

Meeting the Challenge

1 Ki. 18:20-40

INTRODUCTION

- A. Enemies are easy to find.
 - 1. Jesus regularly irritated the scribes and Pharisees.
 - 2. More than once, Paul was forced to leave a city due to threats on his life.
- B. No two people were more adversarial toward one another than Ahab and Elijah.

Let's examine how Elijah handled Ahab and the false prophets in the kingdom.

WE SHOULD CHALLENGE OUR OPPONENTS, vv. 20-29

- A. Ahab gathered all the children of Israel and the prophets to Mt. Carmel, v. 20.
- B. Elijah made the people an offer, vv. 21-24.
 - 1. The people were faltering between two opinions, v. 21.
 - a. They were trying to mix the worship of Baal and the worship of God.
 - b. They were attempting to be one both sides of the issue at once.
 - c. We cannot be on both sides of an issue.
 - 1) Unless we are totally committed to Jesus, we are against him.
 - a) Mt. 6:24.
 - b) "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Mt. 12:30).
 - 2) Are you trying to be on both sides of the issue at once?
 - a) Are you trying to please friends and God at the same time?
 - b) Are you trying to serve God and serve your own desires at the same time?
 - 2. While there were 450 prophets of Baal, Elijah was the only prophet of God, v. 22.
 - a. What the majority does religiously is not right.
 - b. While the majority will be lost, only a small minority will be saved (Mt. 7:13-14).
 - 3. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to offer a sacrifice, vv. 23-24.
 - a. The prophets of Baal were to take a bull, cut it in pieces, lay it on an altar, and call for Baal to answer by burning the sacrifice.
 - b. Elijah would do the same.
- C. The prophets of Baal call upon Baal, vv. 25-29.
 - 1. The prophets took a bull, prepared it, laid it on the altar, and called to Baal, vv. 25-26.
 - 2. The prophets called from morning till noon saying, "O Baal, hear us!," v. 26.
 - a. There was no answer.
 - b. The prophets began to leap around the altar they had made.
 - 3. Elijah mocked the prophets, v. 27.
 - a. He told them to cry aloud to Baal.
 - b. Elijah reasoned that perhaps Baal was meditating, or busy, or on a journey or perhaps sleeping.
 - 4. The prophets cut themselves with knives and lances attempting to get Baal to hear them, v. 28.
 - 5. Although these prophets continued to call to Baal, there was no answer, v. 29.
- D. Elijah challenged these prophets.
 - 1. He basically said, "If you are the prophets of Baal, prove it."
 - 2. Elijah gave them a chance to prove they were right.
- E. We, too, must challenge our opponents.

1. "Prove the Bible condones instrumental music."
2. "Prove the Bible teaches salvation is by faith only."
3. Those who teach these doctrines must be prepared to defend them.

WE MUST MEET OUR CHALLENGES, vv. 30-40

- A. After challenging the prophets of Baal, Elijah took the challenge himself.
- B. Elijah called for the people to come close to him, v. 30-32.
 1. He repaired the altar of the LORD which had fallen down.
 2. He took 12 stones in honor of the 12 tribes of Israel to repaired the altar.
 3. Elijah made a huge trench around the altar.
- C. Elijah offered a bull, vv. 33-39.
 1. Elijah put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid the bull on the altar, v. 33.
 2. Elijah instructed the crowd to take four waterpots, fill them with water, and pour on the sacrifice, vv. 33-35.
 - a. The crowd poured 12 full waterpots on the altar. Obviously the 12 pots are a tribute to the 12 tribes.
 - b. Water ran all around the altar, and he filled the trench with water.
 3. Elijah prayed to God to ask his blessing on the sacrifice, vv. 36-37.
 - a. Elijah prayed that God would show himself to be the God of Israel.
 - 1) Many of the Israelites served Baal.
 - 2) Elijah wanted to show that Baal is a false God, whereas the LORD is the true God.
 - b. Elijah prayed that the Israelites would turn their hearts back to God.
 - c. Elijah had pure motives.
 - 1) He wasn't interested in making a great name for himself--He wanted the Israelites to turn back to God.
 - 2) When we challenge those around us, we cannot do so for our own glory.
 - a) We need to save souls, not win arguments.
 - b) Our works are to bring glory to God, not ourselves (Mt. 5:16).
 4. Fire from the Lord consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust and the fire licked up the water in the trench.
 5. When the people saw this great event, they fell on their faces and praised God.
 - a. They did not praise Elijah for being so great--the people praised God.
 - b. When we meet our challenges, we need to have people praise God, not us.
- D. Elijah seized the prophets of Baal and executed them, v. 40.

CONCLUSION

- A. Let us challenge our religious friends.
- B. Let's show them God's truth.