

Ahab the Horrible

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[0:00] Take your Bibles tonight, go to 1 Kings chapter 17, 1 Kings chapter 17, because as we began here a few weeks ago, looking at the contrast between these two kings.

You have Jehoshaphat and Ahab. You know, while one is experiencing spiritual revival, the other is under the judgment of the Lord.

And one's enjoying blessing while the other is struggling just to survive. You know, and we see here tonight we're going to begin looking as the Lord sends the prophet Elijah the Tishbite to confront Ahab and his wife Jezebel along with the nation as a whole to bring them to the point where a decision must be made.

You know, a decision has to be made. When it comes to the Lord, the one thing people don't realize, there is no place of indecision. You have to make a decision and no decision or an indecision is a no decision.

Because you have to decide what you're going to do with him and especially today of what you're going to do with Jesus Christ. Because as we began a few weeks ago and we remember that Ahab though, one of the things we saw with him and the children of Israel is he married a very wicked woman.

[1:21] You know, very wicked woman by the name of Jezebel. And she had led him to even more towards the worship of Baal.

Matter of fact, she was a priestess of Ashtaroah, the feminine counterpart to Baal, the fertility gods that they worshipped. Now understanding that is important when you see God's judgment because you'll find God's judgment is usually somewhat attached to what they're doing or who they're and what they're worshipping.

You know, they're worshipping a fertility gods that are supposed to provide blessing and a substance and abundance to them. And we're going to find that God sends a drought. Nothing's going to grow.

Nothing's going to take off. There's going to be none of that. And we're going to see this as they promote this worship of Baal throughout Israel. We find, as we looked a few weeks ago at Ahab, we find here that he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger above all the kings before him.

You know, now I don't know about you, but I don't think that wants to be something you want to have on your label. You know, that, hey, here's somebody who provoked God to anger more than all those before him.

[2:32] You know, that's not a good label to reach for. I mean, it's not something that we find is somebody ought to desire to have. And so as we pick up here tonight in 1 Kings chapter 17, we're going to go through a couple chapters, Lord willing, tonight, and cover a few things, highlights of things here with Ahab and the children of Israel.

But we see here, it says, And Elisha the Tishbite, That one over there don't look great. 1 Kings chapter 17, not the second time.

All right, there we go. And Elisha the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, 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.

So here we find in chapter 17, we find that Ahab has been introduced to us. And then we find that Elijah just comes on the scene.

He's now one of these prophets that we know no backstory about, you know very little about. All of a sudden he just bursts on the scene into the presence of Ahab and Jezebel.

[3:43] And, you know, he's one of them. You might look as Elijah was the first long-term weather forecaster. You know, he comes in and makes a declaration about what the weather's going to do for the next three years.

You know, I don't know whether he thought he lived in Phoenix or what it might have been, but, you know, we find here that he gives a long-term weather forecast. And that long-term forecast says, hey, it's not going to rain for three years.

There's not going to be any rain according to my word, the word that God had given to him. And so Elijah the Tishbite comes on the scene with his own extended weather forecast.

And we find here that this is probably something we imagine that Ahab's royal court the day Elijah enters with this bold announcement. You know, it's just kind of one of those things.

I have a feeling as we look through this, I think that they probably didn't really take him seriously. They're like, what's this crazy guy doing? Coming in here and making a declaration like this.

[4:49] Because we find that he comes before Ahab and Jezebel and makes this declaration, turns around and walks out. I imagine that they didn't even think much about it when it happened.

They're like, who's this crazy that shows up? You know, and sometimes that's the way people look at people who believe the Bible as, hey, who's this crazy that showed up? Instead of realizing why are they there and what's happening.

But we find here that he's a Elijah the Tishbite, though we know is a prominent and powerful prophet of the Lord. I mean, his ministry is noted throughout the rest of the scripture.

I mean, you think about all the places Elijah's mentioned. I mean, it's even in reference to Jesus's ministry. Man, it's Elijah has come, you know? It's like you find that over in the Gospels, that oftentimes they would equate Jesus to Elijah, you know, that was to come again.

And we see this being played out. You know, matter of fact, in Mark 6, it's exactly what King Herod thought. He said, you know, is he John the Baptist risen from the dead?

[5:55] Or others said it is Elias. And others said that it's a prophet or one of the prophets. You know, talking about Jesus, their first thought was, you know, hey, it's Elijah, come again, you know?

