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The Lord, He Is God!

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3

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I- THE PRINCIPLE

The *troublemaker* has returned home. The weatherman who claims to have a straight line from God has reappeared. That unknown, unsung man of courage, who stood eye-to-eye with “Ahab the terrible”, has once again made the scene. He had predicted a drought that would cripple the economy, send farmers and ranchers into chapter eleven, put an end to irrigation, and fill Israeli hospitals with men and women who were dying for lack of water. And every word he prophesied has come true. He said there would not even be a drop of dew on Jewish soil until he spoke again; and then he vanished, like a vapor. All of Israel had been looking for him, but to no avail.

Oh, they never thought to look by a little brook called Cherith. And they never thought to canvass widows’ houses in a little town called Zarephath. Those were not the kinds of places they expected to find one of God’s greats. So they never found the wandering prophet. Until now. Suddenly, as mysteriously as he disappeared, he has reappeared and called a mass meeting of all the religious experts in Israel at a place called Mount Carmel. Strangely, none of God’s prophets are there. There is a reason. Jezebel, the king’s Baal-worshipping wife, has run them out of town. In fact, were it not for one of the heads of the king’s household, a man named Obadiah, they would have all perished from starvation.

So only Elijah is there to represent Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel. But as God’s kind of odds would have it, there were 450 prophets of Baal who showed up as well as 400 prophets of Asheroth, all there by Elijah’s personal invitation. The electricity of the moment is beyond description. Much of the nation is gathered together on that hillside. There is a superbowl kind of atmosphere. Whether anyone was selling “Elijah for President” buttons or not, I do not know. There were, no doubt, some bumper stickers that read, “Read our Mail; We’re for Baal”.

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But none of the hoopla affected Elijah in the slightest. Like a mighty mountain of a man, he stood to his feet, peered first to the left, then to the right, with those penetrating eyes of his and finally raised that same bony finger that he had pointed at Ahab three and a half years before, and rotating his body around, pointed to the whole crowd. Then he opened his mouth. With a booming voice that sounded almost like thunder from the heavens, he spoke: “How long will you hesitate between two opinions?”

There was a holy hush throughout the crowd. The prophet continued. “If the Lord is God, then follow Him! If Baal is God, then follow him.”

Every man waited for someone else to be the first to speak. No one did. The silence was deafening. The Scripture reads, “But the people did not answer him a word.” Not a word was spoken. Not one person in that throng of thousands stood to his feet and said, “The Lord, He is God.” Not one. It was that kind of frozen parenthesis in time when a moment seems like an hour. But no one said a word. It is there that we resume our study in the life of a living legend named Elijah. Today’s title and outline are as follows: The Lord, He is God! (I Kings 18:18-39)

I- The Principle (verses 18-21)

II- The Plan (verses 22-25)

III- The Problem (verses 26-29)

IV- The Preparation (verses 30-35)

V- The Presentation (verses 36-39)

Elijah has outlined for the people of Israel the one great principle that governs all other principles in man’s relationship with the Living God. It is this. Either you belong to Him, or you don’t. Either He is your Savior and Lord, or He is nothing. Either He died for you and lives in you, or He is not your God at all. And if He is your God, then all you have, all you own, all you ever hope to be belongs to Him—and to Him alone. You are nothing apart from Him, and you are everything in Him. That, beloved, is the Gospel. A Living God inhabiting fallen man, regenerating him, transforming him, enabling him to live in victory on planet earth on his way to eternity in heaven where all pain and suffering and fear and sin will be done away with, once and for all.

Man’s relationship with God is an *either/or* thing. Either you are His child, or you’re not. Wishing you were isn’t enough.

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Thinking you are isn't enough. You cannot be *maybe* saved, anymore than you can be *maybe* born. You are either alive or you're dead, physically, and you are either alive or dead, spiritually. There are no neutral options. With that principle clearly defined, Elijah goes on. And as he does, the whole of what God is about to do becomes very, very clear. He plans to meet Satan head on, on his own stomping grounds, and grind him into the dust, as He will one day do for all eternity. Listen, now, as the curtain lifts on this, the most exciting chapter yet in the life of that living legend we have come to know as Elijah. We continue reading now, in I Kings, chapter eighteen,

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 answered and said, "That is a good idea."

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."

