

LESSON
4

Elijah Meets The Prophets of Baal

I Kings 18 LESSON AIMS

TO TEACH THE STUDENTS TO:

- Know:** That Elijah's prayers were answered on Mt. Carmel as God demonstrated to the people that He was the only true God.
- Feel:** That only the all-powerful God of Heaven is worthy of our worship and service.
- Do:** A greater effort at worshiping God acceptably and removing the modern-day idols from one's life.

TEACHER'S CORNER



1. The word of the Lord came to Elijah "in the third year" of the drought. (I Kings 18:1). Other passages (Luke 4:25, James 5:17) give the duration as three years and six months. There is no conflict here, as the third year would indicate from three to four years. Elijah spent a period of several months at the brook Cherith and the remaining three years or so at Zarephath.

2. The drought that Israel experienced was of such severity that secular history makes note of it. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives a detailed account of the drought and in this way verifies the Bible account found in I Kings 18. (**Complete Works of Flavius Josephus**, p. 190.)

3. Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's house, should not be confused with the prophet Obadiah. Herbert Lockyer (**All the Men of the Bible**) lists 13 Bible characters with this

name. Obadiah means "servant of Jehovah."

4. For additional information on Baal, see Lesson 8.

5. Point out the location of Mt. Carmel, the brook Kishon, and Jezreel on the map. It appears that Elijah ran some fifteen or twenty miles to reach the gates of Jezreel. Notice that the scripture says that "the hand of the Lord was on Elijah." (I Kings 18:46).

VISUAL AIDS

1. Use the map of the divided kingdom.
2. Use the picture for Visual Aid Lesson 4.
3. Use the cut-out of the altar and fire and place near Mt. Carmel on the map.

GREETING

Welcome your students warmly. Be sure to welcome visitors and new students. After you have taken the roll by allowing the students to say the memory verse from last week, you might like to play a quick review game. Decorate a small box before class and place inside several cards, one for each student. Half of the cards should contain questions about last week's lesson and be numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. Half should contain answers to the questions. When each student has drawn a card, have students with questions (beginning with No. 1) read the questions. The student with the card for the correct answer should respond by reading the answer. This should be very brief but will serve to refresh the child's memory of the last lesson. You might prefer to do this as you call the roll.

DEVOTIONAL



Suggest that we are going to learn in today's lesson how Elijah showed the people that there is only one true God. Ask the class to join you as you talk quietly to this God. Pray for help in seeing God's power and supremacy in the lesson.

PRESENTING THE LESSON

Have you ever planted a flower or a small garden of your own and then forgotten to water it? You know what happens — it turns brown and finally dies. Imagine how the land of Israel must have looked after three years with no rain. Do you suppose it was dusty and probably not very pretty? Don't you imagine that many people suffered? What are some problems that would come with a drought? (Some answers might be: lack of water, lack of food, extremely hot weather, people dying from heat, animals dying from starvation).

God in Heaven knew that the people had suffered and He felt sorry for them. He also knew that some of them would learn to trust Him through this experience. So God told Elijah to go to Ahab and tell him that He planned to send rain upon the earth. This was wonderful news!

As Elijah traveled to meet Ahab he might have wondered how Ahab would treat him. Ahab blamed Elijah for the drought and had been searching for him everywhere. Perhaps Elijah had heard about what happened to some of God's prophets. Jezebel had tried to kill every one of them, but a good man named Obadiah, who was over Ahab's household, heard about her plans and hid 100 of them in a cave. He fed them bread and water and saved their lives. He was a good man and not a worshiper of Baal like the king. Do you suppose Elijah was a little fearful of going to see Ahab? Even so, his faith in God assured him that God would take care of him.

