

Elijah, 1 Kings 17-18. Augusta. October- November 2011. (5) Reading : 1 Kings 18. 30-46.

Our reading for this evening is taken from 1 Kings chapter 18, commencing at verse 30.

[Reading : 1 Kings 18. 30-46.]

Tonight we have reached our concluding study in 1 Kings 17 and 18. But, before I go any further, we need to pick up just a few threads from last evening.

Then we watched the fruitless efforts of the prophets of Ba'al as they attempted – over many hours – to evoke some reaction from their supposed god. And this, even though Elijah's mocking sarcasm had driven them into an even greater frenzy. For, as we saw, according to verse 29, all their ranting and raving yielded no more than a deafening silence – which the Holy Spirit emphasises by His powerful three-fold declaration, literally translated ... 'No sound, no one answering, no one paying any attention'. But this was hardly surprising, because – as Elijah knew well – there was no Ba'al to tune in to their cries.

And we take up the story this evening at the latter part of verse 30.

Elijah's first action, we are told, was to 'repair' – literally to 'heal' – the altar which had been broken down.¹ Not that this altar had fared any worse than the other altars of the Lord, for twice in the following chapter, verses 10 and 14, Elijah told the Lord – who doubtless already knew! – that 'the children of Israel ... have thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword'. And, as we have already been informed in verse 4 and in verse 13 of our chapter that it was Jezebel who had 'cut off' and 'slain' God's prophets, it is, I guess, likely that it had been Jezebel who had been responsible for destroying God's altars also – in all likelihood replacing each of them with an altar to Ba'al, as may have been the case here on the heights of Carmel.²

We are not told anything about the origin of the Lord's altar here, but I suspect it may have been built by some of the more pious members of the northern, ten-tribe kingdom, following the rift with the southern two-tribe kingdom of Judah back in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam. If this is so, it gives added significance to the details which the Holy Spirit provides, in verses 31 and 32, of the manner in which Elijah rebuilt it.³

Some have questioned whether any altar, other than that at the Temple in Jerusalem, could have been used legitimately for the worship of God.⁴ But, leaving aside the 'private' altars used in pre-Jerusalem days by Gideon, Manoah, Samuel and David⁵ – who each, as Elijah, successfully called on the name of the Lord at their respective altars – the split between the northern and southern kingdoms back in chapter 12 had long since created a political situation where any godly souls in the northern kingdom no longer had any access to the altar in Jerusalem.⁶ And the acceptance of Elijah's sacrifice here, together with his lament over the destruction of the altars of the Lord in general in chapter 19, suggests strongly that God recognised things as they now were, and honoured the efforts of His people to worship Him as best they could in their present circumstances.

Verses 31 and 32 tell us that 'Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord'.

And I note first the repeated reference to 'stones' – which would, of necessity, either have been stones from the original altar which had stood there, or, perhaps more likely, from stones lying on the mountain. In either case, Elijah clearly made his altar according to the directions given by God to Moses at Sinai back in Exodus 20 verse 25; 'if you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have profaned it'.

Scholars tell us that the Canaanites made *their* altars of finished stones⁷, and it may well be that the worshippers of Ba'al did so too. But as far as Elijah was concerned, if he was going to build 'an altar in the name of the Lord' then he would build it according to God's own specifications – and the same should hold true, of course, of anything which we attempt to build for Him. So Elijah made no attempt to obtain stones which had been quarried and polished by human art, but chose rather to use the rough and unhewn stones to hand – taking, as someone has well said, 'what God had made and not what man had made'.

But the Holy Spirit draws particular attention, not to the *nature* of the stones, but to the *number* of the stones. 'Elijah took twelve stones', we read, and, just in case we might miss the point, the Holy Spirit explains, 'according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob'.

Not that Elijah was the first – nor would be the last – to make use of twelve objects to symbolise the unity of the nation.

