

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3, Who is God Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3, Who is God, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture focuses on the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, highlighting the question of who is truly God. Elijah challenges the Israelites to choose between Yahweh and Baal, emphasizing that loyalty cannot be divided. The contest on Mount Carmel demonstrates Yahweh's power through fire, proving His sovereignty and prompting the people to acknowledge Him. Oswalt underscores the importance of trusting and surrendering to God, rejecting pagan attempts to manipulate the world. The narrative emphasizes that God wants to be known and that true faith involves wholehearted devotion and obedience. Ultimately, the rain that follows confirms Yahweh's power and sets the stage for continued conflict against entrenched enemies.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).



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on 14_3.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3, Who is God

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on 1 Kings 17-18, focusing on the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.

Briefing Document: Oswalt on 1 Kings 17-18 (Mount Carmel Confrontation)

Subject: Analysis of the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, emphasizing the question: "Who is God?"

Source: Excerpts from "Oswalt_Kings_EN_Session14_3.pdf" - Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 14, Part 3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3—Who is God? © 2024 John Oswalt and Ted Hildebrandt

Main Themes:

- **The Sharp Conflict Between Yahweh and Paganism:** The narrative highlights the stark contrast between worshiping Yahweh and pagan practices, particularly Baal worship. Elijah deliberately chooses Mount Carmel as the location for the contest because of its location. "Mount Carmel is right on the point of that ridge looking out over the Mediterranean Sea... Because the rain, if it comes, will come off the sea. And the lightning, if it falls, will fall from a storm coming in off the sea." He wants to make it clear that Yahweh, not Baal, controls the natural elements, thus demonstrating Baal's impotence.
- **The Nature of Paganism as Manipulation:** Oswalt defines paganism as "the attempt to manipulate nature to supply our own needs." He argues that this impulse is still prevalent today, even when we've "taken the faces off" of pagan deities. The attempt to control the physical world, rather than trusting in God, is a modern form of paganism.
- **The Demand for Exclusive Loyalty to Yahweh:** The central message is that one cannot serve both Yahweh and the world (represented by "mammon"). "You cannot serve God and mammon. We think of mammon as money, but it's really much more than that. It's the physical world." God demands a "perfect heart," meaning absolute devotion with "no ifs, no ands, no buts. No rivals, no limits."

- **Yahweh as a God Who Wants to Be Known and Trusted:** Oswalt emphasizes that Yahweh is not part of the world and cannot be manipulated, He is distinct from creation and desires a relationship with his people based on trust. "We have to choose between trusting the world and our ability to manipulate the world and trusting Yahweh." Knowing Him means trusting Him, and trusting Him means surrendering to Him. "He Is a God who wants to be known and who speaks... He wants to be known. And to know him is to trust him. To trust him is to surrender to him. And to surrender to him is to be at his disposal for good, for us, and for the world."
- **The Power of Prayer vs. Futile Rituals:** The contrast is drawn between the frantic, ritualistic practices of the Baal prophets and Elijah's simple, direct prayer to Yahweh. The Baal prophets' actions are interpreted as a funeral ritual, even to the point of self-mutilation, attempting to influence their god. Elijah's prayer, on the other hand, is straightforward, based on God's past faithfulness, and seeks God's glory and the people's repentance.
- **The Demonstration of Yahweh's Power and the People's Response:** Yahweh's response with fire from the sky is a decisive demonstration of His power, leading the people to proclaim, "Yahweh, he is God. Yahweh, he is God." This signifies a moment of recognition of Yahweh's true nature and authority.
- **The Battle Isn't Over:** Despite the victory on Mount Carmel, Oswalt points out that "the opening battle has been won... But the question will be: What happens next in this war? Is one battle enough? Or is it going to take more to defeat the entrenched foes of Yahweh." This implies a continued struggle against idolatry and a need for sustained faithfulness.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Mount Carmel's Significance:** The location was chosen strategically to emphasize Yahweh's control over the natural world (rain and lightning from the sea).
- **Jezebel's Support of Baal and Asherah Prophets:** Jezebel actively supported the prophets of Asherah, "eating at her table," which Oswalt interprets as meaning she provided for them.
- **Elijah's Challenge to the People:** He challenges them to stop "limping" between two opinions, demanding a clear choice between Yahweh and Baal. "How long are you going to limp between two opinions? How long are you going to try to sit on the fence?"

- **Elijah's Mockery of Baal Prophets:** Elijah mocks the Baal prophets' rituals, suggesting Baal might be "deep in thought," "busy," or even "moving himself" (a euphemism for using the restroom). This highlights the absurdity of reducing God to human limitations.
- **The Thoroughness of Elijah's Preparation:** Elijah makes the sacrifice even harder to ignite by drenching it in water multiple times to further showcase Yahweh's power.
- **The Aftermath and Impending Rain:** Following the demonstration of Yahweh's power, Elijah confidently predicts rain and races Ahab back to Jezreel.

