

# **ELIJAH AND ELISHA**

**by Laura Sweet**

**Grades 3-4  
Year 1  
Quarter 3**



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# **INTRODUCTION -**

## **ELIJAH AND ELISHA**

This quarter we will be studying two of the most exciting characters of the Old Testament - the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah and Elisha lived in a time when Israel was turning her back on the Lord and serving foreign gods. Elijah and Elisha took courageous stands against evil, against false gods, and against corrupt governments. As we study the lives of these two men, we will see several themes emerge repeatedly:

### **1. The Absolute Sovereignty of God**

There is no other authority, no other power, no other god. He alone controls the natural world, decrees the future, and works to bring His will to pass.

### **2. The Rewards of a Life Lived by Faith**

Elijah and Elisha experienced these rewards, as did the widow of Zarephath, the Shunammite woman, Naaman, and many others.

### **3. The “Wages of Sin” that Result in Death**

Ahab and Jezebel reaped the consequences of their sin, but so did Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. There is a price to pay for sin, no matter who you are.

The memory work this quarter is taken from a passage that emphasizes many of these key themes. We will be memorizing Isaiah 45:15-25, verse by verse. While these verses will be learned separately, it would be wise to review all of the verses every three or four lessons so that the entire passage can be memorized by the end of the quarter.

## **Elijah Book**

This quarter, instead of the usual take-home worksheets, your students will be making their own “Elijah Books.” The pages for the booklet are already printed and ready for you to photocopy. In order to complete the project, you will need the following materials:

Two 8½" by 11" pieces of construction paper for the front and back covers of the booklet.  
Scissors, crayons, tape, and glue.  
Old magazines (lesson #2).  
Red ribbon or red tissue paper (lesson #4).  
Cotton balls (lesson #7).

You’ll want to make the covers for the Elijah Books on a Sunday when you have a little extra time after the lesson. Your students may wish to illustrate the cover and entitle their books - perhaps something like “My Book About Elijah” or “Elijah the Prophet.”

We will return to the regular worksheet format for the lessons dealing with Elisha.

## **Related Music**

Whenever possible, related music will be suggested for use with the lesson. Hymns cited will be from the *Trinity Hymnal*. Other popular choruses that your students might know are often suggested as well.

# **AHAB AND ELIJAH**

**I Kings 16:29 - 17:7**

## **Lesson Aim**

To familiarize students with the historical background of Israel before Elijah's ministry and to help them understand the conflict between the worship of God and the worship of Baal.

## **Memory Verse**

Read Isaiah 45:15-25 with your students this week to familiarize them with this quarter's memory work. This week's verse is **Isaiah 45:15** - "Truly you are a God who hides Himself, O God and Savior of Israel."

## **Lesson Background**

Alexander Whyte, in his book *Bible Characters*, writes, "There is a solitary grandeur about Elijah that is all his own. There is a mystery and an unearthliness about Elijah that is all his own. There is a volcanic suddenness, and a volcanic violence, indeed, about all Elijah's descents upon us, and all his disappearances from us." The account of Elijah given in I and II Kings is marked by drought, fire from heaven, earthquakes, whirlwinds, and a chariot of fire. Is it any wonder that when we think of Elijah we think of passion? Yet for all of his "unearthliness," James reminds us that "Elijah was a man just like us," who "prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years" (James 5:17). If Elijah was like us, and if our God is the God of Elijah, what power is available to us through prayer!

This lesson concentrates on background information necessary for your students' understanding of the life of Elijah. It may be helpful to locate a map that shows the division of the ten tribes of Israel from the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Also, if you can find a picture of Baal, the god of the Phoenicians whose worship was brought into Israel by Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, and sanctioned by her

husband Ahab, it would make it easier for your students to picture what it was the Israelites were worshiping. Check Bible dictionaries or a resource book like *Eerdmans' Family Encyclopedia of the Bible*, which has a good illustration of the idol.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. The History of the Northern Kingdom of Israel**

I Kings 12 tells the story of the separation of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Explain to your students that when Solomon died, ten of the tribes of Israel rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam. The ten tribes formed a new nation with a new king and became the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Almost immediately, the new king established idol worship in Israel by setting up golden calves intended to represent the God of Israel. This king was eventually punished for his wickedness (I Kings 14:10-13), but every king of Israel who came after him followed his evil ways. These kings refused to live God's way and led the people of Israel into deeper sins. Finally, the most wicked king of all, Ahab, came to the throne of Israel.

Ask your students to think about the idolatry of Israel. "When the kings of Israel brought in idol worship or allowed it to take place, many, many people worshiped those idols. Who do you think was more responsible for the idol worship, the kings or the people? Why?" Certainly everyone who worshiped idols was held accountable for their actions, but the Lord laid the greatest responsibility at the feet of the kings. They made the laws and set the examples for the people. By establishing, or at least allowing, idol worship, they led the people into sin. Consequently, many of Israel's kings were punished severely for their sins. Their actions are recorded in the Bible for all to read and take warning!

### **2. Ahab, Jezebel, and Baal (I Kings 16:29-34)**

Have your students read I Kings 16:30-33 aloud in class. Ask them to list the things Ahab did that made him the most wicked of all the kings of Israel. One of the things that angered the Lord about Ahab was his marriage to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king-priest of the Sidonians. Not only was this marriage to a pagan princess against God's law, but Jezebel brought the worship of Baal to Israel with her. Ahab gave this religion legal sanction by building a temple and an altar to Baal and by joining his wife in the worship of Baal. Besides bringing the worship of Baal to Israel, we shall see the ruthless wickedness of Jezebel in many of our lessons this quarter.

Explain to your students that Baal was a Canaanite god whose very name meant "lord" - a direct challenge to the lordship of Jehovah. He was the weather-god, in charge of the rains, mist, and dew. He was worshiped, therefore, to ensure good crops and good harvests for the land. Canaanite worship was so degraded, immoral, and animalistic that even the Greek and Roman writers of later days were shocked by it. But it did not demand strict adherence to any set of standards or rules of conduct like the Ten Commandments, and that must have been a great temptation to the Israelites.

It was probably not Ahab's intention to do away with the worship of Jehovah altogether. His sons' names (Ahaziah, "the Lord grasps," and Joram, "the Lord is exalted") seem to indicate that he wanted to worship the Lord as one of many gods. Or perhaps it was just good politics to appear religious in a traditional, "Jewish" way. But our God will not tolerate anything less than complete

obedience to His law. “You shall have no other gods before me. . . . You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:3-6). King Ahab would soon learn the price to be paid for breaking God’s commandments and establishing a rival religion in his land.

### **3. Elijah Arrives on the Scene (I Kings 17:1-6)**

Out of nowhere, a prophet arrived and stood before Ahab, ready to speak on behalf of the Lord. He proclaimed himself to be the servant of the living God and offered a direct challenge to King Ahab, and to Baal.

#### **A. The Challenge to Baal (verse 1)**

What a bold pronouncement to make before the king! Elijah gave Ahab no chance to reform or change his ways. He simply declared, “There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” He could declare this as certainly as he could declare, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives.” Here was a direct challenge to Baal, who was supposed to be the god of rain and dew. The Lord was making it clear that He was the God of Israel, not Baal; He was the one who gave the rain and dew, not Baal; and if God chose to withhold the rain and dew, there was absolutely nothing Baal could do about it.

Ask your students, “Do you think the king and the others who heard Elijah make this statement took him seriously? Or do you think they laughed at him and called him a fool? What do you think it would take to change their minds?” If the rulers of Israel really feared the Lord they would never have instituted idol worship in the first place. Surely they couldn’t have believed Elijah when he first spoke these words. But as the days went by and no rain fell, they would certainly start to take him seriously and his life would be in danger. For this reason, the Lord called him out of the area to a safe place of hiding.

#### **B. The Lord Provides for Elijah (verses 2-6)**

It is interesting to see that, just because Elijah spoke the judgment of God, he was not immune from its consequences. He, too, had to live in a land that was suffering through a drought. The Lord provided for his needs by sending him beyond the Jordan River to the Kerith Ravine. There Elijah was fed bread and meat by ravens and drank water from the brook (this brook, like many in Palestine, was a wadi, which means that it flowed with water only in the rainy season and was nothing more than a dry stream bed at other times). Here he was safe from his enemies. I Kings 18:10 tells us that Ahab looked all over the country for him and even sent people into neighboring nations to try to find him.

Ask your class, “Do you know what happens to people in a country facing drought?” Make your students aware that drought brings great suffering to a nation, especially one dependent on agriculture. Crops fail, people die of malnutrition, and weakened bodies fall prey easily to different diseases. “Do you think Elijah was happy to see this kind of suffering? Was God happy to send it? Why was this drought necessary?” I think it is wrong to think of Elijah, sitting smugly by the brook, enjoying the devastation that this drought would bring to the land. Certainly neither he nor the Lord took pleasure in this

suffering. But the nation of Israel itself was at risk; if the people did not turn from worshipping idols, the entire country was doomed. Elijah's prayer was that this drought would help the people learn once and for all that the Lord was the living God of Israel and that He alone should be worshiped by His people.

## **Conclusion**

Encourage your students to be bold as they stand up for what is right in their neighborhoods, classrooms, and even perhaps in their own homes. They may be laughed at or made fun of, but they can be confident that the Lord will watch over them and care for them as He did Elijah, and they will never be sorry for the stand they take.

## **Worksheets**

Complete pages one and two of the Elijah Book (see Introduction for book instructions). You will need pencils and crayons to complete these two pages. On "Before and After" on page two, you might draw a sample project first to show the students the contrast between a lush, green countryside and a brown desert landscape. Or you might bring in pictures from an encyclopedia or science magazine as examples of desert landscapes.

## **Related Music**

"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #571).



# **Ahab and Elijah**

Choose words from the Word Bank and fill in the missing words in the following paragraph. HINT: Not all of the words are used.

King \_\_\_\_\_ was a wicked king. He built a \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ and worshiped him. Elijah was a man of God. He came to the king and said, “As the \_\_\_\_\_, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor \_\_\_\_\_ in the next few \_\_\_\_\_ except at my word.” The Lord cared for Elijah by a \_\_\_\_\_, and ravens fed him meat and \_\_\_\_\_ every morning and evening.

## **WORD BANK**

<b>brook</b>	<b>dew</b>	<b>cheese</b>	<b>rain</b>
<b>Ahab</b>	<b>bread</b>	<b>days</b>	<b>Baal</b>
<b>Lord</b>	<b>years</b>	<b>Elijah</b>	<b>temple</b>



## **Before and After**

Israel was called “the land flowing with milk and honey.” Draw a picture of a beautiful green countryside with trees and a river below.

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How would that countryside look after three years of drought? What would change? Draw a picture of the same countryside during the drought.



# **ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S OIL**

**I Kings 17:8-16**

## **Lesson Aim**

To show students that we can have faith in God's ability to provide for all our needs.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:16** - "All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together."

## **Lesson Background**

In the Song of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy 32, the Lord says in verse 21, "They made me jealous by what is no god / and angered me with their worthless idols. / I will make them envious by them who are not a people; / I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding." The Israelites rejected God's messenger, Elijah, and so God sent him to a pagan woman in a pagan land. She was willing to act by faith on what Elijah said, and she and her son were preserved through this devastating famine.

How easy it is to trust in ourselves to meet our own needs! Yet we learn so much when we are forced to wait upon the Lord in faith to provide for us. Perhaps you have experienced such a time of waiting; if so, you may want to share your experience with your class and describe how the Lord met your particular need. Perhaps some of your students can also share instances of the Lord's provision for their families. Such illustrations help make a practical lesson like this real for our students.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. **Elijah is Sent to Zarephath of Sidon (I Kings 17:7-10)**

This account of Elijah and the widow is a story of two people who were asked by God to do something that seemed strange and illogical and how both these people responded in faith. First we will look at Elijah and the strange move he was asked to make.

#### A. **Elijah is Directed to the Center of Baal Worship (verses 7-9)**

Elijah was provided for at Kerith by the ravens and the water for awhile. But then the brook dried up, and the word of the Lord came to him with a peculiar direction. Elijah was directed to Zarephath of Sidon - a pagan nation and the very center of Baal worship (Jezebel was from Sidon - see I Kings 16:31). Of all the places for Elijah to “hide out,” surely Sidon would be his last choice (and, as it turned out, the last place Ahab would think to look for him). But the Lord wanted to provide for Elijah in this sinful land, and to do so in a miraculous way.

Read Psalm 23:5a to your class. Ask them, “How does this verse describe what God was doing for Elijah? Do you think he will be safe in the land of Sidon?” God was preparing a table for Elijah in the presence of his enemies by providing for him in “enemy territory.” Elijah would be perfectly safe there as long as he obeyed the Lord.

#### B. **Elijah Goes in Faith (verse 10)**

Elijah was obedient and went to Sidon. His obedience showed his faith that God was able to keep him safe, even in that pagan land, and that God was able to provide for his physical needs of food and shelter, too.

### 2. **Elijah Meets the Widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:10-16)**

As Elijah sat in the town gate, he saw a widow gathering sticks. Perhaps the Lord had told him already that this was the woman who would care for him; in verse 14, he showed that he had already received some word from the Lord. This widow was in her most desperate hour; she was gathering sticks to prepare her last bit of flour and oil for herself and her son. Since this was the last of their food supply, she expected that they would then die of hunger; she saw no hope for them at all (verse 12). She addressed Elijah with the phrase, “As surely as the Lord your God lives.” Was this a courtesy to Elijah because she recognized him as an Israelite (perhaps by his dress or language), or did she have some faith in the God of Israel? It’s hard to know for sure, but this widow had been chosen for life itself, and before Elijah’s stay with her was over, she would have great faith indeed.

