

S.N. Feb 11, 1979 R.M. WART -
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FIRE ON THE ALTAR

INTRODUCTION:

I Kings 18:38

As soon as the world was built, altars were built.

Cain and Abel built altars and worshipped God.

Noah after the flood, the first thing - was to erect an altar.

Abraham built altars at every stopping place. As he moved, he built an altar. Which indicates, when people move from one city to another, they ought to move their church letters and keep up with their church.

Jacob, also, built altars.

This is, by way of history, the altar had a permanent place in the life of Israel. It had a purpose - it was in the tabernacle, right before the holy of holies. And there sacrifices were offered. The temple also, had a huge altar. And today, you might go and see the dome of the rock in Jerusalem - which is the place where it is reported that sacrifices took place.

There is the brazen altar, which was the altar for sacrifices for sin.

There was the altar of incense. One of fellowship.

And then there was the mercy seat all of these directly in line, as one approached God.

We want to talk about a man this evening, who built - rebuilt an altar. And the great conference which he had on Mt. Carmel. But it all hinges on the subject of prayer.

First, let us look at the crowds, and then look at the cold altar. And the live altar. And then, you make your choice.

I. THE CROWD

1811, 5-
v. 15
v. 17

When the great drought had been on the earth for 3 1/2 years, men had been searching for Elijah. Ahab was like a bloodhound, seeking him. Obadiah went to search for water. And he found Elijah. Elijah commanded him to go and tell thy Lord - behold, Elijah is here. Now Obadiah did not want to do this at first. If Elijah failed to show up, then Obadiah would lose his life. But Elijah gives his promise that before that very day, the sun sets, that he would show himself to his royal master. The message was delivered, and soon the king stands (face to face.) These two characters - the prophet of God, and the great champion of Baal. Here stands the upholder of the true religion. Here is the one who stands by false religion. And here is one that stands for right. One for light - the other for darkness. One for truth - the other for error.

As Ahab meets the prophet, he said this in a rage - art thou he that troubleth Israel.

17.18 This is how he meets Elijah. And what will Elijah do. He says, I have not troubled Israel, but thy ^{sons} and thy Father's house - in that thou has forsaken the commandment of the Lord, and followed Balaam. It was a brave man to preach the truth here. He was a fearless worker.

→ What is to be done? Elijah was the master of this occasion and he dictates to the sovereign in the name of God, he purposes that all of Israel gather at Mt. Carmel. This mighty throng of people should come for great conference at Mt. Carmel.

The prophet was familiar with these surroundings, and Carmel was a famous place for its vineyards, King Wazariah had 300 husbandmen and vine dressers. 2 Chron. 26:10.

The whole mountain was a place of flowering shrubs. And Elijah said we will go and decide who is the Lord - Jehovah or Baal.

We think about the crowd that gathered. There were three groups that gathered there.

1 First, there were the royal individuals that gathered. The ranks of

Ahabs Hundreds -

(priests) with their vestments. 850 of them to be exact. And these had worshipped and been assigned as Jezebel's table. They were ignorant and they were following the creed of their (atheistic) king. They were (irreligious) and they had sold themselves to work iniquity.

This first class we would say were the (atheists). They believed in no God. Who is the Lord, that he should reign over us. They do as Ahab does.

2

Minority

Second, the faithful worshippers of God were there. (Obadiah) and his faithful group and he had hid in the caves. And that was the second group that gathered. They had lived for years in hiding. And they were dependent upon their daily bread, by the birds of the forest and of course, the Gentiles who would help them. But they were the true worshippers. They had never bowed a knee to Baal. They were true to God.

3

Haltin' Wavering crowd

Third, there was a great group of people, a great mass of people who were (divided) in their (opinion). They swayed between views. They hesitated. They did not know what they believed. This was a great group, that the prophet said, "how long halt ye between two opinions."

v. 21

There was a vast (mass) of undecided. Those who were half-hearted Christians, on the borders, who could not really get out in the light. Or detect truth from error. And they were unstable as the sea. They have the wish to die happy and to go to Heaven at last. But they (cannot) make up their minds, as to yet

renounce their favorite sins. They wish to flee to Christ as their Saviour, but not yet. They wish to give up the world's follies and sin, but not yet.

