But when David saw the angel who was striking the people, he said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done, and now I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly.

Foolishly. But Ahab was no such king. Oh, my dear friends, we must not be like Ahab and look for someone or something to blame for our troubles because our spiritual situation before God will not be resolved by blaming others, by blaming the church, or blaming God's people, or blaming anyone.

It will only be resolved by confessing our sin and coming with repentant hearts and trusting in the one person who was blameless but took upon himself what our sins deserved so that we could be saved.

That is the only place of refuge from the judgment of God. That is the only place of refuge from what our sins deserve.

[38 : 33] We must not look to the north, the south, the east, or the west, but look to the one who is able to save us.

Look to the one who will cast our sins away. How? Through the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Through the death of his Son, Jesus Christ. Through the cross of Golgotha. As far as east is from the west, he shall remove from us our iniquity.

That is the one to whom we must look. We must stop our blame throwing. But we must come, confess our sin, and with repentant hearts put our trust in Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless to us our thoughts. Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, grant to us that we would not be like Ahab, who thought that God's servant was the troubler of Israel, when he did not realise that the trouble of Israel was in his own heart, in his unrepentant heart, in the hardness of his own heart.

[40 : 07] O Lord, we pray that thou would lead us to confess our sins, that thou would bring us to have repentant hearts, enabling us to trust in the one person who was blameless, but who took upon himself what our sins deserved, so that we could be saved.

The only place of refuge from what our sins deserve is in thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray, O Lord, that as that invitation is given through the preaching of the Gospel this night, for a people to come and to hide themselves under the refuge of Jesus Christ, to come and to shelter under his refuge, that there would be those who would be drawn by thy Spirit and who would confess their sins, who would repent over their sins, who would prove their trust in Jesus Christ.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us in coming days. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.