

**Choosing Whom to Serve**  
**Series: E-100—1 Kings 16:29-19:18**  
November 1, 2015    Pastor Bill Bump

From the very beginning, God's involvement with humans has focused on us choosing whom to serve.

Exodus 20:3 (NLT) Do not worship any other gods besides me.

Paul reaffirms this belief in the only true and living God when he writes about Jesus.

Colossians 1:15-17 (NLT) <sup>15</sup> Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. <sup>16</sup> Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.

In today's E-100 passage, Elijah, the prophet, confronts the people about their need to make a definitive choice on whom to serve.

The challenge:

1 Kings 18:16-19 (NLT) <sup>16</sup> So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come, and Ahab went out to meet him. <sup>17</sup> "So it's you, is it—Israel's troublemaker?" Ahab asked when he saw him. <sup>18</sup> "I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshiped the images of Baal instead. <sup>19</sup> Now bring all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, with all 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who are supported by Jezebel."

The necessary choice:

1 Kings 18:20-21 (NLT) <sup>20</sup> So Ahab summoned all the people and the prophets to Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

We cannot believe two things are true when it's only possible for one of them to be true.

Jesus taught the same spiritual principle:

Matthew 6:24 (NLT) No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

The call for a response:

1 Kings 18:22-24 (NLT) <sup>22</sup> Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. <sup>23</sup> Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it. <sup>24</sup> Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!” And all the people agreed.

The contest arranged:

1 Kings 18:25-29 (NLT) <sup>25</sup> Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood.”

<sup>26</sup> So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal all morning, shouting, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced wildly around the altar they had made.

<sup>27</sup> About noontime Elijah began mocking them. “You’ll have to shout louder,” he scoffed, “for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or he is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or he is asleep and needs to be wakened!”

<sup>28</sup> So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. <sup>29</sup> They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no reply, no voice, no answer.

Elijah prepared:

1 Kings 18:30-35 (NLT) <sup>30</sup> Then Elijah called to the people, “Come over here!” They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. <sup>31</sup> He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, <sup>32</sup> and he used the stones to rebuild the Lord’s altar. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. <sup>33</sup> He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, “Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood.” After they had done this, <sup>34</sup> he said, “Do the same thing again!” And when they were finished, he said, “Now do it a third time!” So they did as he said, <sup>35</sup> and the water ran around the altar and even overflowed the trench.

The God of miracles:

1 Kings 18:36-40 (NLT) <sup>36</sup> At the customary time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. <sup>37</sup> O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

<sup>38</sup> Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the ditch! <sup>39</sup> And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces and cried out, “The Lord is God! The Lord is God!”

<sup>40</sup> Then Elijah commanded, “Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don’t let a single one escape!” So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

God accomplished what could only be called a convincing victory.

Paul tells us in Philippians that the day is coming when Jesus is going to be manifested in such a convincing way.

Philippians 2:9-11 (NLT) <sup>9</sup>Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There will be no doubt in anyone’s mind.

### Conclusion

We should not forget that the God who threw down fire on Mount Carmel still does miracles.

Elijah’s certainty as he built the altar was based on his knowledge of the promises of God. He knew that the God he served was faithful.