

ELIJAH AT HOREB

I Kings 19

This lesson follows immediately after the last one, so there is no transition problem. However, for all but the two youngest classes an understanding of the reasons for the division of Solomon's kingdom and of the nature of the kingdom of Israel is as important as the specific story for today. Thus the teacher might begin by reviewing these points.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord is always trying to reach us, no matter how bad we become.

Notes for Parents

Against the background of the glorious reign of Solomon this lesson again presents a dark picture. Our states of high attainment do not last. New temptations appear. Success brings its own dangers. To the very end of our lives we need to be on our guard against the subtle attacks of our natural selfishness. Even the best people, especially those who have become very gentle and loving, have the temptation to excuse and then to condone selfish and false things in the people about them. The very first verse in chapter 11—immediately following the description of Solomon's treasures—begins, “*But* [only in KJV] king Solomon loved many strange women.” The strange or foreign women represent the desires which do not belong in a life devoted to the service of the Lord and the neighbor. We admit these to our minds in a spirit of charity and presently find that we have taken them to our hearts as our own and are acting from them.

So the northern tribes in the land, which picture the intellectual part of our nature, revolted against Solomon's son and set up a

separate kingdom. They established the worship of idols, and their history, that of the kingdom called Israel, is one of constant revolt and fighting. Their kings became progressively worse. Under Ahab, their most powerful king, the Lord sent the prophet Elijah to rebuke and warn the people. After three years of drought and famine and the wonderful test at Mount Carmel described in chapter 18, Ahab and the people were convinced of the power of the Lord; but Jezebel, Ahab's evil wife, was enraged and sought to kill Elijah.

In the Bible a prophet always represents the Word of God. When we are forced to admit that the Word of God is telling us the truth about ourselves, everything that is selfish in us rises up, like Jezebel, to try to silence it. Elijah's flight to Horeb, which is Mount Sinai where the commandments were given, is a picture of our discouragement with ourselves at such a time and of how the Lord gently and wisely sustains us and revives our courage so that we may go on. The Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but in the still small voice which followed them. The Lord does not send our troubles upon us. Our own evils and the evils of others cause them, and the Lord saves us from the consequences as far as it is good for us. But sometimes He has to let us feel these consequences so that we may be impressed enough to listen to the still voice which tells us to take heart and go on trying.

Primary

Remind the children that when Solomon died the country was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, and that in Israel the kings were wicked and worshiped idols. Have them tell who Jezebel was and why she hated Elijah. Be sure they know that a prophet is one who speaks for the Lord. Remind them of what had happened at Horeb and point out that this was why Elijah wanted to go there. If you have time, read them Genesis 21:22-34 in connection with Elijah's stop at Beersheba, which means "well of the oath."

After Solomon's death his kingdom was divided.

His son, Rehoboam, reigned in Jerusalem over the southern kingdom, which was called Judah.

Ten tribes formed the northern kingdom, which was called Israel.
Their king was a man named Jeroboam, and their capital was Shechem.
All the kings of Israel were wicked and idolatrous.
The worst one was Ahab, whose wife was a woman named Jezebel.
Jezebel was a worshiper of the idol Baal.
The Lord sent His prophet Elijah to Ahab.
Elijah proved to the people that the Lord was the true God, and they allowed him to destroy the prophets of Baal.
What did Jezebel say when she heard it?
Where did Elijah go to escape her?
How did the Lord help him in the wilderness?
Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai.
What do you remember about Mount Sinai?
What three great signs did the Lord give Elijah on the mount?
What came after them?
Do we have a still, small voice in us?
What did the Lord tell Elijah?
Who was to be prophet after him?
What did Elijah find Elisha doing?
How did he show Elisha that he was to follow him?
What did Elisha ask?
What offering did he make?
What position did he take while Elijah lived?

Junior

Have the class study a map as you talk of the division of the kingdom, and be sure they know the names of the two divisions, the capital of each, and the location of the golden calves. They can easily understand why Israel rebelled against Solomon's line. They will want to study the map again for Elijah's flight, and to find Elisha's home, as well as Syria and Damascus.

