

God Speaks Through His Prophets

The Hebrews had many kings after Solomon. Many of them were bad and disobeyed God. The people also disobeyed God and did not keep His commandments. Because of this, (about 200 years later), the great kingdom of Solomon was attacked by enemies. The Hebrews were taken as prisoners to another country, a place called Babylon. The beautiful temple was destroyed. During this time when the people were captives in a strange land, they realized how far they had been from God. They began to sing a song about their troubles. It is a Psalm that we sing today as we prepare for Great Lent.

[See Liturgical Resource Bin: **Psalm Refrains: By the waters of Babylon...**

But all through these long years there were men who did not forget about God and about God's promise to His people. These were wise and very holy men. They listened to God and tried to teach the people God's law. They were even brave enough to go before the kings and tell them that they were disobeying God. These holy men were called prophets. The prophets always reminded the people of God's promise to send a Savior. They told the people many things about the Savior and what they must do to prepare for His coming.

One such prophet was Elijah. God often spoke to him and gave him messages to tell the king and the people. Now the king, whose name was Ahab, was a foolish and wicked man. He gave up believing in the true God and began praying to all kinds of false gods.

One day without any warning Elijah appeared before the king and stood there, tall and stern. He said, "As surely as God lives, if you do not believe in Him, there will be no rain or dew these years unless I say so." This was a frightening thing to say because without rain nothing would grow. Therefore the people would have nothing to eat. But the king thought his false gods would help him and he paid no attention to what Elijah said. Instead, he had him driven out of the city. Elijah went and hid in a rocky desert.

Then it happened just as Elijah had said. Day after day there was no rain. The sun was so hot that the grass, fields, and trees turned brown; the rivers and brooks all dried up. Both the people and the animals became very hungry and very thirsty.

At last when there had been no rain for almost three years, Elijah came back to King Ahab. Elijah asked the king: "How long will you try to serve your false god? If my God is true, you should serve Him. If your god is true, then continue to follow him." Ahab was very angry, but Elijah continued to speak: "Now this is what we shall do. Call all your people together on a mountain. Let us build there two altars. We shall put firewood on them and our offerings on the wood, but we shall not light the fire. I shall pray to my God, and all your priests can pray to their gods. We shall see whose fire will burn. In this way we shall know which is the true God."

Ahab agreed and all his people gathered on a mountain. The priests of the false god, whom they called Baal, laid the firewood down; put their offering on it, and then called and called and called on Baal to set the wood on fire. From morning until noon they called, jumped, and danced; but there was no answer. The priests shouted louder. On and on they went until it was evening, but still there was no answer or sign.

Then Elijah called the people to come to him. He took twelve large stones and built an altar in the name of the Lord God. On the altar he put the wood and on the wood his offering. All around the altar he dug a trench. Then he told the people to bring many barrels of water and to pour it on the wood. They poured and poured until the wood was all drenched and the trench around the altar was filled with water.

Then, as night was coming on, Elijah came forward and called out loudly: "Oh, Lord God, make it known today that You are God and that I am Your servant. Hear me, Lord, hear me!" And suddenly a great fire, like lightning, fell from the sky onto the altar, and the wood, the offering, and the altar went up in flames.

When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said:
"Elijah's Lord is the true God."

Then Elijah went up to the top of the mountain and knelt down and prayed. Suddenly a little cloud no larger than a man's hand appeared in the sky. Soon the sky was black with clouds. Heavy drops of rain came splashing down. Harder and harder it rained until the rain came down in great rushing streams of water. The scorched grass and brown fields and trees could at last drink their fill. Everyone was very happy that the dry, dusty years were over.

**Isaiah Answers God's Call*

**Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones*

**Three Young Men in a Fiery Furnace*