We read, for example, in Exodus 24, that, when Moses built an altar at Sinai, he set up alongside it 'twelve pillars (or 'standing-stones') according to the twelve tribes of Israel'.⁸ Again, according to Joshua chapter 4, as Israel

passed over the Jordan, Joshua commanded *twelve* men, one from each of the tribes: 'each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, *according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel*',⁹ which stones he then set up in Gilgal as a memorial for coming generations.¹⁰

And, looking on to days much later than those of Elijah, we read that, when the remnant of returned exiles dedicated the second Temple, according to Ezra chapter 6, they offered 'as a sin offering for all Israel *twelve* male goats, *according to the number of the tribes of Israel*', v. 17.¹¹

And you will note, I am sure, that, in all of these cases, the Holy Spirit uses more or less the same expression – 'according to the number of the tribes of Israel'.

And Elijah's choice of twelve stones here (as the remnant's choice of twelve goats later) drew deliberate attention to the unity of the nation – that, viewed from God's standpoint, Israel *still* consisted of twelve tribes – in spite of their present political and religious division – that, as *God* viewed them, the *twelve* tribes still formed *only one people* – His!¹²

I suppose it would be true to say therefore that, although *physically* Elijah was standing on 10-tribe ground (Carmel forming part of the tribal inheritance allocated by Joshua to Asher), *spiritually* he was standing on 12-tribe ground.

And, as I see it, even the description of the tribes in verse 31, 'the tribes of *the sons of Jacob*, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, *Israel* shall be your name' ... even that description is significant.¹³ For by alluding here to the fact that '*Israel*' was the name given *by God* to the father of *all twelve* sons – and not just the ten from whom the tribes of the northern kingdom had descended – the Holy Spirit is implicitly criticising the ten tribes, not only for ever breaking away from the two, but for appropriating the name 'Israel' exclusively for themselves, to distinguish them from the two tribes in the south, known after by the name 'Judah'.¹⁴

But what does all this mean to *us*? Surely that, whatever scriptural convictions we hold and practise relevant to the local assembly – and I don't doubt that, for the most part, we know why we *are where we are*, and why we *meet as we do* – we must ever remember that, in God's sight, 'there is', as Paul says in Ephesians 4, 'one body'¹⁵ – and *only* one body – and that that body comprises every true believer in our Lord Jesus, whatever his or her local church association. Our understanding of God's truth may stop us from joining in public fellowship with many, but we must love and respect all – ever remembering that *God* sees us as one in Christ.

In a hymn we often sing back home, Mr. J. G. Deck quite rightly says : ...

'Oft we forget that *we are one*
With every saint that loves His name;
To Him united on the throne,
Our life, our hope, our Lord the same'.¹⁶

At this point in the narrative the text focuses our attention on what happens at Elijah's altar.

There was, of course, nothing unusual about *some* of Elijah's preparations for offering up his sacrifice. His arranging of the wood on the altar, his cutting up of his bullock, and his laying the pieces on the wood are all in keeping with the instructions which God gave Moses in Leviticus 1 for the offering of a bullock as a burnt offering, where we read that the offerer was to 'kill the bullock ... and cut it into pieces. And the sons of Aaron the priest shall ... lay the wood in order upon the fire: and ... lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood'¹⁷ – although, as we will shortly see, in the present instance the wood was certainly not required, as it was in Leviticus 1, to make the sacrifice burn. For 'the fire of the Lord' which was soon to fall needed no help in doing that – nothing could resist *that fire*, not even stones and dust!

But if there was nothing unusual about *some* of Elijah's preparations for offering up his sacrifice, Elijah's *other* preparations *were* rather unusual – to say the least.

For, having first dug a trench¹⁸ around the altar, he proceeded to drench both his offering and the wood on which it was laid. And I mean drench! For they were soaked with no less than twelve vessel-loads of water – 'four barrels'¹⁹, being emptied three times each – the word translated 'barrels' describing a jar or pitcher, being the word used, for example, in the previous chapter of the flour jar of the widow of Zarephath, and in Genesis chapter 24 of the water-pitcher carried by Rebecca to the well in Haran.

