

Confronting Idols

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[0 : 00] All right, we're going to read together from 1 Kings chapter 18 and we're going to read verses 17 down to 45.

This is God's word. When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, is it you, you troubler of Israel?

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your Father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the bails. Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.

So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. When Elijah came near to all the people and said, how long will you go limping between two different opinions?

If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him, and the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, I even I only, and left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

[1 : 13] Let two bulls be given to us and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood. But put no fire to it, and I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it.

And you call upon the name of your God, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is a God. And all the people answered, it is well spoken.

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many. Call upon the name of your God, but put no fire to it. And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, answer us, but there was no voice.

And no one answered, and they limped around the altar that they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, Cry aloud, for he is a God, either he is musing or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.

And they cried aloud, and they cut themselves after the custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice.

[2 : 30] No one answered. No one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me, and all the people came near to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down.

Elijah took 12 stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be your name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord.

And he made a trench around the altar, as great as would contain two seas of seed. And he put the wood in order and cut the bull into pieces. And he laid it on the wood.

And he said, fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood. And 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.

And the water ran around the altar, and it filled the whole trench with water. And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, Oh Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God and Israel and that I am your servant and that I have done all these things at your word.

[3 : 38] Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have turned their hearts back. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, the Lord, he is God. And Elijah said to them, seize the prophets of Baal, let none of them escape.

And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook, Kishan, and slaughtered them there. And Elijah said to Ahab, go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain.

So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and he put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, go up now, look towards the sea.

And he went up and he looked and he said, there's nothing. And he said, go again seven times. And at the seventh time he said, behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea.

[4 : 47] And he said, go up, say to Ahab, prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you. And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind.

And there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. This is God's holy word.

We started last week a series called The Gospel according to Elijah and Elisha. And this is one of the more famous stories in the whole of the Old Testament probably.

Elijah ranks at the top of the list when it comes to important people from the Old Testament. You know, you've got Moses, you've got Elijah. They're the two that we see at the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus.

They're a big deal. And so the Elijah story is a big deal in the Old Testament. There's a lot to see here. Now I think you could probably do a sermon series on 1st Kings 18, but we won't do that.

[5 : 45] We'll just look at it one time tonight, which means there's a lot of stuff in it we can't look at or talk about. But right here, Elijah comes up to the top of Mount Carmel and he confronts the 950 prophets of Baal.

And he has, Jack took us through 1st Kings 17 last week. Last week we saw that Elijah was in the wilderness for three years in exile and there was droughts upon the land.

Nobody was drinking. The crops weren't coming up. There was no water. People were really struggling. And now all of a sudden in the very next chapter, he's on top of a mountain and Mount Carmel translates to garden.

That word Carmel, Carmel is garden or vineyard. And so he was at the bottom of the valley in the wilderness in the midst of a drought. And now all of a sudden this passage, he's on top of a mountain in the vineyard in the garden.

You know, he went from the bottom from the wilderness experience all the way to a mountain top experience very quickly. Three years he was in isolation, probably the worst part of his whole life.

[6 : 47] Can you imagine three years by yourself in the wilderness with very little to eat or drink. And now here he is defeating the prophets of Baal. There's a great confrontation and God shows up here.

And so Mount Carmel is at the very tip top of Israel. You can go visit it today and just across west of the Sea of Galilee by Scottish standards, it's a Corbett, not a full mountain, about 500 meters or so.

And this mountain type experience, a lot of times people come to this, the preachers, the theologians, they've come to this and looked at it in a lot of different ways. One of the ways that people have talked about this passage is to say, what are the conditions for God to bring the fire down?

You know, so they build the altar and then God brings the fire down. What are the conditions for revival? What are the conditions for God bringing the fire down to show up, for God to say, I really am the true God and I want to change people's lives.

That's one of the things that happens here. He transforms Israel. And what are the conditions for bringing revival into our city? What do we need for God to bring the fire down?

