

## ***“Fire From Heaven”***

Joshua 24: 14 – 24; Exodus 20: 1 - 6; Matthew 6: 19 – 24; **1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 19 – 40 (Sermon)**

This morning we are going to continue our study of Elijah The Prophet.

Elijah’s name means *“the Lord is God.”*

Throughout Elijah’s ministry Elijah called the people to worship and to serve The One True Living God of Israel.

When the Israelites entered The Promised they found that every part of Canaan had its own deity.

There were many Baals.

Baal was the great fertility god, the weather god, the sun god, etc.

Baal worship included temple prostitution and child sacrifices.

Baal worship was also linked with that of the goddess Asherah.

King Ahab was the 7<sup>th</sup> King of Israel.

1st Kings 16:30 tells us that ***“King Ahab did more evil in the sight of the Lord than any of those before him.”***

In addition King Ahab married Jezebel who was a devout worshipper of Baal and Jezebel was the daughter of a king who worshipped Baal.

So Ahab built altars to Baal and to Asherah to please his wife.

According to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18, there were 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who ate at Queen Jezebel’s table.

During Ahab’s reign idol worship was rampant in Israel.

God sent The Prophet Elijah to Ahab with a message that there would be no rain or dew in Israel for several years because of King Ahab’s evil and adulterous ways and because he led the people of Israel into idolatry.

Elijah’s message of condemnation infuriated Ahab. (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 17:1)

Last week we ended with Elijah telling Obadiah to go tell King Ahab that Elijah wanted to speak to King Ahab.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to Elijah, ***“Is this you, you troubler of Israel?”***

Elijah answered; ***“I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you have followed the Baals.*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:17-18)

The Elijah issued a challenge to King Ahab.

***“Now 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.”*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:19)

Ahab accepted the challenge for a contest between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah.

The purpose of the contest was to prove to the people that ***“The Lord is God.”***

The contest was to be in front of all the people of Israel and it was to take place on Mt. Carmel?

Mt Carmel is a large mountain in Northern Israel.

Mt Carmel was important militarily, politically, and spiritually.

The altar to God on Mt Carmel had been torn down and large altar to Baal erected.

The people of Israel were trying to worship God and Baal at the same time.

They want it both ways. They wanted the power of Almighty God but they practiced and enjoyed the evil ways of Baal.

After the people were assembled at Mt Carmel Elijah challenged the people.

***“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:21)

Elijah challenged the people to make a choice! Elijah said you cannot worship both God and Baal.

As you know the first of The 10 Commandments says; ***“You shall have no other gods before me”***. (Exodus 20:3)

And the second commandment prohibits all forms of idolatry. (Exodus 20:4)

Then in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 23 – 29 we read Elijah’s challenge to the Prophets of Baal & Asherah.

You and I will make a burnt offering sacrifice to our respective gods.

But we will not light the fire under the sacrifice.

Then we will call on our god to send fire from heaven to burn the sacrifice.

The god who answers with fire he is god.

Elijah allowed the prophets of Baal to go first.

When Baal did not answer

Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal and Asherah. (Verse 27)

*Maybe your god is asleep or maybe he go to the bathroom or maybe he is on vacation.*

Verses 28 & 29 tell us the prophets of Baal ***“cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.***

***When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no answer”.***

Then it was Elijah’s turn.

Remember the purpose of the challenge was to prove God was The Only True God and for the people of Israel to quit worshipping Baal and to turn back to God!

I am going to read verses 30 to 40 again because the steps Elijah took are important.

***30 Then 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. 31 Elijah 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.” 32 With 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<sup>9</sup> of seed. 33 He 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. 35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. 36 At 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. 37 Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:30b – 37)

***38 Then 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.*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 38)

***39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 39)

***40 Then 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.*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 40)

This is a great story but what does it have to do with us today.

Now I do not believe any of you have a statue of Baal or Asherah in your living room nor do you have an altar to Baal or Asherah in your yard.