And here again we can hardly miss the link with the number of Israel's tribes.²⁰

And, then, when 'the water ran round about the altar', we are told that 'he *also filled* the trench with water'. That is, as I read it, the trench not only collected any water which ran down off the sacrifice – which water would otherwise have been absorbed into the dry earth around – but Elijah then 'topped it up' to the brim with even more water.

'Now, wait a minute', you may say, 'that's a lot of water. And there has been no rain for forty-two months. Where is all this water coming from?'

Well, I think we can safely say, not from the Mediterranean Sea – which lay some fourteen hundred feet below²¹ – and at no small distance to the west. For some energetic souls to have carried well over twelve jars of water up and over that kind of distance would have taken far longer than the time available that mid-afternoon. Nor is it necessary to assume that someone managed to get down to the brook Kidron and back in the time.

As we noted on Wednesday evening, less than 100 yards from the plateau which almost certainly provided the stage for this contest between Jehovah and Ba'al, there is a spring of water, which, it is claimed, 'flows even in the driest seasons'. And I see no reason therefore to quarrel with the Jewish historian Josephus when he records that Elijah 'ordered them to fill ... barrels *with the water of the fountain*, and to pour it upon the altar'.²²

Elijah wasn't lacking in intelligence – he knew that sodden meat and wood didn't burn. But he went out of his way to avoid any possible accusation of fraud or deception. There was no way that any flame which he managed to slip in unnoticed was going to start a bonfire here.

Yet, in doing so, he was also, of course, again stacking the deck against the Lord. Indeed, if you didn't know better, you could be excused for thinking that Elijah was playing for the other side. But then this man had unqualified confidence in his God's power to do whatever was necessary. And so, on God's instructions (according to the close of verse 36) he happily put every conceivable difficulty in the Lord's way – knowing that the greater the obstacles, the greater the glory for God when He overcame them.

I enjoy a quote which comes from Daniel Rowlands, who served God in Llangeitho in my native Wales over 200 years ago, 'His ways are past finding out! His glory is *seen* when He works *by means*; it is *more seen* when He works *without means*; it is *seen above all* when He works *contrary to means*'.²³ And so it was here.

'It came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice', we read in verse 36, 'that Elijah the prophet came near'. Don't ask me how Elijah knew it was then the time of the evening sacrifice. I don't know. Perhaps he could tell from the position of the sun. Perhaps the Lord told him! Certainly he wasn't wearing a Rolex watch! As I say, I don't know *how* Elijah knew that it was the time of the evening sacrifice. I know only *that* he did – for God says so.

Jeroboam had long since²⁴ disassociated the northern kingdom of Israel from the worship at the temple in Jerusalem. But Elijah clearly made a point of waiting for the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice there before calling on his God to accept the sacrifice he had prepared. And, by doing so, he openly expressed his desire to have fellowship with both the altar at Jerusalem and the worshippers there.

And did, I wonder, Elijah give any thought to *the origin of the fire on the Jerusalem altar*, which was at that very moment consuming the evening sacrifice? For I note that, about a century before this, following Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, 'fire came down from heaven' to ignite his burnt offering²⁵ – which fire had presumably been kept burning on the temple altar ever since.

Hmm, now *there's* a thought, Elijah. Fire which 'came down from heaven' in response to the prayer of a righteous man. Ah, but don't get *too* excited, Elijah – *that* was Jerusalem, the place where God had promised to place His name. *This* is Carmel – currently situated in Ba'al's territory.

Historians and scholars are of the view that, in all likelihood, the evening sacrifice was offered in Elijah's day, as we know it was at a later date, at the ninth hour of the day.²⁶ Which was, of course, the very hour when, according to the gospels of Matthew and Mark, our Lord Jesus cried 'my God, my God, why did you forsake me' before releasing His spirit.²⁷ And I can't help wondering whether this detail came up for notice when Elijah, along with Moses, appeared in glory with our Lord on the so-called Mount of Transfiguration, and spoke with the Saviour of His forthcoming death at Jerusalem²⁸ – namely that *Elijah* had offered *his* sacrifice at the very same hour of the day at which *the Lord Jesus* was to offer His.