It's like Elijah was a powerful prophet of the Lord. Made quite a statement and dynamic. But we see here is the first thing we see about is his declaration that he made.

The declaration of Elijah. Elijah enters the court of Ahab and makes his declaration from the Lord God of Israel, the one that he stands before, the one that has greater authority than the king.

And each one of them is also a subject. And he turns around and departs. You know, I want you to understand, Elijah didn't speak this in his own authority. The Bible tells us he spoke it from God's authority.

God came and spoke to him and gave him the authority and what to say to deal with this. So we find Ahab and Jezebel didn't seem concerned about the prophet.

[6:59] That is, until the rains didn't come and the rains stopped. You know, and I think here in the last year, we can equate to that, can't we? I mean, we can understand the reality when the rain quits, you know, and understand that when it starts getting dry and the impacts of that.

But, you know, even Nebraska is not as dry as Israel was during this time. It says it did not rain at all for three years plus. It was going to have a great impact.

And the grass began to dry up, the fields failed, and the brooks began to dry up. And the declaration that Elijah had made was both direct judgment upon the gods that they sought to follow.

Because, remember, Baal was what? He was a fertility god that was supposed to provide for their needs and all these things. And, well, without water, you know what happens to all your material needs? Crashes pretty quick, doesn't it?

Kind of goes downhill pretty quickly because without water, grass dries up, crops don't grow, animals don't live. I mean, all those things are just key essentials to that.

[8:06] And so we see here that the declaration that Elijah had made was that judgment upon Baal that they were worshiping. You know, and we see here that they would put their god to a test.

I mean, oftentimes you'll see in Scripture that God sends a judgment related to what people are trusting. God tests them in the area of what they are placing or trusting themselves.

And we see here that Israel, Ahab, and Jezebel had trusted themselves to Elijah, or excuse me, to Baal and to worshipping him.

And so Elijah comes from the Lord and tells him that as Elijah comes in before Ahab, he says it's going to be years before you hear from me again.

So God sends Elijah away, preparing him for what to come. And so tonight we're not going to spend much time on Elijah because our subject is going to be the kings of Israel.

[9:04] So we're going to look at this focused from the aspect and the study of Ahab and Jezebel and the things happening here with them.

And so most are familiar with the brook that God sent Elijah to that provided water for him and the ravens that fed him.

You know, we talk about how God miraculously provided for him throughout all this time. And God sends him then onto the land of Sidon, which is one of those things as I read through this.

I appreciate the irony sometimes in the scripture. Because God sends Elijah to the very home, you might say, the home country of Jezebel.

To hide him. You know, you've got to appreciate the irony. You know, that God would send and hide him there right under their nose. That God is powerful enough to overcome what people think that would be the last place he would go hide.

[10:07] But God sends him there and God takes care of him. And there's a widow without means that's going to sustain him. I mean, the whole thing, when you think about it, it's like God has to be involved. God had to be oversight of all those things.

But we see the news there that was sent, you know, the declaration that he made. But that declaration leads to some devastation. There's some devastation that happens because of this.

You know, look here in 1 Kings chapter 17. Look at verse 7. And it says, And it came to pass, after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Now, we know that that affected Elijah. But I want you to understand, that affected everybody.

When the creeks dried up, it affected everybody in the land of Israel.

When those things went away, it impacted there was nobody that was exempt. Those things were having an impact upon everybody. And where the Lord was coming to pass, the land was drying up.

[11:08] The worship at Baal had been pushed even harder, seeking for deliverance from the drought. Well, you know, even though they knew the Lord God of Israel was the one that would deliver them, they would intentionally still go back to worship Baal.

You know, when you read this sometimes, have you ever wondered, like, what are they thinking? But then you have to stop and look in the mirror sometimes and ask, what am I thinking? Because we know who God is and what He's done. But yet we can still be drawn to act just like children of Israel.

To look someplace else other than to the Lord. Even though the Lord had provided all these things throughout history for them.

And we're going to find that Elijah even reminds them of that. You know, the situation became so desperate that Jezebel orders the prophets of the Lord to be killed in an effort to free the land from God's judgment.

You know? Well, oftentimes we overlook that in this account, the fact that Jezebel got so upset that Ashtaroath and Baal weren't providing for their needs that she says, I'm going to kill all the prophets.

[12:16] You know? Look over in 1 Kings chapter 18. And we see here as all this is happening, as God's taking care of Elijah in the background and providing for all the needs, we find that there's this other element happening.

