

1 Kings 18

Aim of Lesson

To show that there is only one God.

Background study

Find details about and pictures of the results of prolonged drought, and a map of the territory. Deuteronomy 11:17.

Suggested outline of lesson

Question the children, by way of revision, about Elijah's forecast. By means of descriptive language and well chosen illustrations, get the children to imagine the state of the land, the severe shortage of food for humans and animals, and the desperate search for water. The wealth of the king was no protection against such a catastrophe. Ahab himself was now in such a desperate plight that he was driven to join the search. He had had cause to ponder on Elijah's words for three years and had sought him persistently, realizing that only he had the authority to countermand the initial decree. As king of Israel, Ahab should have recognized that God had brought the drought upon the land as a sign of his displeasure and a means of correcting the wicked people, but his pride and sinfulness resisted this knowledge and instead he blamed Elijah for the disaster.

The faithful stand of Obadiah in the face of an evil society and the danger of persecution must have been an encouragement to the stalwart prophet, as he approached his confrontation with the king. As is often the case with people who know in their heart of hearts that they are wrong, Ahab vehemently attacked Elijah and levelled accusations at him. Elijah, however, would have none of it and, consistent with his strength of purpose, came straight to the point; with an air of authority, he issued instructions. Ahab, unable to defend his position, could only comply. Point out what a weak man Ahab proved himself to be in the presence of the great Elijah.

The prophet's power and impact were never more clearly demonstrated than in the events that followed on Carmel. Describe the scene as the people gathered on the mountain side. Elijah stood above them and reproached them for their ambivalence, reminding them that the worship of God was not compatible with homage to idols. The force of his challenge stunned them into silence. Make much of the tension and drama of the situation as it built towards its climax, step by step: the authoritative instructions followed by the detailed preparations for the Baal sacrifice, the vain cries of the Baal worshippers, Elijah's mocking words goading them to louder chanting and then their frustrated frenzy in which they cut themselves and screamed their pleas until half the day was gone. They exhausted themselves and the outcome was an empty silence. In obvious contrast Elijah, as all eyes turned on him, spoke with calm assurance and made his preparations with firm confidence. The attention of the people was drawn to the broken altar of the Lord. As Elijah took the 12 great stones and built them up again, the people would have been reminded of their history, in particular God's covenant with Jacob (Israel), the inheritance of the 12 tribes, the giving of the Law through Moses and the leadership of Joshua. The implication was clear, that just as Elijah was rebuilding the altar which had been neglected through lack of use, so the people should renew their weakened faith in the one true God, the God of their fathers, and worship him again. The children will readily appreciate how impossible it is for anything saturated with water to be kindled into flame. They should therefore, be particularly impressed with the magnitude of the miracle and be able to share in the excitement of the spectators.

Elijah's earnest prayer should be dwelt upon. It is an exquisite expression of Elijah's own faith and his heartfelt plea for the redemption of God's people. God's response was immediate and phenomenal, and brought the people to their knees. Elijah's plea for the people's change of heart was answered: they instantly and spontaneously declared "The Lord - he is God". The people were given the chance to turn back to God, but the false prophets who had wilfully misled them were condemned and slain.

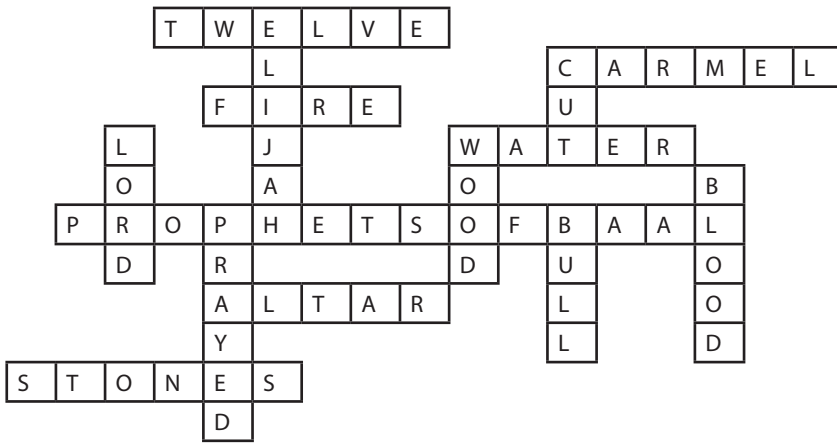
The king did not intervene in any part of these stupendous events. Instead, he complied with Elijah's further instructions to take nourishment and prepare for a journey, while the prophet drew away from the crowds to pray alone at the top of the mountain. Tell of Elijah's prolonged prayers, the repeated scanning of the horizon by his servant, the slow build-up of the storm clouds and wind, the hurried descent from the mountain, the race to Jezreel and the longed for blessing from God of life-giving rain. The "hand of the Lord" was certainly upon Elijah.

Relevance to the children's lives

Elijah told the people that they had to make up their minds to trust and worship only God. God wants all of us to be very sure that he is the one true, living, all-powerful God. What sort of things and what kind of people could lead us away from obeying God?

Worksheets

The crossword reads:



Prayer

Dear Lord God, help us to trust and worship you as the one true God. Amen.

Memory verse

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).