

Ahab or Elijah?

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 4th September 2011

Intro-

- Yesterday went to 'Bang Goes the Theory live' in Cwmbran. One experiment showed the power of friction- something we cannot see but is certainly there (2 books with pages interleaved are very difficult to pull apart- can hold our bodyweight). In another experiment I didn't understand fully how it was going to work but gave it a try and was lifted up in a 'vacuum elevator' to a great height as I held on with my arms. I was willing to believe the scientists as they explained things I could not see, and even was willing to place my trust in their inventions.
- Many people go though their live with very little regard to the fact that God is real, with them and sees them. How aware are we of God's presence with us? How does God's presence affect our decision making process? How much trust are we prepared to put in Him, even though we may not physically be able to see Him?
- This morning we will look at 2 men's opposite reactions to God's presence and see which we most resemble- Ahab or Elijah?

Read 1Kings 16:29-1Kings 17:7

God sees- 16:30 *'Ahab..did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him'*

- Ahab was more conscious of the presence of others than he was the presence of the Lord, even though the Lord saw everything he did. V30 says the evil he did he did in 'God's sight'. The fact is God sees everything we do.

The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. Prov 15:3.

Omnipresence. Omniscience. Jesus said:

'For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Luke 8:17 (repeated in Lk 12:2)

- Daniel saw Cherabim around God's throne which were covered in eyes, and the even the wheels of the king's throne covered in eyes. In the book of Revelation John saw Jesus as a lamb that was slain, but having 7 eyes- all seeing eyes.
- **Application:** How aware are we of the eyes of the Lord? Does the presence of the Lord govern our actions when the eyes of others are not on us?

God matters- 16:31 *'A trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam'.*

- Ahab had a choice- go the way of his evil ancestors or be a radical follower of God. He made a bad choice and thought it wouldn't matter to God- he was wrong!
- Jeroboam was an evil king who ruled 6 generations before Ahab. It all started 1 generation before that when Solomon compromised by marrying foreign wives from Canaanite nations of which God had specifically warned 'do not marry'. He ended up compromising further by building altars for their gods because he wanted to please his foreign wives more than God. As a result the whole kingdom was split in two (but it happened after Solomon's life, as a respect for his father David's obedience to God). 10 tribes of Israel in the north split from the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south. The larger group in the North kept the name 'Israel' and had Samaria as their capital. The smaller group in the south took the name 'Judah' and had Jerusalem as their capital. Solomon's actions adversely affected many people for generations to come. Jeroboam, mentioned in verse 31 is the first king of

this new 10 tribe kingdom of Israel and he kicked off the idolatry by introducing 2 golden calves to be worshipped. Each king after Jeroboam followed suit. Ahab had the chance to be a different king, but instead was the worst of all. Just as Solomon had become more concerned with what others thought about him than what God thought about him, which led him into idolatry, so he too wanted to please his wife Jezebel more than God.

- It is God's view on what we do that really matters.
Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.- Prov 29:25
- Why a snare? It traps you, it gets you into bondage so that you are not truly free to pursue certain choices that will be good for you because of concern of what others may think. A snare because it harms you- it leads to a loss of good things and it bears bad fruit.
- A snare is not obvious- we fall into it. Satan is so subtle. Syncretism- mixing worship of God with other religious claptrap to please others, thinking it will somehow mix okay and soon we are compromised.

Application:

- Where are we compromising? What things from a non-Christian lifestyle are we trying to squeeze in alongside our walk with Jesus? What are the long term consequences of our current lifestyle?
- What philosophies/beliefs are we adopting alongside our Christian beliefs? My background one of the Occult- even though I stopped doing certain things straight away there were some things it took a while for me to sort out- my music taste was one of them. Do a spiritual health checklist- go through your possessions, material you read, programs you watch. Ask yourself 'Is this bringing a good influence into my life, or a bad influence?' Develop an 'if in doubt chuck it out' habit.

God speaks -17:1- 'No dew or rain except at my word'

- Elijah loved God, listened and responded obediently to what God said. As a result he prophesied some serious stuff! The drought lasted for 3.5 years (James says the length of time at the end of his epistle). Same length as the Great Tribulation
- Baal worship. Baal='lord'. Could mean a variety of gods, but usually meant the Caananite god Hadad, god of fertility and rain. Usually depicted as holding lightening in his hand. The ESV commentary notes:
'He was son of the high god El and husband of the goddess Anat. His weapons were thunder and lightening and his symbolic representation was the bull... The absence of rain meant the absence of Baal who must periodically submit to the god of death, Mot (during the dry season), only to be revived at a later date and once again water the earth (during the rainy season).'
- God, in contrast to Baal, was shown by Elijah to be always living and yet having the power to send or withhold rain. The drought was a warning from God saying- 'Baal is not really in charge of the weather, I am. Repent!'
- Ahab could have responded quickly, instead he waited until the showdown on Mount Carmel where the prophets of Baal were shamed and judged.
- "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." - C.C. Lewis.
- **Application-** Are we wanting to hear God's voice, or would we rather not? Has God spoken something to us that we have not put into practise? What things is God warning us not to do? What things is God calling us to do?
- Quick repentance- longer we put things off the harder it is.

God provides- 17:6 -'The ravens brought him bread and meat'

- Elijah trusted God. God leads Elijah to a place that is safe because it is in the middle of nowhere, and where there is a brook to drink from. The only problem is-

no food. God was leaving room for faith to be exercised. Each day was a test of faith- was Elijah going to believe God for the birds to bring him food or not? The Israelites too had to trust God for their deliverance from Egypt, but, once delivered, they still had to trust God as He provided manna in the wilderness.

- Perhaps we have been obedient to God and feel we are in the place where He has led us to, but there is a deficit in a certain area- some things have been provided but not others. God is encouraging us to persist in faith. The parable of the persistent widow- she kept pestering the judge until she got justice.
- Sometimes God's provision comes in ways we do not expect or want and we need to be humble enough to 'go with the flow'. You can just imagine Elijah putting in his order of a quarter pounder, and first comes the meat, then, comes the sesame bun separately, delivered by beak. You can imagine Elijah's O.C.D kicking in as he wonders just what else has that beak has touched.
- My strange experience of trying to clear out gutters of the house, but only being able to do the back ones because I didn't have a ladder. Over the next 2 days a bird landed in the front gutters and cleared them out for me!
- The ravens bring both bread and meat, and bring it twice a day. 'Give us this day our daily bread' -we each have daily needs and are encouraged by Jesus to bring our needs to Him in prayer. What is your current need right now?

Summary

- God sees
- God speaks
- God provides

So are you an Ahab or an Elijah?

Song: Gonna trust in God