(I Kings 18:22-25 NASV)

II- THE PLAN

While no one was speaking, one thing was for sure. No one was arguing, either. The silence spoke for itself. It was up to Elijah to break the silence. What he did was to unveil a plan; a plan so simple, any child could understand it...yet a plan so dramatic, it defied description. He was challenging the God of Israel and the gods of Baal to head-to-head competition in a fire-building contest. Much like the Boy Scouts would do in a jamboree. With one slight hitch. No fire.

The plan was this. Take two oxen, prepare them as offerings to the respective gods, and lay them over stacks of wood. Then, each of the prophets, Elijah on one side, and the 450 of Jezebel's cheerleaders on the other, would call out to their god, and ask for a match from heaven to start the thing going. Whichever god sent down an airmail spark of starter fluid, would obviously be

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the god who was in control. What Elijah was asking them to do was to put their god against *the God* and determine once and for all *who was the true God*.

It was a fair enough offer. The Baalites jumped on it like a frog going after a fly. Elijah even gave them first dubs, since they had him outnumbered. Good move. In other words, just so no one could argue which god did it, he gave Mr. Baal first billing, and let him do his thing without fear of competition. If Baal sent down fire, the contest was over. (Sort of like sudden death overtime in the NFL.) In fact, the people shouted out, “Hey, man, that’s a cool idea. Let’s go for it.” So they did. Now try not to laugh too hard. Because the scenario God paints in Scripture of Baal’s Boy Scouts doing their heavenly flint-and-steel routine could easily make a Steve Martin movie. Here it is straight from the pen of the Holy Spirit:

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.

And 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.

And it came about when midday was past, that 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.

(I Kings 18:26-29 NASV)

III- THE PROBLEM

The Baal butchers did their work, and the sad sideshow was about to begin. It started just after sunup. Can’t you just visualize 450 preachers all doing their thing at the same time? I mean, it was prayer meeting day at Baal city. All morning long, they cried out to Baal, asking him to be a nice god and zap that kindlin’ wood real good, making barbecue of the oxen, and mincemeat of Jehovah. They wailed, and they screamed, and they chanted, and they waited. Nothing. There was no sound from heaven, not even a tiny clap of thunder.

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So they become downright frantic. I think this was the beginning of the overactive church service. They started jumping up and down, dancing all over the altar, thinking that maybe their gods were waiting for a more enthusiastic audience, before they would act. A few of them got splinters in their toes, but none of them got so much as a grunt from their distant deity. Nothing.

It was at this point that Elijah just couldn't resist a little sarcasm. A little *holy humor*, if you will. It was noon by now, and time for a burger break. The weary high-jump team sat exhausted before their uncooked oxen, waiting for something to happen. Elijah approached them. "What's wrong, guys?" the sensitive saint began. "Did you call your god and get no answer? Or did you get a busy signal? Maybe he's tied up on another call, and can't do but one thing at a time. Or, I know, maybe he's outside and didn't hear the phone ring. Or it's summer time; maybe he's gone to Disneyland on vacation, and forgot to leave the phone on call forwarding. Or last, but not least, the poor guy may be tired from laughin' at you clowns, and just fell asleep. Yell a little louder. That'll wake him up."

The Baal Bombers fell for it, hook, line, and sinker. They started screeching at the top of their lungs, and as if that weren't enough, they took out their Swiss Army Knives and began slicing at their skin, as though they could make blood atonement for something and force their god to give in and do his barbecue trick. Nothing. All afternoon, this *scream-and-slice* routine went on, but to no avail. The Scripture concludes, "There was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention."

The heavens were silent. Satan, when the heat was on, and he was forced to stand up to Almighty God, on God's terms, was impotent. He lost his voice. He lost his Zippo lighter. There was no way he could light that fire. He only possesses power, even counterfeit power, as it is allowed by the permissive will of a Holy God. And God had the lid on Lucifer so tight, you weren't going to hear a peep out of him that day. Satan was going to get in on the fire sale later in history. In fact, he'll get to have the burner on high for all of eternity. But at this point in time, even fire was beyond his reach. And, my friend, your life, and all that is in it, is beyond his reach, as well, unless an omnipotent God allows him to touch you, so that God can teach you, as he touches you, about Himself.