Then the man, who, in verse 21 'came near to all the people', in verse 36 'came near' (the same word) to the *prepared* sacrifice on the *repaired* altar – and, of course, to God.²⁹

And we can hardly miss the stark contrast here between Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al.³⁰

Not least in that they, having kept up their wailing and wild ritual for the best part of the day, had produced nothing. Whereas he prays for less than a minute with the most 'striking' result.

And I note that Elijah's prayer occupies just two verses and comprises only sixty-three words in English – fewer still in Hebrew. What an example to us who pray publicly to keep our public prayers short, sharp and to the point. I emphasise 'our *public* prayers' – for, though Elijah's *public* prayer for *fire* was brief and crisp, his *private* prayer for *rain* at the close of the chapter was anything but that.³¹

And Elijah's prayer here reveals his great priority in life – the glory of God.³² For we cannot help noting that his request at the close of verse 36 that *he* would be vindicated as the Lord's servant is sandwiched between two petitions that *the Lord* would be acknowledged as God.³³ This man has no ambition to exalt *himself*; he wishes to be known only as the Lord's 'servant' carrying out the Lord's commands.

And how important it was that Elijah could tell the God who knew his heart that he had done 'all these things' at His (God's) word ... on God's own instructions. Because, had he done it all on his own initiative (resting his case that Jehovah was the true and living God on the falling of fire from heaven, drenching his bullock and wood with water and so on), the outcome and sequel would have proved, not only acutely embarrassing for him, but deeply dishonouring to the Lord whom he would have been guilty of tempting by his presumption.

And as further evidence that Elijah's object and goal was not his own glory but that of God, I note that the 'you' in verse 37 – 'Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that ... you have turned their hearts back to you again', is emphatic ... 'that you, not *I*, have turned their hearts back again'.³⁴

But at this point I feel like crying out, with a slight twist to the words of Isaac almost 1200 years before³⁵, 'Elijah, behold the wood and the bullock for the burnt offering; but *where is the fire?*'

And I suspect that as Elijah drew his brief prayer to its close, the people held their breath to see whether Jehovah's prophet would be as frustrated as had been Ba'al's prophets.³⁶ For if no fire fell from heaven on his altar, the contest would have to be declared a draw. It would have been stalemate.³⁷

But they didn't have to wait long! For 'then the fire of the Lord fell', v. 38.³⁸

Scripture speaks of only two previous occasions when fire had fallen from heaven to consume sacrifices offered up to God by His servants.³⁹ The first had been at Ornan's threshing floor – the account of which is found in 2 Samuel 24 (which some of us will be looking at on this coming Lord's day) and in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21, where we read that 'David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the Lord; and *He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering*'.⁴⁰ And the second had been at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, when, on more or less the very same spot as for David, as we noted just now, following Solomon's prayer, '*fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering ...*'.⁴¹

We read that on both of those occasions the fire from heaven wholly consumed the offerings – but on neither occasion did it consume the altar! Whereas the fire which hit Elijah's altar on Carmel consumed, not only his burnt offering and the wood on which it had been laid – but the very stones of the altar and the dust of the ground around it – and then proceeded to 'lick up' (a very good word to express the action of tongues of fire) the water which filled the surrounding trench.

And, because 'the fire of the Lord *fell*', it consumed these elements in the order it did – working ever downwards – which is, of course, contrary to the action of all earthly and natural fire. No doubt if the items had burned from the bottom up, some suspicious minded folk would have suggested that somehow – in spite of his claim otherwise – Elijah had something to do with it. But burning everything from the top downwards proved beyond doubt that this was no ordinary fire ... this was the work of God! And we can hardly fail to link this with the rending of the Temple veil at the time of our Lord's death – of which Matthew says that 'Jesus ... released His spirit, and behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom'⁴² – which I remind you coincided in time of day with the fire from heaven which here in 1 Kings 18 also worked down from the top to the bottom.

