

[R2332 : page 204]

## "JEHOVAH, HE IS THE GOD."

– JULY 17. – 1 KINGS 18:30-40. –

"And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said:  
Jehovah, he is the God." – 1 Kings 18:39.

THE three and a half years of drouth no doubt had an humbling effect upon King Ahab, as well as upon the people of Israel. No doubt they began to wonder where the matter would end; and to recognize it as more than an accident – as a judgment. The question would be whether it was a judgment from Baal or a judgment from Jehovah; for the people, as a result of their extended acquaintance with idolatry had a comparatively weak faith respecting the unseen Jehovah, who permitted no image or likeness of himself to be made or to be worshiped. The Lord's time had come for awakening Israel, and starting a reformation movement amongst them, and Elijah, who had been sought by the King throughout the surrounding nations, was instructed to present himself before Ahab, with a promise that rain should follow; and was permitted to be the Lord's agent in drawing the attention of the people to the true God, who alone has power over the elements.

Altho Ahab realized that the famine was a judgment of the Lord, nevertheless, after the custom of the natural man, he ignored personal responsibility, and affected to charge the evils to Elijah, saying to him, "Are thou he that troublest Israel?" It is always so with the faithful mouthpieces of the Lord. Since they cannot prophesy smooth things, but must present the truth in reproof of unrighteousness, therefore the world and the nominal Israelite hate them. [R2332 : page 205] They do not seem to realize that the difficulty lies in themselves, and their sins, and their separation from the Lord. But Elijah, humble yet unabashed, did not hesitate to tell the king the truth of the matter, assuring him that the trouble in Israel came from his own wrong course.

The drouth had so humbled Ahab that he did not resent the Prophet's arraignment of his sin: perhaps also he hoped that through the prophet's favor the embargo of the drouth and famine might be lifted. At all events he very promptly complied with Elijah's request that the people of Israel be assembled at Mount Carmel, together with the priests of Baal. Accordingly there was a great concourse to the flat, table-top of Mount Carmel, where Elijah awaited them, the king also coming with them; but Queen Jezebel sullenly remained at the palace in the capital city of Samaria.

Elijah, full of zeal for the Lord, and full of indignation against the idolatry, and probably counseled respecting his course by the Lord, had a plan prepared by which to demonstrate to Israel which was the true God and which the false one. In the presence of the people he made a proposition to the priests of Baal for a contest to prove the question. This proposition was so reasonable, and the interest and expectation of Israel so great, that the priests of Baal dare not refuse. They, four hundred and fifty in number, were to build an altar and to make a sacrifice thereon to their god, Baal, while Elijah would build an altar and offer a sacrifice thereon to Jehovah, and whichever god would answer by fire would thus be attested as the true God. If Baal were powerful enough to answer the prayers of his priests and to accept the offering of the altar, then the people might understand that it was because Baal was offended with them that they had experienced the drouth and the famine. But if Jehovah had the power, and would answer with fire, it would be proof to the people that the drouth and the famine were from him, and signs of his indignation because they had worshiped Baal.

The proposition could not be rejected: the priests of Baal prepared their altar and their sacrifice, and had the advantage of the noon-day heat of a tropical sun, sufficient almost of itself to ignite the fat of the sacrifice. They desired and prayed that the test might be granted; they cut themselves with stones until the blood gushed out, claiming that it must be because some of them, as priests of Baal, had trespassed

against him, that their prayers were not heard. They kept this up for hours, until near sunset – Elijah meantime, in the hearing of the people, pouring upon them the sharpest sarcasm – the sarcasm of truth, not of falsehood. He suggested that they pray louder, as peradventure their god might be a little deaf; he urged them to keep it up, peradventure Baal might be on a journey, or attending to other business, or asleep. Thus he was giving to Israel in general the most telling lesson possible, considering their lethargy on religious subjects. He was preparing them for the final demonstration which he was about to give, that Jehovah is the true God, the only God who had power to answer both by fire and by water.

Mark how thorough the Prophet's faith in God, and how thoroughly he demonstrated that there could be no room for deception in connection with his offering. Twelve stone crocks of water were poured upon the sacrifice and the wood, and filled the trench around about it; the sun was losing its power, and the offering was thoroughly drenched, and all things were thus ready for a thorough test of Jehovah's power to send down fire.

Elijah stated the matter to the people: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal be God, then follow him." The test was to show which was the true God, and which was the false god, and incidentally which the true and which the false prophets. Then Elijah prayed a beautiful and proper prayer. He did not say, "O Lord, cause Israel all to know how great, I Elijah, am, as a prophet of the Lord," but "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art Jehovah God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again [ – recalling them again by their experiences and these signs to be thy people]."

The answer by fire was prompt, and the effect upon the people great. They promptly acknowledged Jehovah, and slew the priests of Baal. Then, while Ahab and the people rejoiced in Elijah's promises that the **[R2333 : page 205]** long hoped for rain would come, and went

to their homes to rejoice and feast, the prophet remained upon the mountain to pray for that which God had definitely promised. Once he prayed, and sent his servant a distance to look for indications, but no answer. Again he prayed, and sent his servant again, but no evidence of response. After having been used of the Lord so mightily, in the matter of the sacrifice, Elijah might have gotten to feel too much of his own importance, if his prayer for rain had been too promptly responded to. Opportunity was given for fear and doubt, that the Lord would fail to keep his engagement, respecting the rain. But knowing the sureness of the Lord's word, Elijah did not doubt; he prayed again and again, and sent his servant each time to see what evidences there were of the Lord's answers to the prayers, until finally, when he had prayed for the seventh time, and inquired for a sign, the young man returned, saying that he saw a small cloud about the size of a man's hand. Then Elijah ceased his prayer, and realized [R2333 : page 206] that the beginning of the fulfilment had come.

There is a lesson in this also for the Lord's people of to-day, that, as our Lord said, "We ought to pray and not to faint," not to grow weary in looking for, asking for and expecting the spiritual blessings which the Lord has *promised* us. Many of the prayers which fail of fulfilment, fail because the petitioners ask amiss; for things which God has not promised. Others fail, because of lack of faith. The prayer of faith is that which is offered, "nothing doubting," and whose hope is based upon a definite *promise* of the Lord. For instance, to us as new creatures, the Lord has declared, "Your heavenly Father is more willing to give the holy spirit to them that ask him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts [of an earthly kind] to their children." He that seeketh the spirit of holiness, the showers of divine grace, findeth them. To him that knocketh, the stores of divine favor shall be opened.

-----