

Elijah Calls Fire from Heaven

Level D | Lesson 4 | Teacher Overview

Key Message: The light of truth reveals falsity.

Text: I Kings 18:1-2,18-46

Activity Options (choose 2 or 3)

1. Talk About It
2. Explore: Mazes and Labyrinths
3. Explore: How Does Evil Appear in the Light of Heaven?
4. Meditate and Activate



I Kings 18:38-39

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice.... Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!”

Talk About It

I Kings 18:1-2,18-46: Fire from Heaven

1. The story of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal is one that plays out in our lives again and again. What forces inside us compete to rule our lives in the way that Elijah and the prophets of Baal competed? (Elijah is like the voice of our conscience, the Word, or our parents. Baal is like the voice of false ideas about what will make us happy, e.g. having a lot of money, being beautiful, etc.)
2. Baal was a false god. His spirit was pictured in wooden statues. He was the Canaanite god of storms with a voice of thunder. The people of the land of Canaan put their faith in his harsh justice, believing that the winter season represented his death. What kinds of “false gods” do we have today?
3. Elijah and the Prophets of Baal set up two altars on Mount Carmel—one altar dedicated to Baal, the other altar dedicated to the Lord. Elijah rebuilt the Lord’s altar with care—setting the stones straight, then laying on wood, the sacrifice and finally he doused it with water. We do something similar in our own minds when deciding how to act—e.g. lying to cover up a mistake we have made vs. telling the truth and facing the consequences. Describe what happens as we weigh these options.
4. The Lord brings a miracle! Fire comes from heaven to Elijah’s altar, completely engulfing it. In what ways can the Lord touch our lives with Divine fire when we accept His ways? Even the prophets of Baal acknowledge “The Lord He is God, the Lord, He is God!”
5. From the clear perspective of the truth, we see our false ideas for what they are. Just as Elijah got rid of the prophets of Baal, we can rid ourselves of our false notions.
6. Following the contest, a wonderful thing happened! The drought that had parched the land for three and a half years ended. Elijah sent his servant to look for rain clouds. The boy went and looked out to sea seven times. Finally he saw a tiny cloud coming up from the sea. It was like a man’s hand. And then the rain came. The rain is the Lord’s truth that can satisfy our minds, bringing us nourishment and prosperity.

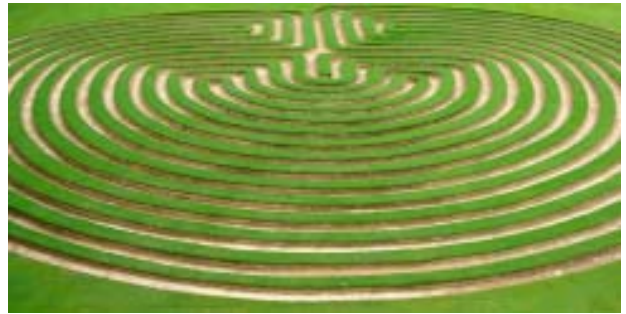
Explore: Mazes & Labyrinths

I Kings 18:1-2,18-46: Fire from Heaven

This activity demonstrates the difference between following a path determined by our own wishes and intelligence and following a path opened for us by the Lord. The path through a maze has many choices, some of which lead to a dead end. A labyrinth has only one path that leads to the center.

Supplies Needed for Each Student

- copy of “Mazes and Labyrinths” and “Maze or Labyrinth” for all students (see attached pages)
- copy of maze and labyrinth patterns (see attached pages)
- pen or pencil
- *optional* masking tape (this will be used on the floor--check to see that it can be removed without removing finish or leaving marks before using)
- *optional* two open areas to lay out the maze and labyrinth patterns
- *optional* two scarves to use as blindfolds



Teacher Preparation

Choose an activity method and prepare as needed.

Warm-up

Often the words maze and labyrinth are used interchangeably, but there is a distinction between the two. Tell students that they are going to explore the difference between mazes and labyrinths and then see how these differences relate to the idea of either following God or following Baal in our lives.

Activity Methods (choose one)

1. Divide students into two groups and give one group the maze pattern and the other group the labyrinth pattern. Give each group a roll of masking tape and ask them to reproduce the patterns on the floor. The outlines should be large enough to walk through. When groups are ready, ask for one volunteer from each group to be blindfolded. Blindfolded students will be led through the pattern that they did not help to create by the other members of the group.

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2. *Or* the teacher lays out both patterns on the floor with masking tape ahead of time, and then student volunteers are led through the maze and labyrinth blindfolded.
3. *Or* give each student a copy of the labyrinth and maze pattern pages. Using pens or pencils have students trace their way through both patterns.