You would think, wouldn't you, that Solomon's descendants could have maintained his glorious kingdom for many generations. But when people have everything they want and everyone looks up to them, they sometimes grow careless and imagine that everything they think must be true and that everything they want must be right. They forget that they must go on trying to learn and do the Lord's will if they want to remain great. Read the first nine verses of chapter 9 again to see the warning the Lord had given to

Solomon. But Solomon forgot. In his old age he married wives from among the many nations which sought his favor. He built places of worship for the various gods his wives served, and finally he even began to worship with them. In order to support his grandeur he levied heavier and heavier taxes, and the people began to grow dissatisfied.

So after Solomon died, the ten northern tribes revolted against his son Rehoboam. They set up a separate kingdom called Israel, with its capital at Shechem, and made their leader in the revolt, Jeroboam, king. Rehoboam's kingdom was called Judah and continued faithful to the line of Solomon; its capital was Jerusalem.

Jeroboam was afraid that if his people went up to the temple at Jerusalem for the great feasts, they would gradually drift back into allegiance to their true king. So he established a new worship. He set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and one in Dan, and decreed elaborate feasts in connection with their worship. So he turned the people of Israel away from the Lord, and all his successors followed in his footsteps. There were a number of good kings in Judah after Solomon, but every king of Israel was evil. The worst was Ahab, whose wife was Jezebel, a worshiper of the idol Baal. The Lord sent Elijah the prophet to Ahab with a warning, and Elijah proved to the people that the Lord was the true God, and slew the prophets of Baal. Jezebel was the patroness of the prophets of Baal. Naturally she was enraged by their death.

Where did Elijah go to escape her?

Find Beersheba on your map. We associate it with Abraham and Isaac. Most people have times when they are discouraged, especially when they have tried very hard to do right and apparently accomplished nothing.

What happened to Elijah in the wilderness beyond Beersheba?

The Lord is always at hand to encourage us and to revive our spirits with enough of His goodness and truth—the cake and the water—to sustain us for whatever we must do. Angels actually minister to us just as they did to Elijah, only we cannot see them.

Do you remember another name for Horeb?

What happened there?

Elijah knew that the Lord had spoken to Moses at Sinai; so he went there hoping to receive a message from the Lord. And the Lord did speak to him there. When we try to find out what the Lord wants us to do, we sometimes have to go through experiences which will really prepare us to listen and obey. The wind and the earthquake and the fire are pictures of the upsetting things which come to us and make us look to the Lord for help. The Lord was not in them. That is, the Lord does not bring them upon us. He merely permits them to come to us to make us stop and think. The still small voice is His. He speaks to our minds through His Word when we are thinking and meditating quietly about what He would like us to do. Conscience is often spoken of as a still small voice, but we should remember that our conscience can tell us only as much of what is right as we have learned from the Word. That is, the Lord can speak to us from every passage of the Word which we have stored in our minds.

First the Lord gave Elijah something new to do. Then He encouraged him by telling him that he was not alone as he had thought himself to be. There were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Who was to be the next king of Israel?

Who was to be the prophet after Elijah?

What was Elisha doing when Elijah found him?

What did Elijah do to Elisha?

What did Elisha ask to do first?

What offering did he make?

Sometimes today, when some leading person is succeeded by another who promises to follow in his footsteps worthily, you read in the papers that the person's "mantle" has fallen on his successor, and you will know that the expression goes back to this story. In the Word garments picture the thoughts with which our desires and affections clothe themselves. They are true or false thoughts depending on whether our desires are good or bad. Since

Elijah was the Lord's prophet, his mantle pictures the "clothing" of the Lord's truth, which is the letter of the Word of God. The literal story of the Bible is the mantle of the prophet which brings the Lord's truth to us.

Intermediate

The general correspondence of the division of the kingdom, of Ahab and Jezebel, of Elijah, and of Jezebel's hatred of Elijah should be discussed.