#### A. **The Widow is Asked to Give All She Has (verses 10-14)**

When Elijah asked for a drink, the woman seemed willing to comply without a word, but when the prophet asked for bread, it was as if she was unable to contain her sorrow. She told Elijah of her terrible situation, and Elijah gave her the first word of hope she had heard in a long time. “First make a small cake of bread for me,” he told her, “for

this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.’” Could it be possible? Yet the only way to find out was to give all she had - the last food she had for herself and her son - to see if God’s promise through Elijah was true!

Ask your students, “Why do you think God wanted this woman to make bread for Elijah first? Why couldn’t she make all three cakes of bread together?” By giving all she had first (after all, she didn’t have enough to make three cakes at once), the woman would be showing her faith in God’s promise to provide for her family. It would teach her to trust in God day by day as Elijah stayed with her, and it would show her God’s power to provide for her needs.

## **B. The Widow’s Obedience Leads to Life (verses 15-16)**

The widow believed the words Elijah spoke to her and prepared a cake of bread for him. She then found that God had miraculously replenished her flour and oil so that she could prepare bread for her son and herself. The Bible tells us that there was food every day for Elijah, the woman, and her son until the drought was over. The woman’s obedience to God and God’s mercy and provision for her brought life to her family.

Ask your students if they can think of other stories in the Bible where God provided food for His people in a miraculous way. Remind them of the manna in the wilderness and Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand. In both instances, food appeared miraculously to feed the hungry. Perhaps your students can think of other stories as well.

## **Conclusion**

Have your students look up Philippians 4:19 and I Timothy 6:17. Remind your students that, like Elijah and the widow, we can have faith that God will provide for our needs if we are His children. This would be a good time to share any personal story you might have of God’s provision in your own life. Be sure to discuss the difference between a need and a desire. “God hasn’t promised to give us everything we wish for, has He? Some things we want might not be good for us, and just as our parents don’t give us everything we ask for, neither does our heavenly Father. For example, you might think you really need a Nintendo and ask God to give you one. But you won’t die without a Nintendo, will you? And the Lord might know that it wouldn’t be good for you to spend hour after hour in front of the TV set, playing games instead of being outside, spending time with your friends, or doing your homework. God doesn’t give us everything we wish for, like some kind of Santa Claus. But we do know He will provide for our needs.” Ask your students to list some of those needs. They should include food, clothing, shelter, safety and protection, and friendships, as well as others.

## **Worksheet**

You will need glue and a variety of old magazines to complete this week’s worksheet. Have your students search through old magazines to locate and cut out pictures that represent some of their “needs” that the Lord supplies. Pictures of homes, families, friends, churches, Bibles, etc. should be cut out and glued “collage-style” on page three of the Elijah booklet.

## **Related Music**

“Father, We Thank You” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #633); “Seek Ye First.”



## **Elijah and the Widow's Oil**

The story of Elijah and the widow's oil reminds us that we can trust God to provide for His children. Paste some pictures in the space below of needs that our God supplies.



# **ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S SON**

**I Kings 17:17-24**

## **Lesson Aim**

To show students the importance of a prayer that is prayed persistently, and with faith in God's ability and willingness to answer.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:17** - "But Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting."

## **Lesson Background**

How passionate is your prayer life? We have already seen that Elijah was a man of great passion, but he was also a man of great prayer. He prayed that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't rain for three and a half years. He prayed for the widow's son to come back to life - our lesson this week - and the Lord raised the boy to life again. He prayed for the Lord to send down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, and he prayed for the rains to return until a small cloud the size of a man's hand was seen (I Kings 18). Elijah's prayers are marked by faith and persistence - two indications that he was a passionate man, even in his prayers. As we teach this lesson on the power and importance of prayer, let's examine our own prayer lives to learn what kind of power and persistence we have ourselves.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by reviewing with your students how God had been providing for Elijah, the widow, and her son through the drought (I Kings 17:7-16). While many others were suffering and dying because there was no food and little water, God had promised that the widow's flour and oil would not run out until rain fell on the land once more. Elijah and this little family were being protected and cared for in a miraculous way. "Just think - every day, this family saw a miracle occur! Every day they discovered a little more flour in the jar and a little more oil in the jug. God's care for Elijah, the widow, and her son could be seen on a daily basis as He took care of their needs."

### 1. **The Widow's Son Becomes Ill and Dies (I Kings 17:17-19)**

Very suddenly, the situation changed. The widow's son became ill; his sickness steadily progressed until he stopped breathing and died. This boy was the widow's only family; he was her only hope for support in the years to come. Every joy and every dream she had for the future was bound up in this child. And suddenly he was taken away from her. Where was the promise of life and blessing now? Why did God allow this to happen to her?

Certainly this widow knew that God's special protection and care had been given to her family when she took in Elijah. But in her grief and confusion, she lashed out at the prophet. "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" Her cry showed her grief as well as a mistaken view of the Lord. Elijah was also confused; he did not attempt to correct the woman's theology or even console her in her grief. He took the boy in his arms and brought him before the Lord.

### 2. **Elijah Prays for the Widow's Son (I Kings 17:19-23)**

Elijah carried the boy to the upper room where he was staying and laid him on the bed. He brought his own confusion to the Lord, but, unlike the widow, did not accuse God or cry out against Him. The boy's death seemed to contradict the life that God had promised by sustaining the widow and her son. Because of this, Elijah was bold enough to ask for an unheard-of miracle. Let's take a look at Elijah's prayer.

#### **A. Elijah's Prayer is in Faith**

There is no other record of someone being brought back to life before this incident. Yet Elijah not only believes that God is able to restore the boy's life, he also believes that God is willing to do so. Elijah is not afraid to ask for something that others would call "impossible." He knows that there is nothing too hard for God.

#### **B. Elijah's Prayer is Persistent**

In verse 21, we see that Elijah stretched himself over the boy three times (perhaps to warm his body?), and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him." He didn't just ask once and then say, "Oh, well, I guess the Lord doesn't want to raise this boy back to life." He prayed again and again, showing his faith that the Lord was listening and willing and able to answer his prayer.

## C. **Elijah's Prayer is Powerful**

Verse 22 says, "The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived." Elijah's prayer was powerful because His God is all-powerful. He asked God for the impossible and it became reality. Have your students look up James 5:16b - "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." Elijah's prayer was powerful and effective because he was a righteous man who prayed persistently and in faith. What joy he must have had, to bring the living boy down to his grieving mother and announce, "Look, your son is alive!"

Remaining in James 5, ask your students, "Was this the first time Elijah asked the Lord to do something difficult? Can you think of another time when Elijah prayed for a miracle?" Read James 5:17-18 to remind your students that Elijah had prayed that it wouldn't rain and God withheld rain for three and a half years. Elijah was used to asking the Lord for impossible things, and he was used to having the Lord hear and answer those prayers!

### 3. **The Son's Recovery Causes the Widow's Faith to Grow (I Kings 17:24)**

When the widow saw that her son was alive again, she told Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is true." She no longer doubted Elijah's integrity or the goodness of God. This woman from the land of Baal worship made a confession that the people of Israel should have made. The people of Israel should have been willing to listen to Elijah and his message from the Lord. Because of their unwillingness to do so, God was revealed to this Sidonian widow and she received the blessing of life for her and her son.

## **Conclusion**

Certainly there is much that we can learn from Elijah's prayer. Ask your students to think about their own prayer lives. Do they really bring their problems and concerns to the Lord? Do they talk with Him every day in prayer? Do they believe that God is listening to them? Do they believe that He is able to answer their prayers - if even it takes a miracle to do so? Do they persist in their prayers or do they give up too easily? And do they thank the Lord when their prayers are answered? Perhaps your congregation has recently seen an answer to prayer. Perhaps someone's health has been restored or someone's family member has recently come to Christ. Be certain to point out these as instances of God's ability to answer the prayers of His people and His willingness to do so. Before you close the lesson, you may wish to ask for prayer requests from your students that you can pray about together as a class.

## **Worksheet**

This week's page in the Elijah Book is supposed to resemble the front page of a newspaper. "Because Elijah was hiding from King Ahab, this miracle was probably kept quiet for quite a while. But let's pretend that you're a reporter for the *Sidonian Sentinel*. How would you report this miracle to your readers?" Give the students time to compose their stories and then have them share their articles with the class. The box for the "photo" may be used to draw a picture of the recovered boy, the prophet Elijah, or the happy mother - or perhaps one of your students will have another idea.

## **Related Music**

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #629).

# The Sidonian Sentinel

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April 21, 862 B.C.

## Local Woman's Son Raised Back to Life!

An extremely unusual occurrence took place yesterday in the city of Zarephath. A poor widow's son died suddenly, but the woman's house guest - a strange man named Elijah - took the boy \_\_\_\_\_

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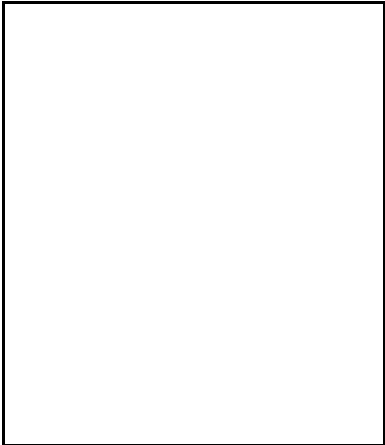
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For local reaction to the miracle, turn to page A5.





# **ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL**

## **I Kings 18**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

### **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:18a** - "For this is what the Lord says - He who created the heavens, He is God."

### **Lesson Background**

As the confrontation between the Lord and Baal comes to a climax, remember that, as the weather god, Baal was supposed to be in charge of the rain, mist, and dew. But the true Lord of Israel had withheld rain for more than three years. Baal was said to ride the thunderstorm with the lightning as his weapon. But Baal was unable to send fire down from heaven; it was the true Lord of Israel who answered by fire. "The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders. . . . The voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning" (Psalm 29:3,7). The Lord was not willing to let His people "waver between two opinions." They could not serve both Baal and Jehovah, but had to choose whom they would serve. Therefore Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal had been perfectly designed to show the powerlessness of Baal and the complete sovereignty of the Lord. As you teach this week's lesson, remind your students that the God who was sovereign in Elijah's day is still sovereign today - the Lord of heaven and earth.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. The Effects of the Three-Year Drought (I Kings 18:1-15)

Because this lesson covers quite a bit of material, summarize the early part of the chapter rather than going into it in detail. We find here that Ahab has shown no signs of repentance at all during the three-year drought. He has only become violently angry toward Elijah and has sought him everywhere - even in different kingdoms, though he obviously didn't think to look for him in Jezebel's home country of Phoenicia. Jezebel, meanwhile, was dealing with things in her own way by ordering the deaths of all the prophets of God in Israel! Whether Jezebel was hoping that these deaths would appease Baal or whether she was just taking advantage of a golden opportunity to get rid of the prophets remains unclear. God provided for the protection of at least one hundred of these prophets through Obadiah, a devout man in Ahab's court, but certainly many others were killed during this time by the ruthless Jezebel.

We also see from the first part of I Kings 18 that the drought had taken a serious toll on the land. Ahab, who is reported to have had two thousand chariots in his army, was reduced to scouring the countryside to look for food and water for his horses and mules. These animals represented Ahab's military strength, and it is not unlikely that the king would have allowed many people to die of hunger before permitting his horses to starve. The fact that they were in serious danger indicates the grimness of Israel's plight.

### 2. Elijah Appears Before Ahab (I Kings 18:16-19)

Elijah is sent to King Ahab, not because Ahab has repented, but because the Lord decided it was time to reveal Himself again to His people. Ahab greeted Elijah as the "troubler of Israel," but Elijah let him know where the true blame belonged. "I have not made trouble for Israel . . . but you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals" (verse 18). Elijah commanded Ahab to assemble the people and the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel. Somewhat surprisingly, Ahab complied. If he took Elijah lightly before, he certainly was not doing so now.

### 3. The People Gather on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:20-40)

Ahab assembled the people and the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel. The fact that the pagan prophets ate "at Jezebel's table" shows the political privileges and financial support that these prophets received from Ahab and Jezebel. The large number of these prophets - 450 prophets of Baal and 400 of Asherah - contrasts strongly with the lone figure of Elijah, the only prophet of Jehovah left to speak publicly for Him.

#### A. Elijah Issues the Challenge (verses 21-24)

Elijah presented a clear choice to the people: If Baal is god, follow him, but if the Lord is God, follow Him. He then described a test to determine the true Lord of Israel. Both he and the prophets of Baal would offer a sacrifice but would not set fire to it. They would each entreat their gods for fire from heaven, and the god who answered by fire would be acknowledged as Lord. This seemed to be a fair test in the eyes of the people; if

anything, the prophets of Baal had the advantage since they were so numerous and their god was the god of lightning and fire. Elijah even allows them to go first.