[7 : 57] What has to happen? And I just want to point to one thing tonight, but I'll make it into three points nonetheless. Okay, don't worry. The one thing, the one thing is just this, that we're being asked, I think, in this passage to say that one of the conditions for really seeing the reality of God and His presence in our city is to know that every single human being, every single one of us tonight, is called to seek the truth, actually, to look for truth, to think about that, to give a good hard look at what's on offer in the world in terms of religion and philosophy and truth claims and to actually say, we've got to put these things side by side and look and say, which God is the real God?

We've got to let the gods confront one another and ask, what's the truth? Who is the God that actually shows up? And that's what happens here. So this passage really confronts us as modern people, I think.

Let me just show you three things here. We're being asked tonight to be willing to seek the truth and then to have a confrontation and then lastly, to choose the real God.

Okay. So let's think about that together. First, we can't be nonchalant about the truth and we can't be nonchalant about looking for it and seeking it and wanting to know it and really find it.

And so that's what we learned first here. So this is about 850 BC, a pretty long time ago. And Elijah is the prophet of God. We saw that last week. We don't know a lot about him at all.

[9 : 31] And the kingdom of Israel has been split in two already. So there's a northern kingdom. There's a southern kingdom. And here we are in the north. And Ahab, he's the king of the north. And the book of kings says Ahab was the worst king in all of Israel.

He was the worst king of the history of the Israelites, which is pretty bad. And he married Jezebel, who's very famous even in pop culture, that connotation.

And she was a Canaanite, bale worshipper. So he married a woman who he was forbidden to marry from a pagan family.

And she, they together, really made Samaria great. So Samaria that we see in the New Testament quite often, they really built it up and made it great in their time, a big, great city.

And at the very center of that city, they put a temple to the bale. Now a bale shows up here. The prophets of bale, 950 of them.

[10 : 30] It's a bale. A bale is just a word for a generic, small g god, which is just to say that you have a bale anytime you take something in this world and you divinize it.

You say that behind this item that I want, there is a god, a spirit, who will give it to me. And so there's rain bales, there's fertility bales, there's wealth bales, there's cattle bales, there's sheep bales.

Pick your thing, there's a bale for it. There's a spirit in the eyes of the ancient Aries that stands behind it. And you've got to worship that spirit in order to get that thing that you're chasing after.

And here Jezebel came from a section of this area in the ancient Aries where she particularly worshiped the bale of Tyre and Sidon. We saw that last week.

And the bale of Tyre and Sidon, this is very important, is that it was the bale of fertility, of nature, of rain in particular. So because at the very center of the temple in Samaria, the temple to the bales, the principal deity that they were worshiping was the god of rain.

[11 : 41] And so what does god do? God says, I'm going to take away the rain and he gives drought. And so the prophet of god Elijah says, no rain for three years. He's trying to show that the idols of the people are empty, that this bale that you've been worshiping is not anything at all actually.

You're just praying to an idol. Now that means that the context that Elijah is in is what we call pluralistic. So it was polytheistic.

There's lots of different gods, lots of different spirits. And you can believe in Samaria and Israel and any god you want to believe in. And you can come to the temple and you can worship any god that you want to worship.

And so in the bale temple in Samaria there was worship of the god of the Bible. And then they would walk across the room and they would worship the god of the rain and the god of the crops and the god of fertility and all these different things.

So they were doing all of it at the same time. It was a polytheistic, pluralistic context. And the one very important thing is never become exclusive. So never say that there really is only one god.

[12 : 46] So you can make a principal deity out of anything you want to do, any god you want to worship. But the one thing you can never do is say that there's only one god and everything else is just an idol.

Does it sound familiar? It's a pluralistic context. It's very modern. It's very similar to the times we live in. And in other words, you can be a spiritualist. Believe whatever you want.

Recognize that there are lots of spirits and all the spirits have just a piece of the truth. No religion has the whole of the truth. So worship whatever you want. Just don't say that there's one god, there's one way.

