

## God's Messengers

1 Kings 17-19

## RECAP

Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, it does. Israel sunk deeper and deeper into the cesspool of idolatry under the royal wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel. They disregarded the God who had made them a nation. The people of promise had broken their promises. But YHWH is a jealous God who would not sit idly on His heavenly throne and allow worthless non-gods and their followers to go unchecked. So, He called prophets who would speak on His behalf and demonstrate that there is no God but Himself. Sounding the alarm, these prophets warned faithless Israel that her unbelief would march her right into captivity.

Elijah warned Ahab that Israel would experience a 3-year drought because of their worship of the pagan god, Baal. Ahab had gone so far as to build a temple for Baal in the capital city of Samaria. Then, atop Mount Carmel, Elijah challenged the idolaters to the ultimate smack down—YHWH vs. Baal. Baal failed to show up, but the LORD made a dramatic statement when He consumed the water-logged sacrifice with fire. Elijah then put to death the 450 prophets of Baal. Ahab's wife Jezebel, the Queen of Mean, threatened to kill him so Elijah fled into the desert. Fatalistic, fearful, and not without some Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Mount Horeb. God revealed Himself there to Elijah, much like He had done nearly 600 years earlier to Moses at Sinai. He told Elijah that he had kings and prophets to anoint – one of whom was his successor, Elisha. Once again, as with Moses and Joshua, God was passing the baton to the next generation of leaders who would speak for Him.

The miraculous intervention of God had not been seen since the days of Moses and Joshua. Hundreds of years later God's people would once again experience the miraculous through the ministry of Elijah and Elisha.

Even with the powerful ministries of Elijah and Elisha, the deeply embedded idolaters remained powerful, numerous, and unrepentant in Israel. God sent Amos, a herdsman from the southern kingdom of Judah, to warn the northern kingdom of Israel that her prosperity, injustice, and sinful ways would soon be judged. He promised them that if Israel did not repent, they would be taken captive. God also sent Hosea to Israel as a living object lesson of His faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness. Israel refused to hear the pleas of God to return to Him.

God's holiness demands judgment against rebellious men, but His redemptive love always provides a way of escape. Whether it's a mountaintop showdown, a boy raised from the dead, a vision of guardian angels, or a prophet commanded to marry a woman who would become unfaithful, God is always telling His story of redemption and compassion through His messengers.



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**SHARE (5-10 min)**

Icebreaker Question: When you were growing up how did your parents warn you that you were in trouble? Was there a special word or phrase that they used?

**STUDY (about 30 min) Read 1 Kings 17-19**

1. Reflect on the reading and the sermon. Is there any truth that stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?
2. What is it about Ahab and Jezebel that provoked unprecedented anger from the LORD? How does this relate to the first two commandments?
3. Look up Deut. 13:1-5. Was Elijah correct or too brutal in slaughtering all the prophets of Baal? Why does God take idolatry so seriously?
4. Baal worshipers believed that their god made rain and storms and that during the dry season, he needed to be brought back to life. Mount Carmel was his supposed sacred dwelling place. What was the point in God taking the battle to enemy territory?
5. Elijah ended up at Mount Horeb, the same mountain where Moses received the Ten Commandments from God. What other parallels do you discover between Elijah and Moses?
6. What is the role of the prophets? Was their role predicting the future or calling the people to repentance? Does God still send prophets today?
7. God's wrath is a response to evil and sin in the world. The showdown on Mount Carmel was a display of His wrath. How does God's wrath fit into your understanding of God's love and grace? What does it mean that the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus on the cross?
8. An idol can be anything that takes the place of God in our hearts. Even a "good thing can become a god thing." What or who are the idols that we worship in our culture today? i.e., materialism/money, fame, approval, tolerance, sex, personal preference, marriage, family, political ideologies. What do they promise? How do they fall short?
9. What idols in your life are you prone to elevate above God? How can you avoid falling prey to modern day idol worship?

**SUPPORT (15 min)**

Split up in groups of 3 or 4 and pray for one another.