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By now, Baal's boys were worn out. They had tried every religious trick in the book, and all they had accomplished was to dig up extra business for the local hospital. I can just hear the operator at the "Jerusalem General" emergency room that night. "J.G. Emergency, Rebecca here. You're sending *what*? You're sending *who*? You're sending *how many*? Four hundred fifty with knife wounds and lacerations? What kind of cutups are these guys? Mount Carmel? What is this? The first Halloween? Sorry, Dr. Isaac's tied up right now. He's watching the newest program on the tube. Okay, okay, I'll go get him. Four hundred fifty, you say?" Just wait 'till the morning shift comes in and asks, "Well, Rebecca, anything happen last night?"

You get the picture. But the party wasn't over. "Baal's Boys" have had their turn. Now the Lone Stranger, Elijah, gets his. Let's read on:

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.

And 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 they did it a third time.

And the water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water. (I Kings 18:30-35 NASV)

IV- THE PREPARATION

Look, now, at the pattern that surfaces, as Elijah prepares the way for God to reveal Himself to a nation. The first thing he does is to make certain that everyone knows *to Whom* the Glory goes. He rebuilds the altar, using exactly twelve stones, signifying God's promise to the twelve tribes of Israel, and he did it "in the Name of the Lord"; that is, he dedicated whatever happened at that place to Jehovah God, and made certain that everyone understood that *no matter what happened, God was in control.*

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We, basically, are often afraid to do that in our own lives. We are afraid to declare God as responsible for the outcome because we are somehow afraid God will embarrass Himself. Or, if the truth were known, we are afraid that *God will embarrass us*. So we concoct all kinds of escape routes or theological excuses, should God fail to deliver. The problem is two-fold. We don't understand the power of God, and we don't understand the nature of God.

There is absolutely nothing God cannot do. He is Omnipotent. There is absolutely nothing God fails to do because He does not know to do it. He is Omniscient. *But there are some things God chooses not to do* because He is Sovereign. Therefore, we must never put God in a box and imply that if He does not choose to reveal Himself our way, He is a failure. Often He does not act because we have been too fearful to announce His Presence. And often He does not act because we have been too presumptuous choosing for Him how He must reveal Himself. In either case, we miss the blessing, and God misses the glory.

Elijah understood the basic principles involved. First, *he understood what God planned to do*. Secondly, *he understood when God planned to do it*. Thirdly, *he understood that before God would do it, it had to be impossible for man to share the glory*. It had to be impossible...period.

So God's man, having given the enemy a whole day to do his thing, now prepares the altar for the Glory of God. First, he digs a trench around the altar. Then he arranges the wood, stacks it properly, and lays the sacrifice on top. Finally comes the clincher. He orders the wood to be pre-treated...with water, no less. He gets four pitchers, fills them with water, and baptizes the ox not one, not two, but three times. Then, just to be sure, he fills the trench around the sacrifice with water, too. In other words, even if fire should fall, nothing is going to burn that water-soaked animal. Nothing but the Power of God.

Elijah understood what we so often misunderstand—the principle we discussed in our last lesson... “G-KOO” (God's Kind of Odds). He understood that before God could step center stage and reveal His Power and Glory, there must be nothing or no one in the way to share the spotlight. Nothing. No one.

V- THE PRESENTATION

We all know how the story turned out. But somehow we just

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need to hear it again...and again...and again...to remind us. When Satan's onslaughts overcome us and blind us to just who our God is, we can be reminded of His Greatness, His Majesty, His Power, and His Glory.

Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word.

Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and that Thou hast 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.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

(1 Kings 18:36-39 NASV)

Isn't it amazing how brief are the prayers of faith that have turned the course of history? Satan's religious phonies had prayed all day long, beat themselves to death, nearly cut themselves to death, and all to no avail. But, ah, Elijah! *The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man*. His prayer took less than sixty seconds. He acknowledged who God was, the one true God. He acknowledged what the problem was; God's Word was at stake. He acknowledged what the purpose was, that this people might know that I AM Is and thus have their hearts turned back to Him. Then he asked...oh, that's important; he specifically asked the Father to send fire down from Heaven and show these unbelievers the Power of the Living God, so they would believe.

Isn't it also amazing how quickly God acts when His time has come. No pleading, no screaming, no cutting of the flesh, no sobbing, no sighing. Just a simple request, and an immediate answer...*because it was time for God to answer*. That's why Elijah's prayer was effectual. He knew the heart of God. He prayed aright. And nearly before God's man had finished speaking the final word of his prayer, before he even had a chance to say "amen", there was a mighty thunder in the heavens, the clouds rolled back like a carpet, and from out of eternity there flashed through the sky a bolt of lightning so ferocious it must have momentarily blinded those who stood, frozen with fear, below.

