

Repairing The Altar

Introduction

This week, the word of God came to us from Bishop Gerold Johnson, who directed our attention to 1 Kings 18:30-39. This story takes place during the troubling times of King Ahab's reign in the northern kingdom of Israel. If you remember, Ahab's wife Jezebel was a devout follower of Baal, and was determined to replace the worship of the God of Israel with worship of Baal. As such, she persecuted the prophets of the true God mercilessly. To make matters worse, the children of Israel were dealing with a drought that had already lasted for three years.

This passage canonizes one of the greatest showdowns and demonstrations of the power of God in history. By the time we reach verse 30, Elijah has already challenged the children of Israel to evaluate their lives and their behaviour. He says in verse 21 "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." And then he challenged the 450 prophets of Baal (vs. 25) to choose a bull and prepare it but to have their God light the fire under it. Baal's prophets cried out and cut themselves with knives (as was their custom) for several hours but nothing happened. In verse 30, something significant happens. Elijah calls the people closer and as they watch; **he rebuilds the altar**. Pause for a second and reflect on the significance of this act in the presence of the people. Bishop Johnson reminded us that "The altar is a place where heaven meets with earth". It is an access point to God and before the miracle, the showdown, the demonstration, the altar had to be rebuilt. Notice that Elijah spent from noon until evening preparing the altar.

The scripture goes on to describe that as Elijah rebuilds, he takes 12 stones which signified God's promise to Israel; and then he drenched the altar with water three times. His prayer was not a long one, but it centered around giving the people a revelation about the power of the true God. Elijah was focused on God turning the hearts of the people back towards Him, not one word of his prayer was self-serving. And as you probably remember, God answered powerfully and immediately. The fire fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water from the drenching. Leaving no doubt about who is the real God.

Upon first read, it may seem as though this story is just about the power of God, however, there is a subtler message about the mercy of God. The children of God had become



wrapped up in idol worship, some consciously making a choice to serve Baal, but many others making no choice without realising that not choosing for God is actually choosing against Him. In this day and age, we don't often see idols of wood and stone, but we certainly see a plethora of people who have never chosen for God and so choose against Him. That way it feels ok to live the materialistic, self-centered life that comes from serving gods of our own making. However, God, who is rich in mercy, allowed the people the opportunity to choose Him. Before they repented, without their confession of sins, without them ever acknowledging that they had fallen short; He allowed them to choose Him. Thank you, Jesus.

Getting Started

Read **1 Kings 18:1-39, 1 Kings 17:5-7, 9** and answer the following:

1. What had Elijah been doing for the three years prior to verse 1? **1 Kings 17:5-7, 9**
2. How many prophets met Elijah for the showdown at Mount Carmel? **1 Kings 18:19**
3. How long did the prophets of Baal cry out to him and cut themselves with knives? **1 Kings 18:28**
4. Notice that the prophets of Baal spent a short time preparing the altar and a long time praying, versus Elijah who spent a long time preparing the altar and a short time praying. Why is this significant? **1 Kings 18:26-36**

Let's Get Personal

1. What are some modern examples of gods or idols that us as human beings have created in our own image?
2. Is double mindedness idolatry? Write down your thoughts.
3. What is an example of an idol that you created in your own image?

Take The Next Step

This week's assignment is that same as last week's, take the time to do the following:

1. **Pray.** Ask God to reveal the areas in your life where you have grown cold or become indifferent to Him.
2. **Listen carefully.** God doesn't always speak in bolts of fire and tongues of angels. Sometimes it's the still small voice. Spend time during your devotion with a pen and a piece of paper and listen for the prompting of the spirit. Write your thoughts and impressions down.



3. **Surender it to God.** The rebuke of the spirit is actually an opportunity to course correct. Thank God for His correction and surrender your failures to Him.

Have a great week!