And at this point the spotlight switches from Elijah and his (now non-existent) altar to the people and their reaction.

Just as the *choice* had been made clear to them – 'If Jehovah is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him' – and just as the *criterion* had been made clear to them – 'the God who answers by fire, he is God' – so now the *conclusion* was made clear to them. Indeed, the conclusion was inescapable.⁴³

The contest had not only been fair, but Elijah had deliberately weighted everything in the pagan prophets favour. Ba'al's prophets had enjoyed the benefit of both the wind and the hill. Not only had the contest played to what they claimed to be their god's strong point – casting down lightning bolts to the earth⁴⁴ ... not only had they been given the choice of bullock ... not only had they gone first, enjoying the obvious advantage of that time of day when the sun was at its hottest ... not only had they been allowed to continue for more or less the whole day – from morning to mid-afternoon ... but they had enjoyed the 'home court advantage' in having the contest held in Ba'al's own territory at Carmel.

And what, pray, was the outcome? Ba'al and his prophets *may* have been playing on their home turf, but the result was clearly 'game, set and match' to Jehovah and His prophet!

The Lord had beaten fairy-tale Ba'al at his own game. It was all over bar the shouting – and we don't have to wait long for that.

For, changing the image, the people, as the jury, gave in their verdict upon the trial – and the verdict was unanimous. As one man, 'they fell on their faces',⁴⁵ and – in words which were almost an echo of Elijah's own name, which means 'my God is the Lord' ... 'my God is Jehovah' – they confessed, 'Jehovah, He is God; Jehovah, He is God'.⁴⁶

In *one sense*, it was all over. And yet, although *the fire* had fallen from heaven, no *water* yet had – and it was rain which was so sorely needed. And before the God who had sent *fire* to revive the people's *faith*, sent *rain* to revive their *land*, two things needed to happen. First, the prophets of Ba'al must be put to death⁴⁷, v. 40, and, second, Elijah must pray the rain down, vv. 42-45.⁴⁸

And here on the heights of Carmel we learn afresh the all-important lesson that God delights to put His will into effect in answer to the prayers of His people ... that, in scripture, prayer isn't a means of getting our will done by heaven, but of getting God's will done on earth ... that prayer offers us the amazing privilege of working with God in the fulfilment of His purpose and the furtherance of His work. In brief, His people's prayer is God's way of getting things done.

And when here on Carmel God put His will into effect through the prayers of Elijah, He showed Himself to be, not only the living God, but the giving God.

Those of you who were here for our earlier studies may remember that I concluded our comments on chapter 17 by claiming that ... 'If the dry brook at Cherith declared, 'Round 1 to Jehovah!' – if the well-fed family at Zarephath proclaimed 'Round 2 to Jehovah!' – then the raising to life of the widow's son positively thundered 'And Round 3 to Jehovah!'

But it was the fire of the Lord which fell on Carmel that delivered Ba'al the spectacular knockout punch in Round 4.

Following Elijah's ascent to heaven in 2 Kings 2, Elisha asked, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'⁴⁹ Well, I can tell you where He is. He is where He has always been – on His throne in heaven – where He reigns supreme, and from where He dispenses grace to each of us His people today to help each of us in our every time of need.

I read once of a printer's error in the program of a performance of Handel's Messiah. It listed the Hallelujah Chorus as reading, by the addition of an intrusive letter 's', 'The Lord God Omnipotent resigneth!' But, fear not, God *hasn't* resigned.⁵⁰ As Handel correctly quoted, 'The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth'.⁵¹

And we can rest in the certain knowledge that no matter what is happening in the world, our nation, or our individual lives, He knows all about it and has the situation under His control. And we can trust Him.⁵²

And on that note I am going to conclude our studies in 1 Kings 17 and 18, leaving you to dig into the closing section of the chapter for yourselves.

Endnotes

¹ 1 Kings 18. 30.

