

Lesson 63: Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

1 Kings 18 (pg. 126-127, Gospel Story Bible)

Teaching Points:

There is a difference between God and other gods -- Today's Bible passage presents a famous story from the Old Testament. God's people, rebelling once again, worship false gods who they believe control the weather. As a result, God has not allowed it to rain in Israel for three years. For all that time, Elijah has been waiting for God to speak, and hiding from Ahab, the wicked king. Now God speaks and Elijah obeys.

Through Elijah, God is planning to end the drought. But first, God wants to demonstrate the clear difference between himself and the false god Baal. God arranges a kind of contest with himself and his prophet Elijah on one side and Baal and hundreds of his prophets on the other side.

Elijah calls upon God -- Elijah sets up an altar of twelve stones representing the tribes of Israel at a time when the nation of Israel is divided. He has twelve jars of water poured over the wood of the sacrifice at a time when water is very precious. Most dramatically, Elijah challenges a false god—who is supposed to be able to control the weather—to bring lightning.

Elijah's prayer shows that he does all this for the sake of God's glory and so that Baal-worshiping Israelites might return to God. He prays, "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back" (1 Kings 18:37).

God brings judgment and blessing -- God judges the false prophets, and they are killed so that they can no longer lead God's people astray. Now that God has proven that he is all-powerful and Baal is nothing, he will send his people rain.

As we see Elijah praying over and over and sending his servant over and over to look for a rain cloud, we have a picture of the kind of faith we should all have. As we pray in faith for God to bring a promised blessing, we need to keep praying and believing, even when the blessing has not yet come.

Where is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Matthew 27:49.

On Mount Carmel, God revealed himself through consuming the sacrifice offered by Elijah. This was an expression of his grace. Even though the people of Israel rejected him, he showed himself by accepting Elijah's sacrifice.

The sacrifice of the bull was another reminder before God that one day a sacrifice would be made to atone for all the sins of his people. Knowing Jesus' sacrifice would come, God poured out mercy and accepted Elijah's sacrifice that day.

When Jesus hung on the cross the people mocked him saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him" (Matthew 27:49). Little did the people know that all of Elijah's wonders were meant to point to Jesus.

Bible Truth:

Our God is
above all
gods.

Object Lessons:

1. Act out the story (Grades K-2)

Supplies:

- A few pictures of meat, or of a cow, which the kids could cut up into a few pieces.
- Sticks
- 12 rocks
- A bucket
- Some red or orange paper to represent fire
- A long piece of paper, to represent the trench (optional)

Set the stage for the event, that Elijah is helping the people know who is the real God -- Baal or the God of the Bible. They'll set up two areas, just about the same, and see which god will do a miracle and prove he is God.

Have kids help set up the sticks in two separate areas, each having two rows of sticks, with space (a trench) in between. Then, have them help put the "meat" (the cut up bulls) on the sticks. The one group represents the 450 prophets (followers) of Baal. The other represents Elijah.

Remind them they are not putting fire on the sticks, but the people prayed to their gods to see who would miraculously put fire on it. Tell the children about how the prophets of Baal prayed, several times, and their god did not answer. When that happened, Elijah teased them, saying that maybe he is asleep, or went on a trip, or something else. Maybe they should call louder. They did, but still nothing happened. No one answered, or even paid attention. (v. 26-29)

Then, Elijah called the people near, and he used 12 stones to make an altar for God. He set up the wood and the bull (the cut up "meat"). Then, he did something unusual. He poured water on it. Have any of you had to put out a fire before? What do you use? Water. Do wet sticks usually make a good fire? No. By putting water on the wood, he was showing it would be almost impossible for anyone to make fire on it. (Have a child pretend to pour water on the sticks and meat.). Elijah did this a second time, and even a third time. Now, it really should not catch fire. Then Elijah prayed, to the real God, the God of the Bible. He asked that God show the people that He is really God.

The Lord created fire, and it burned up the meat, the wood, the dust, and even all the water.

How did the people respond? "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God." (v. 39)

Ask the students:

- What do we learn about the power of God in this story? (God is all-powerful)
- How do the people respond to this event? (They acknowledge that the Lord is the true God.)

2. Act out the Story (Grades 3-5)

See the above lesson, and either act out the story or discuss it.

Include the following questions:

- Why was Baal unable to answer the requests of its followers? (Baal is not a real god, and therefore, unable to do what God can do.)
- How do you see Elijah's faith in this situation? (He trusted God to do something impossible, something only God could do, in front of all of Israel.)
- What was Elijah trying to help the people consider, through this step of faith? (That God is worth following, not Baal.)
- Have you ever had your faith tested? What do you know about God/Jesus that can help you in those situations?

A Little Bit More (grades 3-5) - Old Testament Prophet

The prophet of the Old Testament served as the mouthpiece of God to the people of Israel. God spoke to them, and they would convey his message to the people. The title of prophet indicates a function rather than an office. A person could be a king and a prophet like David or a priest and a prophet like Samuel. Jesus is the ultimate prophet because he brings God's word to all people. Not only is Jesus the ultimate prophet, he is also the King of kings and the eternal priest.