



STORY

Elijah and the Prophets of Baal - I Kings 18

TEACHER PRAYER

I praise You, oh Lord, for calling me into Your kingdom and giving me the privilege of laboring together with You. Especially, I thank You for the privilege of teaching little children the wonders of Your grace and mercy in Christ Jesus. Give me Your Spirit, Lord, that I may help the children committed to my charge to recognize the spiritual dangers in this world of sin. May they be moved to fight the fight of faith and thus live to praise Your holy name before all. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

OUTER AIM

Israel was called upon to chose between the LORD God and Baal

INNER AIM

God's people are called upon every day to chose God and deny Satan and the unbelieving world.

BACKGROUND

 (*Rupprecht Bible History References - Vol. 1, pp. 346-352*)

God created man to live with Him and for Him. In this state he reaches his highest potential and can expect every blessing from God. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God their spiritual relationship with God was broken. They were estranged from God, and their offspring would be born, not in the image of God but in the image of sinful man.

Mankind was spiritually dead by nature, separated from God for time and for all eternity. (cf. Eph. 2:1) This terrible spiritual void in man's life is filled in Christ Jesus, the promised Messiah. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." (Ps. 147:3) By His substitutionary atonement "The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners." (Ps. 146:7). "By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) If this perfect relationship with God in Christ is not found man wanders about in this world of sin a lost soul searching-ever searching for purpose in life, reason for living and peace in heart and mind. He tries to fill the spiritual void in life with all kinds of works; works dictated by his sinful flesh and/or some type of religion which he invents.

Thus he hopes to gain eternal life. As a result, there are many, many religions in the world. Yet, basically there are but two: either of God or it is of man. God's religion is salvation by God's grace in Christ Jesus received through faith. Man's religion is a hoped-for salvation earned by his own works whereby he hopes to appease the wrath of whatever deity he has invented and thus find peace in heart and soul. Yet, man's religion can never give peace. It shall ever be true; "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." (Is. 26:3) The worship of the Baalim (plural for Baal which means Lord, Master) was very prominent among the people occupying the eastern borders of the Mediterranean. There were many Baalim. Much like the Romans and Greeks they had a god or goddess for every aspect of life. Ahab maintained 450 priests of Baal. The domineering Jezebel introduced the worship of the main goddess of her native country of Tyre. Ashtoreth (Astarte) was her name. She was called "the queen of heaven." Jezebel employed 400 priests to foster this religion which included fleshly lewdness.

STUDENT PRAYER

I thank You Lord for your love to me which You have shown in so many ways. You have made me Your child when I was baptized in Your name. There I was cleansed of my sins, brought to believe in You as my Lord and Savior. You came to me in Spirit and to live in me. Lord God, help me always to be alert to any words and actions which oppose Your words of Truth. Strengthen me always to confess Your name in all I do and say so that Your name may be honored and that others see You as the gracious and loving Lord that You are. In the name of Jesus my Savior I pray. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The years of draught in Israel were about to come to an end according to the will of God. The LORD through it all had sustained Elijah. Now he was called to present the LORD'S message announcing the end of the severe draught to Ahab. But this message would be delivered only in conjunction with some very definite spiritual lessons.

All Israel would see the absolute rule, power and majesty of the LORD God of heaven and earth and the total impotence of the false gods invented by man. As is generally the case, when man places his trust in false gods, he is blind to the works and ways of the one true God. So it was that Ahab blamed Elijah for his problems rather than recognizing how he had brought his problems upon Himself by forsaking the LORD God and supporting, as well as worshipping the man-made Baalim and encouraging the people of Israel to do the same.

All Israel would be required to make a choice: "If the LORD is God, follow Him. If Baal, then follow him." It is sad to hear the deafening silence, which prevailed as Elijah challenged the people with that simple choice. "But the people answered him not a word." False teaching threatens faith! The LORD wishes for us to either remove the false teaching or remove ourselves from it. He never gives His approval to consort with false teaching and /or false teachers! Rather, our Lord who loves us instructs us to take careful note of those who teach contrary to his Word to and avoid them. (Cf. Rom. 16:17-18)

APPLICATION

False gods are as prominent today as ever. This is Satan's playground. He gains a tremendous following by using the religion invented by man to occupy the hearts and minds of people who are spiritually ignorant of the Truth of the one true God. Remember, Satan works through people. He uses people - friends, neighbors, peers, acquaintances, people of influence, the wealthy, etc. to attract and draw people away from the Truth of God.

Satan does not always challenge the Truth directly. He might try to inject a reasonable element into his temptation. (cf. Mat. 4) He is satisfied with small victories. He is very patient and will settle for small compromises. The people of Israel who began to follow Ahab and Jezebel in their idolatry were just trying to get along with their neighbors and friends, to begin with. Besides, it was reasonable, wasn't it? It was surely much closer going to Dan and Bethel than all the way to Jerusalem for worship. Probably it was also reasonable to think that they could worship both the Baalim and the LORD.

Whatever the thinking, idolatry had done its work and when faced with the choice between the LORD and Baal the Israelites were speechless. Doubtless many had become faithless. FALSE TEACHING THREATENS FAITH. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." (Gal. 5:9)

Syncretism-compromising the Truth of God and mixing it with man-made teachings is the order of our day. Churches merge with little or no concern about whether God's Truth is being violated. Children are

particularly vulnerable because they are easily subjected to peer pressure. They won't always understand why they are forbidden to keep company with certain individuals or become involved with certain groups or join certain organizations which espouse teachings contrary to the Word of our Lord. Nevertheless, Christian parents who recognize spiritual danger for their children will do what is necessary, in love, to shield them from it. As parents will do whatever is necessary to protect their children from physical harm, how much more should they not do the same concerning their spiritual welfare?

As pastors and teachers, we are called to help the parents by reinforcing them with the truths of God's Word. For "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:7)

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

I Timothy 6:12 - "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called."

Matthew 4:10 - "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

"Matthew 5:10 - "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"I John 2:15 - "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

HYMN CHOICES

Oh, For Faith That Will Not Shrink - TLH #396

Fight The Good Fight With All Thy Might - TLH #447

Rise, My Soul, To Watch And Pray - TLH #446

Preserve Thy Word, O Savior - TLH #264