

Elijah 2 – The Defeat of Baal

These are the leaders notes from the Kielder Bible Study Group for the meeting that was held on 1st May 2012

We continue our Studies – on the life and times of Elijah – A Man of faith, fire and power, loosely following the relevant chapters in 1 and 2 Kings

Lets read Psalm 15 from the message, and compare it to other translations e.g. NIV. IT does seem quite relevant to the passages being considered.

So lets recap what we have learnt about Elijah so far -

- Talking about events in the 9th Century BC
- King Ahab was in command – Not a good king and worshipped Baal
- Married to Jezebel – Famous for idolatry and witchcraft
- Set up Ashera poles (Ashera was the consort of Baal and worshipped as a goddess)
- God tells Elijah to go and tell the king Ahab that there was going to be no rain until he says there will be some.
- Baal was supposedly the god of fertility and lord of rain clouds – ie God was showing how powerless he was.
- Elijah runs away and hides – He is fed by the ravens (A bird listed as unclean in Leviticus)
- The water dries up where he is and God then tells him to go to Zarephath was around 100 miles away. So it was no walk in the park. Zarephath was also in the area that Jezebel came from as the King of Sidon was her Father. An area where Baal was being promoted.
- He asks a widow for food and she gives him her last drop of food.
- But the jar of oil and flour do not run out.
- The widows son dies but Elijah prays for the son and he is miraculously brought back to life.
- Three years have now gone by and we pick our story up

1 Kings 18 1-6

Q What was Jezebel doing – A Killing off the Lords prophets v4

We also meet Obadiah who was in charge of the place, and a secret believer Q What had he done? A Hidden 100 prophets, 2 lots of 50 in caves and supplied them with food and water.

In this context we read that God has told Elijah to go and present himself to Ahab. This presumably means a significant walk from where he has been living.

Q What are Ahab and Obadiah doing – Split up looking for grass for their animals. - These animals were part of the king's military strength. This implies that Ahab was more worried about his army than his people. The notes say that according to the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser III Ahab had a military force of over 2000 chariots

1 Kings 18 7 – 15

Q What does Elijah ask Obadiah to do? A Go and tell the king Ahab that he is here.

Q Why is this significant? A It will identify Obadiah as a supporter of God.

1 Kings 18 16-19

Q How does Elijah react before the king – He does not cower down to him or try to appease him rather tells him what to do

Q What does he want the king to do – get the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah and go to Mount Carmel

The notes say that Mount Carmel was a high ridge next to the Mediterranean sea and very visible. From the top one can also see a long way so if the drought is going to end will be able to see the rain clouds. Also a bull was one of the symbols of Baal so this is a real confrontation of spiritual forces

1 Kings 18 20-24

The nation sat on the fence as shown by Elijah's comments in verse 21.

Can we think of another passage where God is talking about people sitting on the fence.
Revelation 3 14-21

Verse 22 – Elijah saying he is the only one left – Only one left will stand up against Ahab

1 Kings 18 25-29

This passage gives fantastic detail on the prophets doing their pagan worship. They chanted for over 6 hours from morning to evening. Getting more and more frantic. They hoped that being more and more frantic might have an effect. The self mutilation was a form of symbolic self sacrifice.

1 Kings 18 30-35

Q What does Elijah get the people to do – A Watch him repair the altar after it had been destroyed by Jezebel

Q Why does he use 12 stones to rebuild the Altar? A To remind them of the 12 tribes of Israel and their history. Also a dig in the face as the country is now split into two.

1 Kings 18 36-39

God is present in fire and lightening as shown in many other Old Testament verses incl Psalm 29 and Psalm 104 v3

The fact that the whole sacrifice was destroyed could have some symbolism with the destruction of Baal as represented by the Bull, which we have already mentioned.

Q How did the people respond?

1 Kings 18 40

Q Do we think this was a bit harsh – Killing the prophets? Deuteronomy 13 1-18 part of the laws details what the people should do when they come across a false prophet.

Q What do we think Queen Jezebel will think about this? A not be amused.

1 Kings 18 41—46

Q What do we think about what Elijah told Ahab to do (Go and eat and drink)??

Verse 44 is lovely bit of irony telling Ahab to hurry before he gets stuck in the mud due to the rain.

Q What happened to him at the end. A Elijah runs 18 miles

The concordances that I have been looking at suggest that this chapter raises some more general questions that it would be good to consider

- The role of busyness and what we are doing with our time, especially in Christian circles – the example given is too busy making cakes to go and tell people about God?
- Is being a Christian just a Sunday activity or are we a 7 day Christians?
- Do we think we should show appeasement v non appeasement when telling others about God?
- If we met someone for the first time is it right to tell them that if they do not know God and they then die that night in all probability then they will go to hell?

So what an amazing series of events.