So this was the context. And so God gives this three year drought to show the emptiness of this idol. Now here it is. We've got this moment in verse 17 where Elijah comes up Mount Carmel to meet Ahab the king after three years of drought.

And you see in verse 17, he says, Ahab sees Elijah and it's very Tolkien-esque. He says in the Hebrew literally, you trouble bringer.

[13 : 46] You are the trouble bringer to Israel. You know, you've brought this mess. And you started saying Israel had to worship just the God of Moses, just the God of the Bible. That's when all the trouble began.

And you see what Ahab's saying. He's saying the problem is exclusivity. If you say there's only one real God, that's what's brought the chaos. That's what's brought all the trouble.

And Elijah says, no, let's see. Let's have a confrontation. Let's have a battle. Let's choose between the two.

Let's see whose God is actually real. And so in verse 19 and following, Elijah's calling the people and calling the modern person to actually put the God side by side and say discern the truth.

Who's making a real claim? What God is actually, actually fits reality. Which God are you going to actually follow? And so he does that. And so in verse 21, he says, stop limping between two different opinions.

[14 : 46] This word limping, the way they translated it. This is a word for cultic dancing. So he's actually referring here to the fact that you are going to the temple in Samaria and you're dancing between two different gods, the Baals and the Lure, the God of the Bible.

You're dancing between the two of them. So he says, you've got to stop. The text literally says you're limping between two crutches. You're trying to stand on both sides. And he's saying, no, you've got to discern the Spirit.

So you've got to let the gods confront each other right here on the mountain and discern which of the experiences is real. And then it says that the people don't answer. They don't give an answer at all.

They were just quiet. Why? And the people don't say anything. You know, Elijah says, let me call upon you to worship the real God, the Lord. Stop limping between two different options, the Baals and the Lord.

And they don't say anything. Why is it? Well, on the one hand, it's because they were afraid of the government, you know. They looked out and there was the king and the king said, the one thing you cannot do is be exclusive.

[15 : 48] You have to say that you can worship any spirit you want to worship. And so they were afraid. What's the king going to do to me if I say that the God of the Bible is the real God, the only God?

They were afraid. But they also were there to promote religious neutrality. They say, you know, the one thing we must never do is make a hard and fast claim that there really is only one God and that all the other religions are actually wrong.

And so they were afraid to do that. They didn't want to do that. Now, this is the Western mindset. We live in a very similar time where people ask, why do I need to discern between the religions?

Why do I need to decide between the gods? In the city of Edinburgh, most people are not atheists. Most people are not even agnostic in the classical definition of that word.

Most people are believing the supernatural. Most people in our city are spiritualists of some kind. They don't think that there's no God, but they also aren't willing to say there is one God.

[16 : 48] And instead, the most common opinion, I think, in our city is to say, we can never really say. We can never really be sure. We can never really know that one religion has a claim to the truth.

And so the best thing we can do is to say there's something more. We can't really know what it is. That's the heartbeat of our city. Now, Stephen Prothro, a professor at Boston University, he wrote a book, 15th Century, 18 years, 20 years ago now, called God is Not One.

We read this book when I was in seminary in the States. And in this book, he tries to play the role of outside observer, and he examines Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Yoruba religion, Taoism, and Atheism.

So he says these at the time were the eight great rival religions that ruled the world, that had the most statistical population that subscribed to them. And this is what he says.

Now listen, this is very simple, but I hope it's not simplistic, because I think it stands. And this is what he says. He says every single one of these eight religions devise a unique problem.

[17 : 56] So when the religions look out, they all say, when you ask what's wrong with the world, they all answer it differently. So they recognize a different problem with what's wrong with us and what's wrong with the world.

Then they all offer a different salvation, a unique salvation, a different solution. Now look, you see what he's saying? It sounds simplistic to say this, but he's saying when you really look at the religions, when you really discern between the gods, one of the things you find out is that they all make claims that contradict each other.

They all say that what's wrong with us, they're saying something different. How do you fix it? They're all saying something different. And actually he comes around and he says, essentially this is the paraphrase, to say that all religions are basically alike is ultimately to disrespect and fail to listen to the claims those religions have been making for thousands and thousands of years.

