

1 Kings 18 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Here's where we are in our outline of 1 Kings -

XIII. Ahab (Israel) • 16:29-22:40

A. Ahab's Wickedness • 16:29-34

B. Elijah's Career • Chs. 17-19

1. He proclaims drought • 17:1-7

2. The widow of Zarephath • 17:8-24

a. miraculous provision • vs. 8-16

b. a dead boy raised • vs. 17-24

Last week we began the fascinating story of this rough customer named *Elijah*.

He was a godly man, a shepherd from the wilderness region of Gilead who was grieved over the spiritual condition of Israel.

King Ahab & his wicked wife Jezebel had led the nation into an intense era of idolatry & perversion.

Elijah knew the words of Moses from some 500 years before that if Israel turned her back on God, trouble would come in many forms, including severe drought.

So Elijah prayed and asked God to shut the heavens. He then went to Ahab & boldly declared a prolonged drought.

God then told Elijah to retreat to the wilderness east of the Jordan and hide out while God provided for him miraculously.

When the drought dried up the stream he was camped by, God then told Elijah to travel northwest to the region of Sidon, Jezebel's hometown.

There in the town of Zarephath he lodged with a widow & her only son.

Because her pantry was miraculously preserved as the drought continued to devastate the region, she was able to provide for the prophet while famine grew everywhere else.

When the widow's son died, Elijah prayed & his life was restored.

As we saw last week, all of these trials and God's miraculous interventions at Elijah's request were shaping him for a great

showdown that comes here in ch. 18.

This is one of the greatest dramas in the entire Bible, which has many of them.

What we find here surpasses the greatest screenwriters & special effects studios of Hollywood.

This is high drama indeed.

3. The showdown with Baal • 18:1-40

¹And it came to pass *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.”

It's been over 2 years since the onset of drought.

Though Ahab has yet to repent, God shows mercy to the multitudes who are suffering by promising to send rain.

Being royalty, Ahab & his court were somewhat insulated from the dire effects of famine.

History teaches even when the common people are suffering, the rich & royal live in luxury.

Deep now in the 3rd year of famine, the common people are waking up from their apostasy & realizing their distress is due to their forsaking Yahweh in favor of Baal & Asherah.

It's time for a national challenge, so God tells Elijah to confront Ahab.

²So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and *there was* a severe famine in Samaria. ³And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. ⁴For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)

Obadiah was Ahab's chief steward, his chief of staff, who oversaw the day to day functions of the palace.

Though it was dangerous, he'd remained loyal to Yahweh throughout the religious changes Jezebel had instituted.

When she embarked on a campaign of executing the servants of God, Obadiah used the resources at his disposal to hide & provide for them.

Obadiah was like *Miep Gies* – the Dutch woman who harbored Anne Frank’s family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands.

5And Ahab had said to Obadiah, “Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock.”

The famine was so severe it was time to begin putting livestock down.

Before they took that drastic final step, Ahab ordered one last search of the land for water & grass.

6So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. **7**Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, “*Is that you, my lord Elijah?*” **8**And he answered him, “*It is I. Go, tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’*” **9**So he said, “How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?”

Elijah told Obadiah who was probably on horseback, to go on ahead and inform Ahab that Elijah wanted to speak to him.

Obadiah saw this as far more than just a simple announcement; he recognized it as a dangerous mission. Here’s why . . .

10As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, ‘*He is not here,*’ he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. **11**And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, “*Elijah is here*” ’! **12**And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. **13**Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD’s prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and

water? ¹⁴And now you say, ‘Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.” ’ He will kill me!’

Ahab blamed the drought & famine on Elijah instead of owning the guilt himself.

He’d made a long & exhausting search for Elijah to apprehend him and force him to reverse the drought.

Ahab had even put the squeeze on surrounding nations, thinking they were harboring God’s prophet.

But of course, they searchers had not found him because he was hiding out in places they never would have thought to look; the wilderness of Cherith & the pagan town of Zarephath.

Obadiah's concern was that after telling Ahab Elijah was on his way to meet him, the Spirit of God would whisk him away on some divine errand who knows where, and Ahab would be furious at the seemingly false report.

Angry kings like the impetuous Ahab were known to order the execution of servants that upset them & Obadiah thought Ahab would do that with him when Elijah failed to show up.