But today we have other idols and other gods that we worship.

For example: It could be a god of youth or beauty;

it could be your social status or a position;

it could be your career or a college degree.

It could be the god of pleasure or sex. It could be our pride or clothes.

It could be the car we have to have or the home we must have even if we cannot afford it.

Anything that we make more important than worshipping, obeying and / or living for The Lord is a false god.

The physical in The Bible always point to a spiritual truth.

So let's look at the steps Elijah took and the spiritual meaning for us in these steps.

These are the same steps we need to take if we want The Lord's power to be evident in our daily lives.

The first thing Elijah did was to tell the people;

**Come near to me.**

In Psalm 46:10 God said; *"Be still and know that I am God"*

James 4:8 tells us; *"draw near to God and he will draw near to you."*

And Jeremiah 33:3 tells us to Come to me and listen to me and I will show you great & wonderful things you do not know.

We need to come close to The Lord.

**Rebuild your altar**

An altar is a place of worship; a place to confess our sins, a place to pray, a place to praise, a place where a sacrifice was offered, and a place of commitment.

We rebuild our altar by confessing our sins and repenting.

We rebuild our altar by setting aside a special time each day to spend with our Lord in prayer.

We rebuild our altar by having a special time to read, study, and mediate on God's Word.

We rebuild our altar by recommitting our lives to The Lord's service.

We rebuild our altar by using our time and the talents praising The Lord.

We all need to rebuild our altars to The Lord.

**Dig a trench**

Digging a trench is symbolic of our need to separate ourselves from evil, materialism, and worldliness.

Remember sin separates us from The Lord.

You can not walk with Jesus on Sunday and run with the devil the rest of the week.

## **Offer a sacrifice**

We sacrifice when we choose to spend quality time with The Lord each day.

We offer a sacrifice when we bring our tithes and offerings to The Lord.

In Romans 12:1 we read *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”*

## **Pouring water on the alter**

Water is used to clean.

We need to be cleansed from our sins in order to come into The Lord’s presence.

Isaiah 64:6 tells us all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags in God’s sight.

Jesus is the giver of living water (John 4:11)

Water is also used in baptism and when we are baptized we confirm our covenant relationship with The Lord.

Only Jesus can cleanse us from our sins.

## **Prayer**

Sadly most of our prayer time is giving The Lord a list of things for Him to do for us.

Listening for The Lord’s answer is a critical part of prayer.

Elijah expected God to answer his prayer.

Notice the three things Elijah prayed for.

These three items are a model for us to pray each day.

Elijah prayed;

- That God would be glorified by his actions
- That the people would see God at work in his life
- That the people would know that God was The One True God

## **Fire came from heaven**

Fire is symbolic of The Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:3 tells us at Pentecost *“the people saw what seemed to be tongues of fire”*

As believers we have all been given The Indwelling Holy Spirit.

But we all need to pray for Holy Spirit to fill us each and every day.

And Ephesians 4:30 is a command; *“do not grieve The Holy Spirit”*

The power to live the Christian life comes from God The Holy Spirit.

If we are filled with The Spirit there is no room for Satan in our life.

**Kill the false prophets**

We all need to resist temptation.

James 4:7 tells us; ***“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”***.

We all need to kill the evil attitudes and actions in our lives.

Acts 3:19 tells us; ***“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,”***

We need to kill the anger, the prejudices, the hate in our lives and we need to forgive and love those who have hurt, insulted, and take advantage of us.

In Exodus 20:5 we read that God is a jealous God.

God is not jealous because He has an ego problem.

God is jealous for our undivided attention and for our total commitment to Him.

God is jealous because He alone can fulfill our greatest needs and the desires of our life.

God wants all of us, not just part of us, and God allows no substitutes.

God’s word to us today is clear; it’s time for all of us to get off the fence and to put The Lord first in every aspect of our lives.

You can not go to bed with Satan and wake up with Jesus.

***“If The Lord is God then follow Him”*** (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:21)

**AMEN**