

# THE GOD THAT ANSWERETH BY FIRE

**BIBLE TEXT** : I Kings 18:1-46.

LESSON 297 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **1 Kings 18:1-46**

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

<sup>2</sup> And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

<sup>3</sup> And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:

<sup>4</sup> For it was *so*, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

<sup>5</sup> And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

<sup>6</sup> So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

<sup>7</sup> And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, *Art* thou that my lord Elijah?

<sup>8</sup> And he answered him, I *am*: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

<sup>9</sup> And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

<sup>10</sup> As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, *He is not there*; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

<sup>11</sup> And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*.

<sup>12</sup> And it shall come to pass, *as soon*

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **I Elijah's Return**

1. Elijah met Obadiah who then sent Ahab to meet him, I Kings 18:1-16.

2. Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel, I Kings 18:17, 18;

**1 Kings 21:20**

<sup>20</sup> And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

**1 Samuel 1:14**

<sup>14</sup> And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

**1 Samuel 17:28**

<sup>28</sup> And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

### **II Trial by Fire**

1. Elijah instructed Ahab to gather all Israel and the prophets of Baal, I Kings 18:19, 20.

2. The people agreed to a test to prove whether the Lord or Baal was the true God, I Kings 18:21-24;

**Isaiah 41:21-26**

<sup>21</sup> Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

<sup>22</sup> Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

<sup>23</sup> Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.

<sup>24</sup> Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that chooseth you*.

<sup>25</sup> I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

<sup>26</sup> Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is righteous?* yea, *there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.*

**Isaiah 43:9**

<sup>9</sup> Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth*.

3. The God that answered by fire would prove to be the true God, I Kings 18:24;

**Leviticus 9:24**

<sup>24</sup> And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.*

**Judges 6:21**

as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and *so* when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

<sup>13</sup> Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

<sup>14</sup> And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here*: and he shall slay me.

<sup>15</sup> And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

<sup>16</sup> So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

<sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?

<sup>18</sup> And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

<sup>19</sup> Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

<sup>21</sup> And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

<sup>22</sup> Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

<sup>23</sup> Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in

<sup>21</sup> Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

#### 1 Chronicles 21:26

<sup>26</sup> And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.

#### 2 Chronicles 7:1

<sup>1</sup> Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

#### 2 Chronicles 7:3

<sup>3</sup> And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, *saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*

4. The prophets of Baal called upon their god all day but received no answer, I Kings 18:25-29;

#### Isaiah 45:20

<sup>20</sup> Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that *are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

#### Jeremiah 10:5

<sup>5</sup> They *are* upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good.

#### Jeremiah 51:17-18

<sup>17</sup> Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them.

<sup>18</sup> They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

#### Daniel 5:23

<sup>23</sup> But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

5. Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord as the word of the Lord directed, I Kings 18:30-35;

#### Exodus 24:4

<sup>4</sup> And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

#### Joshua 4:3

<sup>3</sup> And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.

#### Joshua 4:4

<sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

6. God vindicated His Prophet by consuming the altar and its contents by fire, I Kings 18:36-39;

#### Numbers 16:28-30

<sup>28</sup> And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD

pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*:

<sup>24</sup> And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

<sup>25</sup> And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under*.

<sup>26</sup> And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

<sup>27</sup> And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

<sup>28</sup> And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

<sup>29</sup> And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

<sup>30</sup> And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

<sup>31</sup> And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

<sup>32</sup> And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

**hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.**

**<sup>29</sup> If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.**

**<sup>30</sup> But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.**

**Isaiah 28:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup> For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as *in* the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.**

**<sup>22</sup> Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.**

**Zechariah 14:4**

**<sup>4</sup> And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.**

**Zechariah 14:5**

**<sup>5</sup> And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.**

7. The prophets of Baal were slain by Elijah, I Kings 18:40.

### **III Fervent Effectual Prayer**

1. Elijah prayed, and God sent rain, I Kings 18:41-46;

**James 5:16**

**<sup>16</sup> Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

**James 5:17**

**<sup>17</sup> Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.**

### **NOTES:**

#### **The Word of the Lord**

"It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: . . . And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 23, 24). Israel, in later years, learned that this warning from God was not merely idle words. Elijah the Tishbite appeared before Ahab and said: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1). And it was so. For three years and a half not a drop of rain or dew was seen in Israel. Though Ahab searched the entire country for the Prophet Elijah, he could not be found; and there was no rain.

#### **Elijah's Return**

The sting of God's judgment on the land and on the people was not lost upon Ahab, for when he finally met Elijah his first remark was, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah was to



<sup>33</sup> And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

<sup>34</sup> And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

<sup>35</sup> And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

<sup>36</sup> And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I* have done all these things at thy word.

<sup>37</sup> Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

<sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

<sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

<sup>40</sup> And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

<sup>41</sup> And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain.

<sup>42</sup> So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

<sup>43</sup> And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

<sup>44</sup> And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there

Ahab the symbol of all his troubles; and he was quite willing to blame the Prophet of God rather than admit that his own sins had brought about this terrible state of affairs. Elijah gave him the correct answer: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim."