Elijah knew God wouldn’t direct him some place else because He’d already told him to go see Ahab.

So he assured Obadiah everything would work out.

¹⁵Then Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.”

¹⁶So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, “*Is that you, O troubler of Israel?*” ¹⁸And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house *have*, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals.

Plural because they set up many altars & idols of Baal all over.

How typical this is of King Ahab, to call Elijah the “troubler of Israel;” to blame the problems on the man of God.

This is ***classic politics***; never admit your policies are at the root of the problem.

Instead, claim nothing but wild success for your programs

while blasting the opposition and laying all the blame for everything negative at their feet.

Elijah speaks truth when he says Ahab was the cause of Israel's distress.

Blame for the drought & famine lay with he & his father Omri's policies of forsaking Yahweh in favor of idols.

Proverbs 14:34, written decades before the time of Ahab, says –
Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

On the surface, Ahab's label of Elijah as the troubler of Israel seems accurate; after all, James 5:17 tells us it *was* his prayer that shut the heavens.

But if we lay the BLAME for drought at Elijah's feet we're judging by appearances, not truth.

Drought wasn't the real problem in Israel; the real problem was deeper & far more insidious.

It was idolatry & apostasy.

Israel had begun a journey down a spiritual path that would lead to *far worse things* than a season of thirst & hunger.

The same passage Elijah had read in Deuteronomy that said God would send drought if the people turned from Him, told of much worse judgments.

Elijah asked God to shut the heavens to *derail* Israel's headlong pursuit of sin that would lead to utter ruin.

We've heard stories of people who've been in a serious automobile accident & had to have emergency surgery to stop some internal bleeding.

But as they surgeon opens them up, they find some other medical condition or disease that was unknown that threatened to kill the person in an instant.

The surgeon is able to correct the problem and save that person's life.

The accident which at first seemed like tragedy ends up becoming a cause of rejoicing in that it revealed a greater need and allowed for it to be corrected.

Israel's drought laid bare the spiritual condition of Israel and for a season at least, stalled it's dash toward judgment.

So while Elijah may have appeared to be the troubler of Israel with

his prayer for drought, he was in fact moved by a desire to protect Israel from a worse judgment.

I've been watching the news closely & it sure seems our country is beset with a plethora of troubles.

Weather, war, geopolitical challenges, the economy, the breakdown of the national infrastructure with the collapse in mines & bridges, I don't know if statistically things are worse, but it sure seems that way.

Now, I haven't been praying for these things as Elijah prayed for drought, nor do I know anyone else who's prayed for them to come.

But we sure ought to pray that they would bring about an honest soul-searching on the part of people as to why the distress is mounting.

One thing is certain, if there isn't a widespread, sincere repentance & turn back to God, our country will face even harsher judgments.

19 Now therefore, send *and* gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

While Obadiah was *secretly* providing for a hundred prophets of Yahweh from the royal coffers, the State was officially supporting 850 pagan priests.

Elijah told Ahab to issue a summons to the leaders of all Israel, along with all the *professional pagans*, to Mt. Carmel.

Carmel is a small range of mountains that lies on the southwestern side of the Jezreel valley where it meets the Sea.

The tallest peak is called Mt. Carmel. It's one of the sties we visit when we go to Israel.

While standing on the top of Mt. Carmel, you look west to the Mediterranean.

South & west lie 3 passes each carrying an important highway connecting the Via Maris with the Jezreel valley.

The City of Megiddo which you can see from Carmel lies right between 2 of these passes, and controlled both.

That's why Solomon had made it one of his fortress cities; whoever controlled the passes controlled the all the trade

that passed between Europe, Asia, and Africa along this route.

As you stand there and look down on the entrance to these 3 passes the amount of history that passed through there is overwhelming!

The trillions of dollars that passed through & the thousands of armies that marched there is beyond comprehension. Dozens of Pharaoh's led Egyptians forces through there. The Hittites, Assyrians, Bablyonians, Persians, Greeks, & Romans, all used those passes.

In later times the Turks, Crusaders, & British led their militaries through them.

To the North & East lies the valley of Jezreel; a vast plain that stretches as far as the eye can see.

Not far away is the *city* of Jezreel - one of Ahab's palaces.

It is in this valley the book of Revelation says the last & final battle of history will be waged.