So if you're not willing, if you want to say as a modern person, all the religions are basically the same. And everybody just has a piece of the truth, and we can never really know which one is right. He says you have not listened to the religions.

You haven't listened to what they're saying. You failed to take in the thousands of years of theology that they've developed because they all know they're making different claims, claims that don't work with one another.

[19 : 14] And Elijah says to the people of Israel, you can't just be neutral. In fact, when it comes to the God of the Bible, you've got to either say yes or no. Don't go limping, he says, between two different opinions.

You've got to look at the God of the Bible and say yes or no. Is this the truth or is it not? Am I going to follow the truth? Or do I think something else is the truth? He's saying you've got to actually discern. You've got to choose.

You can't dance between the faiths. You can't be a mere spiritualist. All right. Secondly, then, the confrontation. We need a confrontation tonight. All right.

So what we have here is a court, very literally a courtroom confrontation. There's language here that uses the concept of a disputation.

To this setup between the gods and the God of the Bible is like a courtroom going down. One will be vindicated on top of this mountain. One's going to be condemned on the top of this mountain.

[20 : 10] And so in the contest, they prepare a sacrifice. He says, Elijah says, you call on your God to consume this bull by fire.

And then in verse 25, he says, you know, you've got a lot of people. So you go first. You call on your God and you go first. Now, the reason he says that, you are many, so you go first.

As he's saying, look, if your God actually does it, then we'll know. If the bail comes down, then we'll know. We don't have to continue.

And you are many. Why is he pointing that out? There are 950 prophets total, 450 on top of the mountain. And he's saying this because in ancient Near Eastern religion, the way it works is that you have to give your God the right thing at the right time with the right words in order to get from your God what you desire.

So when you come to the temple at the right moment, you give the right amount of grain. You say the right incantation. You move in the correct ways. You are trying to appease your God, coax your God into giving you what you're asking for.

[21 : 18] That's how ancient Near Eastern religion works. And so he's saying, look, you've got 450 people and the gods love to be asked. They want to be appeased.

If 450 of you can't all do the right thing at the right time, give the right thing to your God, then we'll know. It's not the real God.

In other words, Baalism works exactly the opposite as the God of the Bible. In Baalism, give this, give that, dance for this, perform in this way.

And maybe the gods will answer you. And in just a minute, we're going to find out that the God of the Bible, the only way that you can ever hear from the God of the Bible is when he decides.

He can't be appeased. He can't be danced for. He can't be coaxed. That's one of the fundamental differences. And so here, for several hours, verse 26 and following, the people cry out.

[22 : 15] This is a reference to cultic ritual prayers. So they're crying out and it says, but no voice. And then it says, then they started to limp around the bull, which means dance.

So they were ritually dancing around the bull, trying to get the gods to answer and bring the fire. And it says, but no answer. And then when your God doesn't hear the 450 voices, when the gods, the Baals, don't respond to the dancing, what do people have to do?

They have to level up their performance. They have to give everything. You know, when you chase after a Baal, but it doesn't answer you, you start to give everything you have to it.

And so what did they do? It says that they cut themselves and they pour their blood out in this performance. And then in verse 29, you get the threefold response.

No answer. No one paid attention. There was no voice, utter silence. Now listen, here's Baalism. This is what the Bible calls idolatry.

[23 : 21] We mentioned it briefly this morning. It's from Romans one. It's when anytime you take a creaturely thing in this, in this life, in this realm, and you replace the creator for the creature.

So in the ancient Erees, they took rain and they said, this is the thing that we want most. We want worship to spirit that stood behind the rain. That's Baalism.

And in the ancient Erees, there were rain bales. Remember crop bales, fertility bales. But there were also gods in this time, there were also gods of beauty and money and power and tradition and sport and reputation and intelligence and approval and comfort and control and independence and even gods of suffering.

The idols of self-pity and it's very important to say in our city today, modern human beings, there are people who are worshiping the bales in a similar way to the ancient Erees.