² Although, as being on the border between Israel and Tyre (which was the land of Ba'al) – it is possible that this particular altar had been destroyed and replaced by an idolatrous altar sometime before.

³ Elijah with his own hands, as would appear, repairs a ruined altar among the woods. Probably it had been erected for secret worship of Jehovah by some faithful amid the national apostasy, when access to Jerusalem was forbidden them, and had been destroyed by Ahab in his crusade against Jehovah worshippers. The selection of the twelve stones was symbolical of the unbroken unity of the nation, and was Elijah's protest against the very existence of the Northern kingdom, and its assumption of the name of 'Israel' The writer explains what was meant, when he reminds us that Israel was the name given to Jacob, and therefore, as he would have us infer, was the common property of all his descendants.

⁴ See Deuteronomy 12; cf. Deut. 14. 22-23.

⁵ Judges 6. 26; 13. 19-20; 1 Sam. 7. 17; 2 Sam. 24. 25; 1 Chron. 21. 26. And see Exod. 20. 24-26 and Deut. 27. 5-7, where the Lord Himself commanded the construction of an altar at Shechem (Mount Ebal) although the tabernacle altar was then available. It seems that at such altars, it was not necessary for an Aaronic priest to officiate – note the cases of Gideon, Manoah, Samuel and David. See the excellent article by Richard E. Averbeck in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, volume 2, pages 888-908 (number 4640) – especially pages 892, 894 and 897, and his further comments in New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, volume 4, pages 1006-1007, article '*Offerings and Sacrifices*'.

⁶ Compare 1 Kings 12. 25-29.

⁷ New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, volume 2, page 890.

⁸ Exod. 24. 4.

⁹ Josh. 4. 2-5.

¹⁰ Joshua 4. 20.

¹¹ Compare Ezra 8. 35, and note that Hezekiah, King of Judah, at the Passover commanded that atonement should be made 'for all Israel', 2 Chron. 29. 24.

¹² I suppose it would be true to say therefore that, although *physically* Elijah was standing on 10-tribe ground (Carmel forming part of the tribal inheritance allocated by Joshua to Asher), *spiritually* he was standing on 12-tribe ground.

¹³ See also 2 Kings 17. 34 – which deals with the aftermath of the exile to Assyria of the northern kingdom who had taken the name of 'Israel', v.23.

¹⁴ One day, the rift between Israel and Judah will be healed: 'Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be king to them all: and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols . . . but I will save them . . . and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people and I will be their God', Ezek. 37. 21-23. So too, one day, our Lord Jesus will present the true, complete and glorious church to Himself, Eph. 5. 27.

¹⁵ Eph. 4. 4.

¹⁶ James George Deck, 1802-1884. This is verse four of his hymn which begins 'Oft we, alas, forget the love of Him who bought us with His blood'. The last verse of the hymn reads, 'Lord, we are Thine, we praise Thy love; *one with Thy saints, all one in Thee*: we would, until we meet above, in all our ways remember Thee'. J. N. Darby wrote of Mr. Deck, 'his piety, grace and devotedness were beyond many—I might say, most', '*Letters of J.N.D.*' Volume 3, page. 52.

¹⁷ Lev. 1. 5-8. Levitical priests were not to be had, all having long since left the kingdom. For on account of the sin of Jeroboam the priests and Levites went into Judah (see 2 Chron. 11. 13, 14). Additionally, the higher commission of the prophet embraced within itself the authority for all necessary priestly acts. Cf. 1 Sam. 16. 2.

¹⁸ The trench 'would contain (literally 'house') two measures of seed' – that is, about half a bushel of grain. A trench that held half a bushel would not be very large. Perhaps the text is making reference to a standard container that holds this amount of grain (the way we would speak of a two-litre bottle) and is suggesting that is how deep the trench was dug all around the altar.

¹⁹ This is the word translated 'barrel' in 1 Kings 17. 12 of the widows flour jar. 'It designates the ordinary water-pitcher, generally carried then, as now, by women: Gen. 24. 14-20; Judg. 7. 16; Eccles. 12. 6', Pulpit Commentary.

