

BOWING THE KNEE TO BAAL (part 2 of 7; next post: tomorrow – 3/25/2021)

In our last segment we left Elijah at Mount Carmel; ready, willing and able to demonstrate that the pagan god of the Canaanites is no god at all. This proving ground was important in setting the stage for the purging which would follow. Just prior to the drama that was about to unfold, Elijah gathers the sons of Israel as well as the prophets of Baal and issues a challenge, recorded in 1 Kings 18:21 –

**“Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’
But the people did not answer him a word.”**

The people are so enamored with having it both ways that they don’t initially respond, although they soon would. In order to determine the true God and the false one, Elijah requires the prophets of Baal to sacrifice an oxen while he does the same to the God of Israel (1 Kings 18:20-35). No matter what the false prophets do, there is no answer from Baal. Elijah prays for a response from the true God (v36) and “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.” (v38) The acknowledgement of the people is immediate, recorded in 1 Kings 18:39 –

“When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.’”

Elijah then exercises his authority as a prophet of God, orders the seizing of the prophets of Baal, and personally executes every one of them. Yet this was only the beginning of the purge, which would be continued by Hazael, Jehu and Elisha (1 Kings 19:17). King Jehu would prove himself to be an especially cold-blooded assassin, as detailed in 2 Kings 9:1-10:36. In spite of Elijah’s sense of isolation in the midst of widespread and overwhelming apostasy, God reserves a remnant of 7,000 true believers for Himself, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. A number of them were used to carry out the purging of idolatry in Israel, **AND IN THIS SPECIFIC HISTORICAL INSTANCE ONLY, a purging by means of execution.**

So in the contemporary context of our generation, where new forms of apostasy seem to be appearing daily, as predicted by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and 1 Timothy 4:1, the comprehensive question we must ask ourselves is simply this: **“Are we going to be part of the problem or part of the solution?”**