

## What Are You Doing Here?

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**Scripture:** 1 Kings 17, 18, 19

17:1

*Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand; surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."*

18:1

*Now it happened after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."*

You will notice that it is now 3 years since there has been no rain. 17:1 talks about *"there will be no rain except by my word."* And then in 18:1 it says: God says to Elijah, *"Go, show yourself to Ahab and I will send rain."* It was the third year. There has been a drought in the land – no rain at all.

Then in 18:19-24 Elijah tells King Ahab:

*"Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So, Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel. Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."*

The same people who were silent when Elijah said, "Why do you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; if Baal is god, follow him." But the people did not say a word. Yet when Elijah stands before them and says, "Let's put our gods to the test – the god Baal and our God, Jehovah." And the people thought that was a great idea. People, who through their history, had known the miraculous things that God had done; from father to son, those stories had been passed on – how the Red Sea had been parted, manna had come. All those wonderful miraculous things that God had done for them which was part of their history seemed to have been forgotten. They thought this would be a great idea to put these two gods to the test and see who is God. The people thought that it was a good idea!

18: 25-34

*So, Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it." Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened." So, they cried with a*

*loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.*

*Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So, all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." so with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.*

Twelve buckets of water on this offering. You can only guess why he was doing it – so that nobody can say that in a dry and arid land, it automatically caught fire. He doused it with water.

18: 36-39

*At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."*

What a magnificent spectacle, to see one man stand in front of 850 priests on one side, and when they are done, all the tribes of Israel standing and challenging them to find out who is the real God. And the true God answered from heaven with fire. What a magnificent victory!

19:1-2

*Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. May the gods do to me what you did to the other prophets if I don't take your life by this time tomorrow.*

19:3

*And he was afraid.*

What? He was afraid? This Elijah afraid? He was the most wanted man in Israel. Everybody was looking for him because he said, "By my word only, it will rain again." There was a drought and people were looking for Elijah. Then he boldly came to Ahab's court and challenged him, told him to call the children of Israel, and all of that. He stood as one man. And then suddenly we see a change.

*And Elijah was afraid and he rose and ran for his life and he came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.*

From Israel to Judah – they say it's about 140 miles that he ran.

Elijah feared and ran. I want to pause here for a moment, and turn this away from Elijah to us. Sometimes we do wonderful things for the Lord, and we may have. That's part of our history, that we obeyed Him, we trusted Him, and He was able to lead us to mountain top experiences. And yet, maybe today that is just history. Today you're fearful to take a step, you're fearful to do anything, to do something new, something that God is inviting you to do and for whatever reason, something could have happened. Now you just go through the motions and say: I'll continue to do the bare minimum and get by. But those mountain top experiences of exulting in the strength and presence of the Lord, and knowing that things have been accomplished for Him in His name are all things of the past. Today maybe, you say it's okay. I'll just read the Bible or do a couple of things. But I will not attempt anything for the Lord. I'll just go through the motions.

Couple of things I want to point out to you as you look at that situation, and maybe you are in that situation. In 19:4-5a, it says that *Elijah says to himself that he should die. He says, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers. He lay down and slept under a juniper tree.*

I want you to see something at this point. Even in those places that we find juniper trees to sit under and let the world go by, and we are fearful, we are frightened, we don't have trust any more, we've long given up on doing what God wants us to do. Even in those places, God still cares for us. Look at His kindness in this situation!

He sees His servant Elijah sitting there or sleeping, and He says – he's been a long way, he must be hungry.

19:5b-8 *There was an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.*

God takes care of you, beloved, even in that situation. But I wonder whether in that situation, we begin to stay there and just say, "Maybe I'll continue to take this sustenance that God has given me, He's allowing me to take each day." But I don't think God wants us in that position, because when Elijah gets up, he goes and finds a cave to sit in, God comes to him and says, "What are you doing here Elijah? What are you doing in this place?"

19:9 *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

I wonder whether that is a word for some of us here today. What are you doing in this place? This is not the place where you belonged. Twice in fact, God asks this question. In verse 9 and then again in verse 13: *"Behold a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

You see, beloved, even though we may take a hit and temporarily we find a place to just lie low, a place where God sustains us, that is not the place where God wants us to pitch our tents and stay. God comes after Elijah and asks him, "What are you doing here?"

19:15 *God says, "Go, return, for I have work for you."*

I wonder this morning, as you look at this passage, whether God is asking you today: What are you doing here? This is not the place where you need to be. there are still things that need to be done and accomplished. Somebody said, "In our lives, two things are important – to

achieve something and then to be able to have a sense of harmony and equilibrium about what we have achieved and accomplished.” There needs to be peace about these two things.

Tom Paterson, in his book, ‘Living the Life You Were Meant to Live’ says that there are five domains in our life that we need to tick off for us to have a sense of harmony and accomplishment. Those five domains are:

- Your personal life – just you, not your family or spouse
- Your family
- Your vocation
- Your community
- The church

We need to input into each one of these areas because there’s a purpose that God has for us. Sometimes we allow one area to mushroom into capturing all or our life, and we think we have done what God wants us to do.

For example, work can take 90-95% of our time, and we are doing well in that area. And God may be saying: How is your personal life? What are you doing in your personal life? Where are you with your family, your spouse, your children? Then the question comes – what are you doing here? There’s more! Maybe you’ve been hurt, maybe something happened and you’re saying: Okay, I’m going through the motions. Or maybe it’s at work, or even in your community, your church. You’re saying – I’ll come to church, but beyond that, I’m not going to do anything.

I wonder whether today, through the Holy Spirit, God is whispering in your ear and saying, “What are you doing here? I will have you arise and go and do something that I have planned for you. What are you doing? The place that you are in is not the place that I want you to be.”

Elijah arose and went from there. And I wonder whether some of us this morning need to say, “Lord, I will arise too. I’ll get off the mat and get back once again and do those things that You want me to do. I’ve checked out Lord, a long time ago for something in my life. but Lord, where I am is not where You want me to be. and I hear You today. Lord, would You help me get up, take my hand, undergird me with Your Spirit, and then point me in the direction that You want me to walk. Lord, with Your help, I will.” Let that be your response this morning.

Heavenly Father, to You Lord, we turn at this moment. We recognize that it is a sacred moment, a moment where You are speaking to us. Unstop our ears, Lord. help us to yield our often stubborn wills to You. Help us Lord, to look beyond the difficulties of the situation or circumstance, and say, nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.

Lord, I pray for each one here. I pray for response to Your Spirit this morning. Help us to say ‘Yes, Lord.’ to You, to be able to walk with that reality. And Lord, as we come to the table as well, if there is lurking sin that has prevented us from following after You, remind us that there is no sin that the precious blood You shed at Calvary cannot cover. Remind us Lord, that the penalty for our sin has been paid. Remind us Lord that we have access to You, that even as we embrace Your will and we find that there are issues or problems, we can come into Your presence and say, “Lord, help me. Help me to finish well. Help me to find the purpose.” Lord, You know where each one is. And so, as we come to the table, infuse us Lord, with energy and strength and a clear understanding of where You want us to be. fill us with Your Spirit as we put aside self-will to be able to follow after You. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.