

Elijah on Mount Carmel

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon emphasizes the exclusivity of true faith and the impossibility of serving both God and mammon.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4, Joshua 24:15, 1 Kings 18:21, Matthew 6:24, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Corinthians 10:14, 1 Timothy 6:10, James 4:4

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Idolatry And Devotion"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18, highlighting the importance of recognizing and maintaining unity among God's people, the courage and composure that true faith brings, the power of prayer based on God's covenants, the consequences of idolatry, and the necessity of exclusive devotion to God as taught in Scripture. The sermon emphasizes the incompatibility of serving both God and worldly wealth, pointing out the present powerlessness of churches due to the pursuit of material gain over spiritual growth.

Transcript

(1 Kings xviii:30-46.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The Recognition of Israel's Unity (verses 30-32). God has gathered two bodies on this earth, both charged

with the duty of representing Himself--Israel and the church. The first great fact concerning the Deity is unity: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord," and the point of most grievous failure in both cases is, that divisions came in to mar the expression of that unity. The two kingdoms in Israel, and the numberless sects in the church mark that failure. Elijah here finely illustrates the individual part in a time of division. He took no position which ignored the entire unity of the people of God.

2. The Courage and Composure of True Faith (verses 33-36).

So sure was Elijah that the power of his God was sufficient, that he deliberately heaped difficulty upon difficulty, and then, in the quietness of a heart stayed on Jehovah, he waited for the time of the evening sacrifice.

3. The Prayer of Elijah and God's Answer (verses 36-39)-

This prayer is one of the most admirable models of prayer to be found in the Bible--that treasury of wonderful prayers. It is based on God's covenants; has the exaltation of God and the salvation of His people for its object.

4. The Execution of the False Prophets (verse 40).

Do not conceive of this scene as the triumph of bigotry. The government of Israel was a theocracy, and idolatry was the supreme treason against the King.

5. The Final Test of Faith (verses 41-46).

The justification of Elijah as God's true prophet was incomplete till rain should come again. Israel, however temporary the repentance might be, had that day turned back to God, and now it was His time to be gracious.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The heart of things here is not far to seek. It is the lesson taught in Scripture again and again, that the religion of the Bible is absolutely exclusive of all other religions.

Neither Christianity nor Mosaism can be put into a pantheon. When the ark of God was set up in the house of Dagon, they of Ashdod found the fish-god on his face with head and hands gone. In Ahab's day, as in our day, men supposed they might worship both Jehovah and Baal. Men in high place in the Christian church to-day are telling us that we must reconstruct our missionary ideals and methods, and recognize the many excellent things in the heathen religions as giving a common ground upon which to build the better things of Christianity. "A great vantage ground would be gained were missionaries to see that idols were in the beginning mere symbols, and to lead the people back from the idol to the truth symbolized." Indeed, we are told that it is an insult to call such cultured people as the Hindu and Chinese "heathen."

But Scripture knows nothing of this false "breath." "If Jehovah be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Ye turneth to God from idols to serve the living and the true God." "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

It is significant that when Jesus Christ, bringing in the new dispensation in which we live, reaffirmed the old exclusiveness, He spoke not of Baal nor of any of the old false gods, but of the false gods whom He foresaw as in a peculiar sense the symbol of Satan as the god of this age-- mammon. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." In nothing is the contrast between the Jewish age and the Christian age more marked than in the new attitude toward wealth. Under the old order, wealth was a token of the divine blessing, and when Jesus said: "How hardly shall those that have riches enter the kingdom of God," the Jews exclaimed in amazement: "Who then can be saved?"

As in ancient Israel men imagined that, notwithstanding the express words of the law, they might keep well with Baal and with Jehovah also, so no professing Christians imagine that they may serve both God and mammon. And precisely there, in the frantic pursuit, by millions of professing Christians, of wealth as an object of life, may be found the open secret of the present powerlessness of the churches. The churches of one of the leading denominations in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, actually shrunk numerically

last year; and similar ominous signs are accumulating all round the horizon. But the members of those churches are as moral and decent in their lives as ever. No charge is made that they have gone off into flagrant vice. No, they are making the most of the present "era of prosperity"; that is all. And that is a respectable sin which the pulpit does not feel itself called upon to rebuke. A dying millionaire, in a southwestern city, sent for his pastor. "Why," said the dying man, "did you never warn me of the sin of making wealth my pursuit?" "Because," answered the minister, "I do not think it a sin to seek wealth." "Then I beg of you, study the word covetousness in your New Testament," said the dying man: "I have been an idolater all my life."

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