Solomon's glory is a picture of a beautiful state which every one of us may attain in some degree if he will. But the history of the Old Testament did not end with Solomon. His reign was also a turning point, and a long decline followed it. The seeds of this downfall were sown by Solomon himself. He had been warned (I Kings 9:1-9) that he and his people must remain faithful to the Lord if they wanted their prosperity to continue. The first eight verses of chapter 11 tell us how Solomon turned away from the Lord and led his people into the worship of other gods. After his death the northern tribes revolted and formed a separate kingdom, which was called Israel. The southern kingdom, which remained faithful to the line of Solomon, was called Judah. Perhaps you remember that David reigned seven years over the southern tribes before he became king over the whole land, and perhaps you remember what that meant.

The division was a natural one. It pictures a division which exists in every one of us. Judah represents our heart or will, and Israel our mind or understanding. You can remember this easily because the south is warmer than the north and we are familiar with the expressions "a warm heart" and "cold reason." Our hearts and our minds do not always work together as one. Sometimes we want very much to do something good but we lack the wisdom to carry out our good desire, and sometimes we know just what we ought to do but don't want to do it. In such situations, our "Judah" and "Israel" are divided and working against each other. Judah kept its capital at Jerusalem where the temple was, and several of its kings

were good kings who tried to bring the people back to the worship of the Lord. Our hearts have more good impulses than our minds have true thoughts. We shall have a lesson about one of these good kings of Judah soon.

But Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, who had led the revolt against Solomon's son, was determined to keep his people from going to Jerusalem to worship, because he thought that if they did, they might be drawn back to their true kings. He established his capital at Shechem, and he set up two golden calves for the people to worship, one in Bethel and one in Dan. A king represents a ruling principle. Jeroboam represents the principle that human reason determines what is right and not revelation from the Lord. All the kings who succeeded Jeroboam in Israel followed his example. So Israel represents our minds ruled by the false principle that we do not need the Lord to tell us what is right.

The most powerful and successful, but the worst of these kings was Ahab. He married Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Zidonians, who was a worshiper of Baal, and they set up the worship of Baal in Israel itself. Some of the enemies in the land had worshiped Baal before this. You remember that Gideon's first work for the Lord was to throw down an altar which had been built to Baal. The worship of Baal is the worship of self—pure selfishness—and Jezebel pictures the enjoyment we get from being selfish. She was the patroness of the prophets of Baal.

It was in the time of Ahab that Elijah, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, appeared. We think of him as the greatest because he came to be recognized as a symbol of all the prophets. The prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:5) said that Elijah would come again, and the Lord Himself (Matthew 17:10-13) said that this prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist, not meaning that John the Baptist was a reincarnation of Elijah, but that he brought the same message from the Lord. At the time of the Transfiguration Moses and Elias (Elijah) were seen talking with the Lord, to represent that the Law and the Prophets taught of Him. The appearance of this great prophet in the time of Ahab shows that no

matter how far our minds go astray, there is always in them some knowledge of the Word of God which the Lord can raise up to rebuke and warn us.

Chapter 18 tells the wonderful story of how Elijah proved to Ahab and the people that Baal was powerless to bring them happiness and that the Lord was the true God, and of how he slew the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal by the brook Kishon. The people promised to obey the Lord, but Jezebel was so enraged by the death of her prophets that she swore to kill Elijah. Our natural selfishness tries to silence the Lord's voice in our minds. Elijah had to flee. He imagined that he was the only one in Israel who really desired to serve the Lord, and he begged that he might die. Sometimes we try our best and apparently make no impression. We say, "What's the use?"

Elijah's journey to Horeb and return picture the Lord's dealing with us in our states of discouragement. We are not forced. We are allowed to rest. The angels, who are always with us, speak to us in our quiet states and point out to us a little goodness, a little truth—the cake baked on the coals and the cruse of water—which we have learned by experience. This is enough to give us strength to go to Horeb, to return to the commandments as the laws given us by God, which cannot fail. We are shown how our troubles lead us to the Lord. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire are not the Lord speaking to us, as some people think, but are the effects of His presence on the worldly and selfish things in us. When they have passed and we can be quiet, we hear the still small voice.

