

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 28

Elijah and the prophets of Baal

1 Kings 16:29–17:1; 18:1–2, 17–46



DAY 1

God stopped the rain • 1 Kings 16:29–17:1; 18:1–2, 17–18

READ

1 Kings 16:29–17:1; 18:1–2, 17–18

EXPLAIN

The truth of 1 Kings 16:29–17:1; 18:1–2, 17–18

Jeroboam sinned by creating a false way to worship God. Ahab made it worse by leading Israel to worship an entirely different god, Baal. So God sent Elijah, whose name means “Yahweh is my God” (1 Kgs 17:1). That was his message: the living God of Israel is the true God, and there is no other. To prove this, God punished Israel for their idolatry by stopping the rain (Lev 26:18–19; Deut 11:16–17; 28:23–24). Since Israel didn’t have river irrigation like Egypt, rain was necessary for food. By causing a drought, and by announcing it in advance (Isa 42:9), God showed that He, not Baal, was the true God. God’s curse was the result of Ahab’s idolatry, but Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel (1 Kgs 18:17). At that time everything in Israel seemed to be going well: the kingdom was stable, there was a new, permanent capital, and trade relations with the Phoenicians were prosperous. If only those intolerant believers in God would stop meddling! Yet, as Elijah declared, the wicked are the ones who bring trouble by abandoning the precepts of God (18:18).

ASK

1. Why was Ahab more wicked than any of Israel’s previous kings?
King Ahab officially introduced Baal worship into the nation of Israel.
2. How did God punish Israel for worshipping Baal?
God caused a drought, proving that Baal (a storm god) did not really have power to send rain.
3. What does Elijah’s name mean?
“Yahweh is my God.” He was committed to the true God when Israel was not.
4. Was Ahab right to blame Elijah for troubling Israel?
No. Trouble comes to those who turn away from God.

DISCUSS

1. Why does the world look down upon those who faithfully follow God?
Describe the persecutions Christians are facing in different parts of the world.
2. Have you ever had to stand up for the truth when it was not popular? What can give you strength to do so?

DAY 2

Elijah's test proved that Baal is not God • 1 Kings 18:19–29

READ

1 Kings 18:19–29

EXPLAIN

The truth of 1 Kings 18:19–29

Israel had not yet wholly rejected God. They wanted to be able to worship God and Baal. But Elijah said they had to choose, since God alone deserves **worship** (1 Kgs 18:21). Their praise, devotion, and obedience must no longer be divided between God and Baal. To help them decide, Elijah proposed a contest (18:19). Since both God (Pss 18:14; 29:3–9; 104:3) and Baal were believed to possess power over thunder, lightning, and storms, it would be a fair test. The winner would demonstrate that he alone was God. So Baal's prophets prayed all morning. But "there was no voice" (1 Kgs 18:26). Why? Because there was no Baal. Getting frantic, they cut themselves, hoping to manipulate their gods by arousing their pity. Yet all their idolatrous worship was worthless. As morning passed into afternoon there was nothing: no voice, no answer, and no response (18:29). That's because false gods cannot hear. They are worthless, like scarecrows in a cucumber field (Jer 10:5) or logs cast into the fire (Isa 44:16–17).

ASK

1. What contest did Elijah propose?
Baal's prophets would prepare a sacrifice to Baal, and Elijah would prepare one to God. Then they would pray, and the one who sent the fire would prove to be God.
2. Why did Elijah propose this contest?
Elijah wanted Israel to stop "limping" between two decisions. They needed to worship God alone.
3. Did Baal send fire to burn up their sacrifice?
No. There was not even a tiny answer.

DISCUSS

1. What idols do people worship today (money, success, health, beauty, pleasure, entertainment, power, etc.)? Do you? What do people hope to get from them? Do these idols actually provide any answers?
2. How powerful is a scarecrow (Jer 10:5) or piece of firewood (Isa 44:16–17)? What kind of a meal do ashes make (Isa 44:20)? That's what idols are like.

DAY 3

Elijah's test proved that Yahweh is God • 1 Kings 18:30–40

READ

1 Kings 18:30–40

EXPLAIN

The truth of 1 Kings 18:30–40

While the chaotic prophets frantically raved into the afternoon, Elijah prepared calmly and quietly. He rebuilt the altar with 12 stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 18:30–31). He soaked the wood and the altar with water to make it clear that the fire about to come was from God (18:33–35). Then Elijah prayed (18:36). He did not imitate Baal's prophets, for God forbids cutting (Lev 19:28; Deut 14:1) and cannot

