

A Consuming Fire

by G.W. North

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and living as God, using the story of Elijah and the altar on Carmel as a powerful example.

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:30

Topics: "Faith", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, illustrating how Elijah, through his unwavering faith, rebuilt the altar of God amidst Israel's spiritual decline. He highlights that Elijah's actions were not merely about the physical altar but symbolized a deeper spiritual truth about God's relationship with His people. The consuming fire that fell upon Elijah's altar represented God's acceptance and the revival of Israel, yet North warns that despite this powerful demonstration, Israel failed to learn from the experience. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a recognition of the spiritual principles behind worship and the necessity of living as God's people, separated from sin and devoted to Him.

Transcript

One of the great cries that ELIJAH the prophet of God made against Israel was 'they have digged down thine altars'. It was a terrible indictment calling for severest punishment, yet for the sake of the remnant in Israel and by the faith of the prophet, the Lord spared the people. The story of the contest on Carmel makes tremendous reading. At the crucial point we are introduced first to hundreds of the prophets of Baal building and leaping on their cold altar, mingling their own blood with the blood of their sacrifices, all to no avail. Then we behold the lone, brave prophet of the Lord, triumphant in faith, building his altar of twelve stones to the Lord.

Elijah was more than a prophet at that moment; he reigned over his circumstances like a king. Like the high priest of God he would make the sacrifice for all Israel; the altar upon which the offering would finally be laid should be the whole nation, each stone must represent a tribe. Needless to say God was entirely satisfied. Upon Elijah's altar the all-consuming fire fell; it devoured the sacrifice, the water that saturated and surrounded it and also the very stones upon which it was supported, elevating all to God.

The key to all lies here before us. Elijah was a man of great faith. The abundant rain, the revival of life, the fruitfulness of the land, the ultimate overthrow of the demonic despotism of Ahab and Jezebel, all came as a result of Elijah's faith. The prophet is a greatly admired man among us to this day, but great as he was,

and however greatly we admire him and seek to emulate his faith, we shall miss the greatest lesson of all if we overlook the fact that everything sprang from his spiritual insight into the ground of truth in God. Like David and Abraham, and perhaps an unnamed host of others, he was a man who understood that the visible altar was but a symbol of a spiritual principle of God's life.

His main function that day on Carmel was to represent to the people what they were. He showed them that they were the altar people of God and drew attention to the means of their real spiritual life. The genius of the man lay in the fact that he saw and understood that to be God's people men must live as God. At the hour of national crisis the altar on Carmel was nothing other than the way into the Temple, the gate of heaven and the entrance into the house of the Lord. Saturating the sacrifice and thoroughly wetting the stones, Elijah precluded the possibility of ignition by any fanatical false prophet seeking to create false fire in an attempt to destroy the purposes of God. The water was poured in until it filled the trench; it flowed round the base of the altar until it completely isolated it. At last there it stood alone, the object of everyone's gaze and Elijah's expectation, separated from the surrounding earth by its moat like an island separated from the mainland by the sea.

Israel was for God and God was for Israel. That day, by God's grace and faithful Elijah's symbolic act, God and His people were isolated from sin and heathendom by the sea of love, joined by sacrifice and consumed together in one fire on the mountain-top of His kingdom. Israel had dugged down God's altars, but Elijah built them up into one altar again, placed the sacrifice upon it and the fire fell. But they could not retain the blessing; the desires of God and the intentions of His prophets could not withhold them from their folly. Despite the unforgettable lessons, Israel did not learn the truth which Elijah knew and so singularly taught on Carmel.

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