## **B. The Prophets of Baal Fail (verses 25-29)**

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice and began their dancing and wailing. “Oh, Baal, hear us,” they shouted from morning until noon, but of course there was no response. What a sorry sight this must have been! Elijah, meanwhile, seemed to be enjoying the show. He taunted the prophets of Baal to show the utter ineffectiveness of their prayers. “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” (verse 27). The prophets then became more frantic, slashing themselves with swords and spears until the whole scene became bloody. Be certain to read verse 29b with your students: “But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.” How incredibly futile their efforts had been! It was not just that there was no response - no one even paid attention! Baal was shown to be a fraud, a false god, a powerless idol.

Ask your students what they think the people of Israel were thinking by this time. Were they beginning to see that Baal was a fraud? Would they be more open to listen to what Elijah had to say in the future? Elijah, with the unwitting help of the prophets of Baal, had shown the total inability of Baal to answer the prayers of his prophets. Now he had Israel’s attention.

## **C. God Sends Fire from Heaven (verses 30-39)**

Elijah, with the help of the people, repaired the altar of the Lord. By using twelve stones, he reminded them of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. He then proceeded to take some very strange action for a man who was hoping for fire - he dug a trench around the altar, then drenched the altar, the sacrifice, and the wood with water!

Ask your students why they think Elijah poured water over the sacrifice and the altar. What was he trying to prove? Elijah may have been trying to prove that there was no trickery involved in the miracle that was about to take place. Or perhaps he was trying to make an even greater distinction between the impotence of Baal and the almighty power of God. Whatever his motive, surely the result left no doubt in the minds of the people who saw the fire.

As Elijah prayed, he invoked the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, once again emphasizing the covenant relationship between God and His people. Unlike that of the prophets of Baal, Elijah’s simple prayer had barely left his lips when the Lord sent fire from heaven. The fire was all-consuming, burning up the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, the soil, and even the water in the trench! The people of Israel responded to this miraculous display of God’s power by falling prostrate and declaring, “The Lord, He is God!”

## **D. The Prophets of Baal are Destroyed (verse 40)**

Have your students look up Deuteronomy 18:20. Then look at I Kings 18:40 together. “God’s law states that false prophets, and prophets of false gods, were to be put to death; otherwise, they would continue to lead the people astray. Ahab was certainly not

going to take charge in this matter, so Elijah ordered the people to seize the false prophets and execute them in the valley.” The prophets of Baal paid a high price for their sin, but their sin was the greatest of all - leading people away from the one true and living God!

#### **4. Elijah Prays for Rain (I Kings 18:41-46)**

The people had confessed their faith in the Lord, and it was time for the drought to end. Elijah took his servant back with him to the top of Mount Carmel, and once again we see Elijah’s intensity and persistence in prayer. He prayed for rain, and continued to pray for rain, sending his servant seven times to look toward the sea for the rain clouds. The servant came back after the seventh time and reported that a small cloud the size of a man’s hand had risen from the sea. Then Elijah knew that this prayer had been answered as well. He sent word to Ahab to leave immediately for Jezreel. Soon the sky began to grow black and a heavy rain started to fall. If Ahab needed any further proof of the power of God or Elijah’s position as God’s prophet, he saw it in a remarkable occurrence - the power of the Lord came upon Elijah and he outran Ahab’s chariot, arriving at Jezreel before the king.

### **Conclusion**

The Lord chose to reveal Himself and His great power to His people again that day on Mount Carmel. He left no doubt in anyone’s mind as to His Lordship over heaven and earth. We, too, can have confidence in God, for He is still Lord and He still reigns over all. If we are His children, we can have confidence when we pray, knowing that He hears our prayers and is able and willing to answer them. We also know that some day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). Until that day, we must live our lives in obedience to His Lordship, making Him the supreme King of our lives.

### **Worksheet**

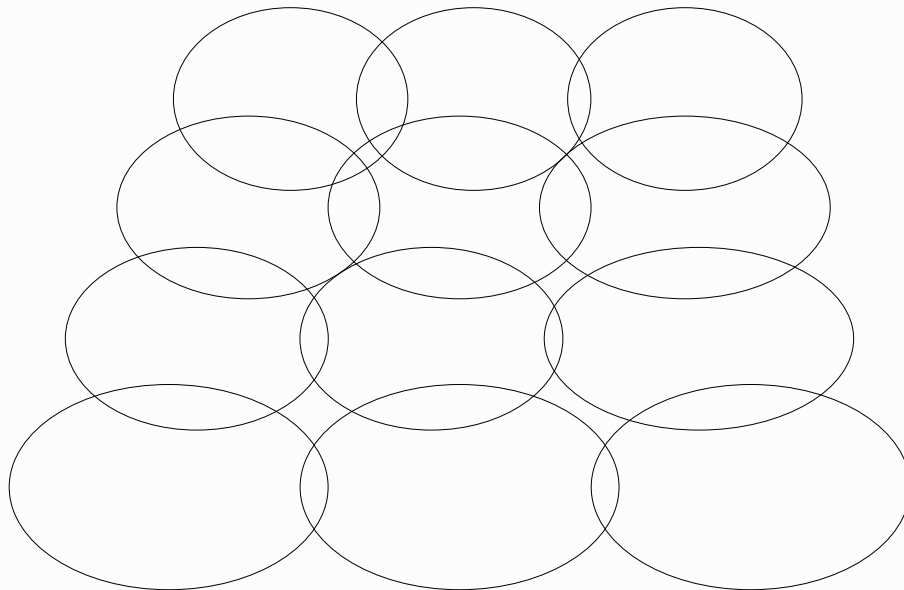
For this page of the Elijah Book, you will need crayons, scissors, glue, and either red tissue paper, red gift-wrapping ribbon, or, in a pinch, red construction paper. Read the directions on the worksheet that describe how the project should be completed. You may wish to make a sample project to demonstrate to your class.

### **Related Music**

“I Sing the Almighty Power of God” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #119); “Our God is an Awesome God.”

## **Elijah on Mount Carmel**

Color the altar, draw wood and a sacrifice on top, and draw the trench around it. Using red tissue paper or red wrapping ribbon, cut strips to use as "fire." Glue the strips on the altar and in the trench to show how the fire from heaven consumed everything.





# **ELIJAH ON MOUNT HOREB**

## **I Kings 19**

### **Lesson Aim**

To see that disappointment and discouragement are real parts of a believer's life, but that God is always able to meet His children's needs.

### **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:18b** - "I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right."

### **Lesson Background**

When we last saw Elijah in chapter 18, we saw him victorious on Mount Carmel, anointed by the power of God, and outrunning the chariot of Ahab. What a contrast now to see him in chapter 19 - fleeing from Jezebel, discouraged, and weary of life. As F. W. Krummacher writes in *Elijah the Tishbite*, "He had performed signs and wonders, such as had not been done in Israel for centuries, and had labored as abundantly as any saint before him. From such exertions Elijah expected to witness effects produced; he probably hoped for nothing less than a penitent return of the whole people to the service of Jehovah. The fervent man of God, however, erred in his calculation. . . . At the very moment when he had hoped to lead back the regenerated people, with psalms and hymns of rejoicing, to the altar of the living God, he sees himself exposed to danger in every direction, and his labor appears to be in vain. Such things were too mysterious for him, and he could not reconcile them with his present ideas of God." Times of discouragement and disappointment are common to all believers, even a man of Elijah's stature. Perhaps you can think of a time in your own life when discouragement almost got the better of you. It may be helpful

to share such an account with your class; this will help them to understand why it is important to believe that God is able to meet the needs of His children when they are disappointed and weary.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Elijah Flees from Jezebel (I Kings 19:1-4)**

Review with your students the events of last week's lesson: the triumph on Mount Carmel, the fire from heaven, and the rainstorm that brought the end of the drought. Ask your students how they think Ahab and Jezebel should have responded to these astonishing events. Certainly both Ahab and Jezebel should have repented and turned to the Lord God for forgiveness for worshiping idols. But in I Kings 21:20 we learn that Ahab still considered Elijah to be his enemy. And Jezebel responded in chapter 19 by threatening Elijah's life! "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them [the prophets of Baal]." Jezebel has already murdered many of the Lord's prophets, so this was not just an empty threat. Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He traveled to Beersheba and then entered the desert alone.

### **2. Elijah is Strengthened for the Journey (I Kings 19:5-9)**

We see from verses 4 and 5 that Elijah wasn't merely frightened; he was also confused, discouraged, disappointed and weary. Where was the revival he had expected in Israel? Where was the power of God now? He certainly had not expected to be running for his life after the great display of God's power on Mount Carmel! We see he was physically tired, and he was emotionally and spiritually weary as well. He prayed to God to take his life because he had "had enough." He could find no strength to carry on as God's prophet in Israel.

Did the Lord immediately speak to Elijah to correct his theology and tell him what to do? No. That would come in time, but right now care had to be taken for Elijah's physical needs. He slept under a broom tree in the desert until an angel awakened him to eat. Elijah ate and slept some more. The angel appeared again with food, telling Elijah he must eat because "the journey is too much for you." Evidently this was no ordinary food, for Elijah received strength from it for forty days and forty nights until he reached Mount Horeb.

Ask your students, "Are you surprised that Elijah has become discouraged? If you were in his shoes, do you think you would be discouraged?" It would be nice if we were always able to remember that God is sovereign, that all things work together for good to those who love God and have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). But as humans, and as sinners, we sometimes lose sight of who God is and we become discouraged when things don't go as we planned. Even a man like Elijah got discouraged, and God prepared to meet his needs there at Mount Horeb.

### **3. Elijah is Addressed by God (I Kings 19:9-18)**

Elijah reached Mount Horeb and spent the night in a cave. Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" It's a simple question, but it implies that Elijah was not sent to Mount Horeb by the Lord and that this cave was a strange place to find the prophet of the almighty God. Elijah wasted no time with his answer; perhaps he had been rehearsing his woes and



injustices throughout the forty- day trip. Read his reply in verse 10 aloud with your students; note the self-righteous tone of Elijah’s complaint and his self-pity.

Evidently Elijah’s answer was not acceptable, for the Lord had Elijah stand outside of the cave as He “passed by.” Elijah experienced a sequence of four events; first, a great wind tore through the mountains and shattered the rocks, but “the Lord was not in the wind.” Then an earthquake again rattled the mountain, but God still was not present. Elijah then saw a fire, but discovered that God was not manifested in the fire, either. After these three momentous, earth-shaking events, the Lord came to him in a gentle whisper: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

There has been much speculation as to the significance of the first three occurrences on Mount Horeb. Some have suggested that they represent the judgment of God that Elijah wanted to see come upon Israel but that God was unwilling to send. Krummacher suggests that God was confronting Elijah with the contrast between the harsh judgments of the Law as opposed to the grace and mercy of God. Perhaps we would have to know the innermost thoughts and feelings of Elijah at that moment to understand exactly what these events symbolized to him. Certainly we can see that God was reminding Elijah of His absolute sovereignty in all things. He can choose to come in power and in judgment, but it is His choice and His alone. If He chooses to work quietly, and if the results come too slowly for Elijah, it is still God’s prerogative to work as He will. It is interesting to see here that Elijah’s answer to God’s question remained the same. While we might criticize Elijah’s hardheadedness and lack of submission to his Lord, we can also sense the pain and honesty of a man who was deeply confused and discouraged with God’s working in his life.

But it was time for Elijah to leave this mountain of discouragement. There was work for him to do and a future for which to prepare. The Lord gave Elijah instructions for the anointing of two men, Hazael and Jehu, who would be used by God to chastise His people and punish the house of Ahab. Then Elijah was instructed to anoint Elisha, who would help Elijah in the work and succeed him as prophet. Then the Lord informed Elijah that he was not as alone as he thought he was: “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (verse 18).

So we see here that Elijah’s questions and objections had been answered. The work of God would continue in Israel, even if the mass repentance Elijah was looking for after Mount Carmel didn’t take place. God was not through with this people yet. And Elijah was not alone in Israel; there were at least seven thousand others who were faithful to the Lord. Certainly, if the Lord still had work for Elijah to complete, he didn’t need to worry about Jezebel or anyone else. No one would end Elijah’s life until the Lord was ready to take him home!

Ask your students, “Have you ever felt like you were all alone? Maybe you were with your friends, and they decided to do something that you knew was wrong so you didn’t join them. But everyone else just laughed at you and left you behind. That can make you feel lonely. But you know what? Even if Elijah was the last prophet in Israel, he wouldn’t have been alone. Why do I say that?” Elijah was never really alone because the Lord was with him. Your students, too, can know as well that the Lord will be with them when they stand against wrongdoing - even if they’re the only ones to say “no.”

#### **4. Elijah Goes to Anoint Elisha (I Kings 19:19-21)**

Elijah was obedient to the command of the Lord and left Mount Horeb. He traveled to Abel Meholah (near the Jordan River on the map, and not too far from Jezreel, where Jezebel had

threatened Elijah; you may want to show your students a map of the area and point out Elijah's trek from Jezreel to Horeb, and then to Abel Meholah). He found Elisha driving a pair of oxen - the twelfth pair of oxen, showing that he came from a well-to-do family. Elisha acknowledged the call and went to kiss his parents good-bye. He then returned to Elijah and made a formal break with his past life by cooking his team of oxen for the people. He even used his plowing equipment to make the fire! Then Elisha followed Elijah and became his attendant.

Ask your students, "If Elisha was a wealthy man, he probably was used to having servants himself. But now he would serve Elijah. Do you think this would be an easy change for him? Do you think he would learn a lot from Elijah?" Elisha's obedience to the call of God meant more than just leaving a comfortable lifestyle. It meant a life of service, of learning obedience and humility. But Elisha obeyed his God and became the man of God in Israel after Elijah's death. He performed miracles, counseled kings, and saw Elijah carried to heaven in a whirlwind. None of that would have been possible without his willingness to leave his home and family to attend to Elijah. Let your students know we will be learning more about Elisha in the weeks to come.

