

December 8

Scriptures: Read 1 Kings 18

Key Verse: “Let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.” (1 Kings 18:36)

Overview

In the third year of the drought and famine, God spoke to Elijah while he was in Zarephath. It was now time for him to return to Ahab and tell him it would rain. At that very time, Ahab was feeling the sting of drought. He and his servant Obadiah were out separately searching for grass so that his animals might not die.

Elijah came upon Obadiah, who had remained loyal to God. He was probably a secret believer, but God was still able to use him. He courageously risked his life to save one hundred prophets of the Lord by hiding them from Jezebel. Her evil plan, which was actually Satan’s plan, was to exterminate the true worship of God and promote Baalism in Israel. This plan almost succeeded, had it not been for Elijah’s great challenge to the prophets of Baal.

Ahab met Elijah with the words, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (18:17). The truth was that it was Ahab who had brought all the trouble on Israel, as Elijah plainly retorted (18:18). It was not the power of Elijah that had stopped the rain, but the judgment of God. Elijah arranged with Ahab to meet with the people of Israel and all the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, likely at the site of a shrine to Baal somewhere on the Carmel range (in northern Israel near the coast). This had formerly been a high place of sacrifice to the Lord God, since there was an altar to the Lord which had been broken down (18:30).

It is evident from Elijah’s words that the children of Israel were worshipping Baal, as well as many other gods, and mixing their worship of the Lord God with idolatry. God would not tolerate this; He demanded total loyalty to Himself without compromise. As Jesus said, “No servant can serve two masters” (Luke 16:13). Elijah challenged the people, as Joshua before him had, by saying, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15). The contest was to make it clear to all that the God who answered by fire upon the altar of sacrifice was the only living God, and He alone was worthy to be served.

Elijah trusted fully in his God and was so confident that he taunted the prophets of Baal who, with ecstatic behaviour, tried in vain all day to evoke a response from Baal (18:27-29). What a difference when it came to Elijah’s turn! As an object lesson to the people, he first repaired the altar of the Lord with twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes. This served to rebuke Israel for dividing the land and condemn the idolatry which led to its division and broke down the true worship to God. Then Elijah broke the sacrifice in pieces and laid it totally on the altar. This was spiritually symbolic: every part of our lives must be laid upon the altar of God in total consecration to Him. Only then will we see the holy fire of God fall upon our lives.

By drenching the altar and sacrifice with water, Elijah took away any suspicion of the skeptics. They were to know beyond any doubt that the fire was a miracle from God. Finally, he confidently prayed, openly declaring himself to be a servant of God and revealing that he had a

burning desire to glorify Him. He said that all he was doing was in obedience to God so that Israel would recognize that He was God and return to Him (18:36-37).

In answer to Elijah's prayer, the Lord sent a consuming fire which did indeed have the desired effect. The people fell prostrate and worshipped Him, exclaiming over and over again: "The Lord, He is God!" (18:39). What a powerful witness! When the world hears and sees evidence of the fire of the Holy Spirit within the lives of believers, we will see a great revival!

The people were moved to act in obedience to the Lord and put to death the false prophets who sought to lead them away from the only true God (18:40; Deuteronomy 13:5). Even Ahab joined in the celebration meal while Elijah again went to pray for God to send the rain. A second time, the Lord miraculously proved Himself to be the only God by doing what Baal, the storm god, could not do. And God sent the rain (18:41, 45).

Prayer

O God of Elijah, You wait for people who have an "Elijah heart" to call upon You, and You have promised to do great and mighty things. We thank You for the mightiest act of all, when You sent Your Son Jesus. Through Him we pray that all the mighty works You have planned for our generation will come to pass.