It draws its name from the *hill* of Megiddo = *Armageddon*

It's fitting Elijah would pick this site as the place to have a showdown with the prophets of Baal, because it's at this same location the *final showdown* between good & evil will be waged

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

It was a great national assembly.

The location was such that *hundreds of thousands* could have gathered.

21 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.

In order to do justice to this story, we have to use a little *sanctified imagination* & try to picture it.

It's taken several days for the summons to go out & the people to gather.

Elijah has no doubt gone to Carmel where he's spent the time in prayer, seeking God on how to proceed.

The lessons he learned over the last 3½ years have taught him to

expect big things from God.

Because Mt. Carmel is the highest point in the entire region, for years it's served as a major pagan religious center.

There is *at least* an elaborate altar there, *probably* a temple to Baal.

Off in the distance Elijah can see the city of Jezreel, Ahab's summer palace

The obscene image of Asherah dominates the city skyline. The evidences of idolatry are everywhere & Elijah grows indignant.

Then, people begin to arrive and set up their tents at the foot of Mt. Carmel.

Finally the time comes & Elijah descends from the Mount to address the people.

The ridge he stands on allows him to be heard by thousands as he issues his challenge.

"Everyone on Yahweh's side over here; everyone on Baal's side, over there" as he motions toward the prophets of Baal & Asherah.

But no one moved. They hesitated in a place of *indecision*. Many of them knew Elijah was right, Yahweh was the true God, but it was a dangerous stand to take.

The conventional wisdom of the day & politically correct position was to follow Baal.

So, caught between a conviction on what was right & the desire to be part of the crowd & avoid trouble, they did **NOTHING**.

This moment was a "tipping point" for Israel.

In 2000, Malcolm Gladwell wrote a bestseller titled, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*.

The idea is that there are crucial moments when history could go one way or the other & it's some *small event* that nudges it in a particular direction.

As we'll see, at this point, Elijah thought he was about the only follower of God left in Israel who was willing to take a stand for him.

One man against a nation.

This reminds me of a tipping point in the early church.

The heresy of Arianism had almost taken over.

A church leader named Arius said Jesus was merely a man.

He was a skilled orator who'd managed to persuade many other influential leaders to his position.

The drive to accept Arianism became a major political force.

His lone public opponent was Bishop Athanasius; who maintained the *scriptures* taught Jesus was both God & man.

When Athanasius appeared before the Roman Emperor to plead his case for the divinity of Christ, the emperor shouted,

“Athanasius, you stubborn old man, don't you know the whole world is against you?”

Athanasius replied, “Athanasius contra mundo—Then Athanasius against the world.”

Chances are you will not be called on to stand alone for God before an entire nation,

But you may be called on to stand alone for Him at work, in your family, at school.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. **23** 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*. **24** 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.”

A *showdown* at the *Carmel Corral*.

Elijah stacks this entire thing entirely in favor of Baal because he knows Baal is a fraud while Yahweh is real.

Carmel was Baal's mountain.

Remember, he was the god of weather & war. Lightening was his symbol.

A Ugaritic poem says of Baal, “He throws flashes to the earth.”

Because Carmel is the highest point, guess where lightening struck when storms passed through this area? Yep – the top

of Carmel.

In fact, on the building we climb to the roof of when we visit Israel, a corner is damaged from a lightening strike as testimony to the fact that Carmel *ought* to favor Baal in this contest.

But Elijah knew Yahweh was the *real* God of fire. He often used fire as His calling card --

Moses & the burning bush

The pillar of fire that led Israel to the Promised Land.

Fire covered the top of Mt. Sinai when God descended to give them the 10 Commandments..

When they dedicated the tabernacle and the temple – God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices.

Elijah told Baal's prophets to go ahead and pick which of the 2 bulls they wanted. He would take the other.

There's 450 of them calling on Baal – only 1 calling on Yahweh.

The deck is stacked heavily in favor of Baal.

When the people hear this challenge, & that it's being suggested by Lone Elijah, they loudly endorsed it.

25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare *it* first, for you *are* many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*."

26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But *there was no voice; no one answered*. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

They take their pick of the bulls, sacrifice it, and lay it on Baal's altar.

They perform their religious rituals, & go through the motions they did every time they made an offering to Baal. But now fire falls.

So they call *louder*. Nothing! This goes on from the morning till mid-day & now they're frantic.