## Conclusion

There are times in a believer's life when he feels down, depressed or discouraged. When we face such times, we need to look to our God of encouragement, who is able to supply our needs and lift our hearts in His service. And we may also take encouragement in the fact that, if we are God's children, we are never truly alone, for He has promised to be with us always, "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

## Worksheet

Pages 6 and 7 of the "Elijah Book" are the story of Elijah on Mount Horeb in rebus form. Be sure to read the instructions and the story aloud with your students, then help them to supply the right pictures in the spaces provided. Below is the way the story should read, with the "picture words" in bold type:

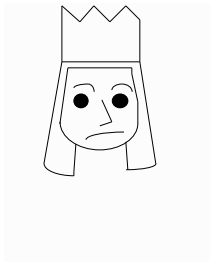
"**Queen Jezebel** was very angry when she learned that **Elijah** had killed the prophets of Baal. She sent **Elijah** a message saying she would kill him, too. **Elijah** fled as fast as he could. He sat down under a **tree** and prayed to die. An **angel** brought him food and **Elijah** went to **Mount** Horeb. The Lord sent him to the mouth of his cave, and **Elijah** saw an earthquake, a **fire**, and **wind** pass by. But the Lord spoke to **Elijah** in a gentle whisper and sent him to find Elisha."

## Related Music

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #629)

## Elijah on Mt. Horeb

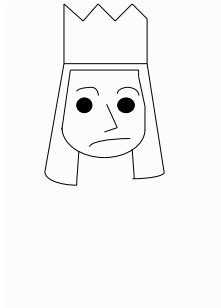
A rebus is a story that has pictures substituted for some of the words. Fill in the spaces with pictures instead of words. Then record what your pictures mean in the key.



\_\_\_\_\_ was very angry when she learned that \_\_\_\_\_ had killed the prophets of Baal. She sent \_\_\_\_\_ a message saying she would kill him, too. \_\_\_\_\_ fled as fast as he could. He sat down under a \_\_\_\_\_ and prayed to die. An \_\_\_\_\_ brought him food and \_\_\_\_\_ went to \_\_\_\_\_ Horeb. The Lord sent him to the mouth of his cave, and \_\_\_\_\_ saw an earthquake, a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ pass by. But the Lord spoke to \_\_\_\_\_ in a gentle whisper and sent him to find Elisha.



**Key:**



**= Queen Jezebel**



# **NABOTH'S VINEYARD**

## **I Kings 21**

### **Lesson Aim**

“Be sure your sin will find you out!”

### **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:19** - “I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right.”

### **Lesson Background**

Some of the events in the story of Naboth’s vineyard must be understood in light of the Mosaic law. When Naboth refuses to sell his land to Ahab in I Kings 21:3, he is showing his belief that this land was his family’s possession in Israel and that it would be wrong for him to sell the “inheritance of his fathers.” It is probable that Naboth was a pious man who knew and appreciated the terms of inheritance set up by the Lord in Leviticus 25:23, which states, “the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants.” One should also note that Jezebel has some understanding of Old Testament law. She frames Naboth on a charge that’s punishable by death and uses the Old Testament practice of two witnesses to do so (see Leviticus 24:14-16; Numbers 35:30). In fact, she arranges it so that the heirs of the vineyard, Naboth’s sons, are stoned with him, as we discover in II Kings 9:26. What a cold-blooded, inexcusable crime - all committed over a piece of land!

The grisly details of the fulfillment of Elijah’s prophecy concerning the house of Ahab are recorded in II Kings 9-10. We will not look into the fulfillment in depth in class, but you may wish to read this passage for yourself to learn the full end of the story.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. **Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard (I Kings 21:1-4)**

Ahab and Jezebel had two residences -- one in Samaria, the capital of Israel, and one in Jezreel. There was a man in Jezreel named Naboth who owned a vineyard close to Ahab's palace, and Ahab wanted that vineyard. He offered to buy it from Naboth or to exchange other land for the property. Naboth refused to sell the vineyard to Ahab; he rightly understood that this property was his family's permanent inheritance in Israel. The law of Israel prohibited Ahab from simply taking the land, and it was well within Naboth's rights to refuse to sell it. When Ahab realized he couldn't have the vineyard, we see him acting like a child denied a toy from the dime store! He pouted and sulked, and refused to eat - or even to get out of bed! Explain to your students that this is what the Bible calls "coveting"; it is the sin of wanting something that belongs to someone else. In Ahab's case, we see several other sins at work - greediness, jealousy and self-pity, for starters. With all of Ahab's power, position and possessions, he was getting worked up over a simple piece of property that Naboth wouldn't sell!

Tell your students, "Think about Ahab lying on his bed, pouting, refusing to eat, just because Naboth won't let him buy the vineyard. That's pretty pathetic, isn't it? But are we ever guilty of wanting something someone else has? Or do we ever get upset because we can't have something we think we really want?" Remind your students that it's just as wrong for us to pout and be jealous and desirous over things as it was for Ahab. Coveting is a sin for kings and for kids - and for Sunday School teachers, too!

### 2. **Jezebel Plots Against Naboth (I Kings 21:5-15)**

Jezebel couldn't believe that Ahab was upset because Naboth wouldn't sell his vineyard. After all, there were other ways to obtain the things you wanted if you had the power. This evil woman concocted a plan that would leave Naboth and his sons dead and his vineyard free for the taking.

Notice how Ahab's sin of covetousness grew from sin to sin to greater sin. Jezebel instructed the elders and nobles of Jezreel to frame Naboth for a sin punishable by death - the sin of cursing God and the king. Perhaps the city fathers agreed to do this out of fear of Jezebel's wrath; we know she had ruthlessly killed many others before this time, and certainly she would not hesitate to kill again. However, this does not excuse these men from complying with Jezebel, since we "ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). By doing what Jezebel ordered, these city fathers were also guilty of murder!

Two witnesses were also found to lie about Naboth and charge him with the crime. After this, the entire town took Naboth and his sons outside of the city to be stoned to death. Can you imagine the horror of the God-fearing people of Jezreel if they knew that they were so unwittingly involved in the murder of an innocent man? So Ahab's sin grows from covetousness to a murder frame-up, involving lies, murder and theft, as Ahab takes a vineyard that doesn't belong to him.

Discuss the following with your students: "Ahab and Jezebel didn't touch one stone that was used to kill Naboth and his sons. But do you think they were guilty of murder?" They were both guilty of murder; Jezebel was guilty of plotting Naboth's death and using her power to see that he was killed. But let's not forget Ahab; Jezebel did what she did with his authority, with his seal, and



in his name. He also took possession of the vineyard without question. Even if he was totally ignorant of how Jezebel obtained this property (and there's no real reason to think he didn't know how she did it), he was still guilty of enabling Jezebel to murder Naboth, and thus a willing accessory to the crime.

### **3. Elijah Pronounces Judgment on Ahab, Jezebel and Their Family (I Kings 21:16-29)**

Jezebel had disposed of Naboth neatly and easily, but there was Someone who knew what she, Ahab, the false witnesses and the city fathers had done. Numbers 32:23 states, "You may be sure that your sin will find you out." The Lord God, the Judge of all, was about to put an end to the rule of Ahab and his family.

Ahab went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, and while he was still on the property, Elijah met him with a message from the Lord. Ahab greeted Elijah as his enemy, but Elijah greeted him as an enemy of God. "You have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord," he tells Ahab. Then Elijah pronounced judgment on Ahab and his family. Because he and Jezebel had murdered a man and stolen his property, God would destroy him and all of his male children. There would be no one left in his family to sit on Israel's throne. And there was a special prophecy concerning Jezebel: "Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." This same curse is given in verse 19 about Ahab, and about Ahab's children in verse 24. Be sure to read verse 25 aloud to your class - it is the Lord's assessment of the reign of Ahab and it helps to explain the severity of the judgment that falls on his family.

Elijah's words terrified Ahab; he immediately tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. Because he humbled himself before the Lord, the Lord did not bring the judgment upon his family while he was alive. But Ahab's subsequent actions in I Kings 22 show that he was still far from repentance, and when he died on the battlefield, the dogs licked his blood as it was washed off his chariot (I Kings 22:38). But the full prophecy was fulfilled in the days of his son, Joram. Joram was killed on Naboth's own field, and Jezebel was literally eaten by dogs in Jezreel (see II Kings 9). All the rest of Ahab's male children and grandchildren were killed, and a new king came to the throne of Israel.

Discuss the following with your students: "What a terrible judgment for Ahab and his family! What does that tell us about how God feels about sin? Do you think all of those terrible things would have happened if Ahab, Jezebel and his family had repented and turned to the Lord?" Elijah pronounced this judgment long before it actually took place. There was time that could have been used for repentance. Because the Lord did change some of the prophecy when Ahab humbled himself, we can believe that there would have been forgiveness if he and his family had repented. But we must remind our students that there is a time for repentance, but when that time ends there is a judgment that follows! No one ever gets away with sin - even a sin done as neatly as the murder of Naboth. We can be sure our sin will find us out. Only those who have come to Christ for forgiveness of their sins will be free from the judgment of God. All others will have to stand before Him and give an account of the things they have done in this life.

## Conclusion

As you conclude this lesson, remind your students of the privileges that Ahab had. He had heard the prophet Elijah speak. He had seen the Lord send fire down from heaven on Mount Carmel. He had seen the resulting rain that ended a three-year drought. He even saw Elijah outrun his chariot when the Spirit of God came upon him. Yet despite all of this, Ahab's heart was hard against the Lord and he considered Elijah to be his enemy. What a sad ending his story has! Your students, too, have many privileges. They hear the Word of God in your Sunday School. They learn the way of salvation as you teach. Implore them not to sin against these privileges by hardening their hearts against God, as Ahab did. Their sin will find them out someday unless they know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Stress the importance of making sure that they personally belong to Christ.

## Worksheet

You will need pencils, glue and cotton balls to complete page 8 of the Elijah Book. As your students show the "snowball effect" of sin in this story, have them glue cotton ball "snowballs" to represent the sin. Above the sin of coveting, for example, they may glue only half a cotton ball; by the time they get to the sins of murder and theft, they will probably want to use two or three cotton balls combined. This is a way to illustrate the growth of Ahab's original sin of coveting as it snowballs into an avalanche of wickedness.

## Related Music

"Call on the Lord (While He may Be Found)"; "My Faith Looks Up To Thee" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #528).

## The Snowball Effect

Sin often has a “snowball effect.” It starts out small, and then grows and grows until it becomes an “avalanche” of wickedness. Show how sin grew in the story of Naboth’s vineyard below.

### Coveting

Who did it?

What did he want?

### An Evil Plot

Who plotted against Naboth?

Who went along with the plot?

### Lying

Who lied?

Who did they lie about?

### Murder and Theft

Who was guilty of murder?

Who was killed?

What was taken?

**AVALANCHE!! AVALANCHE!! AVALANCHE!!!**



# **ELIJAH AND ELISHA**

## **II Kings 2**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show the amazing end of Elijah's life and the beginning of Elisha's ministry.

### **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:20** - "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save."

### **Lesson Background**

Elijah is unlike any other character in the Old Testament, and so it is only fitting that the end of his ministry should come as no other's has come. But while we may have great respect for Elijah's courage, faith and perseverance in prayer, we must also note that the Lord's work continues even after Elijah leaves the scene. Elijah has his successor, just as Moses had his successor, Joshua. There is no such thing as an irreplaceable man or woman of God - no matter how much we would like to think so. This is one of the reasons we must take the responsibility of teaching Sunday School so seriously: we are training the next generation of Christians, the ones who will succeed us and carry on our ministries in this world. As we study the good end that Elijah makes, let us resolve to be faithful to the end of the work that God has called each of us to do.

## Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson by reviewing I Kings 19:19-21. Remind your students that the Lord instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha to be his successor. Elisha then left his family and his comfortable home to be Elijah's attendant and to learn from him. Elisha served Elijah for years; he became known as the one who "used to pour water on the hands of Elijah" (II Kings 3:11b). This relationship lasted until the day that Elijah was to be taken up into heaven in a whirlwind.

### 1. **Elijah's Ministry Draws to a Close (II Kings 2:1-10)**

Evidently both Elijah and Elisha were aware that the time had come for Elijah's ministry to end. They were also both aware that Elijah was to be taken to heaven by "unconventional means." Whether the Lord had revealed to them that Elijah would leave in a whirlwind is unclear. But they did know that he would be taken from earth into heaven. The relationship between these two men was very close. Elisha refused to leave Elijah's side for any length of time as the moment of his departure drew near. He didn't even want to speak about Elijah's departure with the other prophets (verses 3,5). Elisha was clearly feeling grief as he prepared to say goodbye to his master. But he was feeling something else as well - as we'll see in verses 9 and 10.

#### **A. Elijah Visits the Companies of Prophets One Last Time (verses 1-5)**

At this time in Israel there were companies of the Lord's prophets living in Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. As Elijah prepared to leave this world, he was sent to visit these companies one last time - perhaps to comfort them, to leave them with some parting words, or to instruct them to accept Elisha as his successor. [These three towns are quite close together, near the Jordan river. You may wish to point them out to your students on the map.] All of the prophets were aware that Elijah was about to leave them. Fifty of the men of the company of prophets accompanied Elijah and Elisha to the Jordan River. They watched as Elijah parted the Jordan River with his cloak, but only Elijah and Elisha crossed over together to the other side. This was their last private time together.