When the activity has been completed, gather students for a discussion.

Discussion

1. Distribute “Mazes and Labyrinths” pages.
2. What are the characteristics of a maze? Was it easy or difficult to follow the maze? What kinds of choices did you make along the way?
3. What are the characteristics of the labyrinth? Was it easy or difficult to follow the labyrinth? What choices did you make along the way?
4. The maze and labyrinth patterns you were given are relatively easy, but both forms can be very complicated. It can be hard to tell where you are going in either case. Both can feel like walking blind. But there is a difference: a maze has choices, some of which lead to dead ends. A labyrinth has only one path, however complicated it is, leading to the goal or center.
5. Read the handout page aloud together.
6. What are some ways that we can try to put ourselves in a labyrinth, trying to follow the Lord’s leading?



Extra Challenge Activity

If time permits, challenge the students to figure out how to categorize the image on the “Maze or Labyrinth?” page. It is a combination maze and labyrinth: there are many choices, but no dead ends. Might this be the best image of how we live? In this picture, we are not sure where we are going; we have free choices to make; and the Lord is constantly seeking to bend all our choices toward a good end.

Wrap-up

The priests of Baal thought that *they could control their own destiny* and wailed loudly to bring fire to their altar. Elijah knew that *the Lord was leading him*, even though he could not see the path ahead clearly (e.g. he could not know from his own power how to heal the widow’s son, how to make rain come to end the drought or how to bring fire to the altar). But he trusted that if he followed the Lord faithfully, the Lord would make all of these things happen.

Mazes and Labyrinths

A maze has choices, some of which lead to dead ends. A labyrinth has only one path, however complicated it is, that leads to the goal or center.



Mazes are often used as games or puzzles for fun. In the middle ages and renaissance, wealthy landowners would sometimes have mazes made of hedges created in their gardens for recreation.

Labyrinths were sometimes laid out in the floors of European medieval churches to represent the true path to God. Today, labyrinths are sometimes laid out to be used as meditation tools.

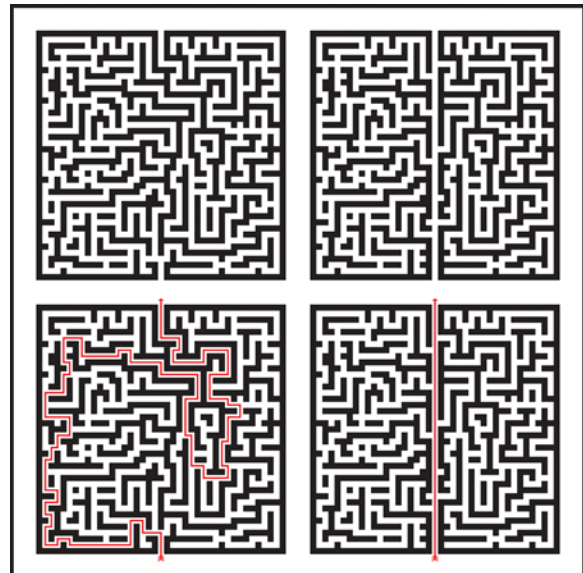
Read these quotations from the teachings for the New Church:

The infinite ways the Lord leads us "appear like a labyrinth even before the angels..." (Apocalypse Explained 1153:7).

People who attribute everything to their prudence are like those who wander in dark forests and do not know the way out; and if they find it they attribute their success either to their own prudence or to fortune (Arcana Coelestia 6485).



Are you someone who thinks everything happens because you are smart enough to control it? If so, you are like someone wandering in a maze. Are you someone who knows that the Lord is always leading all of us? He is always leading us toward heaven. If you can believe that, you are like someone in a labyrinth.



