

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 5

Silence from Baal

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The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To teach the students that idols are lifeless, and so are the people who serve them.

Key Verses

1 Kings 18:20-29—Main Teaching Passage

Psalms 115

Exodus 20:1-6

John 15:5

Joshua 24:14

Memory Verse - Exodus 20:3

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 29:25.

Ask the students if they have a stuffed animal at home. Now tell them to imagine what it would be like so swap their parents out for their toy. Whenever mom makes dinner, you thank your toy. Whenever your dad drives you to your friend's house, you thank your toy for the ride. Etc.

That would be ridiculous! God does way more for us than our families do, but many people totally ignore God and give praise and attention to things that are actually powerless to help us. As we will see today, this is idolatry.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

The prophet Elijah had met with King Ahab and told him to gather all of the people of Israel and all of the prophets of Baal and Asherah to meet him on Mount Carmel. Once there, Elijah turned to the people of Israel and challenged them: “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; But if Baal, follow him.” They remained silent and refused to answer, so Elijah called for a challenge between him and the prophets of Baal. Each of them would prepare a bull on an altar, and each of them would call on their god. If Baal answered by fire, everyone would know that Baal was god, but if the LORD answered by fire, everyone would know that He was the true and living God. The Israelites liked the idea and prepared to watch.

Elijah let the prophets of Baal choose their bull first and let them call on their god first. They chose their bull, prepared it, and all 450 prophets began crying out for Baal to hear them. When there was no answer, they started leaping around the altar as they yelled. They did so from morning until noon, but there was still no answer. Elijah began taunting them, saying that maybe their god was too busy, or on vacation, or maybe he was sleeping. So the prophets cried out louder and began to cut themselves in desperation from noon until evening, “but there was no voice, no one answered, no one paid attention.”

LOOK

Have you ever heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words”? In today’s story, silence speaks louder than words, and the first time we “hear” it is from the people of Israel. Remember, when Elijah first came to king Ahab, he declared that, “The LORD God of Israel lives.” The three and a half year drought should have made it clear enough that what Elijah had said was true! But the people of Israel weren’t comfortable choosing sides. They faltered between two opinions: “Maybe I should follow God, but maybe not. After all, look what happened to everyone else who followed God. Maybe I should follow Baal, but maybe not, let’s just wait and see.” So they remained silent, and it’s important for us to hear the lesson in their silence: not making a decision to follow the LORD is the same as making a decision not to follow Him, but God, in His grace, would soon make the decision much easier for them.

The second and third times we hear silence are from Baal. Elijah had given the priests of Baal all of the advantages: they got to choose their bull, they got to go first. But despite all of the noise and uproar from the priests, “there was no voice; no one answered.” And yelling louder wasn’t going to change anything. Psalm 115 tells us that idols may have mouths, but they don’t speak, eyes, but they don’t see, ears, but they don’t hear... and everyone who trusts them are just like them: lifeless.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK (Continued)

A hard lesson. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had given themselves over to worshipping a god that would never hear them, help them, or answer them, and they had become as blind as the idols they served, as had much of the nation! Elijah called for a decision, but Israel remained silent. God had commanded them to have no other gods and serve no idols, but they had done just that. They had forgotten that God is a help and shield to those who trust Him, as He had been for Elijah, and Obadiah, and the 100 prophets hidden in caves. Let us learn from their examples.

We don't see many people bowing down to idols today, but many still serve things that can't actually help them: money, things, comfort, fame, etc. None of those things are bad in and of themselves, but unless they take their place under God, they are worthless distractions that will keep us from seeing, hearing, and knowing the only One who can help us. The more time went on, the more desperately the prophets tried to awaken a god who had never been alive. Sadly, this still happens today. Instead of turning to God, people think that more money, more power, more fame will help them, but that will never be the case.

This is a common theme we see through the Bible. God's people turn away from Him to serve other gods, experience great hardship and difficulty for doing so, and God reaches out to them in mercy to draw their hearts back to Him. Elijah, like Joshua, would have us "choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:14). Serve the God who is alive. He has ears and will hear you when you call. He has eyes and sees all. He is with you, even when you feel alone. He died to give you life. No false god has ever done that for you or me or anybody else. Why do you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him.

TOOK

As a class, memorize Exodus 20:3.

Pray: Ask God to help you not to trust in things, and to remember that He alone is worthy of our worship. Pray that He would give you boldness to follow Him even when it gets hard to do so. Thank Him for being your help and shield.

Parent Question: What are some idols that people worship today?

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on 1 Kings 18:20-29 by David Guzik

B. Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel.

1. ([1Ki 18:20-21](#)) Elijah challenges Israel to make a decision.

So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

a. **Ahab sent for all the children of Israel:** It is hard to know why Ahab did this, carrying out the instructions of Elijah. Perhaps he hoped that the people would be so angry with Elijah for the last three years of drought that this crowd would turn against the prophet.

b. **And gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel:** These prophets of Baal *hated* Elijah. They loved the favor of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, and they enthusiastically promoted the persecution of any true follower of Yahweh. But over the last three years they had been severely humbled by Elijah and the drought sustained by his prayers. All their cries to the weather-god Baal were ineffective for three years. They *hated* this prophet of God who humiliated them and their sham priesthood so thoroughly.

i. "See, with what malignant glances his every movement is watched by the priests. No tiger ever watched its victim more fiercely! If they may have their way, he will never touch yonder plain again." (Meyer)

ii. "That lone man, of heroic soul, stemmed the fearful torrent of idolatry, and like a rock in mid-current, firmly stood his ground. He, alone and single-handed, was more than a match for all the priests of the palace and the groves, even as one lion scatters a flock of sheep." (Spurgeon)

c. **How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him:** This was a logical and useful question. In general, the people of Israel were in a spiritually lukewarm condition. They wanted to give some devotion to *both* Yahweh and Baal, but the God of Israel was not interested in such divided devotion.

