



Fire from Heaven

Eight Studies in the Life of Elijah
from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2
by **Peter J Blackburn**

3. A Meeting

Bible Reference: 1 Kings 18.1-19

Quest for Fodder

Read: 1 Kings 18.1-6.

Elijah had said that the drought would continue “*until I say so*” (1 Kings 17.1). Now we note that the initiative in ending the drought was with the Lord. After three years, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, “*Go and present yourself to King Ahab, and I will send rain*” (18.1).

Already, Ahab and his servant Obadiah had begun an active and systematic search for food for the horses and mules – Ahab the worshipper of Baal, Obadiah “*a devout worshipper of the Lord*”. Obadiah was not just a person who had privately held onto his faith in spite of the Baal-worship that was going on. He had risked his own life to provide protection for a hundred of the Lord's prophets when Jezebel was bent on eliminating them (vv. 3-4).

Reflect:

- Apparently what Obadiah had done in protecting the prophets had not been known to the king – or his own life would have been forfeit! Try to imagine the situation of Christians in countries where there has been persecution. At what points must a privately-held faith be spurred into action?
- Think about the words of Jesus in Matthew 5.13-16. How can we live so that faith is not simply protected but promoted in the world?

4 A Test of Truth and a Call to Integrity. Bible Reference: 1 Kings 18.20-46.

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Elijah Meets Obadiah

Read: 1 Kings 18.1-15

In the course of Obadiah's search for grass, he met Elijah (v. 7). Because he believed in the Lord, he respected and honoured the Lord's prophet.

But when directed to go and tell the king that "*Elijah is here*", Obadiah was afraid (vv. 8-14). Ahab had clearly been obsessive in his quest for Elijah. After all, the last time he had seen him was when he foretold the drought (17.1). Initially, it was possible to ignore the words of this crazy prophet – after all, there was still plenty of food and water. But as time went on, it became increasingly evident to Ahab that the prophecy was true. Elijah had said it would continue "*until I say so*". So the obvious course of action was to find Elijah and get him to call for an end of the drought. Obadiah was deeply afraid that the Spirit of the Lord might carry Elijah away and Ahab in his anger would kill him.

Elijah made it quite clear that it truly was the Lord who was sending him and he would certainly be presenting himself to the king (v. 15).

Reflect:

- Sometimes people who claim to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord are quite unreliable. What is the evidence that guidance is truly from the Lord? Is God the author of confusion?

Ahab and Elijah

Read: 1 Kings 18.1-19.

Obadiah carried Elijah's message to Ahab and Ahab went to meet Elijah. Ahab accused Elijah – "*So there you are – the worst troublemaker in Israel!*" But Elijah answered the king – "*I'm not the troublemaker. You are – you and your father. You are disobeying the Lord's commands and worshipping the idols of Baal*" (vv. 17-18).

It is somewhat difficult for us to grasp a situation in which Elijah is able to be so directly confrontational and get away with it! However,

considering the position of a prophet in Israel and knowing what we do about Ahab's behaviour, we should be astounded at the king's confrontation of the prophet. We are reminded that he "*considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat*" (16.31).

Reflect:

- Are Christians today ever accused of being troublemakers in our society?
- Who are the real trouble-makers in today's world?
- Think of the words of Jesus in Matthew 5.9 – "*Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children.*" Sometimes we have thought of peace-making as a process of "cover-up". Is there any sense in which the work of Elijah can be thought of as peace-making?
- To what extent should we be more direct (confrontational?) in addressing the serious moral issues of our time?