**The God Who Answers with Fire: The Holy Spirit series #1**

**Handout**

In many ways the Holy Spirit is the most mysterious of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Yet, the Spirit’s ministry is essential in saving us from sin and transforming us into the children of God.

The Holy Spirit is symbolized as wind, dove, anointing, clothing, water, wine, and fire in the Scriptures. In the OT, the Holy Spirit did not indwell people, but rather came upon them and anointed them and gave them power for serving God.

Today, we are going to study the symbolism of God answering with fire. There are many instances in Scripture where fire fell from heaven in acts of judgement on sin. But there are also times when God sent fire for other purposes. Consider when God sent fire on the altar for three different men. David, Solomon, and Elijah.

Forgiveness, atonement, choosing, consecrating, convicting, restoring are elements seen in the fire that came upon these three occasions. For our purposes today, we are going to do a deep dive on the time God sent fire upon the request of the prophet Elijah.

**1 Kings 18:16-41 NIV**

**16So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.17When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”**

**18“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals.**

Elijah was led by God’s Spirit, going wherever the Spirit directed. Elijah spoke by God’s Spirit declaring what God wanted said. Elijah prayed under the anointing of God’s Spirit and his prayers were mighty and effective. But in times of apostasy and wickedness people who live holy lives and who serve God are not well received. When God disciplines a nation for its sins they blame the righteous for their problems. They are blind to the fact that sin always brings trouble.

**1 Kings 18:19Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”**

**20So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.**

**Is it not a marvel that King Ahab obeyed Elijah’s order? 450 false prophets of Baal and 400 false prophets of Asherah were gathered at Mount Carmel.**

**21Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”**

**But the people said nothing.**

A crowd gathered along with the false prophets and Elijah addressed the people, confronting them with their hypocrisy. The people were living as if they could follow Yahweh and Baal and Asherah. They were not only idolatrous, but treating the demonic false gods as equals with Yahweh.

**1 Kings 18:22Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”**

**Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”**

No wonder Elijah felt alone. The people did not side with him, the king did not back him, and the false prophets were certainly against him. But Elijah stood firm because his identity was rooted in that fact that he was committed to and called by Yahweh.

**1 Kings 18:25Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” 26So they took the bull given them and prepared it.**

**Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.**

**27At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” 28So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.**

**1 Kings 18:30Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down. 31Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” 32With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings%2018&version=NIV#fen-NIV-9374a)**] of seed. 33He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”**

**34“Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.**

**“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. 35The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.**

Sometimes we think that our calling to share the gospel in this wicked and materialistic world is too hard. But we must not forget that it is in unlikely things, in hard things, and in impossible things that God specializes. The altar we prepare is ourselves. The sacrifice is our obedience. And the result is the Lord’s.

**1 Kings 18:36At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.37Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”**

**38Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.**

**39When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”**

**1 Kings 18:40Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.**

**41And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” 42So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.**

Now that the prophets of Baal and Asherah were destroyed, and Yahweh was demonstrably proven to be the true God, Elijah says it will rain again. So, Elijah turned to prayer while others turned to feast.

When the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost, cloven tongues of fire fell and rested upon the believers. The fire signified being made holy. Fire declared that God had accepted Jesus’ atoning offering of Himself for others. The fire indicated that God was making His temple in each and every believer. The fire indicated that God was renewing souls. It demonstrated that God claimed these believers as His very own. And, the fire indicated calling, equipping, and power for service.

With the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit we have what we need from God to do whatever He calls us to do.