

Introduction: What does it take for God to get our attention? And, once He has our attention, how do we continue to walk with Him, following after Him where He leads with joyful thanksgiving? *** Our story this morning about the contest Elijah arranged on the top of Mount Carmel between THE True Covenant God of Israel and the demon with much ambition, who was called 'lord' by people, concludes with an eye popping miracle. The people's 'lord' did nothing from morning to evening. Then God's prophet repaired His altar, built a new one and arranged the sacrifice on it on wood AND poured twelve large jugs of water over everything so it filled a trench. Then Elijah prayed and asked God to send fire down to earth. The fire that fell consumed everything in an instant, even the water. God had His people's attention. They fell on their faces in worship and twice proclaimed, 'Yahweh, He (is) God!' But, then ... *** The problem of the human condition is expressed in a line from a 1972 Jethro Tull album, 'We will be geared to the ordinary rather than the exceptional'. C S Lewis asked: How can we get children away from playing in mud puddles in the street and take them to the beach? We seem to be content to be doing the same ordinary things, day after day. *** We have two miracle stories today. Both show the amazing power of The God 'who dwells in unapproachable light' (*1 Timothy 6:16*, ESV). *** As we consider them, may God help us to be transformed in our hearts and minds SO we can live EVERY moment in constant wonder and amazement of how awesome He is, AND come to appreciate and enjoy His life-giving, life-changing LOVE so clearly demonstrated by what He did on The Cross on Good Friday.

I. After three years east of the Jordan River, Elijah meets Ahab, and Elijah proposes a contest to determine if people should go after Yahweh or Baal. (*1 Kings 18:16-39*)

A. After Elijah corrects Ahab, he requests Ahab to gather ALL Israel and four hundred fifty prophets of Baal to decide who is THE True God, and Baal does nothing. (*Verses 16-29*)

1. Obadiah arranges for Ahab and Elijah to meet. (*Verse 16*)

Obadiah: 'Servant of Yahweh' was Ahab's house manager, as Joseph was with Potiphar in Egypt (*Genesis 39*).

He had hidden one hundred prophets from Jezebel (*verse 4*). He asked for Elijah to assure him he would indeed meet with Ahab after three years (*verses 1, 11-15*).

2. Ahab calls Elijah the 'troubler of Israel', and Elijah correctly turns this back on Ahab. (*Verses 17-18*)

Ahab blames Elijah: Sinners will attack God's messenger to avoid repenting.

NO, Ahab, it's you: Elijah says Ahab and his father have troubled Israel in forsaking Yahweh's commandments and going after 'Baal's'. These were demon storm 'gods' named lower case 'lords'.

3. He asks Ahab to send for all Israel to gather on Mount Carmel with all the false prophets, and Ahab does so. (*Verses 19-20*)

ALL Israel: Yahweh wants to use His prophet to turn the hearts of ALL His people back to Him.

Mt. Carmel: Four hundred fifty Baal and four hundred Asherah prophets were to meet on 'mount garden'.

Asherah: The name means 'groves' (KJV). She was supposed to give good fortune and was the consort of Baal.

4. Elijah draws near to say, 'how long will you halt (KJV) between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, go after Him, and if Baal.' I am Yahweh's only prophet. (*Verses 21-22*)

Halt: A better word for halt is limp. The people were limping while trying to worship two deities.

Choice: He makes it clear: Go after Yahweh, or go after Baal. (*Matthew 6:24*)

Application: We limp with two opinions – knowing something of THE True God, BUT caught up in our ordinary existence on earth. Will we be led by The Spirit to commit to always walk after THE True God and rise above our limited lives?

Let us go after THE True God

I alone am left: He is the only prophet, but seven thousand are faithful to Yahweh (*1 Kings 19:18*).

5. He proposes a contest by fire between their 'gods' and Yahweh. (*Verses 23-24*)

Rules of contest: Let them give two bulls and choose one to sacrifice, and I the other – with no fire; you call on your 'gods' and I on Yahweh, THE God will answer by fire.

People say – good: The people said, 'The thing is good'. It's on!

6. Elijah lets them do their bull first, for they are many; they do so, and they call on Baal. (*Verses 25-26*)

Three hours: And no voice, and no one answering from morning to noon.

Limped: Then they limped about the altar they made. They typify ALL Israel, not going after Yahweh.

7. At noon Elijah starts to have fun with them. (*Verse 27*)

Mock: He is derisive to them. May all see it is futile 'walking after' anything less than THE True God.

'god': Call in a big voice, because he is a 'god'.

Four things: For he is talking, stepped aside, on a journey, perhaps sleeping and will be awakened.

(But, THE True God always has open ears, and is present and awake!)

8. They also cut themselves; and, after noon, they prophesy until the burnt offering. (*Verses 28-29*)

Great voice, blood: They continue the big voice call AND cut themselves with swords and spears until their blood gushes.

Prophesied – nothing: Even after ecstatic utterances: no voice, no answer, no attention.

B. As evening approaches, Elijah repairs Yahweh's altar, pours twelve jars of water over the bull and wood, prays a short prayer to Yahweh, and fire falls from heaven, consuming everything. (*Verses 30-39*)

1. Then Elijah told all the people to come near to him, and he repaired Yahweh's altar. (*Verse 30*)

Brought people near: After he called them, the people came near.