Then Elijah was sent back to prepare others to carry on his work. He was encouraged by the knowledge that he was not alone in his worship of the Lord. He was to train another who could carry his message more powerfully. He was to cast his mantle upon Elisha. The mantle of the prophet pictures the letter of the Word. Elisha also was to speak for the Lord. Notice that Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when he was called. Oxen picture the affection for leading useful lives, and the number twelve signifies completeness. So the ground of Elisha's ability to become a

prophet was the wholehearted desire to be useful, and he was glad to begin his preparation as Elijah's servant.

Basic Correspondences

Judah	=	the heart or will
Israel	=	the mind or understanding
Ahab	=	a false principle ruling in the mind
Jezebel	=	the delight of the love of self and the world
Elijah	=	the prophetic Word
Elijah's mantle	=	the letter of the Word

Senior

In addition to the points discussed with the Intermediates, call attention to the meaning of the fact that the Lord was not in the wind, earthquake, and fire. Point out that the upheavals in our lives are not sent by the Lord, but are permitted to come to us when we need them as preparation for listening to the still small voice.

Elijah is perhaps the best known of the prophets, partly because of the power of the familiar stories concerning him in the Word, and partly because the ancient Hebrews recognized him as typifying the prophetic part of the Word just as they recognized Moses as standing for the Law. We remember that the three disciples who saw the Lord transfigured saw Moses and Elias (Elijah) talking with Him. Elijah was prophet in Israel in the time of the divided kingdom.

Judah represents the heart or will and Israel the mind or understanding. When a person has grown up with good habits and established himself in a good civil and religious life, he sometimes forgets, as Solomon did, that he must continue to watch his motives and thoughts, as well as his acts, and keep them faithful to the Lord's truth. Just as Solomon did, he unites himself to many ideas and aims belonging to the world around him and foreign to his religious principles. Then he finds himself in a divided state. He continues to have good intentions—Judah remained more or less faithful for

a long time—but his mind is full of worldly ideas and governed by principles opposed to the acceptance of the Word.

Elijah, like all the prophets, represents the Word of God. He was raised up by the Lord to rebuke and warn Ahab, the most powerful and most evil of the kings of Israel. Ahab had brought into Israel the worship of Baal—self-worship—because he had married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal (“Baal’s man”) king of the Zidonians. Jezebel represents the delights of the love of self and the world. She is sometimes considered the worst woman in history, and the expression “a regular Jezebel” is an epithet applied to women who do great harm to those around them. She maintained four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. The powerful story of the test carried out by Elijah at Carmel and of his slaying of the prophets of Baal is told in the chapter preceding our chapter for today.

Ahab and the people were convinced by the proof Elijah offered of the power of the Lord. But Jezebel was merely enraged. When the truth is presented to us in convincing form, everything that is selfish in us rises up to fight it.

Elijah’s discouragement and flight picture the feeling we sometimes have that our deep selfishness is too strong for us and that it is of no use for us to struggle against it. The Lord’s dealing with us in this state is beautifully pictured in the incidents of Elijah’s journey. First he went to Beersheba, “the well of the oath,” Abraham’s home, which pictures going back to our childhood state of simple trust in the Lord’s promises. This must be our first step when we are discouraged. There Elijah left his servant, the reasonings proper to the natural man, and went a day’s journey into the wilderness—one more step in admission of his helplessness. There he sat down under a juniper tree. (This is not the juniper with which we are familiar, but a species of broom which is common in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula. It was useful for shade. John Worcester in *Plants of the Bible* suggests that it pictures a belief in the working of the Lord’s providence upon earth.) Elijah “requested for himself that he might die.” In the letter this means complete discouragement, but inwardly it suggests rather the desire to be emptied

of self. And this is borne out by the fact that he then lay down and slept, for in sleep our self-consciousness is dormant and the Lord can draw nearer to us. The coming of the angel twice with bread and water is the refreshment and enlightenment which the Lord grants as soon as self-will is wholly put aside, renewing both the mind and the heart. In the strength of that food Elijah went to Horeb, or Sinai, always the symbol of the commandments, and there braved the wind, the earthquake, and the fire—symbols of temptation in thought, act, and will—and was given to recognize that the voice of the Lord was not in these, but in the quiet meditation which follows when they are past. Then he was comforted with the assurance that there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. There are always people who are ready to stand with us for what is right if we look for them.