Ahab and Obadiah had gone out searching for some green grass for their animals when Elijah met Obadiah. He fell on his face before Elijah and said, "Are you my lord Elijah?" He called him lord because that was a title of respect. Elijah said "I am" and then told Obadiah to go get the king. Even though Obadiah was a humble, obedient servant, he was afraid to do what Elijah said. He was afraid that as soon as he left, the Spirit of the Lord would carry Elijah off somewhere to protect him from Ahab. Obadiah must have expected that Ahab would not be happy to see Elijah. But if he should arrive and not find Elijah, he would certainly be angry! In all probability he might even kill Obadiah instead! Only when Elijah promised to be there when he returned did Obadiah go.

Ahab was probably glad to know that Elijah had been found, but when he arrived he was not very friendly. He called Elijah a troublemaker. Elijah did not hesitate to tell Ahab that he was not a troublemaker, but rather that the king and all the kings before him had brought all of this trouble upon Israel by worshiping idols instead of God. Then Elijah told Ahab that he wanted to meet with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Ahab did not know what would happen, but he did as Elijah said.

When everyone had come together, Elijah asked all the people assembled a very important question. He said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (I Kings 18:21). Everyone thought about what Elijah said, but no one answered him a word. Then Elijah proposed a contest. He called for two bullocks and told the prophets of Baal to choose one. (There were 450 of these prophets.) Elijah had the false prophets lay wood on their altar and prepare the sacrifice. Then he

challenged them to call down fire from heaven to light the sacrifice. Surely if Baal were a real god he would not pass up the opportunity to prove it to so many people.

All morning the prophets called on Baal, crying "O Baal, hear us!" When there was no answer they tried all the harder, dancing all around the altar. Finally, about noon, Elijah began to make fun of them. He suggested that perhaps Baal had gone on a journey or was just talking or maybe even asleep. He told them to cry louder. This must have infuriated the false prophets, but nevertheless they did just exactly as he said. They cried even louder and some even cut themselves with knives, hoping that the sight of their blood would prompt Baal to answer. (Baal-worshippers believed that Baal was appeased by human sacrifice and even offered infants on occasion.) Finally, as evening came on, it was obvious that Baal could not answer.

About the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah took twelve stones and began to rebuild the altar of God. It probably had not been used in a long time. While he worked he called the people to come to him. When the altar was rebuilt he placed the wood on it and cut the other bullock into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he dug a trench all around the altar. When all of these preparations had been made, Elijah called for water to be poured on the altar. First, four barrels. Then four more. One last time they poured on four more barrels of water until the sacrifice was soaked with 12 barrels of water and it ran off into the trench and filled it. Elijah wanted to show that only a miracle could cause his sacrifice to ignite.

When all was ready Elijah began to pray. He prayed that God would reveal himself to the people so that they would know He was the only God in Israel and that they would know that Elijah was God's servant. (Show Visual Aid for Lesson 4). God heard Elijah's prayer and sent fire just at that moment, consuming the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and even the dust and the water in the trench. The people could see that a miracle had clearly been wrought. They fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." (I Kings 18:39).

There remained only one more task for Elijah. He called for the wicked prophets of Baal to be seized and put to death by the brook Kishon. If this seems cruel, remember that these prophets had led the people in all types of immorality and even killed many innocent babies in their idolatrous worship. (Jeremiah 19:5). They may also have led in the murder of God's faithful prophets under Jezebel. Only in this way could Israel be rid of their terrible influence.

Now that the people's hearts had been turned back, God was ready to bless the land with rain. Next week we shall learn about this wonderful event. (Place cutout 4, the fire consuming the altar, on the map at Mt. Carmel.)

MEMORY VERSE

Review the memory verse, I Kings 18:21 — "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him . . ."