Repaired Yahweh's altar: Repair can mean heal. Yahweh's altar had been thrown down, by Ahab.

2. Then he took twelve stones and built an altar and made a trench around it. (*Verses 31-32*)

Twelve stones: The stones represented the tribes from the twelve sons of Jacob (supplanter), whom Yahweh said would be Israel (God will prevail).

Built altar in Yahweh's Name: The trench Elijah made in The Name of The Covenant God could hold ten gallons of water. (May we seek to build altars of worship to God, and use them daily.)

3. Elijah properly put the wood on the altar, and cut the bull in pieces and put (them) on the wood; then three times he had four large jars filled with water and poured over everything. (*Verses 33-35*)

Twelve large jars: He used so much water that even the trench filled with water. Was this a waste of water after a three year drought? No. THE True God was going to make a dramatic miracle of fire!

Later cloud: After the fire, a cloud rose from the sea, with a cloudburst over Elijah (*verses 42-46*). Did two sources of water merge to make this great storm? Water from the sea? And, Elijah's water which was consumed?

(I first heard this possibility from Dave Warren about seventeen years ago.)

4. Then Elijah prayed to Yahweh of the patriarchs, 'Let it be known You are God in Israel, I am Your servant and have done all this at Your Word; answer me and this people will know You are The Covenant God and You have turned their heart back again'. (*Verses 36-37*)

Short prayer: He wants ALL Israel to know Yahweh is God! And he twice requests an answer about his last request.

God is prime (first) mover: He wants The Covenant God to turn the heart of the people back to Him. Jesus said no one can come to Him for forgiveness and salvation-healing unless he is drawn by The Father (*John 6:44, 65*).

5. Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed everything, even the trench water; then the ALL the people fell on their faces declaring, 'Yahweh, He (is) God'. (*Verses 38-39*)

Fire falls from Yahweh, consumes everything: This spectacular fire consumed the bull, the wood, and the stones; and, the water that was in the trench was licked up. An awesome manifestation of God!

God's fire manifests His Presence

All, having seen, fall on their faces: This is a physical act of worship with their bodies.

Doubly declare – 'Yahweh, He (is) God': By repeating the declaration, they make a strong testimony.

Bottom line: They will no longer 'limp' between THE True God and the false 'gods' and their false prophets. They are all declaring:

Let us go after THE True God

II. Jesus takes three apostles up a mountain where His form is changed, His clothes become exceedingly white, and Elijah appears to them with Moses and they were talking with Jesus. (*Mark 9:2-4*)

- A. Six days after Jesus predicted his death, He takes Peter, James and John up a high mountain and His form is changed. (*Verse 2*)

1. After predicting His death, Jesus is taking three apostles. (*Verse 2a*)

Taking three apostles: This is an historic present tense narrative, putting us with them.

The names are from oldest to youngest.

Inner circle: Jesus chose a diverse group of three: Peter is the rock, James (Jacob) is the supplanter, and the third one (John) reminds us Yahweh is gracious.

2. And He is leading them to a high mountain for themselves alone. (*Verse 2b*)

Leading away from crowds: They need to get away from the large crowds.

3. And He was changed in form in front of them. (*Verse 2c*)

Acted on from outside His (human) body: This 'metamorphosis' happened from outside Jesus.

It is likely The Father and Holy Spirit acted together on Jesus because the verb is passive.

Transformed body: The inner three saw the miraculous change. How long did it take to happen? How long did it last? We are not told.

- B. His clothes become exceedingly whiter than bleached cloth, and Elijah appears to them, with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. (*Verses 3-4*)

1. And his clothing became shining, exceedingly brilliant white. (*Verse 3a*)

All His clothing: The noun is plural, all His clothing; the verb is singular, meaning one miracle.

2. So as no professional bleacher is able to bleach white. (*Verse 3b*)

Beyond what bleach can do: Again, a miracle. No earthy compound, and no skilled worker can do it.

3. And, having appeared to them Elijah, with Moses. (*Verse 4a*)

Elijah appeared: Elijah was brought to them (by God). He did not come on his own.

With Moses: The only time Moses played 'second fiddle' to a man (*Deuteronomy 34:10-12*). After one thousand five hundred years Moses is finally allowed to set foot in the land spoken of to Abraham (*Deuteronomy 32:48-52*).

4. And they were continuously talking with Jesus. (*Verse 4b*)

Long talk with Jesus: Luke says they were talking about His 'exodus', His atoning death on The Cross (*Luke 9:31*). (We must all commit to taking extended periods of time to talk with The Resurrected Jesus.)

Bottom line: Let the story of the transformation of Jesus, and the five people who shared it with Him, be an incentive for us to go after THE True God.

Let us go after THE True God

Conclusion: THE True God does eye popping, mind blowing miracles so that people who are limping with two opinions may finally decide to always go (walk) after Him, bowing to Him in humble worship and declaring, 'Yahweh (THE True, Three-in-One God), He (is) God.'

Let us go after THE True God