

30 AMAZING BIBLE STORIES YOU MAY NOT KNOW

#19 | Civil Disobedience, Old Testament Style

A BAD TIME AND A DIFFICULT ORDER | 1 KINGS 18:1-2

- According to James 5:17, it did not rain for three years and six months due to Elijah's request before God.
- The instruction to Elijah in verse one comes **in the third year**, thus coming to the end of the 3.5-year period.
- Elijah was to show himself before Ahab, a wicked-toad of a king, henpecked by a wicked wife. Nothing good can be said about Ahab. He was a selfish, manipulative, toad of a man, squatting on an illegitimate throne.
- The words of verse 2 are a summary, the longer version seen beginning in verses 16 and following.
- The **sore famine in Samaria** is the 6th of 13 famines mentioned in the Bible. The number 13 is a number of rebellion in the Bible, as seen in its first use, Genesis 14:4.
- The setting for the civil disobedience of Obadiah is a faithful prophet (Elijah) who has been in hiding for over three years from a wicked King and Queen, during which time God sent famine to punish their rebellion.

MEET OBADIAH: A MAN FOR THE TIMES | 1 KINGS 18:3

- Obadiah was a righteous man working for a wicked King.
- His name (*Obadiahu*) means "servant of Yahweh."
- It is possible that the Prophet Obadiah is the same as this man.
 - There is no firm evidence, but plenty of tradition that the two are the same man.
 - The book of Obadiah is a prophecy against Edom.
 - The Jewish sages teach that Obadiah was chosen to pronounce judgement on Edom because he "dwelt between two wicked people, Ahab and Jezebel, and did not learn from their deeds" and so was perfect for Edom, who "dwelt between two righteous people, Isaac and Rebecca, and did not learn from their deeds." (quoted from Sanhedrin 39b, as found in Rashi's commentary on Obadiah 1:1).
 - Other Jewish teachers believe that Obadiah was an Edomite himself, and that "from within the forest comes the axe."
- Question for consideration: *should a righteous man work for the wicked?*
 - The Bible gives no prohibition.
 - The dangers are many.

- The decision, it seems, needs counsel and wisdom, and is ultimately left to the individual.

A SNAKE OF A WOMAN | 1 KINGS 18:4A

- When Jezebel **cut off the prophets of the Lord**, she committed the first act of a government interfering with the free expression of Judaism.
- The Hebrew term for **cut off** is first used in Genesis 9:11, where it clearly means death.
- There is enough wickedness in this woman to merit an entire sermon series (and entirely unbearable).
- Ahab and Jezebel would have killed Elijah, if they had the chance.

OBADIAH'S HEROIC ACT | 1 KINGS 18:4B

- We are not given many details, but we do know that Obadiah went against the instruction and will of his "boss" and King, to do the right thing.
- We are not told why there were 50 in each cave (logistics, safety?), but we do know that Obadiah put himself at great risk to save these men's lives.
- Point of applicational discussion:
 - It is always right to do the right thing, and sometimes doing the right thing involves doing the "wrong" thing.
 - How do you know when to be "civilly disobedient?"
 - When the directive is *morally reprehensible*, don't give it second thought: *do what is right*.
 - When you feel strongly enough about a principle that you are *willing to pay the consequences*.
 - When less drastic measures have not worked.
 - When you would be embarrassed to leave a certain situation to your children and grandchildren.

ELIJAH'S UNCOMFORTABLE REQUEST | 1 KINGS 18:5-17

- Verses 5-6 – setting the scene
- Verses 7-8 – Elijah's request
- Verses 9-14 – Obadiah's fear
 - It is comforting to know that heroes like Obadiah *get afraid*.
- Verses 15- 17 – Obadiah tells Ahab about Elijah, having been given assurances.
 - Ahab meets Elijah, calling him **he that troubleth Israel**.
 - *Point of application*: Whatever a wicked politician says, assume the direct opposite.