



LESSON VIII.—AUGUST 21.

Elijah on Mount Carmel.

I. Kings xviii., 30-46.

Golden Text.

If the Lord be God, follow him.' I. Kings xviii., 21.

Home Readings.

Monday, Aug. 15.—I. Kings xviii., 20-29.
 Tuesday, Aug. 16.—I. Kings xviii., 30-46.
 Wednesday, Aug. 17.—Lev. ix., 5-7, 22-24.
 Thursday, Aug. 18.—I. Chron. xxi., 18-27.
 Friday, Aug. 19.—II. Kings x., 18-28.
 Saturday, Aug. 20.—Micah iii., 1-12.
 Sunday, Aug. 21.—Josh. xxiv., 14-25.

30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.

40. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

42. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43. And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45. And it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah;

and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

In James v. we read, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.'

One of the most helpful things about these lessons on Elijah is the fact that 'he was a man subject to like passions as we are,' so that his success was not due to anything unusual in his abilities. Elijah's strength lay in his hold on the power of God through prayer. James cites him as an example of what is within reach of every Christian who prays earnestly and in faith.

In this lesson we have a great triumph in the career of Elijah and a crisis in that of Israel. The day of decision has come, and the prophet boldly challenges the prophets of Baal to prove the worth of their god.

Mount Carmel is on the west side of Palestine, near the sea coast. To this day traditions and customs associated with the name of Elijah cling to this mountain. The Carmelite friars, who have a convent on the mountain, trace the history of their order to Elijah.

In the verses following the last lesson we have the account of the meeting between Elijah and Ahab, of the gathering of Israel to Mount Carmel, of the summoning of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred 'prophets of the groves' which ate at Jezebel's table.

When the people assembled Elijah demanded why they halted between God and Baal. He then asked that two bullocks be given, one to him and the other to the prophets of Baal. Each was to be prepared and laid on an altar, but no fire was to be applied.

The prophets of Baal were then to call upon Baal, and Elijah would call upon God, to send fire to consume the sacrifice. The God that answered by fire was to be the accepted God. The people agreed to this trial.

Read the verses preceding the lesson to see how frantic the prophets of Baal were and how Elijah mocked them. No answer came to their appeals uttered during the whole day, and when the time of the evening sacrifice came, and Baal had not responded, then Elijah prepared to call upon his God, and here our lesson opens.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Elijah Repairs the Altar. 30-32. 'And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob.'

The isolation and nature of Mount Carmel seem to have made it a very suitable place for religious worship. Before the time of Elijah there seem to have been altars upon it, one at least erected to Jehovah. But this has been overthrown, for the people of the northern kingdom, as a nation, have turned to Baal.

At the very beginning of his part in the great trial on Mount Carmel, and of the revival of religion, as we might say, which followed it, Elijah repairs the altar of God.

This was the place to begin for a backslidden people, and it is the place for a wayward individual. If you know, down in your own heart, that you have been wandering after the gods of this world, do not make the mistake of trying to reform by mere good resolutions, by trying some different mode of life, by promising some friend to do better. Your chance of success is small if you do.

Repair that broken down altar in your heart the first thing. The great watchword of the remarkable Torrey-Alexander meetings in Great Britain has been, 'Get Right with God.' A reform that leaves out God, whether in the life of a community or that of a single person, is doomed to failure.

Notice the number of stones, twelve, one for each tribe of the Jews, though Elijah was dealing with only ten tribes. But in the mind of God the Jews were one people. Politically they might be two kingdoms, but before God they were the one chosen people. God forgets neither promise nor purpose. He stands ready to wipe out old scores, to accept you anew, as before your separation, if you come through his Son.

The Sacrifice Prepared. 33-35. 'And the water ran about the altar.'

Notice in these verses how bold Elijah was to prove that there could be no imposture. In addition to restoring the altar he placed a trench about it, and when the bullock was laid on the wood, he had twelve barrels, or water jars, of water emptied upon it, so that the sacrifice was drenched and the trench filled.

The Answer by Fire. 36-39. 'Then the fire of the Lord fell.'

All day the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal had frantically called on their idol for the consuming fire. In their frenzy they gashed themselves with knives. How calm and dignified the actions and words of Elijah are in contrast!

At the time of the evening sacrifice, bringing to the minds of the people their neglect of the true worship, Elijah called upon God to declare himself. He also prayed that the Lord would show that Elijah had been obeying his word in doing as he did, and that the people might know that it was God and that he had turned their heart back. The prayer was brief and simple, but most earnest and direct.

Then came the answer. The fire fell and consumed sacrifice, altar, water and all. It was miraculous in its coming, and miraculous in what it did.

'The Lord, he is the God.' The effect on the waiting people was seen at once, for a mighty shout arose in acknowledgement of their God and Elijah's. The trial was over. Ahab, the four hundred and fifty false prophets, and the heathen god Baal were on one side, while the true God and his faithful witness were on the other. But 'one with God is a majority.'

The False Prophets Punished. 40. 'Let not one of them escape.'

The scene of the great test of religions closes in an act of judgment. Having been proven to be false, and evil leaders of the people, the prophets of Baal are led away from the altar and slain at the brook Kishon. This not only delivered the people from these fanatical false prophets, but their death, following close upon God's revelation of his power, must have had a great influence.

The Welcome Rain. 41-46. 'And there was a great rain.'

Elijah bade the king eat and drink, for there was 'a sound of abundance of rain,' possibly the rising wind in the forests of Mount Carmel foretold the change in the weather. A feast usually followed a sacrifice, and the near end of the drought would make this a time of rejoicing.

But Elijah went to the top of the mountain and cast himself down on the earth to pray. (See James v., 17, 18). Presently he sent his servant to look toward the sea. He saw nothing, but was sent seven times, and when he returned the last time it was to report a cloud rising from the sea, 'like a man's hand.'

Then the servant was sent to Ahab to urge him to leave at once, so that he would not be stopped by the rain. Then the king obeyed, and rode to Jezreel. Elijah following the leading of God ran before to the entrance of the city. Perhaps this was a sign of his respect to the king, or it may have been to encourage any feelings of true repentance and desire for reform in Ahab's heart, by the presence of one who could counsel and direct him. But at the entrance to Jezreel Elijah left the king.

The lesson for August 28 is, 'Elijah Discouraged.' I. Kings xix., 1-8.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, Aug. 21.—Topic—Standing alone for God. Rom. viii., 31-39.

Junior C. E. Topic.

OUR MISSIONARIES IN CHINA.

Monday, Aug. 15.—Go. Matt. xxviii., 19.
 Tuesday, Aug. 16.—'As ye go, preach.' Matt. x., 7.

Wednesday, Aug. 17.—'Sow beside all waters.' Isa. xxxii., 20.

Thursday, Aug. 18.—Teaching them. Matt. xxviii., 20.

Friday, Aug. 19.—Speak God's word. Ezek. ii., 7.

Saturday, Aug. 20.—Not afraid. Acts xviii., 9, 10.

Sunday, Aug. 21.—Topic—What our missionaries are doing for China. Matt. ix., 38.