So we don't need to be confused about that. That if you go to the Beltane Festival, for example, you will find that there are people who worship the gods in similar ways to the ways that people were worshiping gods in the old world.

[24 : 34] And so this is not primitive at all. This is actually very common and very modern. But we need to know that while there is a group of the population doing that, a group of people doing that, every single human being struggles with Baalism.

Every single one of us. We all do. And while we might not be chasing after the gods of the rain and the gods of fertility and crops and all these sorts of bales, it's much more common for us to chase the bales of eternal youth and the bales of wealth and comfort and approval and being the smart person in the room or whatever it may be.

Baalism is making, taking anything good that God has made and flipping it around and making it into the Creator, making it into your God, taking anything good that God's made and misusing it, misappropriating it, chasing after it and treating it like it's the God of the Bible.

That's Baalism. It's happened for all of human history. It's the problem in the Garden of Eden and it carries on even today. You can be a Christian tonight and you can be chasing the truth, following Jesus, justified by faith and still be struggling with an idol.

In fact, that's the case for all of us. You can be a Christian tonight, following Jesus Christ and still be chasing after something and it's like some creature and loving it quite often more than you love the God of the Bible, the God who saved you.

[26 : 06] What creaturely good tonight is more important to me than God? That's the question. What creaturely thing in my life? What thing in my life am I chasing after and loving more than I love the God who has saved me?

I've used this quote, this moment from David Foster Wallace's speech at Kenyon College a couple times in the past couple years. You've heard this before probably, but you're going to hear it again beyond tonight as well because it's too good not to use.

This is what David Foster Wallace, a philosopher, this is what he says. He was not a Christian, but I think he really nailed the sense of this. He said, in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is no such thing as atheism.

There's no such thing as not worshiping. You might add there's no such thing as religious neutrality, believing in nothing. He says that everybody worships. The only choice that we get tonight is what we're going to worship.

He says pretty much anything you worship in your life is going to eat you alive. It's going to eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough.

[27 : 17] You will never feel like you have enough. It's the truth. You will have your body and beauty in a lure, and you will always feel ugly. When time and age start to show, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you.

You worship power. You will end up feeling weak and afraid. You will need even more power over others to numb your own fears. You worship your intellect being seen as smart.

You will end up feeling dumb, fraught, always on the verge of being found out for who you really are. The insidious thing about these forms is that they're unconscious.

They are the default setting of the human being. They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip back into. It's balism.

We've been doing it for a long time. Now, lastly, that means as we close, we've got to choose the real God. We've got to let the gods confront one another, and we've got to choose the God who is real tonight.

[28 : 17] And so here's the confrontation how it ends from verse 36. Verse 30 to 35, Elijah made it very hard to win because he said, dig a ditch, pour water over the offering three times, fill the entire trench up with water all around it, and I'm going to call on my God not only to burn the bull, but to take up the water as well.

So he doubled down, he tripled down, and he made it much more difficult. And one of the things you see here, the big difference between balism and the true God, the God of the Bible is they performed, they danced, they did magical incantation, they cut themselves, they gave everything just to try to get their God to listen.

And Elijah simply lifts up his voice in praise. Very simple prayer. Would you just make yourself known tonight today? Show yourself to be the real God.

And Elijah asked God to make God self-known and reclaim the people's hearts. And that's because the only way to know the real God, the only way to know the God that is real is if he chooses to reveal himself.

You can't dance, you can't perform, you can't manipulate, you can't get the real God, the God of the Bible to just do things. God is absolute. He chooses to condescend. He wants to come down.

[29 : 40] And so prayer, he just prays and says, God, we show up. And God says, yes. And so in verse 38, the fire falls down and the people say, this is the Lord, this is the real God.

Now, here's the basic point. It's very simple. The point of the passage, I think, is just very simply this. Our bails, the creaturely things we chase after and divinize in this life are not real gods.

