

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 KINGS 18:1-39

*Our God is above all gods.*

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The Word of the Lord directed Elijah's steps – The word of the Lord came to Elijah. God told him to go to Ahab, and Elijah obeyed. God revealed to Elijah all that would take place - from the end of the drought to the confrontation on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:36). Elijah was not trying to make himself look good with a dramatic demonstration of power on Mount Carmel. He was following the word of the Lord. God was planning to show the people of Israel the true God and judge the prophets of Baal.

The prophets of Baal failed – Elijah established the contest according to the instructions for a sin offering given by Aaron in Leviticus 9. Elijah instructed the prophets of Baal to see if their god would consume the offering. For hours they cried out to their god with no answer. It seemed that their god of fertility and storms could not light the offering. After Elijah mocked their attempts and their god, [the prophets of Baal were stirred into frenzy. If they failed, they would have had to face Jezebel, who had killed the prophets of the Lord. She would have been furious if her own prophets failed. A full-blown effort would at least lend them some credibility. They thought no fire would come from Elijah's efforts either.

Four jars of water were poured on Elijah's offering three times. Twelve stones marked the boundaries of the offering, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel. The tribes were divided into two separate kingdoms due to Solomon's sin. Elijah offered a humble prayer and declared himself a servant of God. His prayer also gives us a clue as to God's ability to capture the hearts and affections of His people. Elijah disclosed God's purpose of turning the hearts of the people back to Himself.(1 Kings 18:37). Without a pause, the fire of the Lord consumed the offering, the stones, the wood, the dust, and even the water in the trench! The people fell down and worshipped the Lord. Upon Elijah's command, the people killed the prophets of Baal, allowing none to escape.

God destroyed the prophets of Baal and brought rain to His people – After the Lord consumed the offering, Elijah called the people to seize the prophets of Baal. Elijah killed them. With the pagan prophets destroyed, God brought rain to Israel in keeping with His word.

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Where Is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

On mount Carmel God revealed Himself through consuming the sacrifice offered to Him by Elijah. This was an expression of His grace. Even though the people of Israel rejected Him, He showed Himself to them 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's see if Elijah comes to save him?" (see Matthew 27:49). Little did the people know that all of Elijah's wonders were meant to point to Jesus.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 98:4-9

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Although Psalm 98:4-9 does not say specifically who the Judge is, we know from the New Testament that it is Jesus. Jesus is the one who will come and judge the earth in righteousness. In 2 Timothy 4:1 the Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus will one day judge the living and the dead when He appears again. On that day all believers will receive a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). Knowing we will be spared Judgment and instead receive a reward, it makes sense that we should shout for joy as we consider the second coming of our Lord.

Questions for reflection:

- Is there reason to look forward to the judgment of Christ? (Yes, Paul looked forward to the reward he would receive when Christ comes to judge the earth, see 2 Timothy 4:8.)
- How should the judgment of Christ affect our behavior now? (Knowing that we will all be judged according to what we have done does not lead to condemnation for believers. We are commended to God by the blood of Christ so we should be obedient to our faith. Paul gives the charge to Timothy to preach the word. We are all called to do the same in our witness of Christ to unbelievers.)

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE BETTER CHOICE

Supplies

- platter
- carrot sticks
- licorice sticks (enough for all of your students)

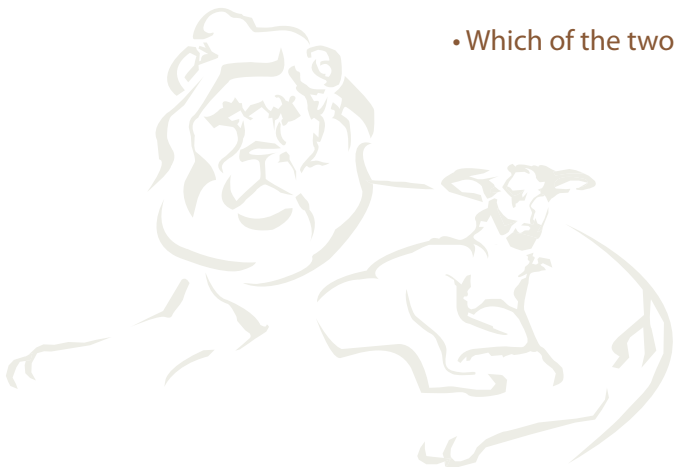
This exercise helps us to see how our desires can overpower the truth that we know.

Place the carrots and licorice on a platter and pass the platter around to your class, explaining that they can have either a piece of licorice or a carrot stick.

After passing the plate interview a few of the children as to why they would have chosen the licorice.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Which of the two selections is healthier for you? (Carrots.)
- Which of the two selections is more likely to cause disease? (Licorice can cause or contribute to tooth decay, diabetes, and obesity.)
- Which of the two would your parents rather have you eat? (Carrots.)



ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 KINGS 18:1-39

- In light of the truth that carrots are healthier for you, less likely to cause harm, more likely the preferred choice of your parents, why did the majority choose the licorice instead? (Have the children go deeper to reveal the way the licorice satisfies their cravings and desires to feel good.)
- In light of the truth that God is powerful, that idols are powerless, that God commands that we follow Him and His Word, why did Israel choose to follow other gods instead? (Help the children to see it is all about satisfying desires. With a wicked king like Ahab in power, to follow God and travel to Jerusalem could have likely gotten you in trouble or even killed. Why take such a difficult journey to Jerusalem when you could worship a golden calf near your home instead? Sin is the result of following our desires when they conflict with God's word. It is not a sin to eat a piece of candy instead of a carrot stick but the same basic desires, if not disciplined by the Word of God, will lead us to sin and even reject God.)



ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

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WAVER BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS

Supplies

- eight identical opaque plastic containers (foam cups with lids work well)
- two sets of the following: 6 carrot sticks, 1/2 cup of raisins, 10 cheese crackers, and 10 chocolate Kisses™

This exercise demonstrates indecision as an introduction to discussion about Israel's wavering between serving the Lord or idols, see 1 Kings 18:21.

Fill the two sets of cups with the ingredients and place them in front of the class in two groups on a table. Ask for a volunteer and ask the volunteer to stand. Tell them that the exercise involves choosing food and eating what you choose whether or not you like it. Then ask the volunteer if they want to decline to participate. If they choose to decline, pick another volunteer and tell them the four cups contain common foods eaten everyday. Ask the volunteer to choose a cup.

After they make a choice, question the choice saying, "Are you sure you don't want to choose one of these other cups?". Try to get them to decide differently. Then, gently shake each set of four cups and then give the opportunity to change the choice again. Give the opportunity for the volunteer to shake the container themselves, with the condition that if they shake a container, they have to change the current selection.

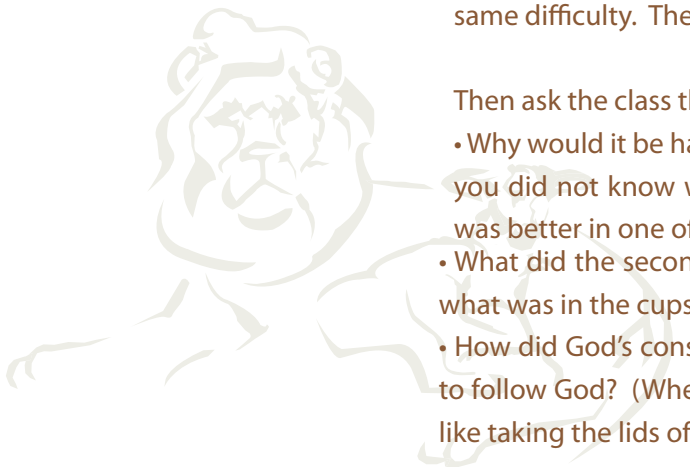
Once they have decided, open one of the cups not chosen and ask if they would like to change the choice for the one you reveal. Do this for each of the remaining cups.

Then ask for another volunteer. For this person, open the lids to all the cups to reveal the contents. Ask them to choose a cup. Then ask if they are sure of the one selected. The volunteer will likely choose the chocolate and refuse to give it up no matter how much you try to persuade otherwise.

Interview the first volunteer by asking them to describe what they were thinking as they faced the various choices. Ask the second volunteer if they experienced the same difficulty. They will likely say they had no difficulty.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Why would it be hard to make up your mind if you were the first volunteer? (Since you did not know what was in the cups, you would always wonder if something was better in one of the other cups.)
- What did the second volunteer have that the first did not? (They had the truth of what was in the cups.)
- How did God's consumption of Elijah's offering help the people make their choice to follow God? (When the prophets of Baal failed and then Elijah succeeded, it was like taking the lids off the cups. The choice became obvious to the people.)



ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

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A BIT OF PIZZAZZ

Supplies

- a packet of waterproof matches
- a pack of normal wooden matches
- a glass bowl
- cup of water

Always be aware of the dangers of even the smallest fire. Do not allow the matches out of sight, even for a moment.

Use this exercise as a way to add a bit of pizzazz to telling the story. Prior to class, place the bowl on a table with a cup of water next to it. Keep the matches in your pocket. Prior to class, place several waterproof matches in with the others. (Practice this exercise at home so you can get good at striking a wet waterproof match.)

Tell the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. When you get to the place where Elijah has the water poured over the sacrifice, ask the children why he had the wood doused with water. The answer is that no one could accuse Elijah of starting the fire himself and to show just how powerful God is.

Take the regular wooden matches out of your pocket. Pull out a match and strike it. Ask the class what will happen if you pour water on it? After they answer, pour some water over it to extinguish the fire. Then take a half dozen or so matches out of the container including some waterproof ones and throw them into the bowl. Pour water over them just as Elijah did. Mix them all around. Then pick up a waterproof match and strike it just as you talk about the part where God's fire consumes Elijah's offering.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What do we learn about the power of God from this story? (God is all-powerful.)
- Where do we see God's mercy at work in this story? (Even though Israel has fallen away from God, God still reaches out to Israel through this demonstration of power. As a result, the people of Israel join with Elijah and kill the prophets of Baal.)

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.



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IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of the fire coming down from heaven to consume Elijah's offering.

FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies:

provided worksheet and pencils

Have the children use the worksheet provided to compare the following three verses: Matthew 6:24, 1 Kings 18:21, and Joshua 24:15. Give the children 10 minutes to record their answers then ask several of them to read their reports. Have all the children place their names on their papers. Collect the papers and give them the parents when they pick up their children. This will provide accountability.

Draw the children out by asking them where children their age are most likely to be tempted to choose against God. (Some classic answers are being afraid to share their faith with friends or being afraid to worship God demonstratively. When we choose to hide our faith in God because we fear what others will think, we are actually denying God and choosing to serve ourselves instead of God.)

Talk to the children about the amazing grace afforded Israel in spite of their sin. Talk about how God's mercy extends to us as well. Although occasional lapses in our faith are covered in God's mercy in the cross, if we have no faith at all or if we have never surrendered our lives to Christ, we will receive judgment.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

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. Unlike kings and priests, there was no hereditary component to become a prophet. God chose His prophets unilaterally. 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.

