

How to Set a Wet Bull on Fire

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Share about Paul B. & Dave E.
- B. **Eastern folklore.** [we all ask, why didn't God stop this bad thing in my life?] *No easy answer*
1. Man, had a horse, ran away. (Neighbor) **Bad luck isn't it?**
(man) *What do I know about these things?*
 2. A few days later the horse came back, w/20 more wild horses. (Neighbor)
Wow not bad luck but good luck isn't it?
(man) *What do I know about these things?*
 3. A few days later the man's young son was taming one of those horses & fell & broke his leg. (Neighbor) **Bad luck isn't it?**
(man) *What do I know about these things?*
 4. A few days later a bunch of thugs showed up take recruits to join their gang, all able young men. then they noticed the broken leg & didn't take him (Neighbor)
wow good luck isn't it? (man) *What do I know about these things?*
 - a) **Wait** until you stand before God *face-to-face* **then you** can ask Him, **why** this happened to you in your life.

II. Slide2 **Intro:** *How to Set a Wet Bull on Fire*

- A. **Now we start Elijah's *Public* ministry.** He had been *trained & tested* in **private** ministry.
Now he is ready for his **public** ministry. [**he waited 3 years to preach 1 sermon**]
- B. A high drama with **great visibility**, God shows himself to be *the only true God in Israel*, by calling *coming down in fire* making **His presence** known & felt.
- C. **Slide3a/b Map:** Where this all plays out in Israel.
- D. **Other titles:** Classic Showdown. My Bovine is on Fire. Blazing Beef. Blazing Saddles. 850 to 1. Waterproof but not Fireproof. Taking the bull by the horns. I settled with, *How to Set a Wet Bull on Fire.*

III. Slide4 **ELIJAH & OBADIAH (1-16)**

- A. (5) Ahab seemed to care more for his *royal livestock* than his people.
- B. Let me say this about Obadiah. (not the writer of the shortest book of OT. *13 in bible*)
1. Our loyalty to God does not involve leaving the service of men like Ahab, unless we are called upon to violate our conscience.
 2. Paul said, *Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.* 1Cor.7:20 [stay in your calling that you were in when you became a christian...until He moves you]
 3. Obadiah did what he could in his position...in sheltering the prophets.
 - a) *Are you serving Ahab?* (I better not see any of my staff's hands go up)
 4. Maybe you're more like Ob rather Elijah. *God needs both in his kingdom.*
- C. (12) I'm going to get a disappearing act from you like for the last 3 years. And, you're going to get bird delivery service to your door. *No, no, I'll show.*
1. *And more importantly* God going is going to *show...show up, show off, show out, and show this nation...*who is God.

IV. Slide5 **ELIJAH & BAAL (17-29)**

- A. (17-20) How blind we can be. Often we are so *strangely oblivious* to the real cause of our troubles, attributing them to *any other source* than to *our own sin*.
- B. (21) Remember this contest really wasn't between Elijah/Ahab...but between God/Baal.
1. The nation was *faltering/limping/tottering* between 2 different ways. *It was time to make a decision.*
 - a) They were supposed to be monotheist, *not polytheist.* *1 God! Not, business-god* on Monday, *and then sex-god* on Friday.
 - b) You can't date God as you check out other gods. *There is no other option.*
God says, *I'm not an option...I am the Lord God Almighty!*
 2. *But the people answered nothing.* A reminder that God isn't just showing us **His power** but also **His mercy** toward His people.
 3. *Faltering* is actually the Heb word *pasach*, *pass over*, but also means *spring over, limp, jump, hop.* [the image is of a bird hopping between branches]
 - a) *A man cannot walk firmly with one foot on the curb & the other in the gutter.*

C. (27) A scene both comical & pathetic.

D. (29) Baal could not answer because Baal does not exist.

V. Slide6 ELIJAH & ISRAEL (30-46)

A. Ok, 1/2 the battle won...*proved Baal wrong*...but now to allow God to show Himself strong on Elijah's behalf.

B. Slide7a (30) He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down - the first step towards blessing is repairing. Question...What alter in your life needs to be repaired? Your *personal altar of devotion*? Your *family altar*? Your *communion with God*?

C. (31) 12 stones reminded them of their unity...they've been *divided* for years now.

D. Slide7b (38) The fire of the Lord fell - this is called in theology, *Theophany Fire*.

1. It's God showing His **existence**. *It communicates the very presence of God*.

2. It was seen with **Abraham** (Gen.15:17 when God *appeared as a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces*. Cov). **Moses** in burning bush (he looked away so as not to see God). Yahweh descended on **Sinai** in fire. **Pillar of fire** to guide Israel. **Here w/Elijah**. 2 Kings 1 w/Elijah **consuming the troops of 50**. Paul says when Christ returns, *He returns in blazing fire* (2 Thes.1:7,8)

E. Slide7c (39) **Success**. In Canaanite religion, *the bull* symbolized the **strength & virility** of Baal, while *the lightning bolt* indicated his power over the **thunderstorm & rain**.

1. **Both summarily crushed**...as God used *the very forces of nature* the baal prophets had claimed their god controlled.

a) **But** their *storm-god* **couldn't** send rain, **couldn't** start fire with his lightning, and **couldn't** show himself strong as a bull.

2. Slide7d Elijah had learned to **count on God**, and he could **not be disappointed**.

F. (40) **Seize the prophets of Baal** - The prophets must be **slain** before the **rain** can come. It is not enough for us to acknowledge that *the Lord, He is God*. We must also **hate that which is evil** in our lives. As **judgment** always prepares the way for **blessing**.

1. Slide8 Our sins are all doomed, **not one** must be preserved!

a) Spurgeon said, *Our darling sin must die. Spare it not for its much crying.*

Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was

laid upon his own Son. With stern unflinching purpose must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart...let not one of them escape.

G. Slide9,10a (43,44) - Explain pictures.

H. Faith sends Hope 6 x's to Carmel's peak. Hope returns each time saying, *there is nothing*. Faith prays even *more earnestly* & sends Hope once again w/a firm, *Go Again!* This time Hope returns, saying *there is something*. (inspired from Spurgeon's Morn & Eve 9/28)

I. Note Elijah's 1st prayer was answered *immediately*...this time he had to pray *over & over again* until God responded.

J. Slide10b Last Lessons:

K. Sometimes the obstacles that stand between us and obedience to God seem *overwhelming*

1. Consider the obstacles Elijah faced. *He had the whole **civil and religious** power structure of his nation against him.*
2. Now take another look at your obstacles. Can God help you to get over them? *Count on it!* Why not turn your *biggest obstacle* into a prayer request today?

L. What we do with God in *private* is far more important than what we do for God in *public*.

1. Are *hidden life* prepares us for our *public life*.
2. We must be willing to go through such **disciplines** as *the dry brook, the depleted food, and the dead boy* or we will never have the victories of Mnt Carmel.

M. Elijah won a decisive victory on Mount Carmel, *but did he understand who God really was?*...stay tuned next week.