#### **B. Elisha Asks for a Double Portion of Elijah's Spirit (verses 9-10)**

Imagine the thoughts that were going through Elisha's head. He was about to lose his master, which was difficult in and of itself. But he was also aware that it was up to him now to take Elijah's place as the prophet of Israel - the spokesman for God and the leader of the prophets. What a daunting task! Elisha knew that he was picked by God Himself to be Elijah's successor; Elijah had told him that he was instructed to anoint him as such. But who could fill such shoes? It was really to Elisha's credit that he recognized his own weaknesses and inability to do this in his own strength. This was why, when Elijah asked what he could do for him, Elisha requested a "double portion of his spirit."

Some have interpreted this to mean that Elisha wanted to have twice the ministry that Elijah had, or twice the power or ability that he had. But I believe the real emphasis of Elisha's request is understood in light of Old Testament inheritance laws. In Old Testament times, the eldest son, the successor of the estate, was given a double portion of the father's goods. Elisha was expressing his desire to have the power to carry on Elijah's ministry. If

he was truly to be Elijah's successor, then he had to inherit the spirit to do the work he was called to do.

Obviously this was not in Elijah's power to give. It was the Lord who had called Elisha to this work, and it was up to Him to empower or not empower Elisha. But Elijah told his friend that if he was allowed to see Elijah taken up into heaven, he would know that the Spirit of God that was upon Elijah would also be upon him.

## **2. Elijah is Taken Up into Heaven (II Kings 2:11-12)**

The conversation between Elijah and Elisha was suddenly interrupted. A chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared and separated the two men. (I imagine that the chariot came directly at them and Elisha dove to one side as the chariot drove between the two of them.) Elisha was now safely to one side, and the Lord allowed him to see Elijah taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. The sight was awesome; Elisha cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" This probably sounds like an exclamation about the heavenly chariot that Elisha had just seen, but perhaps it was a statement about Elijah. Elijah was "the chariots and horsemen of Israel"; he represented the living God to the nation, the true source of Israel's strength and her only hope of victory. Elisha is called the same thing on his deathbed by King Jehoash of Israel, who recognized the power of God in Elisha (see II Kings 13:14).

So Elijah, like Enoch, was taken to heaven without ever experiencing death. Certainly it is true that, like Enoch, Elijah "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24) and knew God in a very intimate way. What an honor this was for Elijah, and how this sight must have strengthened Elisha - to see the power of God as He brought His servant home to glory!

Tell your students, "God allowed Elisha to see Elijah as he was taken into heaven. This meant that Elisha would have the spirit of Elijah resting upon him. How else do you think this helped Elisha?" Elisha saw his master being received into glory - a sight few have ever seen. He was allowed to glimpse into eternity at the glories awaiting God's faithful servants. He was also reminded of God's great power as he watched this miracle take place.

## **3. Elisha Takes Elijah's Cloak, and His Office as Prophet (II Kings 2:13-18)**

Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak - a symbol of his ministry - and headed back to the Jordan River. The fifty men from the prophets of Jericho were on the other side. Elisha struck the water with Elijah's cloak and called upon the name of the God of Elijah. The waters parted, confirming the succession of Elisha before the prophets who were watching. The prophets acknowledged this by bowing before him.

Still, there seemed to be some lingering doubts. Elisha told them what had occurred, but the prophets wanted to send out a search party for Elijah! Perhaps it was only human nature to want the "good old days" to last forever, but they insisted on searching for their former leader. Elisha allowed them to go even though he knew they would never find him. When they returned, he chided them for not listening to him in the first place.

Ask your students, "Sometimes it's hard to change, isn't it? Sometimes, for example, people love a pastor so much that when the time comes for the pastor to leave, they never really accept the new pastor who arrives. Do you think the prophets should have believed Elisha when he said that Elijah was taken up to heaven? Why?" We know from verses 3 and 5 that everyone was aware that

Elijah was leaving that day. And Elisha certainly told them how Elijah was received into heaven. It's a shame these prophets were so reluctant to receive their new leader. Maybe he wasn't Elijah, but he was still the man God had chosen to succeed Elijah as Israel's prophet.

## **Conclusion**

No one knows how long he has to live on this earth. But the Lord has a fixed amount of time for each of us to live. Maybe we will live until we're 100 years old. But most likely we will not. The time will come when God says, "That's it. It's time for you to go now." If we know Jesus as our Savior, we will be accepted into heaven with all of its joys and wonder. If we are not saved, we will face God's wrath. Let your students know that you want each of them to be welcomed into heaven like Elijah was. A life that is lived for Jesus will always end well.

## **Worksheet**

It's time for the last page in our "Elijah Book." Remind your students of all the lessons they have had on the life of Elijah: Elijah's pronouncement of the drought before Ahab, Elijah and the widow's oil and flour, the raising of the widow's son, Elijah on Mount Carmel and on Mount Horeb, Naboth's vineyard, and today's lesson. Give each of the children a piece of 8.5" by 11" paper (regular typing paper or copy paper will do fine) and have each one draw a picture of his or her favorite Elijah lesson. Be sure to take a look at these in class and comment on them; hopefully you will have a good representation from several of the lessons. Assemble your books with a cover and a back page and arrange the pages in the correct order. The books should go home with the students this week.

## **Related Music**

"Amazing Grace" - emphasis on the last verse, "When we've been there ten thousand years . . ."  
(*Trinity Hymnal*, #460).



# **ELISHA AND THE WIDOW’S OIL**

**II Kings 4:1-7**

## **Lesson Aim**

To discuss and appreciate the “quiet miracles” that the Lord sends our way.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:21a** - “Declare what is to be, present it - let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord?”

## **Lesson Background**

It is amazing and delightful to see the different ways in which the Lord uses people to accomplish His purposes. Elijah was a bold personality, and the Lord worked through him in bold ways, with powerful, awe-inspiring miracles - complete with fireworks! While we also see similar miracles in Elisha’s ministry, we are confronted more with the quiet, “everyday” miracles with which God met the needs of His people. Elisha isn’t even on the scene when some of these miracles take place.

Elisha has a strong awareness of the spiritual world around the natural, workaday world in which we live. We, too, need to be aware of the ways in which the spiritual intersects with the natural in our own lives. This week, pay particular attention to the quiet miracles that happen in your life. Has a prayer been answered? Has an obstacle been removed? Has a “coincidence” turned out to be the providence of God working in your life? Perhaps a quiet miracle will impress your heart this week and you can share this incident with your class.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. “Quiet Miracles”

Remind your students of some of the miracles they have just studied from the life of Elijah. Elijah prayed for a drought and it didn't rain for three years. He prayed for a dead boy to come back to life and the Lord answered his prayer. Elijah prayed down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. All of these are examples of dramatic answers to prayer. But do we always need to pray about “big” things, or is the Lord also interested in the daily needs we face in our lives? Are the quiet answers to prayer as important as the exciting answers we sometimes receive? Very few Christians ever pray down fire from heaven, but we do experience very real answers to prayer on a daily basis as our needs are met by our Heavenly Father. To introduce today's lesson, let's take a look at two other “quiet miracles” that occurred in Elisha's ministry.

#### A. Elisha Feeds a Hundred Men (II Kings 4:42-44)

Here is a simple account of a miracle that the Lord used to feed a hundred men. Elisha was given twenty loaves of bread, and he commanded his servant to give it to the people to eat (this may have been during the famine mentioned in 4:38). The Lord told Elisha that the bread would feed a hundred, and “they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord” (verse 44). This “quiet miracle” fed the Lord's people and proved His sufficiency to meet their needs. [Does this remind you of a miracle Jesus did?]

#### B. Elisha Causes an Axhead to Float (II Kings 6:1-7)

Elisha was working with the company of prophets as they cut down trees by the Jordan River. An iron axhead worked its way loose and fell into the river. It was a borrowed axhead - probably an expensive item, especially for a prophet. Elisha, “the man of God,” cut a stick, threw it into the water, and made the iron float so it could be easily retrieved. This is another instance in which the Lord met an immediate need in a simple but miraculous way. Tell your students, “God's miracles are sometimes big and spectacular, but usually He works in quieter ways, providing for His children in their everyday lives. Today's lesson will focus on a particular woman who had two sons and a very big problem. Let's find out how the Lord met her needs in a “quiet” way.

### 2. The Widow and Her Problem (II Kings 4:1-2)

This woman's husband was one of the company of the prophets that worked with Elisha and stood for the true God of Israel. Explain to your students that when he died, he left his wife and children in a very vulnerable state. In those days, a woman's sole support was her husband, and then later her sons. This man owed money when he died, and now the wife was expected to pay back the money he owed. If she couldn't pay, her two sons could be taken from her and sold as slaves to pay off the debt. There is some evidence that the practice of debt slavery, which was allowed by the Old Testament law only for limited terms, was by this time much abused. Both the prophet Amos, and then much later, Nehemiah, decried the way the Jews bought and sold their countrymen into servitude (Amos 2:6; 8:6; Nehemiah 5:5,8). This widow's sons were her only family and her only hope for the future. How could she pay the money she owed? How could she save her sons? She wisely turned to the man of God, Elisha, for help.

### **3. The Widow and Her Sons are Provided For in a Quiet but Miraculous Way (II Kings 4:2-7)**

Point out the concern that Elisha has for this woman and her sons; as the man of God, he reflects the concern of God for His own. “How can I help you?” he asked. “What do you have in the house?” We see the destitution of this woman, as she replied that she had nothing but a little bit of oil. But a little is enough when God is involved! Elisha told her to borrow as many empty jars as she could find. “Don’t just ask for a few,” he warned her. Then she was to “shut the door” and pour her oil into the empty jars. Elisha told the widow to shut the door because he didn’t want her to pour the oil in front of her neighbors, or even unbelievers. This wasn’t a miracle to convince others of the power of God. It was another quiet miracle, used to meet this woman’s need at a difficult time.

As the woman poured the oil in jar after jar after jar, she found that it did not run out until all the jars were filled. I think it’s interesting that the woman did not immediately take the oil to market, but went and told Elisha what had happened. I think we can assume that she really wanted to be obedient to his word, and to the word of the Lord. Elisha instructed her to sell the oil, and we are told that there was not only enough money to pay off the debt, but enough money left over on which they could live!

Here we see God’s ability to provide more than we even ask or think! Did the woman ask for extra money to use for her family? No, but she had a need for that, and the oil kept flowing until that need was taken care of, too.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s help our students draw some principles from this story that may be helpful to them. Based on these stories about Elisha, ask them if God is interested in the small details of our lives, or does He only want them to come to Him when they have big problems? Does God always answer prayers in the same way, or does He use different means to answer them? Look up Philippians 4:6, James 5:13-15, and I Peter 5:7 with your students. Discuss the importance of bringing all of our needs to our heavenly Father. Remind them that He is as concerned to all of His children as He was for the widow and her two sons. He is a God upon whom we can depend to meet our needs.

## **Worksheet**

This week’s worksheet is very straightforward, but it is designed to get your students to think a little bit about the lesson. Elijah’s miracles that pointed unbelievers to God would be the three-year drought, the fire from heaven, and his sprint in front of Ahab’s chariot. Quieter miracles would include the widow’s flour and oil that never ran out and the raising of the widow’s son. For the last question, help your students to go beyond pat answers like “I would feel happy,” or “I would be surprised.” Remind them that, as sons, they are about to be sold into slavery. Help them to imagine the relief, joy, gratitude, and trust that one of the widow’s sons would be likely to feel.

## **Related Music**

“I Cast All My Cares Upon You”; “‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #679).

## Student Worksheet

## Elisha and the Widow's Oil

Some miracles are used by God to show unbelievers His power and to bring them to repentance. Some of the miracles in Elijah's life were like that. Can you name one?

Can you name a "quieter" miracle from the life of Elijah that was like the widow's oil?

What were the three "quiet miracles" that we learn about in this lesson?

Imagine you are one of the widow's sons. How would you feel when you saw the oil being poured from jar to jar?

### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 45:21a** - "Declare what is to be, present it - let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord?"



# **THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN**

**II Kings 4:8-37**

## **Lesson Aim**

To focus on the faith of the Shunammite woman: how it was demonstrated, how it was tested, and how it was rewarded.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:21b** - “And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.”

## **Lesson Background**

Unlike the majority of the lessons this quarter, which have either Elijah or Elisha as the central character, this week we will be focusing on a recipient of God’s grace through Elisha’s ministry. The Shunammite woman, like many other women in the Bible, is unnamed; yet the account of her hospitality, her faith and her reward make her one of the great female role models in Scripture. Unlike the widow of Zarephath, this woman was an Israelite, married and well-to-do. Like the widow, she demonstrated her faith in God with hospitality to His servant and had her faith severely tested through the death of her only son. Her response in this time of testing shows the depth of her faith in God and her confidence in Elisha, the man of God.

The Shunammite woman formed a lifelong friendship with Elisha; we see Elisha’s concern for her not only in II Kings 4, but also in II Kings 8:1-6, as Elisha warns her about an upcoming famine. This woman’s testimony of godliness and faith was not short-lived; it evidently stood the test of time. Our students are just beginning their lives, and some will no doubt walk with the Lord for many, many years.

