

WEEK 31 | SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2026

Elijah, God Is the One True God

Primary Scripture: 1 Kings 18

Supporting Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4 to 5 | Matthew 6:24 | Matthew 17:1 to 5

Memory Verse, 1 Kings 18:39: The LORD, he is God, the LORD, he is God.

BIBLE TIMELINE PLACEMENT

Last week's overview introduced King Ahab as one of the worst kings in Israel's history, married to Jezebel, who aggressively promoted worship of Baal. This week we slow back down to focus closely on one dramatic day in Elijah's ministry, when God settles the question of who is truly God once and for all, in front of the entire nation.

2 CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Baal was a Canaanite god believed to control rain, storms, and fertility, worshiped widely across the ancient Near East. This matters enormously for this story, since Israel had been suffering a severe drought for over three years by this point, a drought Elijah had announced would come as a direct consequence of Israel's unfaithfulness. A drought directly challenged Baal's supposed power over rain and weather, since Baal worshipers believed their god controlled exactly that. Mount Carmel was a prominent, visible mountain where a public event like this could be witnessed by a large crowd gathered from across Israel. Four hundred fifty prophets of Baal stood against Elijah alone, a deliberately uneven contest that made the outcome even more unmistakable. Fire falling from heaven was considered an unmistakable, unfakeable sign of a god's presence and power in the ancient world. Elijah made sure no one could claim trickery by soaking his altar and sacrifice with water three times before praying, making it seem physically impossible for fire to ignite naturally.

3 WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS PASSAGE

Elijah confronts King Ahab, who blames Elijah for Israel's troubles. Elijah responds that it is actually Ahab's family who has troubled Israel, by abandoning the LORD's commands and following the Baals. Elijah proposes a public contest on Mount Carmel to settle the question once and for all.

Elijah gathers the people and challenges them directly. How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him, but if Baal, follow him. The people say nothing in response, revealing their divided hearts. Elijah proposes the test, whichever god answers by fire is the true God.

The prophets of Baal go first, crying out and even cutting themselves from morning until noon, with no response. Elijah mocks their silence at midday. They continue raving until evening. Nothing happens. Baal cannot answer because Baal is not real.

Elijah then repairs the LORD's altar using twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. He soaks the sacrifice and the altar with water three times, until even the trench around it is full, making any natural explanation impossible. He prays a short, simple prayer.

Fire falls from heaven immediately, consuming the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even the water in the trench. The people fall on their faces and cry out, the LORD, He is God, the LORD, He is God. Soon after, Elijah prays again, and after seven times of waiting, a small cloud appears, bringing the rain that ends the drought at last.

A note for teacher preparation only, not for the children's read aloud narrative. Consistent with the ancient legal standard for false prophets who led Israel into idolatry, the prophets of Baal do not survive the day. This detail should not be part of what is read aloud to children. If a child asks directly, a simple, calm answer is enough, these false prophets could no longer lead Israel away from God.

4 KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS

1. What This Reveals About God (1 Kings 18:38 to 39)

God alone is God, with real, unmatched power, and He proves this not through human effort or cleverness but through simple, undeniable demonstration. No other god, no matter how many worshipers it has, can compare.

2. What This Reveals About People (1 Kings 18:21)

People often try to divide their loyalty between God and other things, hoping to keep options open rather than committing fully. God calls for wholehearted devotion, not divided loyalty.

3. How This Points to Jesus (Matthew 6:24, Matthew 17:1 to 5)

Jesus later teaches that no one can serve two masters, echoing Elijah's exact challenge on Mount Carmel. Centuries after this contest, Elijah himself appears alongside Jesus at the Transfiguration, where God the Father commands, listen to Him, showing that the same undivided devotion Elijah demanded for the LORD belongs fully to Jesus.

5 GOSPEL CONNECTION

The contest on Mount Carmel was never really about Elijah's courage. It was about revealing which God actually answers, actually hears, and actually saves. Baal, worshiped by hundreds, could not respond, because Baal was never real. The LORD, worshiped that day by only one faithful prophet, answered immediately and unmistakably, because He alone is God. Centuries later, Jesus stood before crowds and made an even bigger claim than Elijah ever made, that He alone is the way to the Father. Just as Israel had to choose between a real God and a false one, every person still has to choose whether Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be.

Simple Gospel Sentence: The LORD answered by fire because He alone is God, and Jesus is worth our whole hearts for the very same reason.

6 QUESTIONS CHILDREN WILL ASK

Why didn't Baal answer his prophets?

Baal was not a real god, just a carved idol people believed in. He could not answer because there was nothing there to answer.

Why did Elijah pour water on the sacrifice before praying?

Elijah wanted everyone watching to know there was no trick involved. Soaking everything in water made it impossible for the fire to happen naturally.

What happened to the prophets of Baal after this?

This part of the story is for grown ups to understand fully. What matters most for us is that God proved, clearly and unmistakably, that He alone is God.

Was Elijah scared standing alone against 450 prophets?

The Bible does not say, but Elijah's confidence came from knowing who God is, not from his own bravery. Later, Elijah even admits he felt afraid and alone, and God took care of him then too.

Why does the Bible say the people were limping between two opinions?

It means they wanted to keep worshiping both God and Baal, instead of choosing one. God does not accept divided loyalty, He wants our whole hearts.

7 TEACHER SUMMARY

Big Idea	God alone is God, and He proves it not through human bravery but through His own unmatched power, calling His people to undivided devotion.
What God Did	Answered Elijah's prayer instantly and unmistakably with fire from heaven, ending three years of drought and revealing Himself as the only true God in front of the whole nation.
How It Points to Jesus	Jesus later echoes Elijah's exact challenge, no one can serve two masters, and appears alongside Elijah at the Transfiguration, receiving the Father's command to be listened to above all others.
Error to Avoid	Do not make this a story about Elijah's bravery being the point. Elijah himself is described elsewhere as an ordinary man. The point is who God is, not who Elijah was. Also, the fate of Baal's prophets belongs to teacher preparation only and should not be part of the children's read aloud narrative.
Hope to Emphasize	God does not ask us to divide our hearts between Him and anything else. He proves Himself faithful and powerful so that wholehearted trust in Him makes sense.