This other dynamic taking place, the devastation that was in the land that you hear in 1 Kings chapter 18. Look at verse 4. And it says, For it was so when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord.

You know? Here she's so upset she cut off the prophets of the Lord. That word cut off means she had them murdered. All she could find. She was so upset they couldn't find Elijah that she was

trying to blame.

She was so upset that her gods were not responding to her. She was so upset she began to kill people who said they trusted God. You know, I want you to understand that this is a reality then. It's a reality now, too. People get upset at the people of God when things don't go the way they think it ought to go. Don't be surprised. And we're going to look at this as we go through because instead of looking at themselves before the Lord, the problem had to be those prophets.

[13:28] You know, the problem had to be those prophets. You know, today it might see those people who believe the Bible. They're the problem people holding us back. They're the ones causing the problem. And you will hear that oftentimes because today it's okay to be religious.

It's okay to be spiritual, but it's not okay, just like it is in this day, to be biblical. You know, we have a lot of spirituality. But there's a difference between being spiritual and being religious and being biblical.

And we need to understand the difference. Because something that sounds spiritual or sounds good doesn't mean it's right. You know, today we get people caught up in a lot of things. Every time I'm watching the little different feeds of things. Well, some famous celebrity got baptized. Baptism doesn't save anybody. If they truly got saved and they came and got baptized in obedience to the Lord, amen, hallelujah.

But if they didn't come and they just wanted to get wet for a show to be religious, it does more harm than good. And not just for them, for a lot of other people.

[14:40] You know, we have a lot of religious people. And people are turning to spirituality, but there's a difference. The problem in Israel wasn't their spirituality.

Their problem was that they didn't want to follow the Lord. Didn't want to follow the Word of God. Same in America today. We have a lot of people who love to be spiritual, but not follow the Word of God.

We need to be careful because, in other words, you end up just like Israel. You're doing a lot of religious activity with no substance. We need to understand the importance here.

The land had continued to worsen, so much so that Ahab himself begins to look for a place of relief. He calls for Obadiah, his governor of his house, to go with him to search out the water.

Look here in chapter 18. Look at verse 3. And it says, Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. And we see here that now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.

[15:38] Now this is the contrast you're going to see here. And we're going to talk about Obadiah just a little bit here in a moment. But I want you to see here what's happening that when Jezebel sends forth to kill the prophets, what does Obadiah do?

He sticks his neck out and he says, Guys, I'm going to hide you in a cave, all that I can do. And I'm going to feed you. I'm going to do everything I can to take care of you. Obadiah was a godly man in an ungodly situation.

I want you to understand, you can live godly among ungodly people. And God puts people in that situation all the time. We walk around, you work with people who are ungodly.

It doesn't mean you need to be ungodly. It means you need to learn how to walk where you are, where God has placed you to obey him. But we see here that Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.

He said, Hey, I'm going to do everything I can to protect them. Matter of fact, he put them in two different caves and fed them with bread and water. You say, Well, he didn't do much.

[16:41] I tell you what, if somebody's hunting your life, bread and water hiding in a cave don't sound so bad. He's trying to preserve them. The situation's now desperate. The animals were not going to make it.

So Ahab goes one way and he says, Obadiah, go the other way. You know, Obadiah here served in a difficult situation because he served a compromised king with an ungodly wife.

His own commitment to the Lord would put him to the test. His loyalty that he took a personal responsibility to sustain those hundred prophets that he hid in the cave from the death sentence of Jezebel.

Now I want you to understand, by him doing that, what did he put on his own head? A death sentence. Here he's willing to step out and say, I'm going to trust God to do right. And we're going

to find here, there's another detail of the account that just adds to the fact that God's over everything that we see here.

Consider Elijah's here hiding among the queen's own people. And in Zidon, I just still think that's just kind of one of those fun ironies that God does. He's like, we'll look here a little later.

[17:48] They looked every place for him, sent people to search him out. And here he is hiding out with the widow that nobody thinks has anything, but she has everything she needs because God sustains him.

You know, God keeps refilling the barrels. God's providing for all that's needed. And so Obadiah does as his master Ahab tells him, and he starts going to look for the water that is there.

You know, we come to look here in chapter 18, verse 1. It says, And we go on down and we look at verse 5.

Here's Obadiah trying to do what he's supposed to do, and trying to find water to help the animals to survive.

And he meets Elijah in the way, and he recognizes him right away. You know, here is Elijah. He shows back up on the scene after three and a half years, you know, of all this devastation that's taken place.