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Fire? You and I have not seen fire like this. Not yet. It not only toasted the oxen and devoured the wood, it burned the rocks to a crisp and inhaled the water that had flowed into those trenches that surrounded the sacrifice, like a gigantic furnace had been unleashed momentarily on planet earth.

Then it was quiet again. Elijah looked around. The entire congregation was flat on their faces, no doubt weeping, and crying in unison...

“The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”

Yes, He is. It pleased His precious heart that day on that mountaintop to release a tiny fraction of His power for one micro-second in time, to let them know, and to let us know, just who He is. It pleased His heart as well to paint for us on the canvas of His Eternal Word, in strokes so bold that the message cannot be hidden, a tiny preview of the power that will one day, perhaps one day soon, be released on planet earth. Matthew gives us only a fleeting glimpse of the awesomeness of that Day, in Matthew 24:

But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken,

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory,

And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, and one end of the sky to the other.

(Matthew 24:29-31 NASB)

My friend, the day is coming when, one last time, this world will witness a light show from Heaven that will make a Fourth of July celebration look like a night light in a baby's room. Only this time, instead of a bolt of fire that consumes the offering, the offering HIMSELF will appear in clouds of great power and glory. And He will reign forever.

Notice the similarities. In Elijah's time, the odds appeared to be all in Satan's favor. "So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." In Elijah's time, except for a miracle from God, all hope was gone. "So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man." But notice the difference. These people had another chance to repent.

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And repent they did. They fell on their faces and cried, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” However, on that day when Jesus comes again, Beloved, decision time will be past. And there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

From out of the pages of history, the Living Legend of Elijah speaks to us once again. He says...learn to pray effectually, fervently, expectantly. And he says, recognize that no matter what kind of circumstances Satan may have contrived for your life at this moment, don't listen to those who would call for your surrender. The odds that seem to be so in the enemy's favor are but an exciting backdrop, the better to highlight the Glory of God. And when there seems to be no answers, don't scream and yell at God, as though you could awaken a hard-of-hearing deity and frighten Him into action. Just worship Him, and quietly wait for that perfect moment when His perfect timing will bring perfect Glory to His perfect Name.

And then, my child, call upon That Name. That Name that is above every name. And having called upon That Name, look up. For when God decides that He has had enough; that His purposes have all been fulfilled...it won't matter how impossible your situation is; in fact, the more impossible, the more suitable for God. When God determines the moment is right, Satan will develop an incurable paralysis. He will be helpless, powerless, pitifully useless. And the Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary, will reach down with only one ten-trillionth of His Mighty Power and break the bands that hold you and set the prisoner free.

Just as He will one day do for this whole universe when He returns in power and great splendor to set up His Kingdom, and to put Satan and sin once and for all under His precious feet. That, Beloved, is the Gospel. It is a gospel of hope. It is a gospel of joy. It is a gospel of power...divine, everlasting power. On that day, every knee will bow. On that day, every tongue will confess: Jesus Christ Is Lord.

Man will cry out...yea, the trees will cry out...

“The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”

May we not wait until that day. May we from this day forward, awaken to each new morning with that anthem of praise on our lips, and may we continue to sing it until we sing it anew with him in glory. *“The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”*

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To Assist in Applying this Lesson

1- How does one know when to put God to the test as Elijah did? Can you define a Scriptural formula that will allow you to exercise that kind of faith when it is appropriate, without being presumptuous when it is not?

2- Why do you think Elijah had the prophets of Baal go first? How can this apply to our letting God reveal Himself in our own lives?

3- Can you liken Baal's prophets to heathen practices today? Are we, as Christians, sometimes tempted to copy those practices? How?

4- How is their behavior reflected in Satan worship today?

5- Why didn't Satan do something? Why couldn't he? Will he ever again be that powerless? How can we apply his weakness in the midst of God's power to our own individual lives today? Must we constantly fill our minds with information about how powerful Satan is? Why not fill our hearts with information about how powerful God is?

6- Why did Elijah use the water? What kind of symbolism is reflected in its use? Why the twelve stones? Why did he require them to pour it on the altar three times?

7- Reflect on Elijah's prayer. What basic ingredients are there that are necessary whenever we would invoke the power of God in a difficult situation. Was he fervent? Was he effectual? Was he concise? Was he expectant?

8- What great lesson was Elijah teaching us about the end of this age? How can we "be comforted by these words?"

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