Quotes:

- "How long will you waver between two opinions?"
- "Paganism is the attempt to manipulate nature to supply our own needs."
- "You cannot serve God and mammon."
- "He is staking everything, everything, on his trust in God."
- "Yahweh, he is God. Yahweh, he is God."
- "God is God. There is no other God. He is a God who wants to be known and who speaks."

Implications:

- The passage challenges modern believers to examine their own loyalties and to avoid the subtle forms of paganism that prioritize self-reliance and manipulation of the world over trusting in God.
- It emphasizes the importance of prayer and a heart fully devoted to Yahweh.
- It reminds us that spiritual battles are ongoing and require sustained commitment to God.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3, Who is God

Elijah on Mount Carmel: A Study Guide

I. Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Why is the location of Mount Carmel significant to the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal?
2. What does Elijah mean when he asks the people how long they will "limp between two opinions?"
3. Explain what Dr. Oswalt means by the statement, "Paganism is the attempt to manipulate nature to supply our own needs."
4. Why does Dr. Oswalt contend that Yahweh cannot be made part of this world?
5. Describe Elijah's instructions to the people to drench the altar and the sacrifice with water, and explain its significance.
6. What does Elijah ask of God in his prayer on Mount Carmel?
7. What is the response of the people after witnessing the fire from Yahweh consume the sacrifice?
8. What is the significance of Elijah running before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel?
9. According to Dr. Oswalt, how does God speak to us today?
10. How does Dr. Oswalt define what it means to "trust" God?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. Mount Carmel is located on a ridge overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, making it the place where rain and lightning would naturally appear first, thus testing which god truly controls the weather. Elijah chose it to make the conflict with Baal as explicit and decisive as possible.
2. Elijah is challenging the people to stop being indecisive and hypocritical in their worship. He is criticizing their attempt to worship both Yahweh and Baal simultaneously, emphasizing the need for exclusive devotion to Yahweh.

3. This implies that paganism is not just about worshipping false gods, but about trying to control the physical world for selfish gain. This can manifest in modern times as materialism.
4. Dr. Oswalt contends that because Yahweh transcends the physical world, trying to confine Him to it diminishes Him and turns Him into just another idol. Yahweh is separate from and greater than the created world.
5. Elijah instructs the people to drench the altar and sacrifice with water to make the ensuing fire from Yahweh an even more undeniable display of divine power. The water would have made it nearly impossible for the sacrifice to burn without divine intervention.
6. Elijah asks God to answer his prayer with fire to demonstrate that He is the true God of Israel and to turn the people's hearts back to Him. He asks not just for recognition but for genuine repentance and renewed devotion.
7. The people respond by proclaiming, "Yahweh, he is God," acknowledging Yahweh's power and sovereignty after witnessing the miraculous fire.
8. Elijah running before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel demonstrates the power of God working through Elijah, even physically, and signifies that Yahweh's presence and influence extend beyond the immediate victory on Mount Carmel.
9. Dr. Oswalt says that God speaks to us today not audibly, but clearly, through His Word (the Bible), His Son (Jesus Christ), and in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. These means of communication guide and reveal God's will to believers.
10. According to Dr. Oswalt, trusting God means surrendering to Him and being at His disposal for good in our lives and in the world, demonstrating complete reliance on His provision and guidance.

III. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the confrontation on Mount Carmel in the context of the broader conflict between Yahweh and paganism. How does this event illustrate the nature of true faith and the dangers of divided loyalties?
2. Analyze Elijah's character and actions in 1 Kings 17-18. What qualities does he possess that make him an effective prophet, and how does he demonstrate his trust in God throughout these chapters?
3. Explore the theme of idolatry in the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. How does the worship of Baal represent a broader attempt to manipulate the world for personal gain, and how does Yahweh challenge this worldview?
4. Examine the ways in which the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel speaks to contemporary issues of faith and discipleship. How can we apply the lessons of this story to our own lives, and what challenges do we face in maintaining exclusive devotion to Yahweh in today's world?
5. Compare and contrast the approaches to worship and prayer demonstrated by the prophets of Baal and Elijah. What do their respective methods reveal about their understanding of the divine, and how does Yahweh respond to their prayers?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ahab:** King of Israel who reigned during Elijah's ministry and promoted the worship of Baal.
- **Asherah:** A Canaanite goddess of fertility, often worshipped alongside Baal.
- **Baal:** A Canaanite god of storm and fertility, whose worship Elijah challenged on Mount Carmel.
- **Carmel (Mount):** A mountain ridge in Israel overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, where Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal.
- **Elijah:** A Hebrew prophet who challenged the worship of Baal and proclaimed the power of Yahweh.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods, often representing an attempt to manipulate the divine for personal gain.
- **Jezebel:** Queen of Israel and wife of Ahab, who promoted the worship of Baal and persecuted the prophets of Yahweh.
- **Mammon:** A term often associated with wealth or material possessions, representing worldly desires and temptations.
- **Paganism:** A religious system that attempts to manipulate nature to supply human needs, often through the worship of multiple gods or idols.
- **Prophets of Baal:** Individuals who claimed to be messengers or representatives of Baal, often engaging in rituals and sacrifices to appease the god.
- **Ritual:** A set of actions or ceremonies performed according to a prescribed order, often with religious or symbolic significance.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of God in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as "LORD" in English.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 14.3, 1 Kings 17-18, Part 3, Who is God, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on 1 Kings 17-18: The Confrontation on Mount Carmel

