

June 11 — An Epic Showdown

READ

1 Kings 17:8-20:22

1 Kings 18:20-24, “So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, ‘I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 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. 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.’”

THINK

People are intrigued by exciting showdowns. From the classic western shootout to courtroom dramas to action-packed thrillers, we love watching the protagonist outwit and overpower their dastardly opponent. Well, in today’s reading, we get a sneak peek of one of the greatest showdowns of all time.

Yesterday, we read about God’s judgment on Israel’s king for leading the nation into estrangement from God and pagan worship. God sent a three-year drought causing major devastation and famine. So, Elijah once again approached the wayward king, who accused him of being a troublemaker. Elijah wasn’t having it! It was on. He summoned all Israel to join him on Mount Carmel for a showdown between him and 850 false pagan prophets. His words speak for themselves in the passage above. So, imagine his amusement, likely disgust, and absolute disillusionment with what he witnessed during round 1 as the false prophets tried all day long to make their god rain down fire. Elijah even did some trash-talking of his own. He taunted them, saying, “Maybe your god is too busy, on vacation, or asleep. Perhaps shout louder to awaken him.” But, spoiler alert: Nothing happened. Finally, worn out and dismayed, the opponents watched as Elijah stepped up to the plate.

In a great display of God’s power — not his own, and don’t forget, during a major drought — he poured out water, a precious resource at the time, three times all over the wood to make it even more difficult to catch fire. Then prayed to the Lord, who responded in a major way by flashing fire down from heaven upon the bull and altar. The people were so amazed that they fell facedown immediately and called out that God is the one true God. They needed this major reminder to get them back on track and away from the debauchery that went hand in hand with pagan worship.

What do we glean from all this? We cannot waver when it comes to God. He is either the God of our lives or not. We can either live out His best for our lives or in a spiritual drought. Choose God. His way is best, purpose-filled, and in the end, we win!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I choose YOU! Help me stay on track when I begin to stray. Amen.

June 12 —You Can't Always Get What You Want!

READ

1 Kings 20:23-22:9

1 Kings 21:3-4, *"But Naboth replied, The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors. So, Ahab went home, sullen and angry...He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat."*

THINK

There's a Rolling Stones song titled, "You Can't Always Get What You Want." How true is that! We definitely don't always get our way. So, how do you react in such situations? Most of us would like to say we handle frustration with poise and forbearance. However, more often than not, we go a little "Ahab," acting sullen and spewing complaints. But harboring anger in our hearts is a dangerous place to stew in, for it can snowball and lead us down a treacherous and unrighteous path.

Ahab threw a temper tantrum, took to bed, and complained so much that his wife, Jezebel, arranged to kill the vineyard's owner, Naboth — an extreme solution to a petty problem. Unfortunately, they were both so convinced of the importance of their own wants that they were willing to commit murder in an attempt to soothe a bruised ego and ensure they got their way. But they'd soon discover, through the prophet Elijah, that disaster awaited them due to their flagrant disregard for God's ordainment.

We may not go to such extremes when denied a want, but as sinners, we have all pushed aside God's will and plan for us to pursue our own misguided desires. However, God can be our strength and patience in frustrating times. We must rely on His will and desire above our own. His way is best and guaranteed to be more fulfilling than getting everything we think we want.

So, the next time your plans or desires are stymied, don't go "Ahab." Instead, lean into God and allow Him, alone, to be the Source that directs your course. Because as the Rolling Stones song continues, "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you just might find you get what you need." And God is always faithful to provide — not always what we want — but what we need right when we need it!

PRAY

Lord Jesus, Help me trust in You when things don't go my way. I submit my will to Yours, and even if I don't know why You arrange things the way You do, I trust Your plans are always best. Amen.

June 13 — Read the Script

READ

1 Kings 22:10-58

2 Chronicles 18:9 – 20:30

1 Kings 22:16-18, *“The king said to him, ‘How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord? Then Micaiah answered, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’” The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?’”*

THINK

There are times when reading the Bible seems like watching an action-adventure movie. We know the script, but the malevolent characters seem blind to the fact that their actions won’t lead to their demise. Yet, as viewers, we know all along that justice will be served in the end.

Ahab, the Israelite king, who the Bible says, “...did evil in the Lord’s sight, even more than any other of the kings before him,” had a propensity for surrounding himself with like-minded people such as his infamous wife, Jezebel. Clearly, his advisers thought it best to agree with him and bring only favorable news. But, as with any good plot, one character, in this case, Micaiah, rebels against evil and speaks truth to power. He warned the king of his imminent demise because he bucked the system of the king’s “yes men” he was sentenced to prison, even though the king had literally asked for this news.

The truth of God’s Word is like holding a script that tells us the end result of a character’s actions. Do we have the courage to speak God’s truth in love to others in our lives and warn them of the pitfalls of a destructive path? It isn’t always easy, but it is necessary to help one another live out God’s best. Be that courageous character in the script of life, and you will be blessed as you walk in step with God on His precious path of purpose.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your Word that gives such clear life lessons. Open my heart and eyes to what You have for me and help me to walk in Your light. Guide me to be that courageous person who speaks truth in love even when it won’t be received well. In Jesus ’name, Amen.

June 14 — Is There No God in Israel?