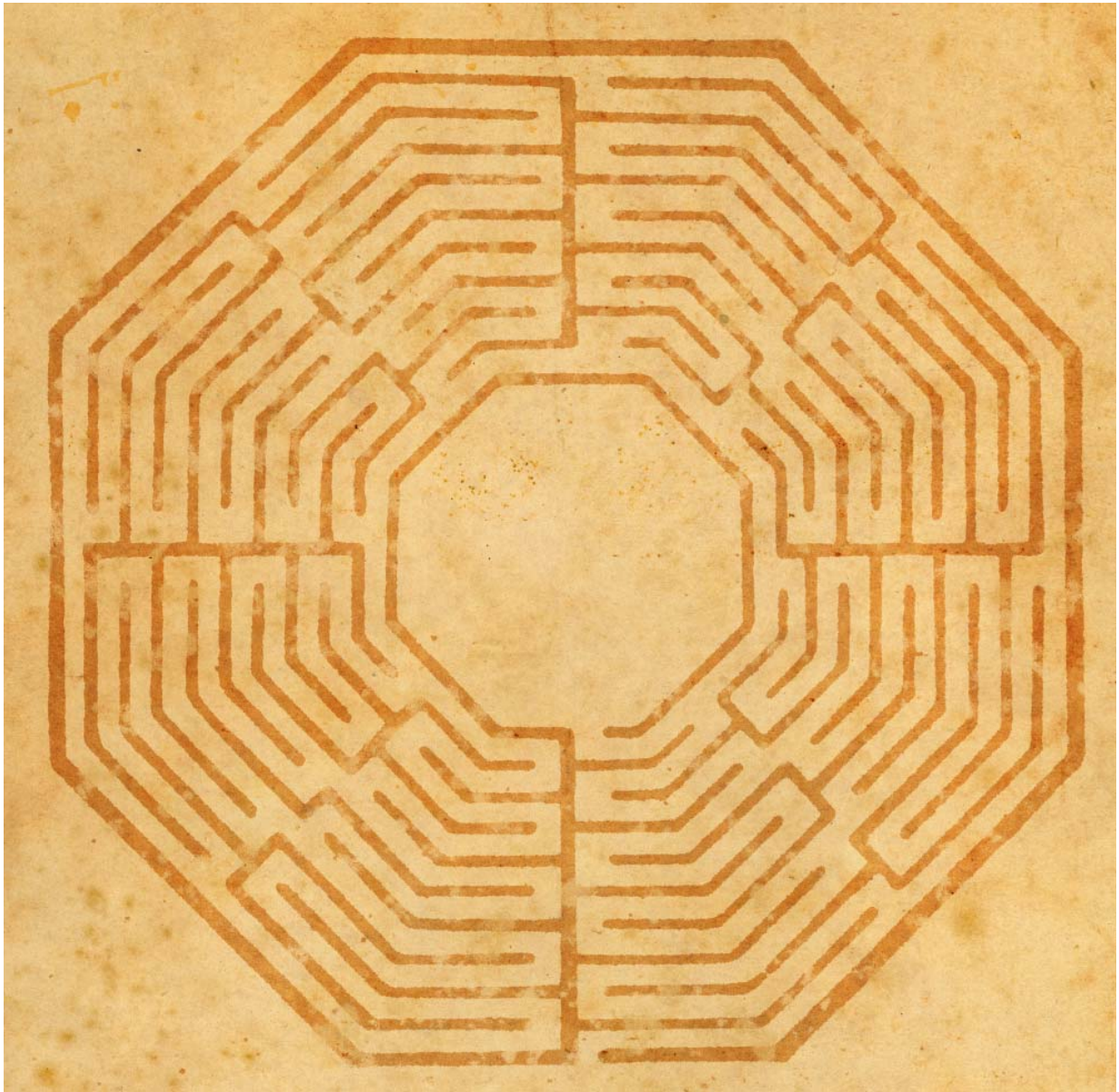
MAZE PATTERN



LABYRINTH PATTERN



MAZE OR LABYRINTH?



Explore: How Does Evil Appear in the Light of Heaven?

I Kings 18:1-2,18-46: Fire from Heaven

The devils in hell see themselves as ordinary human beings. But when the light of heaven shines on them, their true inner nature is revealed and their bodies appear as ugly and distorted.

Supplies Needed for Each Student

- copy of “How Does Evil Appear in the Light of Heaven?” (see attached sheet)
- pen or pencil

Warm-up

Only one person in the history of mankind has been allowed to visit the spiritual world and to see first-hand the inner workings of heaven and hell. This man is Emanuel Swedenborg who lived from 1688-1772. We will be reading accounts of what he saw there, and hear about the people he talked to.



Process

1. Read “How Does Evil Appear in the Light of Heaven?” with the students.

Discuss

1. What did the devils see as they counted their coins?
2. What did the coins look like in the light of heaven?
3. In this week’s Elijah story (I Kings 19) we learn about the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Baal was a Canaanite deity. The false prophets of Baal posed as “holy men.” In reality, what they loved was not real—Baal had no power. His followers tried to summon him, but he did not come.
4. In the story, Elijah represents the Lord’s presence—His truth. During his contest with the prophets of Baal, Elijah provoked them and then they showed their true nature. They leaped around the altar, they cut themselves, they shouted out, and when nobody answered, they looked foolish.
5. Compare the behavior of the prophets of Baal with the devils in the story from Conjugal Love. In what ways are they similar? How are they different?
6. In what ways is Elijah’s presence like the light of heaven?
7. What steps can a person take to cast the light of heaven on their own actions?
8. What significant differences are there between devils in hell and people who are nurturing hellish loves on earth? Can devils change? Can people on earth change? Consider what the prophets of Baal did when they saw the power of the Lord in your answer.
9. Why was it important for Elijah to kill the prophets and not let one of them escape? How might this relate to how we handle false ideas in ourselves?