- **What was the significance of Mount Carmel as the location for the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal?**
- Mount Carmel's location on a ridge overlooking the Mediterranean Sea was strategically important because it was the direction from which rain and lightning storms typically came. Elijah chose this site to highlight that Yahweh, not Baal, controlled these natural phenomena, directly challenging Baal's perceived power over weather and fertility. This was meant to be a clear and decisive demonstration of God's authority.
- **Why did Elijah insist that the people choose between Yahweh and Baal, rather than worshiping both?**
- Elijah insisted on a choice because Yahweh demands exclusive devotion. The text suggests the Israelites were "limping" between two opinions, trying to appease both Yahweh and Baal. However, the pagan worship of Baal was based on manipulating nature for personal gain. Yahweh is not a part of this world and cannot be manipulated. True faith in Yahweh requires complete trust and surrender, not divided loyalties. You cannot attempt to serve both "God and mammon."
- **What does the confrontation on Mount Carmel reveal about the nature of paganism?**
- The confrontation reveals that paganism is fundamentally about the attempt to manipulate the natural world, and by extension, any perceived deities associated with it, to fulfill human desires. The prophets of Baal engaged in elaborate rituals, including self-harm, to try and compel Baal to act. This contrasts sharply with Elijah's simple prayer to Yahweh, demonstrating that true faith involves trusting in a God who is not subject to human control.

- **How did Elijah demonstrate his trust in Yahweh during the challenge on Mount Carmel?**
- Elijah demonstrated his trust in several ways. First, he challenged the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a direct contest, knowing he was vastly outnumbered. Second, he intensified the challenge by having the altar drenched in water, making it even more difficult for a fire to ignite naturally. Finally, he prayed a straightforward prayer, rooted in God's past faithfulness, asking Yahweh to reveal Himself to the people, not just for recognition, but to turn their hearts back to Him.
- **Why did Elijah mock the prophets of Baal during their unsuccessful attempts to summon their god?**
- Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal to expose the absurdity of their beliefs. By suggesting Baal might be "deep in thought," "busy," or even "on a journey," Elijah ridiculed the notion that a true God could be reduced to human limitations and failings. This mockery highlighted the emptiness and futility of their rituals and the lifelessness of the idol they were worshipping.
- **What was the significance of the fire that consumed the sacrifice on Mount Carmel?**
- The fire that consumed the sacrifice, the altar, and the surrounding water was a powerful demonstration of Yahweh's power and sovereignty. It definitively answered the question of "Who is God?" by displaying supernatural power that the prophets of Baal could not replicate. The fire served as undeniable proof that Yahweh, not Baal, was the true God of Israel, capable of controlling even the elements. It also symbolized God's acceptance of the sacrifice and His commitment to His people.
- **What does the story of Elijah running before Ahab to Jezreel symbolize?**
- The scene of Elijah outrunning Ahab's chariot to Jezreel symbolizes God's continued power and Elijah's unwavering dedication to serving Him. Despite the victory on Mount Carmel, the threat from Ahab and Jezebel remained, highlighting the ongoing spiritual battle. Elijah's act of running before the king demonstrates his fearlessness and commitment to delivering God's message, even in the face of potential danger. It also showcases God's ability to empower his servants beyond their natural abilities.

- **What is the ultimate message of the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel?**
- The ultimate message is that Yahweh alone is God. It calls for a complete surrender of hearts and minds to Him, rejecting divided loyalties and the temptation to manipulate the world for personal gain. It emphasizes that knowing God involves trusting Him, and that this trust leads to being used by Him for good in the world. The story serves as a timeless reminder to choose God over idols and to recognize His sovereignty in every aspect of life.