That's the simple point of the passage. The things that we treat as gods in this life in the ancient world and in the modern world are just not actually gods. They're not real gods. They're just creatures that we long for.

We want them so bad, but they're just creaturely things. They're not the real God. They're not gods at all. That's the very simple point. And so there's just an invitation tonight to take a hard look at the truth, the God of truth, and see that Christianity offers a theology and a worldview and an existential hope that actually fits reality, actually fits reality and is so different from all the other religions and so much better.

So let me close with one more invitation. That's the big idea of the passage. Here's the second invitation as we conclude. Did you notice at the very end of the passage, the story does not end?

[30 : 59] It's focused on Elijah, but from verse 41, for just a moment, it actually focuses on Ahab. So at the very end of all this, I think the author is asking us here maybe just for a moment to think, who am I in this passage?

Who are we in this passage? And Ahab is the most wicked of all the kings in Israel's history. It says he was the worst. He created this mess.

He brought idolatry and worship of all these false gods into Israel. And at the very end of this passage, the ultimate idolater who drove Israel into death and drought, Elijah says to him, now Ahab, go up on the top of the mountain, eat and drink, for the rains are coming.

You see, in that moment, the greatest idolater of them all, the Lord tells Elijah, now you invite that man to come to the top of the mountain and to take and to eat and to drink because the drought's going to end, the rains are coming.

He invites Ahab to come up the mountain. I think it's probably the last thing you would expect to happen at the end of the passage. The prophet offers Ahab a feast.

[32 : 27] The drought's over, the debt is paid, the bull has been burned. The sacrifice has been offered, and now what's on the table for you is to come up and eat and drink.

Now this passage isn't really about Elijah. It is, but it's about something more than that. And remember that Elijah's a prophet, and a prophet is there to point away from himself towards something else.

A prophet gives a message that says, don't look at me, look at that. And what is it that Elijah's trying to get us to all look at in this passage? He's trying to get us to look at the sacrifice.

Three times, the water, the bull, the altar, the fire comes down. Don't look at Elijah, he says, look at that. Look at the sacrifice. Look at what God has done here.

Prophets point to something else. And when you come to the New Testament, in Matthew 11, Jesus speaks to the crowds, and he says, crowd, John the Baptist, truly, truly I say to you, of all those born of women, there has arisen no one greater in human history, no greater prophet than John the Baptist, and he is Elijah.

[33 : 38] You see, the prophet Elijah came to point to something else, the sacrifice, and then Jesus comes in the New Testament and says, do you know that John the Baptist, you look at him and you're looking at Elijah? And what did John the Baptist come to do?

John the Baptist did not come to point to himself. Remember, the people came and said, are you the Christ? And John said, not me. I'm here to point to something else. Elijah lived in the wilderness for three years, and he ate the food of ravens.

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness, and he ate the locusts. He is the new Elijah, and he was there to point to somebody else. And Luke 1.17 says, this new Elijah will go in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn back the hearts of the fathers.

Elijah pointed to the sacrifice, the bull, but the bull was only a dim shadow, just like Elijah is a shadow. John the Baptist came to point to the true sacrifice.

He pointed straight at Jesus Christ. And the entire point ultimately of 1 Kings 18 is that Jesus Christ came to be burned. He came to enter into the midst of the fire.

[34 : 44] He came to go to hell for idolaters, for people who struggle with Baalism. And at the very end of the passage, Elijah can say to Ahab, you idolater, because the debt has been paid, come up, take and eat, the rain is coming.

And tonight we can say, God so loved the world that he does not ask me to dance for him. He does not ask me to perform for him.

Not at all. Instead, he looks down at me and idolater, a person who struggles with loving creatures more than him. And he says to me, because the Son of God was burned in the fires of hell for me, for you, come tonight, take and eat.

This is my body. This is my blood. It is broken and poured for you, for the forgiveness of all your sins, for the forgiveness of all of our idols. So let's do that now. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You for the gospel according to Elijah and we pray now that You would speak life to us as we come and we take and eat by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

[35 : 51] And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.