²⁰ Perhaps the number of barrels was intended as symbolical of the twelve tribes.

²¹ 'Its highest point ... 1728 feet above the sea level', The Pulpit Commentary on 1 Kings 18. 19. The platform of sacrifice was some 300 feet below the top of Carmel.

²² '*Antiquities of the Jews*', book 8, chapter 13, paragraph 5. The water almost certainly came from this adjoining spring. 'Close by the steep rocky wall of the height, just where you can descend to the Kishon through a steep ravine, you find, 250 feet it might be beneath the altar plateau, a vaulted and very abundant fountain built in the form of a tank, with a few steps leading down into it, just as one finds elsewhere in the old wells or springs of the Jewish times', Van de Velde, quoted by Keil and Delitzsch on 1 Kings 18. 19. 'And there is an ancient road from the

plain to this locality, which is necessary to explain the fact that Ahab was able to bring his chariot up', John Gray, page 402.

²³ From a sermon on Romans 8. 28 by Daniel Rowlands, 1713-1790, from Cardiganshire in Wales. Source : J. C. Ryle's *'Five Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century'*.

²⁴ About 50 years before.

²⁵ 2 Chronicles 7. 1.

²⁶ The evening sacrifice, which was offered every day, consisted of both a burnt offering and a drink offering, Exod. 29. 38, 41; Num. 28. 3-8. The evening sacrifice was probably offered then, as it certainly was at a later day, at the ninth hour. Cf. Acts 3. 1; 10. 3, 30. Certainly in the second temple, the oblation was offered around the ninth hour. See Mishnah, Pesahim 5. 1: 'The [afternoon] Tamid [daily offering] is [usually] slaughtered at eight and one-half hours and is offered [on the altar] at nine and one-half hours [thus allowing one hour for the entire procedure] ... <http://emishna.com/Pesahim/P5.pdf>. So too Josephus; 'the priests ... did still twice a day, in the morning, and about the ninth hour, offer their sacrifices on the altar', *'Antiquities of the Jews'*, book XIV, chapter 4, paragraph 3.

²⁷ Matt. 27. 46-50; Mark 15. 33-37.

²⁸ Luke 9. 31.

²⁹ 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel', v. 36 ... the formula 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' had been used only once before, and that by God Himself, before the giving of law, at the burning bush, Exod. 3. 6, 15-16; 4. 5; Matt. 22. 32; Mark 12. 26; Luke 20. 37; Acts 7. 32. It was when God revealed Himself in flaming fire that He had proclaimed Himself the God of Abraham etc.. Compare 1 Chron. 29. 18; 2 Chron. 30. 6; Acts 3. 13.

³⁰ Elijah was certainly intense and earnest in his prayer – but he didn't need to resort to any of their antics – no dancing around – no screaming. The tranquil though earnest prayer of the prophet is in sharpest contrast with the meaningless bellowings to Baal.

³¹ Although 1 Kings 18. 42-44 does not specifically mention that Elijah prayed at 'the top of Carmel', James makes it clear that he certainly did; 'Elijah ... prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. *And he prayed again* and the heaven gave rain', James 5. 17-18.

³² It is God, not his own credit, about which Elijah thinks first; cf. Psa. 115. 1; 2 Cor. 4. 5. For himself, all that he desires is to be known as an obedient servant, and as not having done anything at the bidding of his own will or judgment, but in accordance with the all-commanding Voice.

³³ In his prayer, Elijah makes nothing of himself but everything of God. Would that had been true in the next chapter! See 1 Kings 19. 4, 10, 14. 19.

