

WHO IS TO BLAME?

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In 1 Kings 17:1, the prophet Elijah spoke to wicked king Ahab and said, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Elijah then had to flee for his life from the angry king (1 Kgs 17:2-9). James 5:17 informs us that no rain fell for three years and six months. The ensuing famine in Israel was severe. Ahab blamed Elijah for the famine, and one of the king's servants, Obadiah, informed the prophet that "there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee" (1 Kgs 18:10). God then sent Elijah to speak with Ahab. In 1 Kings 18:17, it says, "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*"

The natural way: blame others

Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits." Proverbs 21:2 similarly says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts." King Ahab was following mankind's typical pattern when he blamed Elijah rather than himself for the consequences that he was reaping because of his sins. The very first man, Adam, established this tradition when he blamed his wife instead of taking responsibility for his own transgression. God asked Adam if he had eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree, and Adam replied, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen 3:11-12). Saul the son of Kish was king of Israel as well as excuses. He blamed the prophet Samuel's tardiness for his decision to make an unauthorized offering to the Lord (1 Sam 13:8-12). Later, when he disobeyed God by sparing the king of the Amalekites and the best of their flocks, he blamed the people of Israel for it (1 Sam 15:15,21). Ahab is only one of a host of examples of people who have blamed others for their own problems. After Ahab blamed Elijah for the famine in Israel, Elijah correctly pointed out that Ahab was the one who had troubled Israel, not Elijah. Elijah told the king, "*I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim*" (1 Kings 18:18). Indeed, God had promised to spare Israel from famine if they obeyed Him (Lev 26:3-4; Deut 11:13-15), but He warned them that He would "shut up the

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heaven, that there be no rain” if they turned aside from Him (Deut 11:16-17). Elijah prayed for God to withhold the rain for those three and a half years during Ahab’s reign, and God heard His prophet’s prayer (Jas 5:17-18). God would not have answered that prayer if Ahab and Israel were innocent (Prov 26:2). The fact is, “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him” (1 Kings 16:30), and “there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (1 Kings 21:25). Without question, Ahab was the one who troubled Israel, and he bore the blame for the famine.

Opposing ourselves

How many people realize that when they commit sin, they are actually opposing themselves and behaving as their own enemy? Proverbs 15:32 says, “*He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul.*” God referred to the people who followed wicked Korah, Dathan, and Abiram into rebelling against His authority “*sinner against their own souls*” (Num 16:38). God said of Israel, “Woe unto their soul! for *they have rewarded evil unto themselves*” (Isa 3:9). The Lord pronounced evil against the wickedness of Israel “*which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal*” (Jer 11:17). Luke 7:30 says that the Pharisees and lawyers who refused to be baptized of John “rejected the counsel of God against themselves.” The unbelieving Jews of Corinth “opposed themselves, and blasphemed” (Acts 18:4-6). In 2 Timothy 2:24-25, the Lord tells us to “be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness *instructing those that oppose themselves*” (2 Tim 2:24-25). These people are in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him at his will (2 Tim 2:26). To avoid being in that very same snare, we must look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s word, hear what He says and do it (Jas 1:22-25). When we look at ourselves there, let us not blame others for our faults, and thereby forget what manner of man we are. Rather, let us remember what we see, fix what is wrong, and continue in God’s word so we will be blessed in our deed.