

Waiting for lightning.

I remember living in Maitland in this big old 2 storey house. It was great to watch summer storms from the top floor balcony. You'd see the storm coming for miles. Watch it come. Just a couple of blocks away was a telecom tower that got hit EVERY storm, you watch it, waiting, with anticipation. Then wacko everything would go blue, it was unreal. Actually, that's the way to describe it, this erry blue colour for a split second then the thunder crack - worth the wait.

What about these guys in the story. Waiting for it or waiting to see whose God was real.

1. Which God is real? V22-24

1Ki 18:22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men."

1Ki 18:23 Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it.

1Ki 18:24 And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken."

Israel had gone after other gods. Not just ignored God but tried out some others.

We don't chase gods usually, we tend just to ignore him. That is probably what happened at first. Actually, it is. Slowly and little by little they ignored God. Then ignored him a bit more and then went looking for something to fill the gap. Like looking for a new church, look for the most exciting rather than what is best for us and what is best for them.

They thought they needed to have it proved which God was for real. Pretty sad really when they were supposed to be God's

people. What happened was they religiously tried to find God, and now they weren't sure what was true.

It would be easy for us too and it happens, feel isolated from God then we fill our lives up with religiousness and forget the relating to God bit.

2. Doesn't matter how religious you are if you worship the wrong God it's useless. V26-29

1Ki 18:26 And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made.

1Ki 18:27 And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

1Ki 18:28 And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them.

1Ki 18:29 And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

These guys were really serious and committed. Very religious, holy guys even. But also totally deluded. A carved wooden cow doesn't talk, actually an alive cow doesn't talk or send fire to burn itself! I know faithful committed Moslems, hindus, Jews. All faithful just wrong.

This is not just wrong type of worship, but totally wrong, against the rules of the land, after all God's rules were supposed to be the nations rules if they were God's people. Let's be careful not to write it off as them and not us either. Too often we follow a type of christianity, or a denomination or even a preacher or someone from church history who had a theology we like and nearly place them up there with God. Luther can't send fire

down from heaven, neither can Calvin and Spurgeon comes the closest but he can't either. Sometimes it is as if we put their writings along side the bible. They are not infallible, nor do they have biblical authority. I love Max Lucado books but his writings are not to the same credibility as the bible.

We are only Christians if we worship Jesus, after all the name Christians comes form Christ. If we follow Pastor John we'd be Johnites, or Billy Graham we'd be Grahamonians. Christ is who we are to follow - no middle men, and his book is the bible.

3, Fix up the altar. V30 – 32

1Ki 18:30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down.

1Ki 18:31 Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name,"

1Ki 18:32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed.

I find the altar in this story interesting.

The altar was probably broken down by Baals priests at Jezebels command. So, Elijah rebuilds it. So, it is useful to God. It is symbolic to the Jews. 12 stones 12 tribes, all of them together. Elijah is doing it for all of them. God is their God not just Elijah's. He is rebuilding their national faith.

How do we need to rebuild? Not an altar or building but rebuild people. We need to consciously rebuild God's church here, that means rebuilding people. Not stone by stone, but person by person.

Note Elijah says "come near" (KJV) "come here" (NIV) Near enough to watch him fix up the altar.

How is our altar? Well, we don't have an altar. How's our church? Not the building, but the people. The altar was being built "in the name of the Lord" So Bathurst Baptist must be built in the name of the Lord only.

4. Simple honest prayer works. V36-37

1Ki 18:36 And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

1Ki 18:37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."

The rebuilding must be done not just with God but for God and through God. This is where the prayer life comes in. Elijah's and ours.

Notice Elijah's wasn't flashy like the Baal guys. Just a request. God doesn't require theologically correct prayer but honest prayer. Just say it. If you feel you need rebuilding, tell Him, If I feel I need rebuilding. If you are frustrated, tell Him. Honest.

Look at Psalm 22 sometime- Honest prayer or even,
Psalm 73 - same thing Honest prayer

Look at Jeremiah - he wanted God to annihilate the Jews - wipe em out even.

Not theologically correct but honest.

5. God does it. V38

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The amazing part about our God and Elijah's God (Same person) is His capacity to answer. The Baal dudes god's didn't answer why- they couldn't, they didn't exist. But our God, now he listens and answers. I remember dad getting into trouble for making a statement once that he didn't believe in the power of prayer but in the power of a prayer answering God. Some people quoted him wrong.

But theologically, that's right. (Now not everything dad says is theologically right because sometimes I am.)

But does it work like this for us? Maybe not often. Notice God does it. He gets the credit, not Elijah. Often our prayer requests are for our benefit not the kingdom of God.

Funny how all of a sudden the people are on God's side. "The Lord He is God"

Sometimes it takes lightning to wake us up.

But think about this. If the people had not run after other Gods, had not ignored God in the first place.

Would God have had to use lightning?

God had spoken to the people dozens of times, they had their law, the prophets, more prophets, the tabernacle services (kinda like church). Yet they didn't take notice.

1Ki 18:39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."

Are we waiting for something to miraculously happen to fix up our lives or our church?

God is speaking to us now, constantly, quietly, communicating to us. It would be tragic if we missed this message and God had to do something spectacular to wake us up. That would mean we aren't listening.

Maybe we should just be getting right with God. Now!

What did God ask the people to do – Obey. And kill the worshippers of Baal.

1Ki 18:40 And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

I hope and pray we aren't looking for the spectacular and missing God's will for us.

What are we waiting for???