i. Spiritually speaking, Israel was like an unfaithful partner in a marriage who doesn't want to give up their marriage partner, but also does not want to give up their illicit lover. The marriage partner has a legitimate claim to the *exclusive* devotion of their spouse.

ii. **How long will you falter:** The ancient Hebrew word translated **falter** means "to limp, halt, hop, dance, or leap." (Dilday) It is the same word used in [1 Kings 18:26](#) where the prophets of Baal leaped about the altar. It may be that Elijah meant, "How long will you dance between two opinions?"

iii. Adam Clarke had a slightly different understanding: "Literally, 'How long hop ye about upon two boughs?' This is a metaphor taken from birds hopping about from bough to bough, not knowing on which to settle."

iv. The appeal of Elijah made it clear that there was a *difference* between the service of Baal and the service of Yahweh. Perhaps in the minds of many, there was not a great difference – the only important thing was to have *some kind* of religion, and to be sincere about that, following your heart to whatever god your heart might lead you to. Yet Elijah knew that it could never be this way. You either served Baal *or* you served Yahweh; there was a difference.

v. Elijah's appeal also called his hearers to account for the period of time in which they had not made a decision between Yahweh and Baal. "**How long**," he asked them. "How many more sermons do you want? How many more Sundays must roll away wasted? How many warnings, how many sicknesses, how many toilings of the bell to warn you that you must die? How many graves must be dug for your family before you will be impressed? How many plagues and pestilences must ravage this city before you will turn to God in truth? How long halt ye between two opinions?" (Spurgeon)

d. **But the people answered him not a word:** There was no objection and no repentance. They lacked the courage to either defend their position or to change it. They were willing to live unexamined lives of low conviction.

i. Elijah could so accurately see their hearts because he could see their *actions*. It was as if he said, "I know you are not decided in opinion, because you are *not decided in practice*. If God be God, *follow him*; if Baal, *follow him*. You are not decided in practice." (Spurgeon)

2. ([1Ki 18:22-24](#)) Elijah proposes a test between God and Baal.

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

a. **I alone am left a prophet of the Lord:** This was not true and Elijah had reason to know that it was not true. In the recent past Obadiah told him that he sheltered 100 prophets of God against the persecution of Jezebel and Ahab.

b. **Let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves:** In this proposed test, Elijah was careful to give the prophets of Baal every potential advantage. They picked the two bulls, and picked which one they would sacrifice and which one Elijah would sacrifice.

c. **And the God who answers by fire, He is God:** The fire would not come from either Elijah or the prophets of Baal. It had to be supernatural in origin, and supplied by either Baal or Yahweh.

i. Again, Elijah gave plenty of advantage to the prophets of Baal. It was thought that Baal was the sky-god, lord of the weather and the sender of lightning (thought to be fire from the sky). If Baal were real, he certainly could send fire from heaven.

ii. To put God and himself on the line before the gathered nation of Israel took a lot of faith. Elijah learned this faith over the many months of daily dependence on God, both at the Brook Cherith and at the widow's house at Zarephath.

iii. Of course, Elijah had plenty of reasons for confidence in the Lord God. First, he was following express instructions from the Lord ([1 Kings 18:36](#)). Second, he knew from the history of Israel that God could and would send fire from heaven upon a sacrifice ([Judges 6:20-21](#) and [2 Chronicles 7:1-7](#)).

3. ([1Ki 18:25-27](#)) The prophets of Baal pray for fire from their god.

Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare *it* first, for you *are* many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*.” So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But *there was no voice; no one answered*. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened*.”

a. **Called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!”** The prophets of Baal had a devoted prayer life. Here they prayed long and with great passion. Yet because they did not pray to the *real* God, their prayer meant nothing. **There was no voice; no one answered.**

b. **They leaped about the altar which they had made:** The prophets of Baal had a energetic prayer life. Their worship was filled with enthusiasm and activity. Yet because it was not directed to the *real* God, their prayer meant nothing.

c. **Elijah mocked them:** Elijah could not resist the opportunity to mock the prophets of Baal for their evidently foolish faith.

i. “Elijah’s irony bordered on sarcasm.” (Patterson and Austel) The words **meditating** and **busy** can be translated “to be engaged in business” and may be a euphemism for bodily elimination.

ii. “Rabbi S. Jarchi gives this the most degrading meaning; I will give it in Latin, because it is too coarse to be put in English; *Fortassis ad locum secretum abiit, ut ventrem ibi exoneret*; ‘Perhaps he has gone to the ————-.’ This certainly reduces Baal to the lowest degree of contempt, and with it the ridicule and sarcasm are complete.” (Clarke)

4. ([1Ki 18:28-29](#)) The prophets of Baal work harder at their prayer.

So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention*.

a. **They cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them:** The prophets of Baal were utterly *sincere* and completely *devoted* to their religion. They were so committed that they expressed it in their own blood. They had zeal, but without knowledge – therefore their zeal profited them *nothing*.

i. “The practice of self-inflicted wounds to arouse a deity’s pity or response is attested in Ugarit when men ‘bathed in their own blood like an ecstatic prophet.’” (Wiseman)

ii. “This was done according to the *rites* of that barbarous religion; of the blood of the bullock would not move him they thought their *own blood* might; and with it they smeared themselves and their sacrifice.” (Clarke)

b. **But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention:** This is the sad result of worshipping an imaginary god or the god of our own making. We may dedicate great sincerity, sacrifice, and devotion to such gods but it means nothing. There is no one there to answer.