

THE TEST (1)

By Keith Greer

"And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word." (1 Kings 18:21)

Elijah went to the children of Israel, many of whom had rejected God and were worshipping Baal. In 1 Kings 18, we have the record of "**The Test**" that they witnessed.

The prophets of Baal, some 450 of them, and the prophet of God, Elijah, chose two bullocks to be dressed, cut in pieces and placed on wood. They were to put no fire under either of the bullocks. Elijah told them, "Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken." (1 Kings 18: 23,24)

The prophets of Baal called on Baal from morning until noon. No answer. They leaped upon the altar. Still, no answer. At noon, "And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." (1 Kings 18:27)

"So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention." (1 Kings 18:28,29)

Then it was Elijah's turn. "Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And 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. Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed." (1 Kings 18:30-32)

Elijah built an altar with twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he made a trench around the altar, the wood was put in order and the bullock laid upon the wood. Elijah then commanded that four barrels of water be poured on the sacrifice and on the wood-not once, but three times. The water not only ran around the altar but also filled the trench.

"And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their

hearts back to You again. Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:36-39)

Over and over again, we have seen how the Israelites have rejected God and served other gods. When Ahab's daughter Athaliah became the bride of Jehoram of Judah, the influence of Baal was also extended from the northern kingdom into the southern kingdom.

Certainly, the people of Israel appeared to be convinced by what they saw from Elijah's "test". Even when Elijah was sure that "...I ONLY, AM LEFT;" to serve the true and living God. God reminded him that there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed unto Baal. (1 Kings 19:9-18) Truly one is never alone when they are seeking to be faithful to God and put their full trust in Him. Yes, it seems at time we stand ALONE – but God is always there! (cont.) ***