Elijah was sent back to complete his own work by preparing another to carry it further. Elijah and Elisha both represent the letter of the Word, but Elisha, as we shall see later, represents the letter used with a deeper understanding of its source and meaning. The fact that when Elijah found him, Elisha was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen pictures the truth that the effort to do good as fully and thoroughly as possible is the best ground for an ability to understand the Word and to use it for spiritual help.

Adult

The last point mentioned for the Seniors should be stressed in this class also. Perhaps the best discussion topics are Solomon's sin, the golden calves, the meaning of Jezebel, and the general significance of Elijah's return to Beersheba and to Horeb.

Solomon's death marks the passing of the state of joy in doing the Lord's will. The sense of duty remains—his son Rehoboam—in our hearts for a long time. The southern part of the land—Judah—remained faithful to Solomon's line and kept its capital at Jerusalem and its chief worship at the temple. A number of its kings were good. But there is a state of resistance to the rule of the Lord in

our minds. The ten northern tribes refused to accept Rehoboam and set up a separate kingdom called Israel, with its capital at Shechem. Jeroboam, the leader of the revolt, was its first king.

Jeroboam naturally was not anxious that the two kingdoms should be reunited, and he recognized that his people would be likely to go back to their old allegiance if they were allowed to continue in their familiar manner and place of worship. So he set up new objects of worship in new places—the golden calves at Bethel and Dan—and inaugurated a new feast to hold the people's interest within the limits of his own territory. "By a calf is signified the good of the external or natural man." (AC 9391²) We are familiar with the thought that the oxen and calves in the Old Testament sacrificial law picture our affections for useful work of an external kind, which should be made sacred to the Lord, that is, done from love to Him and with the recognition that all power to do good is from Him. When the calf is made an object of worship instead of a sacrifice, it means the setting up of external good works as the all of religion, enabling us to give ourselves credit for goodness.

Ahab was the seventh ruler of the separate kingdom of Israel. The reigning house in Israel had already been changed by violence three times. When our thought life is separated from its true purpose of furthering the growth of the heavenly kingdom, it is easily upset by every new and revolutionary idea. The kings of Israel had been uniformly evil, but it is written of Ahab that he "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." He not only continued the worship of the golden calves, but he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, who worshiped Baal and set up a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria itself, which Ahab's father had made capital of Israel. The worship of Baal pictures the perversion of worship of the Lord into worship of self. The writings tell us (AE 159) that Jezebel represents the "delight of the loves of self and the world," or "the church completely perverted," the worship of Baal representing "worship from the loves of self and the world" (AE 324²¹).

Jezebel was the cause of Elijah's flight to Horeb. Ahab and the people had been convinced by the great demonstration at Mount Carmel of the impotence of Baal and the power of Jehovah, had promised to serve Jehovah, and had willingly seized the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and brought them down to Elijah at the brook Kishon to be slain. The voice of Baal speaking to the mind had been silenced. But the delight of self-love was still very much alive and in the person of Jezebel rose up to slay Elijah.

Jezebel's threat completely discouraged Elijah and caused him to flee. In this flight he left Israel altogether and went far to the south, first to Beersheba, the southernmost city of the Holy Land, prominent in the story of Abraham, and then on to Horeb. When one lacks sufficient understanding of the Word to enable him to defend it against the attacks of the loves of self and the world, his only salvation is in a return to childhood states of trust and obedience. Elijah took another step in the right direction when from Beersheba he went a day's journey into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper (broom) tree and "requested for himself that he might die." This seems to be a picture of complete discouragement, but as is frequently the case the internal meaning is very different. It expresses the recognition of one's own helplessness and ignorance, willingness to rely on the protection of divine providence, and the desire to be completely emptied of self. This is carried further by his lying down to sleep, sleep being the state in which consciousness of self and the world is relinquished and the Lord can come in closer contact with us. The immediate influx of the Divine into this state is pictured by the appearance of the angel with food and drink. The cruse of water is the truth needed, and the cake baked on the coals suggests goodness which has been developed by experience.