What happens if no fire falls?

They can see a disconcerting look growing on the faces of the people they've been telling for years Baal is a mighty god, superior to weak Yahweh.

In real desperation, it says they leapt on the altar. What they're doing is throwing themselves on the altar as sacrifices!

The ultimate sacrifice one could make to Baal was a human sacrifice and these guys are now so desperate, they begin to climb up and offer themselves – hoping in his hunger for worship Baal will send the desired fire.

27 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.”

At noon, Elijah decided to have a little fun with the prophets of Baal.

As he watched their elaborate rituals & frantic attempts to get fire from heaven, he couldn't help but see it as tragically comical.

So he begins to *mock* them . . .

And of course, Elijah played this to the crowd that stood watching & waiting.

After all, it was they he was trying to win.

There was good purpose in his *shaming* the prophets of Baal.

If that shame would move the people *away from idols* & back to God, then it was *good use* of shame.

Shame can be a good thing if it wakes a person to the *foolishness* of sin & evil.

Often in the OT we the prophets of God *mocking* idols.

At some points they are called in Hebrew “gillul’ - *little dung balls*.

So Elijah told the prophets of Baal couldn't hear them; they needed shout louder still!

He even suggested reasons why the fire hadn't fallen.

Maybe Baal was deep in thought, or was busy.

This word “busy” is *movement* – & that's really what Elijah meant; maybe Baal was having a movement.

Or he might be away on a journey or be taking a nap – in which case, it was a real bummer for them because he wouldn't be able to hear or see them & all their frantic action was for naught.

Yahweh, on the other hand, the One who watches Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

He's attentive to the cry of His people & is never too busy to aid

them when they call to Him.

28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

Because they conceived of Baal as a blood-thirsty deity, they added some of their own blood to the altar as they climbed on it to sweeten the pot and induce Baal to send evidence of his power.

29 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.

A long day of intense emotional & physical activity & personally inflicted abuse has driven them to an altered state of consciousness, so they begin to speak out prophetically.

But of course, it isn't *real prophecy* – it's merely wild ravings – and now the common people see the *real origin* of these false prophets words.

It was never supernatural – it was simply an altered state of consciousness. They've been duped!

30 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.

Before the altar to Baal had been built at Carmel, people had worship Yahweh there.

But Yahweh's altar had been dismantled in Jezebel's anti-Yahweh campaign.

Elijah rebuilt it – humble as it was, little more than a pile of uncut stones, as Moses & Joshua had commanded.

31 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."

32 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.

About 5 gallons.

33 And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with

water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.”

34Then he said, “Do *it* a second time,” and they did *it* a second time; and he said, “Do *it* a third time,” and they did *it* a third time. **35**So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

There’s a spring at the base of Carmel they probably got the water from.

It was one of the few that was still flowing after 3½ years of drought.

That’s probably another reason why Elijah picked this place for the showdown, it was one of the few places people could gather & have water.

He drenched the altar, wood, and sacrifice until the water filled the trench.

36And 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.

37Hear 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.”

Elijah’s prayer was simple but clear. “Yahweh, prove that *You* are God & that it’s all about You!”

38Then 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.

Elijah had no more uttered his prayer than the fire fell.

It didn’t just consume the sacrifice, the entire altar, water, and soil were vaporized right down to the bedrock!

39Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!”

The reaction of the people was immediate!

Their previous indecision was thrust away as they realized the foolishness of trying to stay spiritually neutral when there *is* no

middle ground.

40 And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

It was time for reformation. And it had to begin with drastic action. These men who’d led Israel into idolatry had to be put to death. Deut. 13 & 17 made it clear that anyone who led Israel into the

worship of other gods was to be executed. [\[1\]](#)

4. The drought ends • 18:41-46

41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for *there is the sound of abundance of rain.*”

While the people had returned to the Lord, Ahab was still apostate.

It’s hard to understand how this could be after such an obvious demonstration of God’s power & Baal impotence.

But there it goes again – Ahab’s failure to repent only proves yet again that unbelief isn’t a problem with a lack of proof – it’s a lack of will.

It isn’t that the unbeliever **CAN’T** believe, He./she doesn’t **WANT** to.

Because the people had returned to Yahweh, the drought was over.

The king could celebrate.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, **43** and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked, and said, “*There is nothing.*” And seven times he said, “Go again.”

