

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-26 The Prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel

Miracles happen when God decides to show his power and his love. The Bible reports four main periods of miracles. In each period God used his followers to confront the powers of darkness. During the first period Moses confronted Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. These miracles are recorded in the Book of Exodus. God's purpose was to show his superiority over pagan beliefs.

The second period of miracles occurred during the ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. They prophesied and acted in the Northern Kingdom. King Jeroboam had set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Many people began worshiping the calves rather than worshiping Yahweh. A few years later, King Ahab brought in the pagan god of his wife, Queen Jezebel. She led thousands of people to worship Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility and war.

The third great period of miracles occurred after the Southern Kingdom was taken into captivity in Babylon. This was a great empire with its capital about 500 miles east of Israel. Many pagan gods were worshiped in Babylon. Four Judean young men—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—were under pressure to worship Babylonian gods and to renounce Yahweh, the God of Israel. God used these four men to show his superiority to the gods of Babylon.

The fourth great period of miracles happened during the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. God came as a human man—Jesus of Nazareth—to destroy the works of the devil (1John 3:8). After Jesus ascended into heaven, the Apostles continued to do miracles in his name. (To do something “in the name of Jesus,” means that Jesus is personally involved and will take personal action.)

But, there is a great difference between this period of miracles and the previous three periods. This period of miracles did not end. It continues into the present day, wherever the followers of Jesus do the works of Jesus in this world. The apostle Paul wrote the books of Romans and Corinthians to believers. Paul teaches that the Spirit of Jesus gives gifts to his followers for the work of his kingdom. Some of these gifts are preaching, teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, distinguishing between spirits, healing, speaking in other languages, and interpreting these other languages (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12).

Let's go back to the second period and one of the stories about the prophet Elijah. King Ahab reigned in the Northern Kingdom for 22 years. He did more evil than any king before him. Yahweh was fully aware of what Ahab was doing. God directed Elijah to go to Ahab and announce, “I serve Yahweh, and he says, ‘There will be no rain in Israel in the next few years, until I say otherwise’” (1Kings 17:1).

God then told Elijah to escape to the east and hide on the other side of the Jordan River. God used a big bird to bring Elijah food morning and night. A nearby brook supplied water to drink. When the brook dried up weeks later, God directed him to travel west to stay with a widow and her son near the ocean. Again, God supplied food for him, the widow and her son. While he stayed there, they never ran out of food. The jar of flour was not used up, and the jug of olive oil did not run dry. (Remember that there was famine in the land due to lack of rain for the crops.)

Because of the famine, King Ahab was looking all over for Elijah. He sent messengers to surrounding countries to find the prophet. Three years into the famine, God sent Elijah back to Ahab. When the king saw him, he said, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

“I have not made trouble for Israel,” said Elijah. “But you and your father’s family have. Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel.” (This was a mountain near the ocean.) “And bring hundreds of Jezebel’s leaders of Baal worship and Asherah worship, too.” (Asherah was a fertility goddess, and Asherah worship included sexual orgies.) So Ahab did as Elijah commanded.

When they all were assembled, Elijah cried out, “How long will you waver between two opinions: If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him!” The people were stunned into silence. Elijah continued, “I am the only Yahweh-prophet left, but here are 450 leaders of Baal worship. Get two bulls and build two altars. Let the Baal-leaders take one and I will take the other. Cut up the bulls and put the pieces on the altars, but don’t light the fires. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The one who answers by sending fire—he is God” (1Kings 18:16-24).

The people agreed. The Baal-prophets called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. No response; no one answered their cries.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them, “Shout louder! Maybe your god is busy traveling, or deep in thought. Maybe he’s asleep!” So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom. This went on all afternoon. No response; no one answered their cries.

Then it was Elijah’s turn. He had a trench dug out around his altar. Three times he had water poured over the altar, until it filled the trench. Then he prayed a short prayer. “Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

Then fire from Yahweh fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and the water. When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

Elijah commanded, “Seize the Baal-leaders!” They seized the 450 men, dragged them into the valley, and executed them.

The king saw all this. Elijah said to him, “Go, eat and drink. A heavy rain is coming.” Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel and put his face between his knees. He sent his servant to look toward the sea for rain.

“There is nothing there,” the servant said. He sent him five more times. Then the seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”

Elijah said, “Tell Ahab to get going before the rain comes.” Elijah himself ran ahead of the king’s chariot all the way down the valley. Yahweh gave him power to run fast (1Kings 18:25-46).

This story is **important** because it teaches us that God is fully capable of defending his name and his messengers. He sometimes used miracles to show his power and his love for his

people. It is always proper to ask God to demonstrate his power and his love. Jesus said, “You should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1). We pray according to our understanding of a situation, but God answers according to his complete, full, and loving knowledge of what is best.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the Northern Kingdom had turned away from God, and was excited by the Baal worship of the king and queen. The people were following the sinful example of their leaders. At the same time, God was raising up faithful leaders like Elijah to turn the people back to true worship of Yahweh.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What were the four main periods of miracles in Bible times? [Pause]
A. If you said, “When Moses confronted the gods of Egypt, when prophets confronted Baal-worship, when Daniel and others confronted the gods of Babylon, and when Jesus and his disciples destroyed the works of the devil,” you are correct.
2. What is different about the fourth period of miracles? [Pause]
A. If you said, “The miracles of Jesus continue to the present day, through the power of the Spirit of Jesus in his followers,” you are right.
3. Why did God stop the rain in Israel during Elijah’s ministry? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “God was punishing the nation for its turning away from him and toward the worship of false gods and goddesses,” you answered correctly.
4. What happened on Mount Carmel? [Pause]
A. If you said, “Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal, and with miraculous fire God proved his superiority to Baal worship,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. See the events in your own mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Ask your friend the same review questions you answered when you first heard this lesson.

Perhaps you or your friends are facing a situation that seems impossible. The situation may involve evil spirits, false gods, or the works of the devil. Gather your friends together and share the truths of this lesson on miracles. Join with them in prayer to destroy the works of the devil that are challenging you and other believers. Believe that all things are possible with God!