There were three great groups, that were gathered here at Carmel. And what a crowd.

II. THE COAL ALTAR

V. 19-

Now we have them gathered, and in V. (19) - we discover that the conference has been set. V. 19 - 400 prophets of the grove, fed by Jezebel, and 450 prophets of Baal, are gathered on the mountain.

V. (21) - The people were charged with sin.

V. (24) - God, who answers by fire, will decide the contest.

V. (25) - Elijah says, I'll let you be (first) You may build your altar - but do not put any fire.

Elijah had a Program - Josh. Called To V. Service man Fire
her set - spread Tools -
What seems to Trouble ?
well for one thing, all the Programs are for...

V. 26 - 29 - We read that this was a cold altar without fire. The sun was hot and Baal, being a sun God could not produce fire.

The proposal was adopted by both parties, and Elijah lost no time helping them choose. Because they were many in the majority. And they out-numbered the little flock. And perhaps it is something like that today - the world outnumbered the flock of the little disciples of Jesus. And yet, the narrative goes on to tell how the priests of Baal, made their preparation. They took the bullock and dressed it, and put it on the altar and then they cried aloud, oh Baal, hear us. They were hoarse and exhausted. They began to cry another will cry. And then other priest. And their cries did not rally their spirits.

From morning til noon and from noon until the time of the offering, of the evening sacrifice - it is all in vain. The cry of frenzie. There was neither voice nor any to answer nor regard. It was a fanatical religious dance.

The idol of the world had nothing to offer. Their God, there is neither voice, nor answer, nor attention or proof. As they call upon their God. A God such as this, that cannot concern himself with the affairs of men, is tragic.

Those that go on in the service of the flesh, allow falsehood and deceit.

This is a God of the preverse generation. And whoe unto the Bible hating, false, rational generation we are in the midst of today.

V. 27
As you look at Carmel, the out cry and the noise would lead you to compare it to some of the cults, that we have today. And God must have had holy indignation for how foolish. Elijah said, to these people - you cry aloud, your God must be talking. He must be on a journey. He must be asleep. He must be awake. Maybe he is meditating. Maybe he is not at home.

V. 28
This excitement Baal must come forth. And their cry to Baal is now so intense, they have worked themselves up with noise and frustration. They take out their knives and their lances. They lacerate their bodies. And the blood streams. And with their sinful blood, they think to induce Baal to hear and to answer.

V. 29
And then they begin to prophesy. They make all kinds of motions and ravings, and mutters, and horrible incantations. And perhaps some of this may have been as the speaking in tongues. And they did this until they had no voice. And until all was in vain.

However much they were excited - we need to get the point here - you might excite yourself. But Jesus, Jehovah God, has no pleasure in such sacrifices. They could pray themselves hoarse and we could spend hours, in that kind of worship - but this is not the thing. And God does not answer.

III. A LIVE ALTAR

V30

In V. (30) the Bible says that Elijah repairs the old altar. It was about the time of the (evening) sacrifice. This man of God simply, by faith came, and he said unto the people - now here on Mt. Carmel is the ruins of an altar. And an altar that was called the altar of God. Now it had probably been built many years ago but had been torn down by the idolators. This altar Elijah repairs.

He took 12 stones - the number of the 12 tribes of Israel.

33-35

V. (33-35) The preparation. He digs a trench - and he puts plenty of water on the altar. And water is the ob~~ject~~ of fire. And he wants to show people that this is no fraud. So they fill four barrels of water. And put the wood on. They do it a second and third time - until the water fills the trench.

The preparation is now complete.

36-37

V. (36-37) - Elijah prays the old prophet stands alone. And shows his trust and his desire. At the important hour. And here is his prayer - "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac of Israel - let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel and that thou art thy servant, and that I have done all of these things of thy word, hear me oh Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God. And that thou hast turned their hearts back again."