After confidently announcing the end of the drought, Elijah retired to the peak of Carmel & adopted the position women took when giving birth.

He was in agony as he prayed equating what he was doing to birthing a baby.

Now—which seems harder, calling down fire or rain from heaven?

If Elijah could pray a simple, quick prayer & *fire* fell; how much easier to get *rain*?

But that's not the way it happened. He *labored* in prayer!
He prayed, then sent a servant who had now joined him to the western ridge of the mountain to look out over the sea in the direction that rains come from to see if there were any clouds. The servant returned with the report it was blue skies.

7 times Elijah repeated this scenario.

Probably at the instruction of the Spirit, Elijah understood this was how the rain would come, by his fervent devotion to praying in the answer.

Why? What's the lesson God has for His people?

Just this – we must never slip into the mentality of thinking that prayer is merely manipulation of cosmic forces that control the universe.

Prayer is *relational*; it's *communication with God*. It isn't *magic* by which we create our own reality.

Prayers is one of the means God uses to fashion His heart in us.

Elijah knew it was God's will to end the drought.

He knew he was to be the agent by which prayer came, so he remained in the place of supplication until God's will was done on earth as it is in heaven.

That's the way we're to pray! Discover His will, then pray it in! No matter how long it takes!

One evening as a family had their devotional time together, the father said, "Let's all pick one person to pray for." The son prayed for God to help his friend Eddie to be better at school because he was so bad. A week later, when they gathered again for devotions the father asked his son if he was going to pray for Eddie again. "No," the boy replied, "I prayed for Eddie last week and he's still bad."

In James 5:16-18 we read –

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Then, using this story as a model James says -

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

William Lee once wrote, "It is not the *arithmetic* of our prayers, how

many they are;
nor the *rhetoric* of our prayers, how *eloquent* they are;
nor the *geometry* of our prayers, how *long* they be;
nor the *music* of our prayers, how *sweet* our voice may be;
nor the *logic* of our prayers, how *[persuasive]* they may be;
nor the *method* of our prayers, how *orderly* they may be -- which
God cares for.

Fervency of spirit is that which avails much.”

A small town successfully fought the incursion of liquor stores for years. But eventually a nightclub was built on Main Street. Members of one of the churches were so disturbed they conducted several all night prayer meetings, asked God to burn down that “den of iniquity” as they called it. Sure enough, during a storm lightning struck the tavern and it was completely destroyed. Knowing how the church people had prayed, the owner sued them for the damages. His attorney claimed their prayers had caused the loss.

The congregation hired a lawyer & fought the charges. After much deliberation the judge declared, “It is the opinion of this court that wherever the guilt may lie, the tavern-keeper is the one who really believes in prayer while the church members do not!”

Prayer is the power to effect real, dramatic change in this world. We need to pray & pray fervently

44 Then it came to pass the seventh *time*, that he said, “There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” So he [Elijah] said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’ ”

On the 7th time the servant went to check the sky over the Med, he saw a small cloud on the horizon.

When he told Elijah, the prophet sent him quickly to Ahab who was still there at Carmel & told him to beat it back to Jezreel as fast as he could.

The dirt road would soon be impassable to a chariot’s wheel, so Ahab needed ot get moving because a deluge was on it’s way.

45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. **46** Then the hand of

the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

The storm came up so quickly Ahab's servants barely finished decamping before it struck.

Jezreel was 19 miles from Carmel, a trip of a few hours for a chariot, which probably took longer for Ahab since the muddy road would slow his passage.

Elijah, filled with the Spirit, ran cross-country & *beat* Ahab back to Jezreel.

CONCLUSION

This guy is *pumped up!*

He's just had the all time mountain top experience.

It's from *this story* we get that phrase as a description of a high point in life.

He goes from *lone prophet* to *national hero*.

He's got real pull with God – great enough to call down BOTH fire & rain from heaven.

He's dealt a literal death blow to idolatry.

Then he outruns a chariot.

Certainly Elijah has experienced enough of the power & favor of God to last him for years! Right?

We would think so. But the real story is altogether different.

Next week, we'll witness Elijah's fall into a spiritual funk & depression that is *unbelievable*.

And as we look at his story we'll learn some important lessons about dealing with depression.

[1] Deut. 13:6-9; 17:2-7