### The Call to Worship

All Israel and the prophets of Baal gathered to hear what Elijah, the man who could seal the heavens from raining, had to say. His proposition was simple enough for all to grasp: Let an altar be built, sacrifices offered upon it; and the God which would consume the sacrifice by fire would in truth be the true and living God, and Him should they serve. It was a bold challenge for Elijah to make. There were 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of the grove, while Elijah, so far as he knew, was the sole representative of the Lord. Elijah's boldness was born of holy faith in the omnipotent God, and Elijah knew numbers meant little where God was concerned. Elijah knew there was no life or power in the dumb idols of Baal that the Israelites were so foolishly and superstitiously worshiping. God was using drastic methods to show the Israelites that nothing they could do or could not do would change, in the slightest degree, what God was doing. Let the prophets of Baal now prove the reality of their god once and for all or forsake him as a fraud. This was the gist of Elijah's appeal to the people; and they accepted the challenge.

### Dumb Idols

There is a desire in men's hearts to worship something; and Satan has often capitalized this inherent characteristic of men's souls, in order to enslave them for his own ends. He has often filled the people's hearts with superstition and fear, to make them worship idols; and they have become slaves to such things, unable to escape satanic domination except by the power of God. Israel had forsaken the worship of the true God and was ensnared in heathenish superstition and the worship of idols. They were indeed fortunate that God still cared enough for them to send a man such as Elijah to break up this idolatry and to turn their hearts once again to the Lord.

The prophets of Baal spent the day in shouting, and fanatical and rabid cutting of themselves, in frenzies of emotion trying to get their idols to perform a miracle for them. This is a classical Bible example of fanaticism. Elijah ridiculed them and gave them all the day to bring down an answer by fire from Heaven. But no answer came. It never will come on those conditions.

Moses had told the Children of Israel: "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else" (Deuteronomy 4:39). Faith that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him, is the key to receiving things from God (Hebrews 11:6). God is very particular as to the manner in which men approach Him, and the worship of God must be carried on as the Word of the Lord directs.

### The Altar of God

When the prophets of Baal had exhausted themselves in vain praying to Baal, Elijah built an altar to the Lord according to the Word of the Lord, using twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel. While preparing to make his sacrifice, Elijah asked all the people to come near. No doubt Elijah wanted the people to watch him closely and know for themselves that there was no sleight of hand involved in his offering but that everything was done according to God's Word. After placing a bullock upon the

ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

<sup>45</sup> And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

<sup>46</sup> And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Why was there no rain in Israel for three years and a half?
2. What did Elijah have to do with the stoppage of rain?
3. Why did Elijah call the people together?
4. Why could not the prophets of Baal get an answer from Baal?
5. Why did Elijah build an altar of twelve stones?
6. Why did God answer Elijah and not answer the prophets of Baal?
7. How did Elijah know it was going to rain?
8. Why did Elijah have to pray seven times for rain?
9. What was the reason for Elijah's great success in praying to God?

altar and digging a trench around it, Elijah had the people drench the entire altar and the sacrifice three times with water. There was to be no strange fire here. And the most valuable thing in the land – water – was offered with the sacrifice to the God of Israel.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, the time God had ordained in the past, Elijah made his prayer to God. It was simple, evidently short in words, but full of faith. He reminded God that he was doing all these things at His command, and Elijah prayed that God would now prove Himself and turn the hearts of the people back to Himself. The fire of God fell in answer to this prayer, and consumed the sacrifice, and the altar, and even the water in the trench! The people fell upon their faces as one man and acknowledged. "The LORD, he is the God."

The prophets of Baal were taken by the people and slain at the hands of Elijah. So will every false prophet and every preacher of false worship suffer the judgment of God and suffer eternal damnation. They will, in the end, be revealed as idolaters and followers of Satan, and will suffer like condemnation together with Satan.

### **Sevenfold Prayer**

Elijah's work was not yet completed, for still there was no rain. God had proved His existence to all concerned, and now Elijah must prevail with God to send rain. Retiring to a mountain, he began to pray. Elijah's heart must have been full of faith and confidence, because he told Ahab, "There is a sound of abundance of rain." Although Elijah had to pray again and again, his prayer did not recognize discouragement. Elijah had just come from a spectacular revelation of God's might and power, which certainly confirmed his faith in God. He was interceding for the people, and the burden was great. He had to send his servant seven times to look for rain; but the heart of Elijah had a grip on God, and he would not let Him go — like Jacob who prevailed with God and would not let the angel of God go until the blessing came. When Elijah's servant came and told him he could see a cloud the size of a man's hand, that was proof enough for Elijah. He knew the torrents of rain would soon follow. Warning Ahab to get down from the mountain before the rain prevented him, Elijah ran with joyous praise unto God, before the chariot of Ahab.

Elijah was made of mortal clay as is every man. James tells us he "was a man subject to like passions as we are" (James 5:17), showing that he did not possess superior virtues or gifts that other Christians cannot possess. "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." God can be prevailed upon to glorify His name if His people will pray fervently and earnestly as did Elijah. The lack of fervency in prayer is a great limitation to many Christians' power. Acknowledging God only through the intellect will get nothing from God. There must be a crying out to God from the depths of the heart, in faith. We must let nothing belie the fact that God is and that He will hear and answer prayer. Then we shall see the fire fall upon our sacrifices and offerings even as it fell upon Elijah's. God delights in proving Himself to His people and will do so again and again if we pray with faith believing.