

Lesson 51: ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL
1 Kings 18

INTRODUCTION:

Elijah was a prophet of the Lord. He prophesied during a time when many in Israel had begun to worship the false and cruel Caananite god named Baal and the false goddess Asherah.

Israel at this time was ruled by the most wicked king and queen in this nation's history – King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel were selfish and violent. Whatever they wanted, they took, even if it meant killing someone to get it. Ahab and Jezebel favored the priests of Baal, and the worship of Baal. They had killed many, many priests of Jehovah, the true God.

Elijah often came to King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. He would point out the wicked things that they did, and insist that they must stop. Ahab and Jezebel hated Elijah. Ahab called Elijah the "troubler of Israel", because Ahab didn't want to hear that he was doing evil things. No one who loves evil wants to be told to stop doing evil.

The wicked things that King Ahab and Queen Jezebel did brought much trouble to the land of Israel. One time, a terrible drought hit the land. Do you know what a drought is? (A long period of time in which no rain falls.)

What happens to a land when there is a drought? (Rivers and streams dry up. Crops and vegetation stop growing. There isn't enough food and water to go around for all the animals and people.)

Rain is a symbol of the Lord's truth showering down. When so many people in Israel didn't want to listen to the Lord's true ideas any more, no truth could shower down and help their spirits to live. This caused there to be no rain in Israel – no water could shower down and help their bodies to live.

The only thing that could stop this drought would be to have the people of Israel turn away from worshipping Baal, and start to worship Jehovah again. The Lord showed Elijah a way to convince the people to turn back to Jehovah. Elijah called for a contest, between Jehovah and Baal! He said to King Ahab, "Send up to Mount Carmel your 450 prophets of Baal, and your 400 prophets of Asherah! Gather all the people of Israel up to Mount Carmel."

King Ahab rose to this challenge. He commanded the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah and all the people of Israel to gather on Mount Carmel. There, Elijah was waiting.

"How long will you falter between two opinions!" he shouted to the crowds. "If Jehovah is God, follow Him! If Baal is god, follow him!" The people were silent, watching and waiting.

Then Elijah announced the contest, which would determine who was the true God. He called for two bulls, and said, "Let the priests of Baal choose one of these bulls, and kill it for a sacrifice. Let them lay it on an altar of wood with no fire under it. Then let them call upon Baal to send down fire from the sky to burn the sacrifice!"

The priests of Baal did so. They prepared their sacrifice, and then called upon the name of Baal. All morning long, leaping and dancing about the altar, they cried out "O Baal, hear us!" But of course, no one answered. No fire came down from the sky.

Lesson 51 – Oak Arbor New Church Sunday School, page 2

At noon, Elijah teased them. "Cry louder," he suggested. "Perhaps Baal is meditating, or just very busy. Perhaps he is on a journey right now – or maybe he's asleep!"

Embarrassed and frustrated, the priests of Baal cried out more loudly. They even cut themselves with knives, hoping to draw the attention of their cruel god. On and on they tried until evening, yet still there was no fire and no voice from above. There was no one there paying attention to them. And then, it was Elijah's turn.

READING:

Now read aloud or have the children take turns reading from **1 Kings 18:30-46** (16 verses). Show a picture of this event if you have one.

DISCUSSION:

And so two major things happened that day. Number one: Jehovah's power was clearly shown to be real, and Baal's power was clearly shown to be false. Jehovah's fire was so powerful that it consumed not only the sacrificed bull and the wood, but the water, the stones, and the dust below the altar as well! Number two: the long drought in Israel came to an end. When the children of Israel's attention had been drawn back to the true God Jehovah, then His true ideas could once again start showering down into their lives.

Even today, people sometimes worship false gods like "money" or "power and control" or "fame and worldly success". To "worship" them means to make them more important than anything else. Sometimes people pursue these things so hard that they are even willing to suffer for them, like the priests of Baal were willing to cut themselves and suffer pain. But the Lord, the true God, does not wish us to suffer. To worship the Lord is to open ourselves up to heavenly rain, which will make happiness grow in us just as nourishing plants can grow from physical rain.

In heaven, the rain falls in beautiful forms, always refreshing and welcome. Sometimes it even falls in beautiful colors such as gold or crimson. And the angels always know that rain shows a picture of refreshing true ideas from the Lord, that can quench their thirst and keep them alive.

**PROJECT: A PICTURE OF A HEAVENLY RAIN SHOWER
(made with paper “quilling”)**

Supplies:

Colored paper
Scissors or a paper cutter
Toothpicks
Glue
One large piece of paper on which to mount the quilling
Markers or crayons to write a title

Procedure:

1. Prepare a large piece of paper with a title: "The Lord's truth showers down like rain."
2. Cut very narrow strips of colored paper, with the scissors or the paper cutter. You can use just shades of blue, or use several different colors to reflect heavenly rain.
3. Have each child take a strip of paper and roll it tightly around a toothpick. When they pull it off the toothpick, the strip will be in a circular spiral.
4. Have them pinch one end of the circular spiral and crease it, to turn it into a raindrop shape.
5. The teacher can then take each "raindrop" and glue it onto the large paper to start creating the rain shower. Encourage the children to make lots of raindrops.
6. If you have a lot of time to fill, perhaps some could create a "cloud" by making circular spirals and grouping them on the large paper into a cloud shape.