

The Sunday-School.

THIRD QUARTER,
LESSON VIII.—Aug. 21.

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL.

1 Kings 18: 30-46.

THE LESSON.—Study the entire scene of Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18: 20-46, with the New Testament reference, Jas. 5: 17, 18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*If the Lord be God, follow him.* 1 Kings 18: 21.

LEARN BY HEART.—Vs. 36-39; 1 Pet. 3: 12; Matt. 6: 24.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—*Time.* Soon after the last lesson, allowing time enough for the gathering of the priests of Baal and representatives of the people. About B. C. 907 (common chronology), B. C. 870 (revised chronology).

Place.—Near the summit of Mount Carmel.

Rulers.—Ahab, king of Israel, perhaps in his twelfth year. Jezebel, his queen. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, eighth year, in the midst of his great religious reformation, which would be a help to Elijah's mission.

Place in the History.—Overthrow of foreign Baal-worship as the result of a decisive test on Mount Carmel. The crisis of Ahab's reign and Elijah's career.

FALSE GODS OR TRUE GOD? THE ISSUE JOINED.—1 Kings 18: 20-24. Some days must have elapsed after Elijah's meeting with Ahab before the 450 prophets of Baal and the representatives of the tribes could have been gathered upon Mount Carmel.

The test proposed by Elijah, to determine between the true and false divinity, was the test of fire. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" was the prophet's stern question of the people. "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And when the people, awestruck and conscious of their guilt, made no response, Elijah proposed that each side prepare a sacrifice and pray to their deity; the God who answered by fire sent down from heaven would be the true God. The test was appropriate. Sacrifice was common to all religions. Then, Jehovah claimed to be the God of nature, to have brought the famine, to have sent Elijah, to have wrought miracles for his people. He could do it now. On the other hand, it was fair to Baal, for (1) Baal claimed to be the sun-god, lord of the elements and forces of nature, and therefore, if this was true, he of all idols could send fire from heaven. (2) The attempt was to be made in the full light of the rising sun, when Baal was especially worshipped. (3) If Baal could work this miracle then he was able to bring rain, and the famine continued from no want of power on his part.

THE FAILURE OF BAAL.—1 Kings 18: 25-29. The priests of Baal were caught in Elijah's trap. Elijah bade them make the first. They had no time to prepare any of the deceptions often practised by idolatrous priests. All the morning they cried "O Baal, hear us! Hear us! Hear, Baal!" now softly imploring, now shrieking in a frenzied chorus; but there was no reply. At noon Elijah mocked them with deserved sarcasm. Stung to maddened efforts, the Baal priests began

one of those wild dances often practised by idolaters. But there was no answer.

THE POWER OF JEHOVAH SHOWN.—Vs. 30-38. After priests and spectators had grown weary, Elijah called the people to him. *He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.* One of the altars thrown down by command of Ahab or Jezebel. *Took twelve stones,* one for each of the twelve tribes. *Israel shall be thy name.* The name of all the tribes. *Built an altar in the name of the Lord, as great as would contain two measures of seed.* The "measure" contained about three gallons. *He put the wood in order, etc., following carefully the rule of Lev. 1: 6-8. Fill four barrels.* "Water-jars," such as the maidens used to carry on their heads. Whence came the water in that great drought? From a spring which still exists under the cliff, and which is known to be perennial. *Do it the third time.* Twelve pitchers full in all.

Why was the Water Used?—To increase the people's wonder at the miracle and assure them that no fraud was practised. *At the time . . . of the evening sacrifice.* About 3 p. m. *Lord God of Abraham, etc.* He would excite their memories of all that God had done for their ancestors, in Egypt, in the Wilderness, and in Canaan; he would teach them that Jehovah was still *God in Israel,* ready to bless as of old; and he would declare that he had done all these things at God's word, and not following his own will. *The fire of the Lord fell.* Not lightning, for the sky was clear; but God sent from the sky supernatural heat in answer to prayer. Not only the sacrifice and the wood were consumed, but the stones and the dust, and even the water that was in the trench.

THE DECISION OF THE PEOPLE.—Vs. 39, 40. The effect of the miracle was convincing. *The people . . . fell on their faces.* Filled with reverent awe. *The Lord, he is God. Take the prophets of Baal.* The entire number of 450. *To the brook Kishon, at the foot of the hill. And slew them there.* Elijah required the people to confirm their new decision by aiding in this execution.

