

**THE BIG IDEA: Before we can see the fire of God, we've got to rebuild the altar of God.**The Take-Off

Today marks the beginning of the 3rd week in 50 Days to Fire.

Those of you who are fasting and praying with us - great job!! We're believing that God is moving us from resurrection to revival and that each of us will experience a personal revival.

Renewed vision, passion. A rekindled fire!

That's why we've given our series during this time the one word title BURN. We want the fire of God!

The question that we're asking during this time is a simple one: what happens when God answers by fire?

Last week we talked about buying the field - understanding that a kingdom that is worth everything will cost everything and, as a result, will be valued above everything.

This must be our mindset during this season of focused prayer and fasting - God, your kingdom is worth it all!!

Today, I want to give you a peek at where the concept of God answering by fire comes from.

We won't teach the whole story yet - that's for another day - but let's look at 1 Kings 18.

Back story: Israel has been under the rule of Ahab and Jezebel

Bad people - nobody is naming their kids after these people!

This king and queen were all about the false God Baal, and in 1 Kings 18 Elijah has a showdown on top of a mountain against the prophets of Baal

Elijah tells the the people to pick one - there can't be 2 Gods - and then says the following in **verses 22-24** ...

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. 23 Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it. 24 Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!" And all the people agreed.

I love that last line in the NIV: "The god who answers by fire - he is God!"

On the last day of the fast, we'll answer the question of what happens when God answers by fire, but this morning, we need to back up and start with something even more basic: giving God something to answer.

Look what Elijah did in **1 Kings 18:30** - "he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down"

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That's what God wants to drive home to us this morning - we've got to rebuild the altar.

**1. To rebuild the altar, develop an altar ego**

- a. An altar in the Bible was a place of exchange and sacrifice, a meeting place between heaven and earth.
- b. It was where people had personal encounters with God and were changed as a result.
- c. What's an ego? It's basically what you think about yourself, who you think you are.
- d. If we say someone has "a big ego," then we're saying he is full of himself.
- e. So someone with an altar ego would be someone who is emptied of himself.
- f. One more note: I didn't spell altar incorrectly.
- g. I know that an alter ego is what we'd normally say, but something that is altered (with an "e") is modified but not necessarily changed.
- h. You can alter a wedding dress but it's not going to become yoga pants.
- i. To alter is to modify something, but to altar something is to change it into something else.
- j. One step toward rebuilding the altar is by developing an identity that is defined by the altar.
- k. People of the presence. People of sacrifice. People determined to meet with their God.

**2. We can't take shortcuts when we're rebuilding the altar**

- a. I see that right away in what Elijah did - he didn't take the easy way out
- b. He could have used the altar that the prophets of Baal had been using
- c. It was ready-made, there were unused sacrifices there and everything!
- d. It would have been easier, but **we can't take shortcuts when we're rebuilding the altar**

- e. Remember that the altar represents a meeting place for the presence of God
- f. Shortcuts to the presence can be costly
- g. Turn to **1 Chronicles 13:9-12** for proof
  - Uzzah reached his hand out, touched the ark, and died
  - Seems harsh until we realize that David took shortcuts
  - The ark (God's presence, i.e. altar) was supposed to be carried by hand on poles
  - By Levites, not just any men
  - David had copied the Philistines (1 Sam. 6), but God calls us to be different than the world!
  - David's shortcuts cost Uzzah his life
- h. If shortcuts are costly, then why do we take them? We want an easy way out. Elijah didn't take one!

### 3. To rebuild the altar, look back and look around

- a. Let me point out 2 critical facts about how Elijah rebuilt the altar: he built it on history and unity
- b. He didn't come out with a snazzy new blueprint; instead, he rebuilt what had been before
- c. The NIV says that he repaired the altar that was in ruins
- d. He didn't get rid of it or replace it; he rebuilt it
- e. We rebuild the altar on history; we honor the heritage that had an altar ego before we did
- f. We're not doing something new; we're bringing a new passion and focus to what has been!
- g. **Isaiah 58:12 (NIV)** / the result of true fasting!
- h. **Isaiah 61:1-4 (NIV)** / our calling!
- i. Not only that, but he took 12 stones and used them to rebuild the altar
  - One stone for each of the 12 tribes - that were DIVIDED!!
  - This was a prophetic act about God's presence being found where there is unity
  - Psalm 133 / unity is where God commands blessing
- j. The point? The altar of God is built on unity!
- k. History and unity - **to rebuild the altar, look back and look around!**

#### The Landing

What happens when God answers by fire? Maybe a better question would be have we given God anything to answer? Have we rebuilt the passion of meeting with him no matter what it costs us?

***The evangelist Billy Sunday once said, "But before God will pay any attention to a call for fire, Christians must get right. It is a great mistake to expect a crop without planting the seed. It is a great mistake to expect a blessing without first doing your part."***

God's part is to answer by fire.

Our part is to rebuild the altars in our lives so that he can.

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Let's pray.