[19:25] And we see here that Obadiah had faithfully served both the Lord and Ahab through a difficult situation. You know, there are times that God places you in a position for just this purpose.

You know, sometimes we don't always understand why God puts us in situations. But, you know, God, if you look at the story, God put Obadiah exactly where he needed to be to have an impact. Exactly where he needed to be. It allowed him to preserve the life of those hundred men. It allowed for a righteous witness in a dark place. You know, when there's darkness, there needs to be light. There needs to be somebody that God puts there that promotes the things of God. Remember that we cannot always withdraw, but we must sometimes trust God to protect us through the situation. You know, look at this principle. Look over to John chapter 17 for a moment. John chapter 17, we find Jesus, his high peace priestly prayer, you might say, right before he goes to the cross.

[20:33] Here in John 17, and Jesus prays for his disciples, but he also prays for you and me. He prays for all those that are going to believe on his name. And look here in verse 15 of chapter 17 in the Gospel of John.

It says, I pray that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but thou shouldest keep them from the evil. You know what? Sometimes God puts us places where there's going to be evil.

And it takes God to protect us from that by living and doing what we ought to do. Because we're not removed from this world. We have to live in this world. In this world, there's a lot of evil going on.

We have to learn to live separated from amongst the evil. And Obadiah here, though, when Elijah comes to him, and Elijah's afraid of the outcome when Ahab hears that Elijah has returned, and it was him that found him.

You know, the implications here are great, because I want you to understand that maybe Ahab would assume that maybe, you know, hey, did he know where Elijah was all the time?

[21:43] And you say, well, why is that? Well, we find that Ahab knew that Obadiah had hid the prophets from his wife. Look in verse 13, chapter 18.

It says, and notice what Obadiah says to him. He says, was it not told my Lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid the hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water?

You know, what's he concerned about? He says, Ahab knew about that, but Ahab was kind enough he overlooked it. What's he going to do now when I show up with you? That's a legitimate concern.

Obadiah is concerned with what's happening here, and he was wondering what was going to take place and that Ahab had found out about the other prophets and overlooked it, but we, you know, that's we don't know why, but I think as we look through here, you're going to find that Ahab did what a lot of people do today and tried to blend things together to make everybody happy.

Syncretism. That's a word you need to be familiar with because what Ahab did, I want you to understand, Ahab wasn't totally anti-God. He just wasn't for God because he allowed people to worship the Lord, but yet he wasn't for God either.

He wanted to promote Baal. He wanted to blend things together. Let's make everybody happy. Let's do whatever it takes, kind of be missy and wishy-washy in the middle and kind of just make

everybody happy.

[23:19] You know, that's kind of like a national prayer service or whatever they wanted to call that fiasco. That was a prime example of syncretism. Everybody, you know, I guarantee you that most of what they called prayers didn't make it outside the building.

They might have been a good show, but they weren't, had no substance. Syncretism, and then we find this and we find that God had just, maybe had just protected Obadiah.

We don't know, we weren't told all the heart behind what was happening, but now if Elijah's not there when he returns, Ahab's surely going to kill him. You know, Obadiah's like, man, you've disappeared before, and if you do this again, this is not going to be good.

Now, you know, you can read that and say, well, Obadiah should have trusted, I don't know, I can even relate to Obadiah. It's like, dude, don't be pulling this. You know, don't be tricking me here. You know, this is not a good thing. He says, I'll go to Ahab, but you better be here when I get back. You know, that's a pretty legitimate concern. But Obadiah goes and he gets Ahab, and he returns.

[24:24] We find here the defiance that comes because notice here as we look in chapter 18, look at verse 17, it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, and Ahab said unto him, art thou he that troubleth Israel?

You know, here's the defiance that he has, and Ahab arrives and confronts Elijah with the accusation about his role in the situation.

You know, one thing you need to be careful and understand is that when people accuse God's people of causing evil, you'll see that throughout history. It should not surprise you when God and his people are blamed for the effects of sin.

You know, sin has a course it's going to run. There are certain things you're not, you might thwart it for a while, but I want you to understand, sin has an impact that's going to happen. It's going to impact the life of a person.

When we understand that, but notice in verse 17, what he tells him here, he says, art thou he that troubleth Israel? Like Ahab's looking at him and says, you caused all sorts of misery for me.

[25:32] You're the one that caused my problem. You know, we often do the same thing. We think, well, it's God that caused my problem. No, God might have allowed the problem to play out because of your choices, but God didn't cause your problem when it comes to the effects of sin.