He prays for revival - that God will reveal himself. He prays with

compassion. That God's love may come to fallen men. And he calls upon the God of Abraham, that God would let it be known, that the people may know that thou art the Lord God.

There are two things to notice - what the prophet did and what the prophet said. What shall we admire the most in his prayer. The prophet's zeal for God's glory. His love for a back-slidden house of Israel. His boldness in asking such great things. He had confidence.

We marvel at the unspeakable grace of God. Which teaches us that here at a mysterious moment, things were going to change.

V. 38 V. 38 - the (mysterious moment) - the whole revelation of God is at stake. Elijah has prayed, and testified, and prayed unto God - the prayer has been uttered. Every heart has been lifted up. The amen now is to be given. The fire of the Lord fell at 3 o'clock. And then all the people saw it and fell on their faces, and said - Jehovah is the God. Jehovah is the God.

How glorious it was that here was an altar - and the Holy Spirit, the fire of the Lord never goes out day or night. And it has now descended upon this altar.

39 -

Who could return that day from Mt. Carmel. Without caring to have it be said in his heart, the Lord - he is God. There was no one who would hesitate and would say that.

40

And of course, the worshippers of Baal were right for destruction. Let not one of them escape. The people are ready enough to do it. They call upon them - and at the brook Kishon, God destroyed them. It was a painful execution.

How many times have we witnessed God's mighty power - Deut. 13:6-9.

If anyone will entice thee, secretly saying - let us go and seek other Gods. Which thou hast not known - thou nor thy fathers. Thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hands shall be thrust upon him to put him to death. And afterwards the hand of all the people. This is an expressed command of God. And obligation for us to obey God and put him out of evil.

We know that there is going to be a harvest and the wicked and the righteous grow together. And then there is going to come a day of destruction.

Here was a live altar - here was life, and light on this altar.

Which altar will you choose. What will be your choice.

Two altars built very much alike. And two altars outwardly seemingly were equally as promising. Anybody can build an altar.

Only God can furnish the fire. God can turn the cold altar into an altar of living fire.

The truth is, we have cold altars everywhere - do you not see them as you look around today.

Let me mention a few cold altars:

First, there are churches and preachers without fire. In God's program, there are churches today that tolerate sin. It does not matter what they believe, but as the modern world decides - they simply look for entertainment or something fancy today. Rather than the Gospel.

Few people seek prayer from the church anymore. Many love groceries, clothes, friendship, fun for prayer

Peter told Bigger - "Follow & you'll have a word - such as we have - have prayer"

I remember reading Dr. B. H. Carroll, from Belton, Texas, was preaching night after night and there were no conversions. One night, at midnight, he put on his clothes, and he said - I went out to the cemetery, on the hillside. I got on my knees between two graves. And I prayed Lord, show me what Hell is like. Help me to see what it is like to be lost in sin. After that remarkable experience, the next night, the Spirit descended, in the Revival swept the countryside. People in the church became more in earnest. They were on fire after seeing the condition of the sinner.

2. There are Deacons and leaders without fire. In some of our churches, our leaders are nothing more than cold altars. A Deacon ought to be on fire and his life should be felt throughout the entire church. He is a servant of the church - and he should be able to lead in that way. Dr. Robert G. Lee said, I used to ask Deacons, where were you born the first time. And then where were you born the second time. Will you support the Training Union, the Sunday School, and will you tithe. And then he says, I would ask - what about your wife. Is she going to be a leader and faithful to the church. And to the worship in the church.

Parker once said, he knew only two colors - black or white. It had to be definite. That is, a man needs to be on the altar - ablaze for God.

Many years ago in 1932 before graduating from the Seminary, Appleman and Cauthen, and Harold Hall were talking. Hall said if the Gospel were a train what would you like to be. One of the fellows said - I'd like to be the engineer. Another one said, I'd like to be the conductor on the train. Appleman said, I'd like to be the coal in the engine. And burn out for God. Not freeze up for the Devil but burn out for Christ.