How Does Evil Appear in the Light of Heaven?

Emanuel Swedenborg spent many years exploring the spiritual world—the place where people live after life on earth. There he met people who had recently died and were living in the world of spirits. The spiritual world appears so much like the world we live in that some people were quite surprised to find out that they had actually died. In addition he met people who had become angels in heaven, and also people who had rejected the Lord and embraced a life of selfishness, choosing to become devils in hell.

One of the surprising things about the spiritual world is that what people look like and see all around them mirrors their inner loves. So the angels of heaven who love the Lord look beautiful and are surrounded by attractive gardens, magnificent homes, and peaceful animals. On the other hand devils in hell are surrounded by deserts, stinking bogs and savage animals. Their ugly homes and bodies mirror the twisted and selfish things they love.

How Do the Devils See Themselves?

To each other, the devils look like ordinary people. The Lord allows them to appear this way so that they do not look loathsome to each other. From the selfish outlook they freely choose, they believe that the darkness of hell is full daylight. Their homes look like normal houses.

What Happens when the Light of Heaven Shines in Hell?

When the light of heaven shines into hell, the picture changes completely. Here is what Swedenborg witnessed:

Seen in any of heaven's light, all the spirits in the hells appear in the form of their own evil.... So you can tell what they are like by looking at them. In general, they are forms of contempt for others, threats against people who do not revere them; they are forms of various shadings of hatred, of various forms of vengefulness. Savagery and cruelty show through from within. When others praise them, though, or revere and worship them, their faces compose themselves and look almost happy and gratified.... In general, their faces are frightful, as lifeless as corpses. Some of their faces are black, some like little torches, some pimply, with huge ulcerated sores. In many cases there is no visible face, only something hairy or bony in its place, while with others only the teeth show. Their bodies are equally misshapen, and their speech seems to embody wrath or hatred or vengeance.... (*Heaven and Hell* 553)

What Do the Activities of Devils Look Like?

One day Swedenborg visited a hell where people who loved money lived. They fantasized that they could possess all the wealth in the world! Moving closer he saw a house made of reeds. Mist poured out of the cracks in the walls. Inside it, lots of people sat at benches with purses of gold coins all around them. They hissed as they talked and their faces looked red, with glittering green eyes.

Standing in their midst, we asked, "Do you believe that you possess all the riches of the kingdom?" to which they replied, "We do possess them."

We then asked them, "Which of you?" and they answered, "Each one of us." "How each one?" we asked, "You are many." They said, "Each one of us knows that all his are mine. No one is allowed to think, still less to say, 'Mine are not yours' but it is allowed us to think and say, 'Yours are mine'."

The coins on the tables seemed as though they were coins of pure gold, and this even to us. But when we let in light from the east, they were granules of gold which these men, by their common united fantasy, had magnified into coins. They said that every one who comes in, had to bring some gold with him. This they cut up into little pieces, and these into granules; then, by the united power of their fantasy they enlarge these into coins of the larger sort. (*Conjugal Love* 268)

The people confessed that they felt that they were reasonable people—but that the passion to count the coins overcame them and so they would return to do this again and again. But if anyone in the group tried to take the coins away from other people and hoard them for themselves, they would be put in prison and punished, and would have to give up their coins as a fine.

Meditate & Activate

Thinking or meditating about a passage from God's Word and finding opportunities to put it into action can be a powerful experience. Keep this card intact or cut out the illustrated quotation to use as a bookmark or put up somewhere in your home.

Meditate: The Lord wants to do amazing things for you! How can you use the gifts He has given you to bring His presence more fully into your life?

Activate: Identify something you feel passionately about, whether it is a dream for your future, a job you do now, or a hobby you enjoy. How could the Lord help you in this area of your life? What part can you take in making your hopes come true?

If you abide
in Me, and
My words
abide in you,
you will ask
what you
desire, and it
shall be done
for you.

John 15:7



To make a stronger bookmark, print this page on heavy paper or cardstock, cut in half and give half to each student.

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