

Fire from Heaven

There were many kings that ruled over the land of Israel. Some of them were good kings who loved God and some of them were not. King Ahab was not a good king. He did not love God and he did not try to rule his kingdom God's way. God sent his prophet, Elijah, to King Ahab to warn him to change his ways but King Ahab didn't listen. Instead, King Ahab decided to worship a fake god named Baal. If he worshipped Baal, he could still do all the evil things whenever he wanted to. Elijah told King Ahab that God was going to send a drought to the land as punishment. It didn't rain in Israel for 3 years and that made King Ahab very mad at Elijah.

One day near the end of the three years, Elijah challenged King Ahab to a contest. He told King Ahab to gather 450 prophets of Baal and follow him to the top of Mount Carmel. There he explained the challenge. The people who believed in Baal would be on one team and the people who believed in God would be on the other. Everyone but Elijah chose to be on the King's team and worship Baal. Each team was supposed to build an altar and offer a sacrifice of a calf to their god, but they had to pray that their god would send fire to burn the sacrifice. Elijah let the other team choose their cow and go first. They built their altar, cut up the meat from the calf and then started to call out to Baal to send fire. They called and called all day, but nothing happened. Elijah even teased them saying, "Maybe your god is busy talking or maybe he's asleep. You should call louder." They kept calling louder and louder and even danced around their altar, but nothing ever happened.

When it was Elijah's turn, he built his altar out of 12 stones because there were 12 tribes of Israel. He laid the wood on the top of the altar and then the meat from the cow on top of the wood. Then he dug a ditch around his altar. After he dug the trench, he called for four barrels of water to be dumped on his altar and all over the wood and the meat. Then he called for four more barrels and then four more barrels to be dumped. Twelve barrels had been dumped on his altar. It was soaking wet! The meat was wet. The wood was wet. The stones were wet. The ground was wet. Even the trench was filled with the extra water. Everything was drenched and when things are wet it is very hard for them to catch on fire. Elijah wanted to be sure that everyone could see exactly what great big, wonderful things God could do.

Then Elijah started to pray. "Dear God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, please send fire so that all of these people will know that you are the one true God." Suddenly, a ball of fire came from the sky and onto his altar. It burned up the sacrifice, the wet wood, the stones, the ground and even all the water in the trench. When the people saw what had happened, they knew Elijah's God was the one true God. They fell with their faces to the ground and worshipped God saying, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God!"