

# The Divine Response

by J.B. Chapman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and prayer in receiving the divine response, which is God's answer to our call for pardon and peace.*

**Duration:** 9:05

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 18:21, 1 Kings 18:24, Psalm 65:2, Isaiah 45:22, Matthew 6:33, Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. J.B. Chapman discusses the story of Elijah and the contest between Baal and Jehovah in the book of 1 Kings. He highlights the importance of the divine response in proving the true God. Chapman also mentions a Hindu professor who converted to Christianity because he found a savior in it. He emphasizes that our standing with God is determined individually by grace, regardless of race, family, or faith. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for true belief and right practice, and the transformative power of encountering the true God.

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## Transcript

You are about to hear a message from one of the most respected second-generation leaders in the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. J.B. Chapman. This sermon, The Divine Response, is one of the few Chapman sermons that has been preserved in audio form. This message was first presented on the Nazarene radio program Showers of Blessings in 1945, in the early days of religious radio.

Dr. J.B. Chapman started his ministry as an evangelist at 16 years of age. In the course of his influential ministry, he served as pastor, college teacher, college president, district superintendent, and general superintendent. He also served as the editor of the Herald of Holiness and was the founding editor of the Preachers magazine.

By 1946, he estimated that he had written three million words throughout his ministry up until that date. Dr. J.B. Chapman was the denomination's leading advocate for the start of Nazarene seminary, and many believe his message, All Out for Souls, delivered at the district superintendent's conference in 1946, turned the Church of the Nazarene from a possible focus on introspective legalism to outward commitment to worldwide evangelism. He served as general superintendent for 19 years, from 1928 until his death in 1947.

The 18th chapter of 1 Kings is the story of the most remarkable religious contest that ever took place on this earth. The lines were closely drawn. The subject for debate was unequivocal.

On the one side were those who said that Baal was the supreme God. On the other side were those who held that Jehovah was God. But there were many who waited in indecision.

And now the land was cursed by drought. Some said it was because all had not been full converts of Baal. Others said it was because the worship of Jehovah had been neglected.

There were arguments pro and con, but there was little progress toward decision. Then suddenly Elijah, the champion for the sight of Jehovah, came with a clear challenge. Let us, said he, meet on the top of Mount Carmel.

Bring along 850 of your prophets. I alone will represent Jehovah. On each side we will prepare an altar and a sacrifice.

But we'll put no fire under the wood. And the God that answers the fire, let him be God. It was logically impossible for the prophets of Baal to refuse this challenge, since the odds were all in their favor.

They were 850 to 1, and their God was the sun God, and fire was his special element. Besides these things, they were sure of the queen's support, sure also of the sympathy of a considerable portion of the crowd, and reasonably sure of the king's best wishes for their success. The priests of Baal were a comely, well-fed, well-dressed company.

Their ritual was full and faultless. Their zeal was equal to their wish for success. Their persistence was worthy of a better cause.

Everything was all right, except on the one point that made the difference. There was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any that regarded. There was no fire.

There was no response to prove that Baal was God. Elijah was alone and unimpressive. His ritual was brief, and his prayer was short.

But on the pointed issue, the answer was abundant. The fire fell from heaven to consume the offering, the wood, the stones that composed the altar, the water in the trench about the altar, and to lick hungrily at the surrounding dust. The divine response was abundant and unmistakable, and the people cried, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God.

A few years ago in India, a well-known Hindu university professor suddenly announced that he had become a Christian. Soon thereafter, he was asked, what have you found in Christianity that you did not find in Hinduism? He answered simply, I found a savior. There is the crux for the individual every time.

Christianity has its history, doctrines, ethics, and ritual as other religions have. And although we as Christians, of course, believe and say that ours is superior to any and all of the others on any and all these points, yet our supreme advantage is in the fact that we have a savior. Others have their prophets and priests, but we alone have a savior.

A salesman for General Motors in China asked a missionary if he found much competition for Christianity in Confucianism. The missionary replied with the question, do you find China's wheelbarrows in competition with your Buicks and Cadillacs? But quick generalization is always dangerous and is often

unfair. Even Christian people have a tendency toward this, and we all need to be reminded that our standing with God and our state and condition in his presence is not a matter of race, family, or faith, but a matter that is determined for each of us individually by grace.

No intelligent person can, of course, claim that it makes no difference what one believes or does, but we can stand on the proposition that to believe what is true and to practice that which is right is yet not enough. These at best must be taken as either conditions or results. It is the cause with which we are at this moment concerned.

Let us go back again to Elijah on Carmel and let us meet individually the challenge which he proposed there. Let us recall once more that it is not the size of our crowd, the beauty of our ritual, or the apparent popularity of our method that makes us sure. It is the divine response that makes further argument unnecessary.

In fact, at the point of the divine response, argument gives way to testimony. The question then is, has God responded to my appeal to him for pardon? Has he answered my prayer for peace and inward assurance? This is the real question. With everyone who claims to be a Christian or desires to be one.

And since this is the great and fundamental need of all who call upon the name of the Lord in sincerity, there is, I think, prima facie evidence that there is such a response promised and that the realization of such a response is possible for everyone and on terms that everyone can meet. Our fathers used to speak of praying through, and while there are those who would account that expression antiquated, the fact that it represented still lies at the heart of the true New Testament religion. When it is said that God answers prayer, some think that the answer must be in the form of a material interpretation to be real.

But God is a spirit, man likewise is essentially a spirit, and communication between the two directly is possible and true. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Some time ago I sat at the table with a man and his wife when the telephone rang.

The man answered, placing the receiver to his ear and said, yes. A moment more and he said, no. After another short wait he said, I don't think so.

At a moment he said, all right then. Back at the table he explained that the call was from a Mr. Jones out on the west side of the state and that Mr. Jones had inquired about the farm he had been offering for sale in his community. My host wife asked if Mr. Jones bought the farm.

When she was told that he did not, she said, well, I heard what you said, but I would like to know what Mr. Jones said, for I cannot see how you could say what you did and yet him not buy the farm. Then my host explained that Mr. Jones had asked, is this Mr. Holmes? He answered, yes. Mr. Jones had then asked, have you sold your farm out here in my community? And the reply was, no.

Then there was the question, will you take any less for it than you've been asking? To this the answer had been, I don't think so. Then Mr. Jones had said, then I have decided I will not take it. And Holmes had closed the conversation by saying, all right then, the conversation is quite understandable when one knew both sides of it.

It is like that with our call for God. Mere prayer is not conversation, and to one who hears but the human end, there may not be any meaning. Indeed, there is no real meaning if this human end is all there is of it.

But the whole is intelligible to the one who calls and then witnesses in his own spirit the coming of the fire, the divine response. That proves to the inner consciousness beyond all doubt that the Lord, he is God. And I am glad to be a witness as well as a minister and to say unequivocally that God responded to my call and has answered me in a witness that my heart feels and knows to this very day.

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