Let's use this lesson today to encourage our students to live their lives by faith as they look to the Lord for all of their needs.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. The Shunammite Woman and Elisha (II Kings 4:8-17)**

Elisha, the Lord's prophet, was often on the move. He often traveled from town to town, proclaiming God's message, meeting with the companies of prophets, etc. - it certainly must have been wearisome at times. Remind your students that there were no Holiday Inns or McDonalds when Elisha was around! He depended upon those among whom he traveled for hospitality. As he traveled through Shunem, there was a wealthy woman who recognized his need for a "home-cooked meal" and invited him to stop and eat at her house whenever he passed that way.

#### **A. The Shunammite Woman Builds a Room for Elisha (verses 9-10)**

As time passed, the woman came to two realizations - that Elisha was a "holy man of God" (God had set him apart to use in a very special way) and that the prophet could use a place to stay - a need for which she and her husband had the means to provide. "Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us" (verse 10).

What a blessing this would have been for Elisha - to have a room where he could stay and relax when he was in the area! This woman didn't just say she cared about Elisha and the Lord's work - she showed she cared! She demonstrated her faith in the importance of Elisha's work by going to the trouble of building a room for the man of God. Remind your students that it's easy to say you believe something or to say that someone is important to you; it's another thing to prove it. The Shunammite woman proved her faith by building this room for Elisha.

#### **B. Elisha Prophesies the Birth of Her Son (verses 11-17)**

Elisha was touched by the woman's generosity and offered to speak on her behalf to the king or commander of the army (this shows something of Elisha's influence among the most powerful people in Israel). The woman said she was content to live as she was and didn't desire favors from anyone in the government. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, remarked that the woman "has no son, and her husband is old." This would indeed be a burden to the woman's heart; if her husband died without a male heir, his land would be given to other relatives and she would have no son to take care of her in her old age. Elisha told the Shunammite woman that within a year she would be holding a son in her arms. The woman was incredulous. "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God," she cried, unwilling to get her hopes up that such a marvelous prophecy could come true. But verse 17 tells us that she did indeed become pregnant and gave birth to a son "just as Elisha had told her."



## 2. The Shunammite Woman's Faith Tested (II Kings 4:18-30)

The years passed and the child grew. One day the boy was out with his father and became ill - perhaps with sunstroke or some other ailment. The father ordered the child to be taken to his mother, and within hours his condition worsened and he died in his mother's arms.

What was the Shunammite woman to make of this disaster? Had God promised her a son, only to take him away from her in a few short years? This did not make sense to her; she could not accept that this death is God's will for her. She summoned up all of her faith and courage and determined to go to Elisha himself and bring him back with her to help her son.

She shared her despair with no one - not her husband (verse 23), not even Gehazi, Elisha's servant (verse 26). She went to Elisha and spoke of her "bitter distress." "Did I ask you for a son, my lord?" she said. "Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes?'" Elisha showed his concern by sending Gehazi down immediately with his staff in his hand as Elisha's representative. The woman urged him to go as well, saying she would not leave him, "as surely as the Lord lives and you live."

We see this woman in a time of crisis, when something terrible has happened and she doesn't understand why it has happened. Does she get angry with the Lord? Does she get angry with Elisha? What does she do? The Shunammite woman is grappling with despair and confusion, but she does not turn to Elisha in anger (like the widow of Zarephath turned on Elijah). Rather, she goes to Elisha with her distress and her confusion and looks to him for help. She clings to him, knowing that as God's representative Elisha is her only source of hope. What does this say to us? What should we do when bad things happen to us? To whom should we turn? Remind your students of the importance of taking our burdens and our questions to the Lord. He does hear prayer; He does answer; He does have a purpose in all things, even when we don't understand what that purpose is.

## 3. The Shunammite Woman Receives Her Reward (II Kings 4:31-37)

Gehazi's efforts yielded no results, and Elisha found the boy dead on his couch. Elisha shut the door and remained alone with the dead boy. He prayed earnestly to the Lord. Then, in a manner reminiscent of Elijah's action with the son of the widow of Zarephath (perhaps he had heard Elijah tell of it), he stretched himself over the boy's body, "mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands." The boy's body grew warm. Elisha persisted, and after stretching himself over the child once more, the boy came back to life.

What a beautiful scene it must have been as Elisha presented the living boy to his mother. She fell at Elisha's feet, perhaps too moved for mere words. Then she took her restored son and left the prophet.

## Conclusion

Have your students look up Hebrews 11:32-35 and read these verses aloud in class. Verse 35 states that, because of their faith, "women received their dead, raised back to life again." Ask your students what two women the writer of Hebrews was probably thinking about - obviously, the widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite woman. The Shunammite woman is an example of what faith is all about. She proved her faith by providing a room for Elisha. She had her faith tested when her son died, and her faith was rewarded when her son was raised to life again. If we are Christians, then the Bible says we must live by faith. We will

show our faith by the way we live. We will go to the Lord with our hurts and questions. And if we live by faith like the Shunammite woman, we, too, will receive a reward. What do you think that reward will be? Your students will probably suggest heaven and eternal life, “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade - kept in heaven for you” (I Peter 1:4). Remind your students that a life lived for Jesus will never disappoint, and that it leads to an eternal reward some day.

## **Worksheet**

In Part I of the worksheet, your students will write either “did” or “did not” in the blank spaces - whichever phrase will make the sentence true. The answers should read: did, did not, did not, did not, did, did not, did. In Part II, encourage your students to think of some of the ways they show they are “true friends” - do they listen to their friends when they have problems? Do they share their toys or their lunches? Do they stick up for their friends in front of other children? You might direct them to verses like Proverbs 17:17 and Proverbs 27:10.

## **Related Music**

“Seek Ye First”; “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #528).

## Student Worksheet

## The Shunammite Woman

### Did ... Did Not

Fill in the blank with either “did” or “did not” to make the following sentences true.

1. The Shunammite woman \_\_\_\_\_ build a room for Elisha.
2. She \_\_\_\_\_ ask Elisha for a son.
3. She \_\_\_\_\_ tell her husband that the child had died.
4. She \_\_\_\_\_ become angry with Elisha.
5. Elisha \_\_\_\_\_ go with the woman back to her house.
6. The boy \_\_\_\_\_ come back to life the first time Elisha stretched himself over him.
7. The woman \_\_\_\_\_ receive her son - alive again!

### Forever Friends

How did the Shunammite woman show she was a good friend to Elisha? \_\_\_\_\_

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How did Elisha show he was a good friend to the woman? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways do you show yourself to be a good friend to your friends? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 45:21b** - “And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.”



# **NAAMAN THE LEPER**

**II Kings 5:1-14**

## **Lesson Aim**

To see that worldly wealth, fame and power are unimpressive to God. He desires obedient and humble worshipers.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:22** - “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”

## **Lesson Background**

Humility doesn't come easily to any of us, much less so to a man like Naaman, commander of the armies of Aram. He was a man used to giving orders and having them obeyed. He was used to respectful and even fearful attentiveness. But Naaman is about to have a lesson in humility - a lesson that will ultimately bring about physical and spiritual healing in his life.

The political situation at this time in Israel's history is somewhat confusing and needs some explanation. Israel had worked out a peace treaty with the Arameans during King Ahab's reign (see I Kings 20:34). However, the armies of Aram continued to make border raids on Israel over disputed territory, and it was during such a raid that the young Israelite girl was taken captive. These raids did not negate the peace treaty, however; the Israelites tolerated them in order to avoid all-out war. This is why the king of Aram felt free to send the commander of his army to Israel with a letter demanding his healing. This also explains King Joram's dismay when he thought Aram was “picking a quarrel.” Joram wanted to avoid a war with the Arameans and was fearful that this incident might set off a confrontation. Elisha entered this touchy,

potentially volatile situation by inviting the commander to his home. There he would learn “that there is a prophet in Israel” (verse 8) - and a great deal more!

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Naaman’s Position and Power (II Kings 5:1)**

Naaman was the commander of the armies of Aram - a powerful position in which he enjoyed the favor and the ear of the king of Aram. The Aramean king regarded Naaman highly because of his victories in battle, although the writer of II Kings reminds us that it was the Lord, who controls all events in history, who allowed Naaman to win his battles. Naaman was a man of wealth, power and position. He had the army and all of the resources of Aram at his disposal. But Naaman was also a man with a problem; Naaman had leprosy. All of his money, all of his power, and all of his influence in the royal court were unable to cure him. He was as helpless to cure himself of this disease as even the lowliest slave in the kingdom. His position and power could not rid him of his leprosy.

Whether Naaman’s leprosy was what we think of as classic leprosy (Hansen’s disease) or whether it was another kind of infectious skin disease remains unclear. Whatever he had, it is clear that it was serious. We see its seriousness in that:

- his household was concerned about it (verse 3)
- his king was willing to send him to Israel for a cure and to pay highly for it (verse 5)
- Naaman himself was willing to go to incredible lengths to be cured (verse 13)

Ask your students, “Is this true even today? Are there diseases and problems today that even rich and famous people, powerful people, are helpless against?” Remind your students that diseases such as cancer, AIDS, and heart disease can kill people from all walks of life. Other problems, such as unhappiness in marriage, wayward children, drunkenness and drug abuse also affect the “rich and famous” - in fact, sometimes they seem to suffer such things more than average people. Like Naaman, many rich and powerful people find that who they are and what they have alone can’t make their lives happy.

### **2. Naaman’s Servant Girl Speaks of Elisha (II Kings 5:2-8)**

What an example this young Israelite girl is for our students, and for us as well! She was taken captive from her home and family and forced to live as a servant among the Arameans. But instead of being bitter and angry, she showed true love and concern for her master, Naaman. She told her mistress, Naaman’s wife, that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure Naaman of his leprosy. It was her witness to the power of God in Elisha that gave Naaman and his wife hope, and Naaman spoke to the king of Aram about “what the girl from Israel had said” (verse 4).

#### **A. Naaman is Sent to Samaria (verses 5-6)**

The king of Aram showed that he, too, was anxious for his commander to find a cure; he was not willing to lose such a skillful man as Naaman. He sent Naaman to Samaria, where the king of Israel ruled, with a letter and a great deal of silver, gold, and ten sets of clothing. The letter to King Joram of Israel stated that he was sending Naaman to Israel to

be cured of leprosy - but there was no mention in the letter of any prophet who might be involved. Either the king of Aram forgot, or misunderstood, about the prophet who could heal Naaman, or perhaps he merely assumed that the king of Israel would be aware of who the prophet was and have him immediately at his disposal. Whatever the situation, the omission of the prophet's name caused Joram a great deal of grief.

## **B. The King of Israel Fears the Worst (verses 7-8)**

King Joram tore his clothes to signify his grief and despair when he read the letter from Aram. "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?" Obviously not; Joram feared that the king of Aram was trying to pick a fight with him, to find some cause worthy of breaking the peace treaty so that he could declare war. He didn't even think about the prophet Elisha, or about the God of Israel who really could do something about Naaman's leprosy. Like many politicians of today, Joram's view of life was totally secular. He had no thought of taking this problem to Elisha. But Elisha sent a message to him, chiding him for his lack of faith and inviting the commander to visit him.

Ask your students, "Who was the better witness for the Lord - Joram, the great king of Israel, or a little slave girl from Israel?" Obviously the little girl shames the king of Israel in this story. She had faith in the power of God, she knew where Naaman could be cured of his leprosy, and she witnessed to that effect. Joram should have known where he could send Naaman, but his terror and despair showed he didn't have a clue. Remind your students that you don't have to be famous or important to be a good witness for the Lord. A heart that cares and a willingness to share the message of Jesus are all that the Lord requires.

## **3. Naaman Visits Elisha (II Kings 5:9-13)**

No doubt in Naaman's country there were so-called "prophets" or healers who provided that service for a certain price. This was the case in most pagan cultures of the day, and in many places it is still practiced. Naaman went to Elisha's home for a cure, but he went with money to pay for it. And notice that he didn't just walk to Elisha's place there in Samaria; Naaman arrived with a full entourage of chariots, horses and servants. Clearly he was demonstrating to the prophet that he was a man to be reckoned with - a man of importance and influence. Elisha would stand to gain much if he was able to cure Naaman's leprosy.

### **A. Elisha Tells Naaman to Wash in the Jordan River Seven Times (verse 10)**

Notice the irony in this scene: Naaman arrived in all his glory, eager to impress Elisha, and Elisha didn't even bother to appear in person before him! He sent a servant with a message for Naaman, which was an insult in and of itself. But the message made the situation worse: "Go wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored."

### **B. Naaman's Pride is Wounded and He Becomes Angry (verses 11-13)**

This response was not what Naaman had expected at all. Elisha didn't even bother to see him. There was no display of Elisha's "magical power"; Naaman thought he would

come out and wave his hand over him to call upon the Lord. And wash in the Jordan, that muddy river? What good would that do him? Naaman didn't understand that the power of healing was not Elisha's, but God's. God would heal him of his leprosy, but only if he was willing to humble himself and become obedient to Him.