READ

2 Kings 1:1-18, 3:1-27, & 8:16-22

2 Chronicles 20:31-21:7

1 Kings 22:41-50

1 Kings 1:16, *"He told the king, 'This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'"*

THINK

It's said, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Like father like son, King Ahab was dead, his successor, Ahaziah, involved in pagan worship. After a mere three-year reign, he fell through the lattice of his upper room and sustained a life-threatening injury. On the brink of death, could he recover? This, only God could know. But who's advice did he seek — even after all that had been proven about the one true God of Israel during his dad's reign? He wanted the opinion of a false, pagan god.

Enter Elijah, the true prophet of the Almighty God, with a message for him through his advisors. He said, "Is there no God in Israel to answer this question of life and death?" He would not survive. This set the bed-ridden king on edge. He wanted a meeting with Elijah ASAP. But Elijah was already back atop a mountain. So, Ahaziah commanded a captain and his men to confront the prophet three times. The first two times, Elijah asked the soldiers the same rhetorical question. And both times, even though acknowledged as a man of God, the soldiers met their immediate demise for succumbing to the lordship of a wayward king as Elijah called down fire from heaven. The third captain and his men, however, survived. Why? They humbled themselves and bowed to the One true king of Israel. They understood the King of king's lordship and survived. And ultimately, the answer to the king? He would die... just like dad. Again, the apple didn't fall far from the tree!

What can we glean from this? When we seek life and death answers apart from God, if we don't know where we're heading the moment this life ends, it's a major cause for concern. The only answer is Jesus. Through Him, we own the key to life. He is our Lord and Savior — only He knows the amount of time we have left. So, choose life! Choose Christ, choose life!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I seek Your opinion above all. I know You, alone, hold the keys to life and death. From You alone, I will seek answers. Amen.

June 15 — A Peculiar Provision

READ

2 Kings 2, 4

2 Kings 4:3-6, *“Elisha said, ‘Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don’t ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side. She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, ‘Bring me another one. But he replied, ‘There is not a jar left. Then the oil stopped flowing.”*

THINK

There’s a story told about a man who found himself in a sinking boat. He cried out to God for help. A boat came by, but he waved the boat away, saying he had faith God would save him. A helicopter then arrived, but the man stubbornly pushed away from the rope they dropped, stating that God would come to his rescue. Unfortunately, the man ultimately drowned because he didn’t recognize the help that God had sent!

It certainly was a peculiar provision that God provided the widow in today’s reading. Because of debts, her son was to be sold into slavery. But God, through Elisha, didn’t miraculously provide the money she needed. Instead, she was instructed to humble herself, go around to all her neighbors and ask for all of their empty jars. Only then did God provide, and only as much as could fit in the jars she had collected.

She asked for help, but instead of an answer, she was given a command. Her faith and obedience led to God’s unexpected solution. How is your faith in God’s provision? Are you like the man in the sinking boat, refusing to humble yourself and receive help? Perhaps God is offering a solution to a current need that you’re failing to see. Be open to answers in unexpected places, and obey His voice. He is always faithful to provide exactly what you need, right when you need it!

PRAY

God, I cry out to you over _____. Help me to see where You are leading and trust that You will provide. Lord, be glorified! Amen.

June 16 — A Humble Heart

READ

2 Kings 5:1-8:15

2 Kings 5:14, *“So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.”*

THINK

Have you ever made plans only to have them fall through? Or wanted an answer to a specific prayer but had preconceived notions of how God should respond? Sometimes we are so stubborn that we insist things go our way. And if they don't, we get upset. Why do we think our way is best? Because we see things through the lens of pride as we focus on ourselves and our own self-interest.

In today's reading, Namaan, a man of great power and success, struggled with the same thing. He had certain expectations of how God should heal him of leprosy, but when God did it differently, he stomped off in a fit of rage. It wasn't until he humbled himself before God that he received healing.

If we block everything out but our own hidden agendas, then we will never hear God's voice. But if we come before Him with a humble heart, we are teachable and open to how and what He wants to do in our lives. That's when He reveals His will and way to us so we can grow and fulfill our purpose.

PRAY

Lord, Forgive me for my prideful ways and help me be humble and open to Your will. I trust that Your way is the best way! Amen.

June 17 — Zeal for the Lord

READ

2 Chronicles 21:8-22:7

2 Kings 8:23-10:31

2 Kings 10:16, *“Then he said, ‘Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they had him ride in his chariot.’”*

THINK

Have you ever felt really impassioned over a certain activity? Maybe you live for hitting the links on the golf course. Perhaps you love trying out new recipes. Whatever it is, we are all passionate about something. But what about God? Does He drive your heart’s desires?

In today’s reading, we find one of the most impassioned kings of ancient Israel, Jehu. In his own words, he had great zeal for the Lord. But within his zealous reign, he failed to keep his pride in check. God used him to take out the former (and evil) king’s family, including the notoriously wicked Jezebel. He acted swiftly and obeyed God, denying his own safety and comfort. But within his zeal, he seemed most passionate about confrontation and violence. That was what truly drove his heart. Then he bragged, as we see in the passage above, for others to “Come and see his zeal for God.” Here is where the lesson lies: zeal for the Lord is great, but not when we put it on display with the intent to be congratulated by others.

So, again, how is your zeal for the Lord? Are you passionate about displaying His love towards others? Are you driven to serve Him and walk in obedience to His commands? If so, GREAT! Just be watchful that your motives are sincere in making His name known and bringing Him the glory He deserves.

PRAY

Lord, Use me to make Your name known. Nudge my heart if pride and ego get in the way. I am passionate about serving You — not for my glory, but Yours. Amen.