

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Faithful Prophets**

March 2021

Spring Quarter

**March 27, 2021**

**Lesson #4 – Prophet of Courage**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – 1 Kings 18:5-18

***Key Verse - 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.—1 Kings 18:18***

**ICE BREAKERS** –

1. How can we gain courage to live out our faith and speak God's word?
2. What are some ways Christians can reassure one another in times of fear or doubt?

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

Today's Scripture covers the early portion of the ministry of the prophet Elijah (who prophesied about 869 to 838 BC). He proclaimed the word of the Lord during one of the most critical periods of Old Testament history. His ministry began after the split of the nation into two kingdoms (931 BC): Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom).

The first king of the north, Jeroboam I (931–910 BC), began his reign by violating the first two of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3–4). He set up two golden calves for the people to worship: one in the northern part of the northern kingdom, in Dan, and one in the southern part, in Bethel (1 Kings 12:28–29). This made it easier for those in the north to embrace pagan worship.

The reign of King Ahab in northern Israel (874–853 BC) was characterized by economic prosperity, at least at the outset (1 Kings 22:39; compare 2 Chronicles 18:1). It was also a time of spiritual poverty (1 Kings 18:17–40). Idol worship became more prevalent when Ahab married Jezebel. She was the daughter of the king of Zidon and a devout worshipper of the god Baal (1 Kings 16:31; 18:3, 19). Baal was a fertility god, believed to be in control of anything to do with giving life, whether to animals, plants, or human beings.

First Kings 17 begins with the sudden appearance of Elijah. He boldly proclaimed that “there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (17:1). Moses had warned God's people of the abomination that idolatry constituted in the sight of God (Deuteronomy 4:15–24). Famine was listed among the curses that would result from disobeying God's law (28:23–24; compare Leviticus 26:19–20). A declaration of famine amounted to a grave insult to Baal (and to Ahab and Jezebel) and constituted a direct challenge to the authority of that fictitious god.

Following this announcement of a famine, Elijah went into hiding for a time. The prophet hid by the brook Cherith (until the brook dried up), then traveled northward to Zarephath of Zidon (Jezebel's homeland!). There he stayed with a widow, for whom he offered two unforgettable demonstrations of God's power. First, her supply of oil and meal to prepare bread for her household did not run out during the famine; and second, her son was raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:8–24). Both miracles revealed the Lord's authority in matters of fertility, where Baal was believed to be in control.

Following this time away from the northern kingdom, Elijah was spiritually prepared to speak and demonstrate the Lord's authoritative word. He could return to Ahab's realm and confront the defiant, disobedient king.

### **LESSON COMMENTARY –**

Although most of the northern kingdom had abandoned the Lord to follow paganism, a remnant remained faithful to the God of Israel. One of Ahab's servants, **Obadiah**, who was **over the household**, a high-ranking position, **feared the LORD greatly** (v. 3). Obadiah even risked his life by hiding a **hundred prophets** of the Lord **in a cave** to protect them from the annihilation policies of **Jezebel** (vv. 4, 13). Ahab had sent Obadiah to search for **springs of water ... and keep the horses and mules alive** (v. 5). On the way, this godly servant met **Elijah** (v. 7), who had been in hiding from Ahab who was searching for him in every **nation and kingdom** (v. 10; cf. 17:3–24). The prophet told Obadiah to go announce to the king that **Elijah is here** (v. 8). Obadiah understood the command as an indictment of some sin in his life, because Elijah apparently had a reputation for appearing in one place and then disappearing to another (cf. 2Kg 2:16).

Obadiah was sure that if he announced Elijah was coming to Ahab, but then Elijah failed to appear, **he [Ahab] will kill me** (vv. 12, 14). Elijah reassured Obadiah that **as the LORD of hosts lives** (v. 15), he would surely appear before Ahab. Obadiah obeyed the prophet's order then, **and Ahab went to meet Elijah** (v. 16).

**18:17–19.** When the two men met, a debate ensued that centered on who was the true cause behind the devastating famine. Ahab called Elijah the **troubler of Israel**. Elijah in turn indicted Ahab as the real culprit, **because** he had **forsaken the commandments of the LORD and ... followed the Baals** (v. 18). The word for "troubler" translates the Hebrew word *'oker*, used elsewhere in the OT to refer to individuals who brought spiritual pain and tragedy to the nation (cf. Jos 6:18; 7:25). To verify his claim that Ahab was the troublemaker, Elijah proposed a test to take place on **Mount Carmel**. Ahab was to bring from among the corrupt spiritual leaders of Israel **450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah** (v. 19). Apparently only the prophets of Baal showed up (vv. 22, 25, 40).

**LESSON NUGGET** – Ahab wanted to kill Elijah (v.10), but God protected His servant. To Ahab, Elijah was an enemy (1 Kings 21:20), but Ahab was his own worst enemy. We commend Obadiah for protecting the prophets, but that was not the final solution. Israel had to make a decision between Baal and Jehovah (Jos. 24:14-21)

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*