An Act of Justice.—Infidels are fond of condemning Elijah for this deed. It was however, both necessary and right; for: (1) It was a solemn, terrible execution. (2) It was the punishment for idolatry ordained by Jehovah. (3) It was just retribution for the killing of the prophets of Jehovah. (4) If the priests of Baal had been allowed to live, they would have continued to corrupt the people. (5) The act, therefore, was precisely like a defensive war in modern times, or like the execution of criminals for the public safety and as a warning against sin.

THE SHOWERS OF BLESSING.—Vs. 41-46. During the day, Elijah seems scornfully to have disregarded Ahab. Now he addresses the trembling monarch. *Get thee up.* From the Kishon to the top of Carmel. *Eat and drink.* Some have thought this spoken in irony. *A sound of abundance of rain.* "Either the wind which in the East usually heralds rain, began to rise, or perhaps the sound was simply in the prophet's ears. *And Elijah went up . . . his face between his knees.* The Oriental attitude of entire abstraction. *His servant.* There is a tradition that he was the son of the widow of Zarephath, afterwards known

as the prophet Jonah. *Go up now.* Elijah was praying beside his altar. From a point about 200 yards further on, one could look toward the sea, whence come the storms of that region. *Go again seven times.* Meaning an indefinite number. *A little cloud . . . like a man's hand in size. Prepare thy chariot.* It was waiting at the foot of the hill. *Stop thee not.* The plain of Jezreel is seamed everywhere by the Kishon and its tributaries, whose floods are sudden and dangerous. *In the mean while, in a little while. There was a great rain.* The long drought was over. *The hand of the Lord.* A divine impulse seized Elijah. *He girded up his loins.* His mantle twisted round him. *And ran.* It is at least twelve miles from the base of Mount Carmel to Jezreel. From the summit, 16 to 18 miles. To accomplish this race with horses, after the fatigue of the day, Elijah received supernatural strengthening. *Before Ahab.* This was a tribute of respect. It would compensate in part for Ahab's humiliation before the people. It would strengthen whatever impulses toward reformation the king entertained. *To the entrance of Jezreel.* Jezebel was there, and Elijah would not put himself in her power.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

The central thought is decision for God and right.

1. In Elijah's time it was a choice between Jehovah or Baal. Now it is a choice between Christ and worldliness, selfishness, sin.

2. The two appeals are in such terms as these:—

The Modern Baal—

Get rich quickly.

Obtain power by craft and trickery.

Wink at crime and misrule.

Don't bother about the poor and distressed.

Take prompt advantage of the misfortunes of other men.

Become popular. Keep up a good appearance.

Go with the crowd.

Christ—

Seek first the kingdom of heaven.

All real power is of God and for the godly.

You are your brother's keeper.

Bear ye one another's burdens.

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Seek God's approval first. Be pure in heart.

One with God is a majority.

3. In the struggle with worldliness the Elijahs must often stand alone, to men's eyes; but all the invisible hosts of heaven are with them.

4. True religion still proves itself by fire—the flame of the Holy Spirit, purifying hearts, enlightening minds, cheering and comforting lives. The religion that fails in these points is not true religion.

5. God is always ready for the test, however false religion and worldliness shrink from it.

6. A decision between God and mammon must be made. "Ye cannot serve both," said Christ.

7. The only safe way is to decide now for God.

8. When you decide for God, do not keep your decision to yourself.

9. Decision involves outward acts as well as inward allegiance—joining the church, doing Christ's will, forsaking heart-idols, testifying openly for Jesus.

10. In making the decision and in carrying it out, prayer is to be our stay, as it was Elijah's.

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Short Hair

We have too little praying face to face with God every day. Looking back at the end, I suspect there will be a great grief for our sins of omission—omission to get from God what we might have got by praying.

A Sure Cure for Headache.—Billious headache, to which women are more subject than men, becomes so acute in some subjects that they are utterly prostrated. The stomach refuses food, and there is a constant and distressing effort to free the stomach from the bile which has become unduly secreted there. Par-melee's Vegetable Pills are a speedy alterative, and in neutralizing the effects of the intruding bile relieves the pressure on the nerves which causes the headache. Try them.

If the few who are called to the work of preaching, all are summoned to Christian living. Gospel preaching and godly lives mean glorious results for God and for humanity.

Externally or Internally, it is Good.—When applied externally by brisk rubbing, Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil opens the pores and penetrates the tissues as few liniments do, touching the seat of the trouble and immediately affording relief. Administered internally it will still the irritation in the throat which induces coughing and will cure affections of the bronchial tubes and respiratory organs. Try it and be convinced.

"Much reading and thinking," says Berridge, "may make a popular preacher, but much secret prayer must make a powerful preacher." James wrote: "We are weak in the pulpit, because we are weak in the closet."

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