

Kings Series #1 - "Fire From Heaven" - 2 Sam. 24:18-25

I. INTRODUCTION

A. New Book

1. Finished Acts last week - Time to start a new book
2. Following a usual pattern of study - jump back to the OT and cover 2 books
3. Next in our excursion through the OT are 1st & 2nd Kings
4. But when we ended our study in 2nd Samuel, we didn't cover the last ch. Because it forms a great bridge between Samuel and Kings
5. Our passage this morning comes from 2nd Samuel

B. Set The Scene

1. David has been king of Israel for many years and has led the nation to it's zenith
2. The sun is setting on his reign - and the kingdom will soon pass to his son, Solomon who will lead Israel into it's Golden Age
3. As we come to this last chapter of Samuel, the nation, though enjoying a time of peace and prosperity never known before, had entered a period of spiritual decay
4. It seems that now that David had no more battles to fight, his vigor and vitality diminished
5. His vibrant leadership began to dull, and as it did, so did the spiritual fervor and devotion of the nation
6. Slowly and quietly, the people began to turn from God to the pagan deities of the Canaanites
7. And God moved to correct them by sending a plague
8. It's sad but true; when life is going well for people, they have little or no time for God
9. But when trouble descends like a storm,
 - a. then they quickly become very religious
 - b. they fall to their knees in desperate pleading for Him to save them
10. If this is what it takes to bring us to Him, and we will come no other way, then God will send the storm
11. He did that to Israel - a plague settled on the land and some 70,000 people died
12. David realized what was happening and went before the Lord in confession and repentance on behalf of himself and the nation
13. That's where we pick it up in v. 18 . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 18-19

{18} And Gad came that day to David and said to him, "Go up, erect an altar to the

LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

{19} So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.

1. Gad was a prophet whom God used in the later years of David's reign
2. Here we see that after David prayed for an end to the plague, God sent Gad to him with a message
3. He was to buy a small plot of land from Araunah, one of the native Jebusites who still lived in the area
 - a. it was a threshing floor
 - b. a rocky, flat place where grain would be set out and animals or large stone wheels would be rolled across the grain to separate the corn from the chaff
4. Jerusalem was originally a Jebusite stronghold that David had conquered and made his capital
5. Rather than becoming a war refugee and fleeing the area, Araunah had stayed and submitted to the new Israelite king
6. His land was located just north of the City of David, on the same ridge of Mt. Moriah
7. Gad told David to buy this land and there erect an altar to the Lord

B. Vs. 20-23

{20} Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

{21} Then Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people."

{22} Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood."

{23} "All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you."

1. David and his officials went to Araunah to make an offer, but Araunah saw David coming and went forth to meet him
2. David explained his desire, and Araunah willingly agreed to part with the land
3. In fact, David had said he wanted it for an altar to make sacrifices to the Lord
 - a. but Araunah could see that David had brought no animals with him
 - b. so he even offered the wood and oxen to offer up
4. And it would all be a gift - it wouldn't cost David a penny

C. Vs. 24-25

{24} Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

{25} And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace

offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

1. Why Araunah offered the land as a gift we aren't told
 - a. he may have thought it a politically expedient thing to do
 - b. it would have indebted David to him
 - c. maybe he was giving up a relatively small plot then for great favors later
2. But David wasn't in the mood to play politics or get involved in haggling and negotiations
3. People were dying and time was of the essence
4. Say he speaks an emphatic, "NO!!!"
5. And then he says something remarkable,

I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.

6. He measured out 50 shekels, gave them to Araunah, quickly built an altar and offered up the oxen as sin and fellowship sacrifices to God
7. The plague was stopped, and the land and people recovered

D. Giving To God

1. It's David's words to Araunah in v. 24 that I'd like to focus on this morning
2. And I must confess to you that though I have read this passage often, every time I do, I find what David says here to be extremely thought provoking and challenging
3. I'm reminded that David is the only person in Scripture who God calls a man after His own heart
4. And when I see David's response to Araunah's offer, it sparks me to take a look at my own life and the character of what I offer to God
5. To tell you the truth, if it had been me instead of David, when Araunah offered to give the threshing floor, I would have seen it as a glorious gift
 - a. more than likely, when the prophet Gad came to me and told me there was something I had to do to stop the plague, I would have said, "EEH Gad! Why?"
 - b. then I would have grumbled about having to fork out my money to buy a lot just so an altar could be built -
 - c. what, you mean I can't build a home on it?
 - d. and then if I would be so fortunate as to have it offered to me as a gift, I would jump at it
6. But when I read David's response, it brings me up short because it makes me realize how far I still am from being the kind of man God says is close to His heart
7. What I offer to God, I all too often offer with an eye to what is easy and convenient
 - a. oh sure, I *want* to give to the Lord
 - b. but I don't want my giving to cost me too much
 - c. my mental calculator adds up the value of time, interest, and attention
 - d. it tallies the total for service, property, love

- e. but when my giving begins to cut into MY time, My interest, My attention
 - f. when I am called to give My energy, My goods, My affection
 - g. then often the price is too steep and I pull back and come up with excuses
8. I'm sorry if this is very far from your experience; I'm just sharing with you this morning about my personal struggle with this passage
 9. I trust that there are at least a couple of you who share it
 10. When faced with the offer of Araunah for easy worship and cheap service, David was quick to reply = NO!!!
 11. "For I will not give to the Lord that which has cost me nothing."
 12. David could reply so quickly and without hesitation because he had already overcome the temptation to an easy religion that threatens every child of God
 - a. there isn't a believer that has every lived who hasn't know the seductive voice of the devil trying to cool the passions of devotion to God
 - b. who says, "It's fine that you believe in God. It's good to be religious; it will make you a better person. But be careful lest you become a fanatic."
 - c. "Don't go over the edge now. Be religious. Go to church, but it's best to keep it to yourself."