³⁴ The very tense he used indicating his unqualified confidence in His God and His God's power ... for, to Elijah, although falling of the fire and the people's response to this lay yet in the future, it was as certain as if it had already taken place. 'That you have turned their hearts back to you again'. Cf. the last verse in the Old Testament: Mal. 4. 5, 6: 'He ("Elijah the prophet") shall turn the heart of the fathers ...'; cf. the next time heaven spoke, Luke 1. 17. Elijah speaks as if the miracle were already wrought (cf. John 11:41), and the people already repentant. This may possibly mean that, when the people made their decision (short-lived as it proved) to return to the Lord, Elijah wanted them to realize that, ultimately, it was all of God's grace and His working in them. For, whereas scripture places on us the responsibility for serving the Lord, we recognise that all the credit and glory for any decision on our part to serve and please Him belongs to Him; cf. Phil. 2. 13. 'The perfects ... are used to denote not only what has already occurred, but what will still take place and is as certain as if it had taken place already. ('Turn their heart back again' refers) to the conversion of the people to the Lord their God, for which Elijah's coming had already prepared the way, and which was still further advanced by the following miracle', Keil and Delitzsch.

³⁵ See Gen. 22. 7.

³⁶ A breathless hush must have settled on the people for the brief moment following Elijah's prayer.

³⁷ With the Lord no more entitled to be confessed as God than was Ba'al.

³⁸ While he was yet speaking, God heard (Isa. 65. 24).

³⁹ Neither of whom had been Aaronic priests.

⁴⁰ 1 Chron. 21. 26.

⁴¹ 2 Chron. 7. 1.

⁴² Matt. 27. 50-51.

⁴³ Irresistible.

⁴⁴ Ba'al 'will sound his voice in the clouds and flash his lightning to the earth'; see John Gray 402.

⁴⁵ This is not the first time we find the combination of 'burnt offering on the altar', 'fire from the Lord', and the reaction of the people falling on their faces and shouting. It had happened back in the days of Moses and Aaron, who 'went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and *fire came out from before the Lord* and consumed the *burnt offering* and the fat *on the altar*. *When all the people saw it* (the exact words of 1 Kings 18. 39), *they shouted and fell on their faces'*, Lev. 9. 23-24.

⁴⁶ The echo of ver. 24. The Hebrew words are the same.

⁴⁷ See Deut. 13. 1-11. It was important to confront and eliminate these prophets of Ba'al *before* God sent rain to the land of Israel. It was crucial that everyone understand that the rain came from the Lord, not from Ba'al.

⁴⁸ So that everyone might have confirmed to them that the 3½ drought was no accident of nature but was a divine chastisement, it ended as it had begun—with a declaration from God’s man; 1 Kings 17. 1; 18. 44. And the man who had previously prayed for life, 17. 20-21, and for fire, 18. 36-37, prays for rain, 18. 42.

⁴⁹ 2 Kings 2. 14.

⁵⁰ http://sermonplayer.com/c/epworth/pdf/187557_17040.pdf

⁵¹ With a sideways glance at one of Mark Twain’s famous quotes, (‘The report of my death was an exaggeration’; see <http://www.twainquotes.com/Death.html>) we can safely say that the report of the Lord God’s resignation was very much an ‘exaggeration’! (See the PowerPoint slide after the black screens at the end.)

⁵² 1 Kings 21 ... C J H Wright, ‘Jezebel’s treatment of Naboth and his family was not just to satisfy Ahab’s greed. It was an act of socio-cultural imperialism based on Jezebel’s concept of political power (where the monarch could do as he pleased with the land and subjects he virtually owned), and her concept of economic practice (where land was a commercial commodity, not an inalienable family trust). In both respects her cultural background was diametrically opposed to Israel’s social system, as Ahab had sullenly accepted. And the Baal cult she fostered was an integral part of the same socio-cultural matrix. That is why the story of Naboth—a story of social and economic injustice—though it is set in the middle of a saga of religious conflict (Yahweh v. Baal) is not at all out of place or peripheral to such a context. The struggle between Yahweh and Baal for the soul of Israel was not merely ‘religious’, but thoroughly social; not just a question of who was really the true God (as on Mt. Carmel), but of how Israelites were to live and treat each other’. http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/religions_wright.pdf