

Elijah prayed: "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." (1 Kings 18:37)

Giver of all good things, you are the source of life, hope, and faith. Grant us a deeper faith that we would call upon your name in all circumstances, trusting in your wisdom and mercy. Thank you for helping us to see and turn away from false gods so that we might live holy lives in you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

The followers of the false god Baal were many, but only Elijah the prophet stood up on behalf of the Lord. Elijah had two altars built, challenging the Baal followers to see which god would reveal his power and ignite the sacrifice with fire.

Read: 1 Kings 18:17-40

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel tell the story of Israel as a united nation. But the Israelite Monarchy did not last long. With the death of King Solomon (931 B.C.), the time of the unified state came to an end.

Because of disputes in the royal house, God's people were split into a Northern Kingdom (Israel) and a Southern Kingdom (Judah), both of which began to fall into idolatry. The books of 1 and 2 Kings go on to describe this division.

This period was the time of many prophets who spoke the Word of God to the leaders and people of both kingdoms. God criticized the people for following after pagan idols, and he warned them of the coming disaster that would result from their sins.

Discussion Questions

1. At this time King Ahab and Queen Jezebel ruled in Israel. According to verses 17-18, what had they done that was so wrong?
2. What did Elijah decide to do about this problem? Who did he want to come meet him? Where did they go?
3. What challenge did Elijah give to the prophets of Baal? What did they do to try to get their god's attention?
4. In what two places does the word "limp" or "limping" appear in this text? What might the Bible be implying about the worship of false gods?
5. When it was Elijah's turn, what did he do? Why do you think Elijah repeated his action three times? What point was he making?
6. How did God respond to Elijah's prayer? In addition to the wood on the altar, what else was affected?
7. How did this affect the people of Israel? Is it necessary to see amazing feats like this to know that God is real? Why or why not?
8. Read Mark 9:42-48. Why do you think fire is often used in Scripture to symbolize and carry out God's wrath? How is the Old Testament story of Elijah an effective example of what Jesus warns us of?