be manipulated (Matt 6:7). Instead he prayed by faith, depending wholly on God. God answered Elijah immediately and powerfully. He burned up not just the offering, as the terms of the contest stipulated, but also the wood, stones, dust, and water too (18:38)! So when the people saw the fire from God they shouted, "Yahweh is God!" (18:39). **Yahweh is God's covenant name, the "name of God's redeeming love."** (Exod 3:14). Recognizing this, the people killed Baal's prophets according to God's law, because worship is serious, a matter of life and death (1 Kgs 18:40; Deut 13:13–18; 17:2–7).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. Why did Elijah soak the wood and the altar?
To make it clear that the fire was from God.
2. Did Elijah pray like Baal's prophets?
Baal's prophets raved, cut themselves, and tried to manipulate their gods. Elijah prayed calmly and humbly, seeking God's glory and trusting God's sovereignty even over Israel's sin.
3. How did God prove that He is God?
God burned up the offering, the altar, and the water too.

DISCUSS 

1. You probably haven't seen fire come down from heaven and burn up an altar. But what unmistakable evidence of God's power do you have (Rom 1:19–20)?
2. How do you pray? Do you say certain words, or try to work up certain feelings, to try to get your prayer answered? Is God's glory your priority, or your passions?

DAY 4*God sent rain • 1 Kings 18:41–46***READ** 

1 Kings 18:41–46

EXPLAIN **The truth of 1 Kings 18:41–46**

Now that Baal was exposed as a fraud, God could restore rain to Israel without people thinking the rain was from Baal. So Elijah told Ahab to eat and drink, for the drought was over (1 Kgs 18:41). If Elijah was so sure of this, then why did he go up Mount Carmel to pray (18:42)? Because God uses His people's prayers to accomplish His promises. But this time God did not answer Elijah immediately (18:43). Yet Elijah persevered in humble dependence until a small cloud appeared (18:44). The cloud grew into a storm, resulting in a torrential downpour (18:44–45). The diligent prayer of a righteous man truly is powerful (Jas 5:16–18)! Then God empowered Elijah to run before Ahab's chariot the 20 miles back to Jezreel (1 Kgs 18:46). This showed God's power, but it also showed Elijah's loyalty. Elijah acted like one of Ahab's servants, running before his chariot. It was an opportunity for Ahab to consider all he had just seen and repent. If he would follow the words of God's prophet, God's prophet would be his servant instead of his enemy.

ASK 

1. What did Elijah say to Ahab?
He told Ahab to eat and drink, for the drought was over.
2. How many times did Elijah tell his servant to go up and look for rain?
Seven times.
3. How did God prove His power again?
God proved His power again by sending lots of rain and by empowering Elijah to outrun Ahab's chariot.

DISCUSS 

1. How have you seen God powerfully answer prayer? Do you believe prayer makes a difference? Do you pray first and often, or only as a last resort?
2. How should you respond if God doesn't answer your prayer right away? There are three possibilities: (1) Psalm 66:18; James 4:3; (2) Luke 22:42; 2 Corinthians 12:8–9; (3) Psalm 27:14; Hebrews 10:36.

DAY 5

Lukewarm: neither cold nor hot • Revelation 3:15–16

READ

Revelation 3:14–22

EXPLAIN

The truth of Revelation 3:15–16

At the beginning of the book of Revelation, the apostle John records seven different letters to seven different churches scattered throughout Asia Minor (Rev 2:1–3:22). These churches existed a long time ago, but they still apply to Christians today. They show us the kinds of problems churches have faced throughout history. The church John mentions is Laodicea (Rev 3:14–22), which was known for its lukewarm drinking water. This was because the city's water supply had to travel through a very long underground aqueduct before getting to the city. A lot of times, when visitors drank the water for the first time, they would immediately spit out the water because it was lukewarm. Sadly, the church at Laodicea was just like its water. Because their devotion to Christ was lukewarm (3:15), they were useless, like water that is neither cold nor hot. Unless they repented, God would spit them out (3:16). Like the Israelites on Mt. Carmel, they were limping between two opinions (1 Kgs 18:21). There is no neutrality before God—we are either for Him or against Him.

ASK

1. What was the city of Laodicea known for?
Its lukewarm drinking water.
2. How did the church at Laodicea resemble its drinking water?
The church's devotion to Christ was lukewarm—neither cold nor hot.
3. What does the church at Laodicea have in common with the Israelites on Mt. Carmel?
They were both lukewarm in their devotion to God.

DISCUSS

1. What things do you like to drink cold? What do you like to drink hot? Do you like to drink anything lukewarm? Why does God reject “lukewarm” worship, devotion, and obedience?
2. Is it possible to remain a “lukewarm” Christian (Matt 6:24)? Is there something in your life that is stealing away your love for God?

NEXT WEEK

God is glorified by
protecting Judah

2 Kings 18:1–19:37