Those are there of your own fruition. The truth will often draw the ire of those caught in sin. You know, it's your fault this is going wrong. You know, I was fine until you pointed it out.

You know, it didn't bother me until you came along. You know, Ahab here is faced with that dynamic. But notice Elijah here. He points to the nature of the issue.

He says, Ahab and his house is what has happened. Look here in verse 18, here in chapter 18. And he said this, 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.

You know, I want you to see here, he tells them very clearly that the core issue here is not the drought. The drought's the side effect of them not following the Lord, of forsaking the Lord and his commands.

[26:47] I mean, think about what's the primary command Ahab forgot about. He didn't even get past the first one. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. I mean, what did Ahab do?

He says, God's okay, but I'm going to worship Baal. It's not that he wasn't familiar with who God is. He says, I'm going to put God down here and put Baal up here. I like worshipping Baal better.

You know, we've talked about that earlier, those things that took place with it. We find that people like the same things today. The vulgarity and the immorality attached to it.

You find those same things played out today, don't you? You know, we can dress things up and make it sound good, but it's all the same. You know, people want to do their own thing.

But we find here that when Israel rejected and turned away from the Lord, we find God doing something continually. You know, oftentimes we forget that God always wants restoration.

[27:48] People try to paint God as such a mean, wicked contrast, but whenever you read the scripture, you'll find that God always calls people back. You know, take a look over to Deuteronomy for a moment.

Deuteronomy chapter 8. We find over here in Deuteronomy chapter 8 in verse 5, all the way back here when they're still coming out of Egypt. Excuse me, look here at verse 5. It says, Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Why is God chastening? Why is God correcting them? Why is God trying to get Ahab's attention? Because God cares and wants him to come back. Look over to Proverbs chapter 3.

Proverbs chapter 3, verse 11 tells us this. It says, My son despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction.

For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. I want you to understand, God delighted in Israel. He's calling them back.

[28:55] This whole thing with Elijah is God calling them back to him. Trying to get their attention. Trying to get them to understand the importance of what's happening.

And this sets the stage for a great showdown. It would be the prophets of Baal on one side against Elijah the prophet on the other. You know?

You've got a huge crowd of crazy individuals cutting themselves on one side. And a calm, cool, and collected prophet of God on the other side.

I mean, this is like a showdown from the ages. You know, when you look and see what takes place here. And we find here that the prophets of Baal had spent three and a half years trying to make it rain, and they had failed.

God's judgment was upon Israel. God set it forth and established it by his prophet. And we find here that for the last three and a half years, and the prophet of the Lord had stayed the rain.

[29:59] And Ahab is instructed to gather the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel along with the people of Israel for a call to a decision. This whole thing, this whole three and a half year sequence, was God calling Israel and Ahab back to a decision.

God was patiently working and waiting to get the people's attention. You know what? Sometimes we're pretty hard-headed too. You know, God takes a while. I'm glad that God's long-suffering.

That God cares. But we see here the decision that's being called. You know, look here in verse 21 of chapter 18. It says this, And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long?

Halt ye between two opinions. If the Lord be God, follow him. If Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. You know, here we find the crowd gathered atop Mount Carmel and Ahab alongside with his 450 prophets of Baal, the representatives of the people and the prophet Elijah.

The first challenge is a call to decide. Elijah looks at him and says, What are you going to do? What are you going to do? How long? Halt ye between what? Two opinions.

[31:11] Even the very word opinion suggests the reality of having to make a choice. What are you going to believe? What are you going to follow? What are you going to attach to? You know, you find that God oftentimes does that.

He makes a call and says, Make a decision. You're either in or you're not. Look back in Exodus chapter 32 for a moment. Exodus chapter 32.

Look here in verse 26. Exodus 32 and verse 26. Here Israel, God's calling them here also for a decision. To make a decision of what they're going to do.

It says, Then Moses stood by the gate of the camp and said, What? Who is on the Lord's side? Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me and all the sons of Levi gather themselves together unto him.

You know, you'll find statements like that throughout the scripture. It's like, you have to make a decision. What are you going to do? Think about Joshua. Joshua chapter 24, verse 15.

[32:15] He's getting ready to depart off the scene and he looks over the people and he makes that declaration. Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Elijah's just making a, you might say, a repeat statement that God's called Israel many times before.

Make a decision. What are you going to do? Are you going to serve your heart and what you want to do? Or are you going to serve the Lord?