FILL IN THE BLANKS

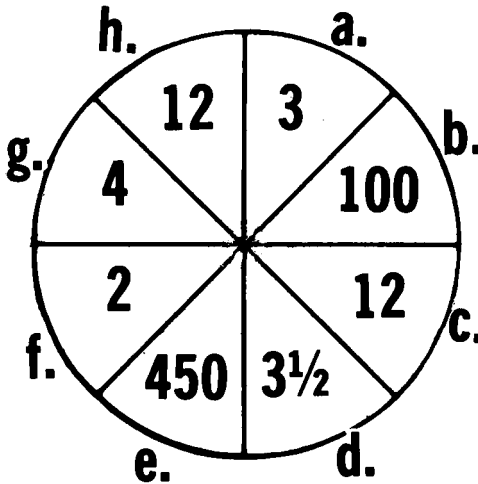
Using the following word list, fill in the blanks:

(1) killed; (2) contest; (3) two God Elijah; (4) governor; (5) fire; (6) 450; (7) Ahab; (8) Is God.

1. Obadiah was **governor** of Ahab's house (I Kings 18:3).
2. **Ahab** accused Elijah for Israel's trouble (I Kings 18:17).
3. Elijah proposed a **contest** to decide the point as to who was the true God.
4. There were **450** contestants on the side of the priest of Baal.
5. There were **two, God and Elijah**, contestants on the side of the prophet of God.
6. **Fire** manifested the power of God.
7. The people of Israel cried out that Elijah's God **Is God**.
8. Baal's priests were **killed**.

NUMBER MATCH

Each phrase below has a corresponding number on the number wheel. Find the correct answer and write the letter beside it on the blank.



- d years of drought in Israel
- b number of prophets hidden by Obadiah
- e prophets of Baal slain by Elijah.
- f number of bullocks mentioned in the story
- c or h number of stones used in Elijah's altar
- a number of times that Elijah soaked the altar
- g number of barrels of water used each time
- c or h hour of the day when Elijah began to mock the prophets of Baal

DECODE ELIJAH'S PRAYER

Elijah's prayer shows his faith in God and his desire for the people that they turn away from the worship of Baal. Decode his prayer below.

A-1 B-2 C-3 D-4 E-5 F-6 G-7 H-8 I-9 J-10 K-11 L-12 M-13 N-14 O-15 P-16 Q-17 R-18
S-19 T-20 U-21 V-22 W-23 X-24 Y-25 Z-26

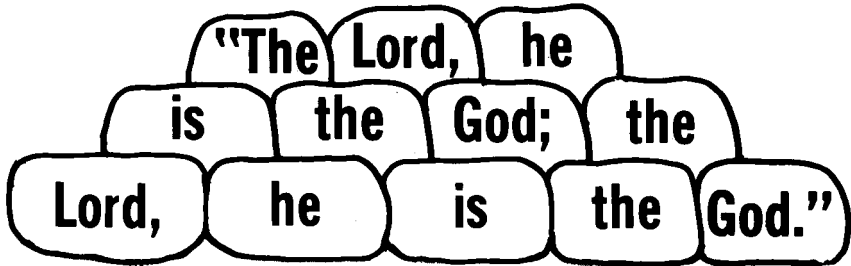
"12-15-18-4 7-15-4 15-6 1-2-18-1-8-1-13 9-19-1-1-3 1-14-4 15-6 9-19-18-1-5-12
LORD GOD OF ABRAHAM ISAAC AND OF ISRAEL

12-5-20 9-20 2-5 11-14-15-23-14 20-8-9-19 4-1-25 20-8-1-20 20-8-15-21 1-18-20
LET IT BE KNOWN THIS DAY THAT THOU ART

7-15-4 9-14 9-19-18-1-5-12."
GOD IN ISRAEL.

FIND THE WORDS

Read Kings 18:39 and find the words of the people when they saw the miracle on Mt. Carmel. Record their words in the stones of the altar below.



- CLASS DISCUSSION:**
1. Was Ahab fair in blaming Elijah for the drought in Israel?
 2. What did Elijah mean when he said, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou?"
 3. Discuss the meaning of Matthew 6:24. How does this verse relate to what Elijah told the people assembled on Mt. Carmel?
 4. Why did Elijah dig the trench around the altar of God and soak it with 12 barrels of water?
 5. What did the contest on Mt. Carmel prove to the people who saw it?

CLOSING: Ask for a volunteer to lead the class in a prayer, praising God for His greatness and power.