Ask your students, "If Elisha had come out to Naaman, waved his hands and healed him, and then accepted money for the healing, who would probably have gotten the credit for the miracle?" (Naaman probably would have thought it was Elisha's power that healed him.) "Also, if Elisha did that, what would be required of Naaman? Would he have to have any faith for that kind of healing?" Naaman was going to Elisha the way a patient goes to a doctor - with money in hand, hoping for a cure. But Elisha was looking for a spiritual as well as a physical healing for Naaman. Naaman was angry with the prophet's instructions, but his servants found the courage to approach him with some wise advice. Read verse 13 aloud with your students and remark on the reasonableness of the servants. After all, the only thing Naaman had to lose by washing in the Jordan seven times was a little time . . . and a little pride. Was that such a large price to pay for a cure?

#### **4. Naaman is Cured of His Leprosy (II Kings 5:14)**

Even Naaman was unable to argue with the logic of his servants. Although he was reluctant to obey, he took himself to the Jordan River and dipped himself in seven times. To his great joy he discovered that the prophet was right - his leprosy was cured, and his skin was as clean as that of a young boy!

Ask your students, "How do you think Naaman felt when he discovered he was healed? Do you think he thought it was worth it to humble himself and obey the prophet's instructions?" Next week we will discover just how changed Naaman really was - the healing wasn't just "skin deep!" As you conclude this week's lesson, remind your students that it is humble obedience that matters with the Lord, not who we are and what we have. You can develop this idea further by comparing the "three powerful men" with the "two humble Israelites" in this story. When the powerful men were at a loss, the two humble Israelites knew the truth and pointed to their God. Encourage your students to be obedient to the Lord, both in their behavior and their witness in the world.

### **Worksheet**

This week we'll be doing a "grown-up" kind of Bible study, so you'll want to do the worksheets in class. Help your students to find the books of Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. The questions are very straightforward, but you'll want to look up the verses ahead of time.

### **Related Music**

"Create in Me a Clean Heart"; "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #253).



**Our Great Physician**

In today’s lesson, Naaman needed healing for his leprosy. According to the Bible, we also need healing, but we need healing from our sins. Look up the following verses about healing, and answer the questions.

**Psalm 103:2-3** - Who is able to heal all of our diseases? \_\_\_\_\_

What else can He do? \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 147:3** - Whom does the Lord heal in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

**Malachi 4:2** - Who are the people the Lord heals? \_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 17:14** - For what two things does Jeremiah pray? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 33:6** - What three things does God promise here to bring to His people?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Bible often compares leprosy to sin. Like leprosy, sin is a disease that spreads throughout a person. Like leprosy, sin will lead to death. Like a leper, a sinner is in need of cleansing and healing. When a person was cured of leprosy in Old Testament times, the law required a sacrifice before he was pronounced clean (see Leviticus 14:19).

**I Peter 2:24** - Whose sacrifice was required for the believer’s cleansing? \_\_\_\_\_

What must we die to? \_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:22** - “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”



# **THE SIN OF GEHAZI**

**II Kings 5:15-27**

## **Lesson Aim**

To show students the impossibility of serving “two masters” and impress upon them that God must have first place in our lives.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:23** - “By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”

## **Lesson Background**

Gehazi’s punishment may not seem in keeping with his sin until we understand the nature of that sin. When Naaman came to Elisha with money in hand, he was attempting to “purchase” the power of the Lord for a cure for his leprosy. Elisha went to great pains to show him that that is not the way the Lord works; He is not impressed by power, position or money, but looks for those who humbly obey Him. Gehazi’s sin was not just one of covetousness and falsehood. He cheapened God’s gracious healing in Naaman’s life by making merchandise of God’s power. He also managed to blur the distinction between Elisha, a true prophet of God, and the “prophets for hire” with whom Naaman was familiar. For a New Testament equivalent to the story of Gehazi, look at Acts 8:9-25, the account of Simon the sorcerer. Simon also tried to make religion profitable by attempting to purchase the Holy Spirit from the apostles. The sin of religious profiteering is a serious one, and God condemns it strongly in both the Old and New Testaments.

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. Naaman Returns to See Elisha (II Kings 5:14-19)

After Naaman was healed by dipping himself into the Jordan River seven times, he returned to speak to the prophet Elisha. This time Elisha actually spoke face to face with him, as Naaman acknowledged the supremacy of the Lord God of Israel. “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel” (verse 15). Naaman offered a gift to Elisha to show his gratitude, but Elisha refused the gift; he would not accept money for Naaman’s cure. Naaman then asked to be allowed to take back some soil from Israel because he would “never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord” (verse 17). Naaman held the pagan belief that he could only worship a god on the soil of that god’s nation. He wanted to bring home soil from Israel so that he could worship the Lord in Aram. Here again we see the faith of someone outside of the covenant nation of Israel. Like the widow of Zarephath, Naaman had seen the power of the Lord and believed in Him. He stood as a testimony against the nation of Israel, which had the law, the promises, the sacrifices, and the prophets, and yet continued in unbelief. Naaman’s faith was another fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32:21 - “I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation with no understanding.” Jesus rebuked the unbelieving Jews of his day by reminding them of the faith of Naaman. “And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed - only Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27). God’s grace extended beyond the boundaries of Israel when His own people rejected Him, and Naaman was the recipient of that grace.

### 2. Gehazi Plots to Profit from Naaman’s Cleansing (II Kings 5:20-25)

Gehazi was Elisha’s servant and filled a position similar to the one that Elisha filled for the prophet Elijah. It has been suggested that Gehazi might have been a “prophet in training,” but we see no record of God’s call to Gehazi for that office as we saw in the case of Elisha. But Gehazi was a man who had been with Elisha for some time and was Elisha’s constant companion (see II Kings 4:11, 25). Certainly by this time he should have understood the prophet’s heart and ministry, but in this instance he decided to second-guess Elisha. “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean,” he thought to himself, and he plotted a way to take advantage of Naaman’s generosity and “get something from him” (verse 20).

Discuss the following with your students: “Gehazi saw a way to make some ‘easy money’; after all, Naaman was willing to give Elisha the money, wasn’t he? What would it hurt if Gehazi took just some of Naaman’s gold and silver off his hands? Would that be such a big deal?” Explain to your students that it was a “big deal.” By accepting Naaman’s gifts, it would look like the healing was something that could be bought or sold. It would take this glorious gift from God and put it on the same level as buying a pair of shoes or a couple of chickens. Elisha was adamant against taking Naaman’s money, and Gehazi was going behind Elisha’s back to make a little profit. Remind your students that even Christians are sometimes tempted to take the easy way and sin “just a little bit.” Maybe they cheat on their income taxes so that the government will send them a larger refund check. Or maybe they’ll sell their car for a good price without explaining that the car has engine problems. Even preachers can be tempted to do the “Lord’s work” for money; in recent years there have been several well-known cases in which preachers have been arrested and convicted for the ways they used money that people gave them for their “ministries.” Tell your students that the story of Gehazi shows how seriously the Lord takes such sins; His people must be careful to be honest, especially when they are doing the Lord’s work!

## **A. Gehazi Lies to Naaman and Accepts His Gifts (verses 21-23)**

Have your students read these verses aloud in class, and then have them tell you in their own words how Gehazi tricked Naaman into believing that Elisha wanted some of the silver and two sets of clothing. Point out to your students that Gehazi wasn't overly greedy; he didn't ask for all of the silver or any of the gold. Point out as well that Naaman was happy to send these things with Gehazi; in fact, he constrained Gehazi to take two talents of silver instead of just one. Naaman was grateful for the healing he had received and he showed his gratitude in his generosity.

## **B. Gehazi Attempts to Hide His Sin from Elisha (verses 24-25)**

But Gehazi's sin was not hidden from God, and God had revealed Gehazi's sin to Elisha. Elisha began his denunciation of Gehazi's sin by asking, "Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants?" (Perhaps some or all of these things were what Gehazi was planning to do with his new-found wealth!) Elisha was showing Gehazi that his heart and mind were on the wrong things. This was the time to be warning the Israelites of their sin and to point them to the Lord. It was a time for self-sacrifice and total dedication to the Lord's work. Gehazi's mind was on his earthly situation, not on spiritual things. Then Elisha pronounced Gehazi's punishment: the leprosy from which Naaman had been cured would cling to Gehazi and his descendants forever. Even as Gehazi left Elisha's presence the leprosy appeared, "as white as snow."

Remind your students of last week's "Bible study," in which they learned that the Bible compares leprosy to sin. "In what way was Gehazi's heart 'leprous' before his body was?" Gehazi's heart was leprous, or sinful, because he coveted worldly wealth and he used deceit to acquire it. In so doing, he went against Elisha's directives and compromised the Lord's work by taking money for Naaman's healing. Have your students look up Matthew 6:24 and read it aloud in class. Then ask the following questions:

- What did Jesus say it is impossible to do? (Serve both God and money)
- Who was Gehazi supposed to be serving? (God)
- What was he really serving, and how did he show this? (He was really serving money because he gave that first place in his life)

Gehazi is a perfect illustration of Christ's teaching on the impossibility of serving God and money - or God and anything else, for that matter. Remind your students that serving God means putting Him before all other things. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). Encourage them to examine their own hearts to see if they are putting anything else before the Lord.

## **Worksheet**

Remind your students briefly of the story of Naboth's Vineyard and how Ahab's sin of coveting eventually snowballed into murder and theft. Then help your students do the compare/contrast section of the worksheet. [NOTE: Your students may need to be reminded of the definition of coveting. Explain the concept of coveting and then help them define it in their own words.]

## **Related Music**

“Jesus is All the World to Me” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #653).

## Student Worksheet

## The Sin of Gehazi

Ahab was the rich and powerful king of Israel; Gehazi was a humble servant of the humble Elisha. But they both had a lot in common. They were both guilty of the sin of coveting!

What is coveting? \_\_\_\_\_

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What did King Ahab covet? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Gehazi covet? \_\_\_\_\_

Remember how Ahab's sin "snowballed" from coveting to lying to murder and theft? How did Gehazi's sin of coveting "snowball"? \_\_\_\_\_

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Was Ahab punished for his sin? \_\_\_\_\_

How was Gehazi punished for his sin? \_\_\_\_\_

### Up Close and Personal

Jesus said that it is impossible to serve two masters. What did Gehazi put before the Lord?

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What other kinds of things can people serve instead of serving God? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are there things in your life that want "first place"? \_\_\_\_\_

Think this week about putting God first in everything you do!

### Memory Verse

**Isaiah 45:23** - "By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear."





# **ELISHA AT DOTHAN**

**II Kings 6:8-23**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand that seeing with the “eyes of faith” is the only way to see reality.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:24** - “They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. All who have raged against Him will come to Him and be put to shame.’”

## **Lesson Background**

Our society today places a lot of importance on the need to be “realistic.” A “realist” is a pragmatic thinker - one who will not hold to romantic ideals or unreasonable optimism. Sometimes we come across such individuals, who may comment that they see no need of Christian education for their children. After all, they argue, isn’t it necessary for us to bring our children up to live in the “real” world?

But wait a minute - just what do they mean by the “real” world? If they mean a world without God, without spiritual forces, without purpose and meaning, then they are the ones living in unreality! Our lesson today makes it quite clear that only the eyes of faith can see the true reality of the universe. Only the Christian can understand that behind the ordinary routine of our daily lives there is an unseen reality, as God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). The story of Elisha at Dothan lifts the veil between the seen and unseen realities of this world and allows a brief glance at the spiritual forces around us. Let’s use this lesson to show our students the unseen reality so that they, like Elisha’s servant, will be aware that “those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

## Lesson Procedure

### 1. Elisha Frustrates the King of Aram (II Kings 6:8-13)

While verse 8 states that the King of Aram was at war with Israel, verse 23 clarifies the political situation by stating that Aram had been sending troops to raid Israel's territory. Perhaps this was just a continuation of "business as usual" for the Arameans, or perhaps there was some escalation of these attacks in an attempt to draw Israel into an all-out war. It is fairly clear from this section of Scripture that at this time Aram had the military advantage over Israel; look, for example, at how easily they surrounded Dothan (which was only a short distance from Samaria, the capital!) in verse 14.

Despite Aram's military strength, however, the king of Aram found himself continually frustrated in the raids against Israel. Elisha was informed by the Lord as to the places where the Arameans were lying in wait and he passed this information on to the king. This happened time and again until the king of Aram was enraged. He summoned his officers and demanded to know who the "traitor" was! "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" (verse 11).

The officers of Aram assured the king that they were not traitors. They told him that the prophet Elisha was counseling the king of Israel and telling him "the very words you speak in your bedroom." Naaman doesn't appear to have been one of this group; nevertheless, his encounter with Elisha may have been common knowledge among the other officers of Aram, who obviously held a very high opinion of the prophet.

This was a problem that the king of Aram decided to settle in his usual military way. "Find out where he is so I can . . . capture him." If you think about it, this was rather ridiculous; Elisha was as likely to be aware of his "kidnaping" attempt like he was of the other raids the Arameans had attempted. But the king of Aram was not used to thinking about the power of Elisha's God. He was only used to responding with his own power - the might of his army.

### 2. The Army of Aram Goes to Dothan (II Kings 6:14-17)

The king of Aram sent out his spies and the report came back - Elisha was in Dothan. You may wish to use a Bible map to show your students where Dothan is located. It is almost exactly between Jezreel and Samaria, the two residences of the king of Israel. At this point, the armies of Israel must have posed so little threat that the Arameans were able to march a strong force, with chariots and horses, right into the heart of the country. They came in by night and surrounded the city with ease.