What cold things we sometimes are in our churches. Our choir sings with percision - and out Sunday School teachers teach history. And we are frozen together with orthodoxy. Like Sampson, he wished not that the Lord's spirit had departed from him.

The church at Ephesus was loveless and didn't know it. The church at Sardis

was lifeless and did not know it. The church at Laodicea was luke warm and didn't know it.

Some people spend the first six days of the week sowing wild oats and they go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure. We need to stop flirting with sin.

Charles Spurgeon was fond of the story - some children were taught the Apostles Creed. Each child repeated a clause. Thus they proceeded - through the Creed. I believe in the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, etc.

One day the minister came into class and he said, children, we are going to repeat the Creed now.

It was a little bit awkward at first - what is wrong. And a little boy replied, please sir, the boy that believes in the Holy Spirit is (not) here today.

Now the (Holy Spirit) is lost and closed out of some churches and some leaders lives. The Holy Spirit gives power to praise and to witness. So there are churches without fire, leaders without fire, etc.

③
③ And thirdly, there are members without fire. Did you know there are church

members that have grudges between them. They do not speak one to another.

There are some who pray the Lord's Prayer and do not mean a word of it. Because if God should forgive you as you forgive others, you would never be forgiven.

So many people talk about my feelings have been hurt. All they talk about - and they bury these things in their heart and let them grow, instead of getting those things out and making them right. Suppose David had spent all of his time trying to get even with Saul. He would have never been crowned king.

Some Christians are like the Scotchman who said, "I am open to conviction. But I would like to see the man who could convict me."

As the soldier said, "when I come to die - do not sound taps over my grave but reverie - the morning call. The summons to rise. This is the great need of the hour.

Oh for a passion for souls

Oh for a love that loves even to death

Oh for a fire that burns

In Scotland years ago, before matches, the fire had gone out in one

community, but far on the hillside - there was one fireplace that was still ablaze. And soon the people were carrying coals here and there until all was a glow. Today we have cold hearts, cold altars - they need fire. Let's light some of these souls tonight.

What shall we do. Where shall we get the fire. Good intentions will not do it. Hell is paved with good intentions. Of people who intend to live better, but that is not enough.

The Disciples depended upon this fire - they could feel it burning within.

Fire (penetrates) - the hardest piece of metal.

Fire (illuminates) - it brings light.

Fire (softens) - like a candle.

Fire (warms) - brings heat.

Fire (consumes) - it destroys.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire.

Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed by fire.

The Burning bush was afire of direction.

The (clouded pillar) - was the Holy Spirit guiding and leading. And when they had camped there long enough - the fire moved on.

And here on (Mt. Carmel) there was fire from Heaven.

In 1665, London, there was a terrible plague. Disease germs multiplied. The following year, a great fire broke out, and the plague smitten city was possessed by a spirit of burning. London literally was baptized with fire. And fire accomplished what water had failed to do.

7 (Matt. 3:11) - He shall baptize you with fire - this fire from above is our redeeming agency.

7 (God uses three things) - his Holy (Word) his Holy (Spirit) and a holy (life)
- The (Emmaus) road is a pilgrimage for you tonight. They said, did not our heart burn within us. While he talked with us by the way. And while he opened to us the Scriptures. They (compared hearts.)

21 V. (21) - Every man's (question) is listed here. There is no middle of the road.

Isa. 6:6-7

We are going to stop right now and let you make your decision concerning fire on the altar.

Yosemite Nat. Park at floor valley - campground & at
Night can watch Fire Fall -

on Mt. Top - a bundle of wood is put together, all
is set afire & smolder, as evening falls, begins to burn
brightly.

When the crowd has gathered - appointed time -
some one cries "Set The Fire Fall" -

The bundle comes tumbling down -
Tourist - heart jumps in throat.

When will the Fire fall on us!

It will fall when we put God Back on the Throne!

" " " " " " Serve " with gladness!

" " " " " " Believe it well!

Foreigners at Wesley's Tomb prayed "Lord, do it
again, Lord Do It again" -

Set your Prayer; Set The fire fall again Lord, Now!