E. Mere Christianity

1. Our enemy, the devil and the demons, are masters at temptation and deceit
2. They have 6000 years of experience and are very effective
3. They will do all they can to keep a person from coming to faith in God
 - a. failing that, they do not give up
 - b. no, they then take their opposition to the next level
 - c. which is to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit conforming them to the image of Christ
4. And one of the greatest tactics the enemy uses is the appeal to be "balanced"
5. Now, I realize that may come as a surprise; because if you've been at Calvary for any length of time you now how often I speak of the need for balance in the Christian life
6. But the balance we need is not the balance the enemy pushes
 - a. biblical balance is found in learning and living the whole counsel of God
 - 1) it embraces both love & truth
 - 2) grace & righteousness
 - 3) boldness & tact
 - b. the "balance" the devil pushes is really *compromise*
 - 1) he whispers in our ear to not let this "Christian" thing go too far
 - 2) he tries to water down our commitment to Christ with a host of other interests and concerns
 - 3) like the cares of the world in the parable of the sower, that rise up

and choke out the good seed, he tempts us to see our faith as just one part of who and what we are

7. C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Screwtape Letters* eloquently describes this whole process . . .
[explain context of letters]

8. Lewis is right-on and has pegged the enemy's tactic exactly
9. You see, Christianity isn't some *compartment* to be tucked away in the corner of our lives
10. It isn't the religious *component* to a life with many other components; like a work component, marriage component, recreation component
11. It isn't a department, a philosophy, an ethic, or a hobby
12. It is everything we are, and it comprehends, embraces, and informs everything we do
13. That is why there is no room for "balance" when it comes to being a Christian
 - a. what would we balance with?
 - b. are we to find some middle ground between the devil and God?
 - c. between heaven and hell?
 - d. between sin and righteousness?
 - e. of course not
14. Either we are all Christian, or as CS Lewis puts it, *mere* Christian, or we are not!
 - a. we are either saved or lost
 - b. we are either born again or we are dead in our trespasses and sins
15. David understood what it meant to be a believer, and though he lived before the light of Christ, still he knew the dividing line between life and death, between faith and unbelief
16. He knew his relationship with God was either an all or nothing proposition
17. And so, in a very practical way, when it came to worship, David was determined to give God his best, not what was merely convenient or easy
18. Why?

- a. because David knew God is not impressed with the externals
 - b. he knew God could see his heart
 - c. really, roasting ox meat does not thrill God
 - d. but a heart that desires to give God the best does!
19. In Psalm 51, David wrote . . .

{16} You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

{17} The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart; These, O God, You will not despise.

20. The Apostle Paul echoes these words in writing to the Romans and says

(Rom 12:1) I plead with you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

III. CONCLUSION

A. What's It Cost?

1. In light of these things, we are faced with a sobering question
2. What does our faith in Jesus cost us?
3. And no, I'm not talking about time or money, or any of those issues
4. I mean on a much more basic level--I'm speaking on the level of our hearts--I'm talking about the bottom line
5. How often does our desire for comfort defeat our desire for worship?
6. How often does our longing for ease overcome the Spirit's call to service?
7. How often does our agenda get a higher priority than God's?

B. Cheap Religion

1. Another way to look at this is to ask if a cheap religion is real?
2. If our relationship with God doesn't cost us something in terms of reordering our priorities and rearranging our value system then can it be genuine?
3. The answer of course, is "No!"

C. The True Cost Of Christianity

1. If you want to see the cost of genuine Christianity, then don't look at the works and devotions of the church's greatest saints
2. Rather, look back to the threshing floor of Araunah
3. For you see, it was there, on that very same mount that some 1000 years later, Jesus Christ hung on a cross for you and me
4. He paid the ultimate and final price for us
5. "For God so loved the world that He -----GAVE"
6. And what is it He gave?
 - a. something convenient?
 - b. something easy?
 - c. something that easily came to hand and cost Him little?
 - d. no—He gave ALL—He gave HIMSELF!

7. If we are True Christians—Can we give Him any less?

D. Fire From Heaven

1. Before we conclude, there is one more thing we should note about this story
2. In the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21 we read that after David had the altar built, and laid out the sacrifice on it, God sent fire from heaven to consume it
3. Obviously, this was God's way of showing He was pleased with the offering and accepted it
4. We don't offer animals as sacrifices anymore
5. The offering God wants from us isn't just a check, or a 20, or an hour or two a week
6. We wants us - all of us - all we are
7. And when we offer ourselves without reservation - then He sends fire from heaven, the Holy Spirit who consumes us and makes of our lives a sweet smelling sacrifice of praise and worship to God
O You who came from above
The heavenly fire impart
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the altar of my heart