

Elijah & Elisha #2 I Kings 18:16-30

Elijah and Elisha



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We are in a series about Elijah and Elisha (E1 and E2). Today we will only focus on Elijah. These are 2 prophets in the Old Testament who didn't write any books but they speak God's word to the people of Israel.

Here is the question for today: Tables are where life happens.



Here is a table at my house: my mother had it custom made for us, sitting 12-20+. We had to take it apart to get into the house. Tables are where things are taken in that bring life and information.

What We
Bring to the
Table

Identity: Who am I? Am I safe? Am I worthy? Am I seen?

Responsibility: What is required of me/us?

Power: Who has authority? Who is with us? Who threatens us? What kind of world are we trying to protect or build?

Let's think about what we bring to tables.

We bring identity: who am I, am I seen?

We bring responsibility: what are we required to do?

Whose in charge?

Think about these things as you ponder this question: who is telling you about power and how it works and your part? Who is telling you who you are?

Proverbs 9

1 **Wisdom** has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, 4 "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says, 5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."

Proverbs tells about a table of wisdom and of folly.

Wisdom is life: Jesus. If you eat from this table, you move from simple thinking to life and insight.

Proverbs 9

13 Folly is an unruly woman; she is simple and knows nothing. 14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, 15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way, 16 “Let all who are simple come to my house!” To those who have no sense she says, 17 “Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!” 18 But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

Summary

The kingdom split after Solomon into Judah in the south and Israel in the north.

Elijah ministers in the northern kingdom, which had a long pattern of compromise.

1 Kings 18 takes place under Ahab, who, with Jezebel, pushed Israel into Baal worship.

1 King 17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, **there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.**”

1 King 18

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “**Is that you, you troubler of Israel?**”

18 “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have **abandoned the Lord’s commands** and have **followed the Baals.**”

Who is telling you who you are? Folly, death, darkness or wisdom and life?

Let’s get caught up in I Kings:

1. The kingdom has split into N and S
2. Elijah ministers in the N which has a long pattern of stupidity and compromise.
3. In I Kings 18 Ahab is king, married to J, and pushed his kingdom into idol worship.

In I Kings 17, Elijah predicts a famine. By the next chapter, there hasn’t been rain in a long time: no water.

To clarify, Obadiah was Ahab’s assistant (not the prophet in the OT). It’s interesting that when Obadiah runs into Elijah, he doesn’t want to tell Ahab he had found E because he thought Elijah would run away and then Obadiah would be killed.

Did you notice when a bad leader is confronted, he will respond by telling you that the trouble is your fault?

If you want things to go poorly, choose the opposite of what is good. This is basically the theme of the whole O.T. In this case, they chose Baal and there were consequences.

19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, **who eat at Jezebel's table.**

Here is where we see a table: 800+ people were eating at the table of Jezebel and folly. Asherah is about provision and security: in the ancient world, you would hope for rain, pregnancy and a way to be sure the children grow up and conform. These two gods provide these things.

In our culture, we are all sitting somewhat at Baal's table of foreign gods. Process how this looks in your world, in our world? Hold on to this thought!

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, **"How long will you waver(limp) between two opinions?** If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."
But the people said nothing.

This reminds me of every time I've caught my kids doing something wrong: I ask them, 'How long will you continue to do this?'. But really the better question is "how long will you waver in between tables?" You should just pick one table!

This is where we are: there are many ways where we limp back and forth between God and Baal: between our control/demand and Jesus. We are

ineffective because of this. Elijah addresses this with his question.

Mark 12:15b But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, **"Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"** "Caesar's," they replied. 17 Then Jesus said to them, **"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."** And they were amazed at him.

Jesus also confronts this question. The religious leaders wanted to trap him with their question about who to pay taxes to. But Jesus understands what is happening.

I have preached on this text before about whose image is on you (God's) and on money. However, there is more to this. Everyone had money in their pockets: they were intertwined and enmeshed in Asherah and Baal without thinking about it. The

hypocrisy is that they had already sold their souls to the Romans! I think we have to ask this question: who's table am I sitting at and how enmeshed am I in what I'm watching and listening to? Am I understanding God through these systems?

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal's prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. **24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God."** Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

The question "whose table am I sitting at" is a difficult question.

Elijah was the only prophet willing to stand up to the rest of them. This is going to be fun! Elijah is a political character going against political power. This is helpful to us as we try to figure out what we should do in the midst of the situations in our world. We unnecessarily spend a lot of time trying to figure out who to speak to. We also see this in the N.T.

Matthew 16

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

Jesus asks them a question: What do people say that I am?

We must understand that there is a spiritual battle going on and that we do not change people's minds: **God changes people's mind.**

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is **deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.**" 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

The people are limping and hollering and mutilating their bodies: these people were OK with blood. There was no fire for the altar of Baal.

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that **you are God in Israel** and that **I am your servant** and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will **know** that you, **Lord, are God**, and that **you** are **turning their hearts back again.**"

Elijah has them add water 3X so it would be impossible to light. The prayer he makes is hugely intrusive, actually the prayer of a political activist.

Notice that he asks God to turn the hearts of the people around: there is a conflict of light and dark. He asks God to show up in that particular space and to act.

38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

These might seem like great, super-hero stories. But really, these are just about people of God and in the same way we are called to do similar things.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!"



Elijah just keeps telling people whose table he is sitting at. God is telling him who he is and God has the power.

Even in the midst of drama, Elijah knows who he is. He has done all these things at his command.

1 Kings 17:1 . . . As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve

1 Kings 18:22 . . . "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left

1 Kings 18:36 . . . I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

Take this question from the smallest areas to the largest areas: who actually has power? Who is telling you these things? **I think we are not actually spending much time at God's table.** I have bought into the modern lie that I have a long list of things to be OK. I sit at the table of my stock market charts and they tell me who I am. I like knowing that I have some control even though that is not true. The phone and instagram are killing young women: they are telling them who they are.

We can go and on: the way our home looks when people come over?

If you follow Jesus, you are invited to sit and God's table in his kingdom

A simple diagnostic to figure out what table you are sitting at is this question: **What is good and right?**

•Romans 14:17"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Am I a person of peace and joy in all these spaces? You can hear these things come out of your mouth. Your conversations will bear witness to this. The things we do in secret seat us at the table of folly.

Who gets to define what we are doing? Am I concerned with God ultimately having the power?