This is enough to give us strength to endure temptations until we reach Horeb or Sinai, i.e., the assurance that the commandments are the eternal laws of God. On the mount sheltered in a cave—a state of relative obscurity—Elijah was given the experience of witnessing the wind, the earthquake, and the fire—a demonstration

of the upheaval which takes place in the mind, heart, and conduct of the natural man when he tries to conform to the will of God. But he was told that these effects were not the voice of God. They are the necessary reformation which must take place before a person can really hear the still small voice. Then Elijah was ready to leave the cave, wrapping his face in his mantle—making use of the veiling protection of the letter of the Word. He was given the encouragement of knowing that he was not alone in his efforts to serve the Lord, since there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. And he was given instructions for the reorganization of Israel: a new king in Syria, a new ruling principle in the external life; a new king in Israel, a new ruling principle in the mind; and a new prophet, a new and stronger voice of the Lord in the land. The occupation of Elisha when Elijah found him pictures the life of devotion to useful service and the desire for the truth needed for such service which are the necessary ground for the commission of messenger of the Lord.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Apocalypse Explained, n. 159: “As all perversion of the church springs from those two loves, namely, from the love of self and the love of the world, ‘Jezebel’ signifies the delight of these loves. . . . Every man is such as his love is, and every delight of his life is from his love; for whatever favors his love he perceives as delightful, and whatever is adverse to his love he perceives as undelightful. . . . Those, therefore, who are loves of self and of the world, that is, they, with whom these loves reign, have no other life’s delight, or no other life than infernal life. For these loves, or the life’s delights from them that are permanent, turn all their thoughts and intentions to self and the world. . . . It is otherwise when man loves God above all things, and his neighbor as himself; then the Lord turns the interiors which are of man’s mind, or of his thought and intention, to Himself, thus turning them away from man’s proprium [what is his own], and elevating them, and this without man’s knowing anything about it. From this it is that man’s spirit, which is the man himself, after its release from the body is actually turned to its own love, because that constitutes his life’s delight, that is, his life.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- J. What three buildings did Solomon erect? *temple, two palaces*
- J. What happened to the kingdom after Solomon died? *divided*
- J. What had Solomon done which brought this about? *idolatry, heavy taxes*
- J. What were the two divisions of the land called? *Israel, Judah*
- I. What do these divisions picture? *division of one's heart and mind*
- J. What worship was set up in Israel, and where? *gold calves at Dan and Bethel*
- P. In our lesson for today, who is king of Israel? *Ahab*
- P. What was his wife's name? *Jezebel*
- P. Who was the Lord's prophet? *Elijah*
- P. Why did Jezebel want to kill Elijah? *he had killed prophets of Baal*
- J. When Elijah fled, where did he go first? *Beersheba*
- J. How did the Lord encourage him in the wilderness? *an angel fed him*
- J. Then where did Elijah go? *Horeb*
- P. What else was Horeb called, and for what do we remember it? *Sinai, ten commandments*
- J. What happened when Elijah was in the cave on the mountain? *Lord spoke, gave signs*
- P. Was the Lord in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire? *no*
- P. What came after them? *still small voice*
- J. What did the Lord tell Elijah which encouraged him? *seven thousand still true to the Lord*
- J. What did the Lord tell Elijah to do? *anoint new kings, choose his successor*
- J. What was Elisha doing when Elijah found him? *plowing*
- S. What is pictured by the Lord's speaking in the still small voice? *times of quiet meditation after temptations, when we hear the Lord speaking to us through our conscience*