

Sermon Series
Elijah, A Prophet for Our Times
January 10, 2021

Title: When the Fire Falls

Subject: The Fire of God, Elijah, The Sacrifice, Confession, Salvation, The Holy Spirit, Atonement, Jesus Christ, Baal, Judgment, Consuming Fire

Theme Text: 1 Kings 18:38-39 (ESV) ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.”

Theme Illustration: I must admit that I have wondered why God has not done this more often on behalf of His honor and the edification of His people. There have been times when I have desired to see God bring fire from heaven to silence His critics, doubters, and haters. The purpose of this display of the holiness, power, and jealousy of God was for the benefit of His covenant people, to bring revival. This fire was not sent to consume His enemies but to bear witness to the reality of His existence, that He is a God that sees, hears, and responds to the plea of His faithful people. The Lord is not a dumb, blind, and deaf idol. This event is a demonstration of **Exodus 20:5-6 (ESV)** ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. This fire was the fire of His wrath spent upon the innocent substitute so that the people of God may be spared, preserved, and revived.

Our Lord’s own disciples got this wrong by desiring that they be allowed to bring down fire on a town that refused to receive Jesus, **Luke 9:52-55**

(ESV) ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. ⁵³ But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them.

The Lord has sent fire down at Pentecost, the fire of life-giving regeneration and cleansing. The Lord will send down His consuming fire to judge His enemies at the proper time. **Luke 3:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”**

Read: 1 Kings 18:38-40

Introduction: We need to briefly review Elijah’s appeal to God to turn the people’s hearts back towards Him by proving, through His answer by fire upon a sacrifice, that Baal is a false god. This will also prove, Israel’s God, is the only true God, **1 Kings 18:37 (ESV) ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”**

If there is no answer then the Lord is no more entitled to be regarded as God than Baal and Elijah would thus also be proved as a false prophet to a god who did not hear, thus, could not answer. The brief moments between the close of his prayer and the Lord’s answer by fire must have seemed like an eternity but happened immediately. From Elijah there had been no frenzied appeal, no constants begging, no dancing for hours, and no cutting to make whatever god feel sorry for him. Elijah’s appeal was short and orderly to the Lord on behalf of the Lord’s honor and His concern for the Lord's covenant people.

Transition: Without delay:

1.The Lord Answered: 1 Kings 18:38 (ESV) ³⁸ Then the fire of the

LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

The words imply that Elijah's prayer had scarcely ended when the fire of the Lord fell. The fire did not rise from the wood, but it fell like a waterfall straight out of heaven. This fire did not have hours to consume the wood in the sacrifice, but he immediately vaporized everything including the altar, the dust below the altar, and the water. It left a crater. All of this happened while Elijah was physically untouched and apparently unsurprised.

By that fire, the Lord vouched for Himself to be the only true God and that Elijah was His prophet and Israel was His people. How gracious it was of God to offer this proof to such a rebellious people. It is clear that the fire of God consumed, but it also regenerated faith in His people.

Obviously, this was no ordinary earthly fire, it was supernatural. This is a fire that no material agency could resist. The nature of the fire and its effects left each spectator with a choice Whether to respond to Him who they so grievously dishonored.

We, the Lord's people, should fret not. When we stand alone against all of the worldly and spiritual powers that oppose us. We worship and serve Him who has all power in heaven and on earth. If God is for us, it matters not who is against us, **Romans 8:35-39 (ESV)** ³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?** ³⁶ **As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."** ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** ³⁸ **For I am sure that neither death nor life, him nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,** ³⁹ **nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

While the devil and the world incite us to compromise the truth of Christ and His word, we have the sure promise of God. We must always unreservedly

and unashamedly place ourselves in His hands. How wonderfully this reinforces the power of faith and faith-filled prayer. Prayer is the main conduit, pray without faith is an insult to God.

What does the Scripture mean by praying in faith? It is no less than the mind and the heart to be regulated by what God has said. It is us laying hold of the word of God and counting on Him to fulfill His promises. We need to emulate Elijah's attitude, **1 Kings 18:36 (ESV)** ³⁶ And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, **“O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.**

If we, as pastors, deacons, church members, and believers are to be a means in turning the hearts of men back to God, we must look to Him to work in us and by us, we must rely on His power to carry us through the discharge of our duties. We must have our eyes to God's glory and what we undertake. To honor God's word is to honor Him.

As we read, “the fire fell”, we remember that **Hebrews 12:28-29 (ESV)** ²⁸ **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,** ²⁹ **for our God is a consuming fire.** This pulpit and every faithful pulpit that declares that God is love while ignoring by silence that God is a consuming fire disserves the flock. This reminds us that God is righteous and ineffably holy.

Here on Carmel, the Lord vindicated His holiness. That fire that fell, fell in judgment and revival. God executed His sentence for God's outraged law. His message was clear, if it were not for His mercy the fire should have fallen on the people.

Transition: The people who were there when the fire fell were spared because the fire fell on their substitute. Thus:

2. The People Respond: 1 Kings 18:39 (ESV) ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.”

The people could no longer doubt the real existence of Yahweh. There can be no deception. What an extraordinary intercession of the Lord to recover His people from their idolatrous bondage in sin. The Lord is known by His works. Since that time, the Lord has sent his fire of revival many times to reclaim His covenant people. Will He send again before His return? In Revelation 11, we see a dead church resurrected at His return.

Thus the truth was revealed between Yahweh and Baal. Sadly, just like Israel’s ancestors who were delivered out of Egypt, they too soon relapsed into idolatry. Displays of divine justice may terrify, and convince the sinner, and elicit confessions, and bring about short-lived acts of obedience. However, something more is needed to change the heart and to convert the soul.

Miracles of Christ left the Jewish nation still opposed to the truth. There must be a supernatural work within the person to be born again. The fire, having fallen on the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, must now fall from heaven, this time in regenerating power and grace, bringing faith and spiritual cleansing.

A holy God must deal with all sin by the fire of His judgment. The question we are compelled to ask is no escape possible? The Lord demonstrated the only way out is that His fire must then find a substitute. An innocent victim must be provided to represent the sin-laden nation or person. Israel from the ceremonial law.

God provides the innocent victim, His own son, the just suffering for the unjust. He was made a curse for us, **Galatians 3:13 (ESV) ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—**

Transition: But upon the false prophets who had led Israel astray:

3. Judgment: 1 Kings 18:40 (ESV) ⁴⁰ And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

We must observe that Elijah did not pray for the false prophets, thus the sacrifice did not avail for them, nor was it intended for them. This is a great but often rejected truth. Christ died and served as a propitiation for His sheep alone.

At the original Passover, the Passover lamb gave exclusive protection from God’s wrath to God’s people. None was provided for the Egyptians. It does not matter how we feel about Elijah’s actions.

We must remember that Israel was under the covenant at Sinai. False prophets were an enemy of God and His people. To give them leave would have been an act of treason against Yahweh. Those who claim that Elijah exceeded his calling do not know Elijah’s God. He did what God commanded in his law in **Deuteronomy 18:20 (ESV) ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’**

Under the covenant of grace, we remember **2 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV) ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.** Thus, we leave justice to God. It is God who will deal with false believers.

Conclusion: The application for us is that the fire must fall, either in regenerating grace, revival, or fearful judgment. That regenerating grace is founded on Christ's work as our substitute. There can be no apostasy for us, **Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have**

shared in the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Though the Scriptures speak this way, we must reject the world's idols.

Thus, we have his promises. If we persevere, **2 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV)**¹⁶

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.