

Elijah on Mount Carmel

Elijah challenges the 450 prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. When Baal fails to answer, the God of Israel sends fire from heaven.

1 Kings 18:16-46

CHARACTERS: Elijah, King Ahab, The prophets of Baal, The people of Israel, God

THEMES: God's power, True vs. false gods, Faith, Prayer, Revival

AFTER THREE YEARS of drought, Elijah sent word to King Ahab and arranged a confrontation on Mount Carmel. All Israel gathered there, along with the 450 prophets of Baal.

Elijah stood before the people. 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.'

The people said nothing.

Elijah proposed a test. Two bulls would be prepared as sacrifices—one for the prophets of Baal, one for Elijah. But no fire would be set. 'You call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—He is God.'

The people agreed.

The prophets of Baal went first. From morning till noon they called on Baal. 'Baal, answer us!' But there was no response. They danced around the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah began to mock them. 'Shout louder! Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.'

They shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. They continued their frantic prophesying until evening. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah called the people to him. He repaired the altar of the Lord using twelve stones, one for each tribe. He dug a trench around it. He arranged the wood and the bull.

Then he did something remarkable. 'Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.' He had them do it three times—twelve jars in all—until the water ran down around the altar and filled the trench. In the middle of a drought, he soaked everything.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed: 'Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Answer me, Lord, so these people will know that you are God and that you are turning their hearts back again.'

Then the fire of the Lord fell. It burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell on their faces and cried, 'The Lord—He is God! The Lord—He is God!'

The prophets of Baal were seized and executed. And soon, after Elijah prayed again, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, and a heavy rain came. The drought was over. The true God had answered.