



## LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

### “Church and State”

Ps. James Lowe - June 28, 2015

#### WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What is your favorite sports victory? Why?
- Have you ever succeeded at something you expected to fail at? What was it?
- What is one of your most meaningful victories in life? Why?

#### WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at <http://www.bethelworld.org>

Jude 1:17-23 ESV *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.*

- God draws people to repentance with lovingkindness. We are to do likewise.

1 Kings 18:17-18 ESV *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 Baals.*

- God's faithful witnesses are commonly maligned by those who have rejected God's commands. We should not be surprised when this happens to us.
- God's prophet was unafraid of the king, who could take his life. He remained faithful as a witness to God, providing the king with an ongoing opportunity to repent.

1 Kings 18:19-21 ESV *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. And 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.*

- Elijah confronted the major sin of Baal idolatry. King Ahab and the nation had repeatedly failed to heed God's call to repent.
- Elijah, moved by God, provoked a crisis of confrontation between Yahweh and the false god, Baal, and his prophets. God will not leave people to destroy themselves indefinitely. He will eventually force a confrontation with them to challenge them to repent.
- God's heart is not to destroy people, but to bring them to the repentance that leads to life and blessing and wholeness.

1 Kings 18:22-36 tells of the futile effort of the prophets of Baal to demonstrate his power and so legitimize their leadership and influence in the nation.

1 Kings 18:37-40 ESV *“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; the Lord, he is God.” And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.*

- God demonstrated his power and revealed his authority to the nation, confirming the message of his prophet.
- God also expressed his justice against the prophets of Baal, who had led the entire nation astray into a perverse idolatry that resulted in the abuse and oppression of humans.
- Although this was an appropriate action by Elijah according to Israel's divinely revealed covenantal law, it would be inappropriate today according to the fuller teaching of Jesus Christ.

1 Kings 18:41-46 records God's blessing of rain being brought upon the land again after three years of no rain. After the people acknowledged God's legitimate authority over them, God immediately blessed them.

### Summary

#### **God calls.**

- God had been calling to Ahab and the nation for years through the preaching of his prophets and through the drought he had brought upon the nation as chastisement for its sins.
- Even in our sins God calls to us. He wants us to repent and return to him. He wants to show mercy and compassion to us.
- We must pray for ourselves and our nation. We must listen to God's voice.

#### **God confronts.**

- If we fail to listen to God, he will eventually confront us. God confronted Ahab and the nation.
- God confronts us to make clear his authority and to bring us into crisis for the purpose of bringing us to repentance.
- We should not be surprised if God brings our nation into crises. But we should not desire it. Instead, we need to earnestly pray for our own sanctification and for our nation's repentance.

#### **God cleanses.**

- When we repent God removes the sin from us *and* blesses us in spite of our past guilt!

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.**

- How does God call to you when he wants you to change something in your life?
- Have you ever experienced God's confrontation in your life? What did you learn?
- Has God ever blessed you in a way that surprised you? What did he do?

### **PRAYER (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- Pray that God would give us and our nation ears to hear him calling us to his ways.
- Pray that God would give us his heart and wisdom to speak his message to others.
- Pray that God would cleanse us and bless us.