#### A. Elisha's Servant is Alarmed by the Troops of Aram (verse 15)

Imagine getting up one morning, looking out your window, and discovering that enemy soldiers are surrounding you on every side! This is exactly the sight that greeted Elisha's servant that morning. There was no way for the people to defend themselves against Aram's chariots and horses and no way for them to escape the surrounding forces. The servant went to Elisha and cried, "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?"

## **B. Elisha Shows His Servant the “Real” Reality (verses 16-17)**

The servant was looking at their apparently hopeless situation; his alarm was based on what he saw with his physical eyes. But the prophet had the gift of spiritual sight. He comforted the servant by saying, “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Elisha knew that there is greater strength in the unseen forces of God than in all the armies of all the enemies of God.

He prayed that his servant, too, would have the gift of spiritual sight. And the servant’s eyes were opened so that he was able to see “the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” To the army of Aram, Elisha looked like a “sitting duck”; in reality, the army didn’t stand a chance against the forces of heaven!

Ask your students if the chariots of fire appeared when the servant’s eyes were opened or if they were there all along? They were there all along, of course, but they were invisible to the physical eye. The only two who could see the heavenly army were Elisha and his servant - the ones to whom God revealed them. “What does that say about our world today? Are there forces in the universe that we can’t see, that we know are there by faith?” The Bible tells us that there is a spiritual world made up of angels and demons, “the powers of this dark world, and . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12), which operate unseen by human eyes. We know from Hebrews 1:14 that angels are ministering spirits, sent by our heavenly Father to serve believers. Have your students look up Psalm 34:7 and Psalm 91:11-12, which speak of the protection that angels give to those who fear God. No, we cannot see these spiritual forces with our physical eyes, but we can see them with the “eyes of faith” by believing God’s Word and knowing that they are all about us.

## **3. Elisha Captures the Arameans (II Kings 6:18-23)**

This part of the story can only strike one as amusing; here is a strong force from the king of Aram, surrounding the city of Dothan, swooping down to capture a single man. Instead, the prophet singlehandedly captured them, fed them dinner, and sent them home! As the army came down to take Elisha, he prayed that their eyes would be blinded. The Lord then blinded the Arameans, which must have led to total panic.

Elisha then told them that they were in the wrong road and at the wrong city, and that he would lead them to the man they were seeking. Don’t get too hung up on whether this was a lie, whether it was a sin, or whether God condones this kind of lie, etc. After all, Elisha accompanied them to Samaria, where they would find him! Try to imagine what this group must have looked like traveling to Samaria, about eleven miles south of Dothan. Did they travel choo-choo style, one behind the other, to keep from getting separated? However they got there, they must have been quite a sight to the people of Samaria.

The city of Samaria was built like a fortress, and once the Aramean soldiers were inside, they would be trapped. After entering the city, Elisha prayed for the eyes of the soldiers to be opened once more. Suddenly, the soldiers received their vision and understood their predicament - enemy forces trapped in the capital city of the nation they had invaded!

The king of Israel became aware of the situation and asked Elisha if the enemy soldiers should be killed. Elisha told him that the soldiers are prisoners of war; “would you kill men you

have captured with your own sword or bow?” (verse 22). This last remark reminded the king that it wasn’t his sword or bow that had captured these soldiers - it was the God of Israel. Elisha instructed the king to feed the soldiers and a great feast was set before them. Then the soldiers were sent home to Aram with quite a tale to tell! As a footnote, the writer of II Kings tells us, “So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory” (verse 23). Ask your students why they think this happened. Obviously, raiding Israel’s territory was a fruitless pursuit, and the king of Aram had recognized, at least for a time, that it was impossible to thwart the God of Israel.

## Conclusion

Have your students look up Psalm 91 again and read the entire psalm, which speaks of the security of those who “rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” Then have your students look up Romans 8:38-39. Remind them that there is an unseen spiritual world around us and that God is fully capable of protecting and delivering His own no matter who or what they are up against. He can protect the soldier in battle or the student in school who is threatened by gangs or bullies. He can protect the jet pilot flying over enemy territory or the family driving home in a blinding snowstorm. We need to see reality through the eyes of faith and remember that God is able to take care of His own.

## Worksheet

Part I of the worksheet is self-explanatory. In Part II, help your students think of situations when they will want to know that the Lord is able to protect them and keep them. Perhaps it is in school situations when they are threatened by bullies. Perhaps one of them is terrified of tornadoes or earthquakes. Encourage each student to come up with a situation that is relevant to him or her. You might even encourage them to memorize Psalm 91:14-15 for the times when they need to be reminded of God’s loving protection.

## Related Music

“Open My Eyes, Lord (I Want to See Jesus)”;  
“A Shelter in the Time of Storm” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #619)

I. **Unscramble the Verse** - Look up Psalm 91:14-15. Unscramble the words below the verse and put them in the correct blank spaces.

“‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will \_\_\_\_\_ him. I will protect him, for he \_\_\_\_\_ my name. He will call \_\_\_\_\_ me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_ him and \_\_\_\_\_ him.’”

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rhoon

II. Does Elisha ever seem afraid in this story? \_\_\_\_\_ Why or why wasn't he afraid?

\_\_\_\_\_

Was Psalm 91:14-15 true for Elisha? \_\_\_\_\_ Can you think of a time when you would like to remember the verses above? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does God have the power to deliver you in times of trouble? \_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:24** - “They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. All who have rages against Him will come to Him and be put to shame.’”



# **THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA**

**II Kings 6:24-7:20**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students realize that our God is sovereign over all situations and has the power to change circumstances completely.

## **Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:25** - "But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult."  
Review entire Isaiah 45 passage this week.

## **Lesson Background**

This lesson on the siege of Samaria contains some material that is really too graphic and gory for children of this age group; we will not deal with the account found in II Kings 6:26-30 (concerning the two women who cooked their sons and ate them) in class. But it is important for us to consider this as background to the lesson. In Leviticus 26:27-29 and Deuteronomy 28:53-57, we see the Lord describing some of the consequences of sin to the nation of Israel; in these particular passages, the cannibalism they would resort to in time of siege. These are the "covenant curses" that would come upon the people if they broke God's covenant with them and worshiped other gods. The sin of King Joram and his people was so great that these curses came upon them at this time of siege. This suffering should have led Israel to remember the covenant and repent of her sin. Instead, we see that King Joram blames both God (II Kings 6:33) and Elisha (verse 31) for the state of the city and the suffering within. God mercifully delivers Israel at this time, allowing them a reprieve from the curse. But in the years to come, after Israel's stubborn refusal

to repent, the nation would eventually be removed from the world scene altogether (for an account of the final judgment of Israel, read II Kings 17:7-23). While we will not discuss some of the more horrific details of the siege with our students, we will speak of the famine and the starvation, and it is important to stress to your students that this siege was a judgment from God because of the Israelites' sin.

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. The Arameans Attack Samaria (II Kings 6:24-33)**

Review with your students the uneasy truce that existed between Aram and Israel and the continuing border raids that we've discussed in the last several lessons. Although the border raids ceased temporarily after Elisha captured the Aramean soldiers at Dothan, verse 24 states that "some time later" Ben-Hadad declared all-out war on Israel. Also remind your students of the fortress-like construction of Samaria. While the city was well-built to defend against attacks, there was a problem with getting supplies in and out of the city. Because the people were starving to death, they disregarded all of the ceremonial laws of uncleanness and ate whatever they could get their hands on. Even the head of a donkey was being sold for two pounds' worth of silver! King Joram of Israel was faced with an impossible situation; if they left the city, they had to face Ben-Hadad and the army of Aram. If they stayed, they would all starve to death slowly. What should the king do?

The elders of the city knew. Look at verse 32 - they were sitting with Elisha in his house rather than with the king. They knew that their deliverance would come from the Lord if it came from anywhere, and so they sat with His prophet, awaiting His word. But Joram was not sitting with Elisha. He blamed the Lord (verse 33) for this terrible situation and he also blamed Elisha. He cursed Elisha in verse 31 and threatened his life. Then he sent an executioner to carry out Elisha's murder.

Ask your students what good it would have done the king to have Elisha killed. Absolutely no good, since their situation would still be as desperate as before. "What should the king be doing instead?" The king should be repenting! He should be seeking God in this time of crisis. And he should be with the city elders in the house of Elisha.

### **2. Elisha Speaks of the Deliverance of the City (II Kings 7:1-2)**

Elisha had the city elders shut the door against the king's messenger, but the king quickly followed and entered the house. Elisha told him that by "this time tomorrow" there would be plenty of food at an affordable price. One of the king's counselors scoffed at this: "Even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?" After all, it takes time for things to grow. Even if the drought were to end immediately, Elisha's prophecy seemed impossible to this man.

Elisha told the king's counselor that he would see this happen with his own eyes but that he would not eat any of it - another difficult prophecy to understand. But the events of that very evening were about to make both of Elisha's prophecies come true.

### **3. Four Lepers Discover the Aramean Camp (II Kings 7:3-15)**

If the situation of the people in the city looked desperate, take a look at the situation of the four lepers at the gate of the city. As lepers, they lived off whatever they could get from begging.



But now even the affluent people of Samaria were starving, which meant a definite downturn in the begging business! If they stayed at the gate, they would die. If they went into the city, they would starve to death and die. They decided among themselves that their only recourse was to surrender to the Arameans. The Arameans might spare them and feed them, and if they killed them, well, they were going to die anyway. It seemed like the only option available, so the lepers left for the Aramean camp at dusk.

#### **A. The Aramean Army is Driven Off by the Lord (verses 5-7)**

Read verses 5-7 aloud in your class. Explain to your students that often the kings of this time would hire the armies of other nations to help them win their battles. When the Lord caused the Arameans to hear the sound of a great approaching host, they immediately thought that Israel was being helped by a hired army. Like most bullies, they retreated from a real fight; they fled the area so quickly that they even left their horses and donkeys behind! When the lepers arrived at the enemy camp they found it completely deserted.

#### **B. The Lepers Share the Good News with the People (verses 8-11)**

At first the lepers celebrated among themselves by eating and drinking and plundering the camp. But eventually their consciences were pricked, and they realized they must share the good news with the people in Samaria. Read verse 9 to your class and ask them what good news Christians have to share; remind them that it is as wrong for us to keep silent about Jesus as it was for the lepers to keep silent about the abandoned camp.

#### **C. King Joram Sends Soldiers to Investigate the News (verses 12-16)**

Note the king's lack of faith; he had been told by Elisha that the city would have abundant food by the next day; he was told by the lepers that the food was in the Aramean camp, ready for the taking. But instead of believing that Elisha's prophecy had been fulfilled, he sent soldiers to investigate the situation to be certain that the Arameans were not lying in wait for the Israelites. The soldiers tracked the flight of the Aramean army all the way to the Jordan River. Along the way they saw the clothing and equipment that the Arameans had cast aside in their panicky retreat. With their report, the king became convinced that the Aramean camp was safe, and the people went out to plunder it.

### **4. Elisha's Prophecies are Fulfilled (II Kings 7:16-20)**

One day the situation in Samaria looked grim, desperate and hopeless. The next day, the enemy had fled the country and there was food enough for everyone! God had completely changed the circumstances and had delivered His people once again!

Not only had the Lord delivered the people from death by starvation, but Elisha's other prophecy had also come true. The king's counselor who scoffed at the word of the Lord from Elisha was put in charge of the gate. He was trampled to death by the starving masses as they rushed to get some of the food. So while he saw the people's deliverance from starvation, he was not able to eat any of the food himself, just as Elisha had prophesied.

Note with your students how the writer of II Kings wanted his readers to know that Elisha's prophetic word was fulfilled. In verse 16 we read, "as the Lord had said." Verse 17 says, "just as

the man of God had foretold.” Verse 18 repeats, “It happened as the man of God had said,” and verse 20 concludes, “and that is exactly what happened.” Case closed, once and for all - Elisha’s prophecy was from the Lord, and the Lord was true to His word.

## **Conclusion**

As we look back over this lesson and many other lessons that we have had this quarter on the life of Elisha, we see God’s power to keep His own and deliver them in times of trouble. He is able to change our circumstances when we come to Him in prayer by faith if it is His will to do so. He is interested in the big and small matters of our lives and wants us to bring all of our needs to Him. Remind your students that our God is indeed an awesome God; He is the God of Elijah, Elisha, and He is our God as well. Encourage your students to bring their own concerns to the Lord and to seek to serve Him in humble faith and obedience.

## **Worksheet**

This week’s worksheet reviews the six lessons we have had on the life of Elisha. In Part II, your students are asked, “What was your favorite story from the life of Elisha?” Encourage them to share their answers with the class, as well as what they felt they learned from their favorite stories.

## **Related Music**

“Our God is an Awesome God”; “I Belong to Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #129).

**I. Who Am I???** Match the names below to the sentences that describe them.

Elijah

The Shunammite Woman

Gehazi

Naaman

King Joram

The prophet's widow

“I came to Elisha to be healed of my leprosy.” \_\_\_\_\_

“Elisha took my place as Israel's prophet after God took me to heaven.”

\_\_\_\_\_

“Elisha told me how I could save my sons from slavery.” \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

“I blamed God and Elisha when the people in Samaria were starving.” \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

“I received Naaman's leprosy as punishment for my sin.” \_\_\_\_\_

“Elisha raised my son from the dead.” \_\_\_\_\_

**II.** What was your favorite story from the life of Elisha? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn from it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Memory Verse**

**Isaiah 45:25** - “But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.”