

ELIJAH PRAYS FOR THE FIRE OF THE LORD

I Kings 18:17-46.

LESSON 66 -- Primary Course

MEMORY VERSE: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

When Elijah Prayed

Elijah was a man who did much praying, and we know that God answered his prayers. If his prayers were not answered right away he continued praying until they were answered. Elijah was displeased with King Ahab because he and his followers were worshiping idols instead of worshiping God. So Elijah told the king that there would be no dew or rain in the land for a long time. He, no doubt, wanted the wicked people to be punished for their sin, and wanted to prove to them that God in Heaven was the true God.

A Famine

We all know that without rain we cannot raise grain, fruit, vegetables, or food of any kind. The country of Samaria was becoming dry, and food was scarce. The king sent men to the fountains and brooks -- perhaps there they could find grass to feed the animals.

However, God was taking care of the good people who loved Him. We learned in a recent lesson that He sent food to the Prophet Elijah. We also read about the widow who had plenty of flour and oil for herself and her son. God always takes care of those who love and trust in Him.

The wicked king blamed Elijah for the famine that had come upon the land. But Elijah told him that all the trouble had come because the king had forsaken the commandments of the Lord and worshiped an idol named Baal, instead of worshiping God.

At Mount Carmel

Elijah told the king to bring all the people to a mountain named Carmel. When they were all there together, Elijah said to them, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." He wanted the people to make up their mind as to who was God. But the people did not answer Elijah.

Elijah said that he was the only prophet of the Lord; but that Baal, the idol, had four hundred and fifty men. Then Elijah suggested that the followers of Baal take an animal and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood and put no fire under it. Elijah would also take an animal and do the same. That was the way that people offered sacrifices in those days. Then they should call on their god and he would call on his God. The one who answered by fire would be the true God. All the people said, "It is well spoken."

So the prophets of Baal did as Elijah had said. They prayed to Baal from morning until noon. But nothing happened -- there was no voice to be heard, and no fire came down upon their altar. So Elijah began mocking them. He said that they should cry louder; their god might be on a journey, or he might be sleeping and needed to be awakened. They cried louder and even cut themselves; but no fire came down from Heaven.

About evening time Elijah built an altar in the name of the Lord, and made a trench or ditch around it. He put everything in proper order -- the altar, the wood -- and then cut the animal in pieces and laid it on the wood. He had the men pour 12 barrels of water on the altar, and the water ran into the trench until it was filled. Then Elijah prayed to his God -- the God of Heaven and earth. He said, "Let it be known this day that thou art God."

The Fire of the Lord

Right away the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. Then all the people fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

So Elijah had proved to the wicked king and all his followers that their god was not the true god, but that the God that he served was the true and living God.

Praying for Rain

Next we find Elijah going to the top of the mountain and praying to God for rain. He sent his servant to look toward the sea. But the servant said there was no sign of rain. Elijah prayed again and again, till he had prayed seven times. Then the servant said to him that there was a little cloud like a man's hand rising out of the sea. That was enough for Elijah. He told the servant to go and tell King Ahab to get down

before the rain overtook him. Soon the sky was black with clouds and there was a great rain. The three and a half years of famine were over.

Elijah had proved to the people that the God of Heaven and earth had power to answer by fire. He had power to stop the rain from falling, and power to send the rain again upon the earth. There is nothing too hard for God to do. It is a wonderful thing to have a Friend so kind and so powerful.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Elijah say to the people when they gathered at Mount Carmel? I Kings 18:21.
2. Was there an answer to the prayers of the Baal worshipers? I Kings 18:29.
3. Did the Lord answer Elijah's prayer? I Kings 18:38.
4. How many times did Elijah send the servant out to look for rain? I Kings 18:43.
5. What did the servant see the seventh time? I Kings 18:44.