What are you going to be doing? You know, it's a constant thing, but I want you to note something because you know what? I think a lot of times we can relate to the crowd because what did the crowd do here? Looked like a bunch of Baptists on Sunday morning.

I mean, you think about it since they said not a word. You know, oftentimes God calls or asks us to do something and we can be pretty lethargic of saying, I'm going to sit. If you consider what's happening here, it's no time to say, well, I'm going to wait and decide.

They should have been making a decision. They should have been voicing something, but instead, silence. Silence. They said not a word. You know what silence says?

[33:18] I don't want to decide. It often seems easier not to make a choice or just kind of keep floating along. You know, sometimes it's easier because you know, hey, time's running out. We'll be good.

They could worship who and what they wanted or even both together. The children of Israel had blended their worship with the things of Baal, corrupting the whole thing. You know, now most of us are familiar with this part of the account where the prophets of Baal prepare one altar along with the bullock and they spend all day calling out for fire to devour the sacrifice and the Bible talks about them cutting themselves and crying and trying to gain the attention of their God all for nothing. And here's Elijah. He waits all day. I want you to understand when it talks about the people said nothing, they stood around all day to watch the show. Look down in verse 30. Chapter 18, Elijah said unto all the people, come near to me and all the people came near unto him and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down and Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob unto whom the word of the Lord came saying, Israel shall be thy name.

And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord and he made a trench about the altar was great so it contained two measures of seed. You know, so we find here that he builds an altar in the name of the Lord.

Elijah does and he prepares everything for the sacrifice and then he says, hey guys, he gets some volunteers from the crowd. He says, guys, I want you to go fill up buckets or barrels of water.

[34:55] And so they go gather the water. They come and he says, I imagine they were trying to figure out what he's doing. I imagine they look pretty shocked when he looks at them and says, okay guys, thanks for hauling it up here and I'll dump it on top and go get more.

And everybody went, whoo! But they went and they got more and they dumped it on there. And then they're like probably sweating at this point getting it up there. You've got to remember it hadn't rained so where did they get in the water?

That took some work. He sends them back twelve barrels of water he pours over and Elijah prays. Really Elijah's prayer here when you read it it's God stir your people to a decision.

It's a turn to a decision who are they going to follow? This day who are they going to follow? The prayers of Elijah made a difference. God sends down fire from heaven licks everything up.

The water, the stones, the altar, everything. I want you to understand it was one man that made a difference. You don't have to be Elijah to make a difference when God is on your side. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

[36:02] Take a look at what happened. Look down in verse 37. He says, 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.

And when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench and there were all the people saw it they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God. You know, when fire fell from heaven, they decided it was time to get off the bench, get off the sidelines to make a decision.

I want you to understand though as we look at this that Elijah was not sent to destroy the people but to call them to repentance. To call them back to Him. Just as today God doesn't want us to preach a message of condemnation but a message that's saying come to God.

Come to Him. He is the one. I mean, look back over in the New Testament for a moment and we'll close here tonight. 2 Peter chapter 3. You know, when you read this account of Ahab and the people and the children of Israel, I can tell you what, God's way more merciful than you or I would have been.

[37:16] If we had a group of people acting like that and had the authority and the power we would have said, Gotcha! Yeah, you got what you deserved. But look at how God responds even to us today.

He says, The Lord is not what? Slack concerning His promises as some men count slackness but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. You know, even today we can keep in mind the importance that our task is not to condemn people it's to lead them to repentance to a loving God. They're going to look at it as condemnation. They're not going to be comfortable with it but the truth of the Word of God always brings and points people back to Him. We need to be focused. We can learn some great things from Elijah and we're going to look here as we continue on next week.

This had an impact upon Ahab also. Even as wicked as he was God still wanted to call Ahab back to Him. God wants you with Him.

[38:27] Let's pray. Heavenly Father as we come before you tonight Lord we just thank you for the opportunity here as we have to see the reality that you want to reach those in this world and Lord that you're the one that corrects.

Lord you're the one that allows the judgment and the things to get our attention to be what it ought to be to get a hold of our hearts and our minds.

Lord help us to be focused upon you and what you would desire and what you would have for us. Lord we pray you might be challenged even this week as we work through these things Lord that you might be mindful of them as we are in contact with people even in our own lives before you. Lord that we might always be mindful of who you are and what your purpose and what your desire is even towards ourselves and towards others and Lord help us not to sit in silence. And that we pray