

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

Tuesday, January 15

Reading: 1 Kings 18:30-40

1 Kings 18:38 *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. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"*

Baal's prophets had obviously failed. Elijah now calls the people over to him. Apparently there had been an altar dedicated to God on Mount Carmel at one time but through neglect and misuse it had fallen apart. Elijah takes the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel and rebuilds this altar.

Then Elijah does something strange. He has 16 large jars of water poured over the altar until it is dripping wet and filling the trench he had dug around it. Elijah did not want any chance for the people to say this was a trick. If he had hidden fire somewhere under the bull or wood it would not burn after this drenching.

Now Elijah prays. It is the time when the evening sacrifice would be offered at the Temple in Jerusalem. Unlike the frenzy and screaming of the prophets of Baal, Elijah's prayer is simple in which he states four basic things: (1) He knew Who God was – "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel", (2) He knew who he was – God's servant, (3) He knew what he was doing – God's will as he was commanded, (4) He knew why he was doing it – so the people will know the LORD and turn back to Him.

The result of Elijah's prayer is that God sends fire from heaven that burns up everything – the sacrifice, wood, stones, water, and dirt. The fire of God renews a fire in the people's hearts as they fall down and proclaim "The LORD – He is God!" At Elijah's leading they then eliminate the false prophets who had led them astray.

LESSON ONE: "The Great Divide." The altar Elijah rebuilt was a symbol of the people's relationship with God. The twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Though they are now divided politically, God still sees them as "one nation under God." Sometimes Christians can get pretty divided. Age differences, style preferences, and disagreements can split us up into factions. We need to remember that all believers are one in God's sight! What attitudes do we need to cultivate to build unity based on the truth of God's Word? What should we do instead of seeking to argue and fight with other believers?

LESSON TWO: "Broken Altars." The altar was broken down because no one was using it anymore. As Elijah rebuilt the altar, so it was God's desire to rebuild His broken relationship with His people. Are there any "altars" in your life that have broken down? Has your prayer life, time in the Word, worship, service, or fellowship begun to crumble? What do you need to rebuild or repair in your relationship with God?

LESSON THREE: "Waiting for God To Do Something." When Elijah first suggested this "contest" the people said nothing. They were waiting for God to show them something! When God sent the fire they responded in worship. Many people today are waiting for to do something to "prove Himself." But God has already done something – He sent His son to die for our sins! Do you bathe your service for God in prayer? Are you faithful in declaring the message of salvation so people can know that "The LORD – He is God"?