

# 1 Kings 18:16-46

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[ 0 : 00 ] Before we turn to consider the passage that we've read, we'll bow our heads in prayer. We come before you, our God, this morning, and as we would turn to your Word, we pray that you, the author of this Word, would speak to us through it.

We thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in our midst, and we thank you for the confidence that we have that he is the one who will ensure that this Word, this written Word, will be a living Word in our experience as it is proclaimed to us and as we consider it this morning.

And so we pray that the Spirit of God would be in our midst and speaking to each and every one of us. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I wonder how many of you are a question of sport fans that long-standing quiz show certainly goes back to my childhood and very much a family favorite.

Good, wholesome family entertainment, which is hard to find often. I wonder if you are indeed a fan of that quiz show, if you have any favorite rounds.

[ 1 : 22 ] Over the years, they've developed the program and introduced new rounds as part of the quiz. But one ever-present that I think is a favorite of many is what happened next.

And you're given a shot of some sporting incident, and it's cut at a certain point, and the contestants have to answer the question, what happened next? Well, as I was considering what we were meditating on last Sunday morning, the beginning of the incident that we've read, when Elijah poses the question to the people gathered there on Mount Carmel, this dramatic question and challenge, how long will you waver between two opinions?

If the Lord be God, follow him. If Baal be God, follow him. And we considered that challenge, we considered that question and how it spoke to us today, but we left it there.

And it did rather beg the question, what happened next? And that is what we want to turn to this morning. What happened next? Following this challenge that is posed to the people, this question that is posed to the people, to which, as we noted last week, they said nothing.

But what does happen next? Well, we have what happens next in the chapter we've read. There in verse 21 is where we left the incident.

[ 2 : 56 ] But the people said nothing. Verse 22 begins with these words, Then Elijah said to them, Then what happens next is about to be recounted for us.

And I think many of us are familiar with the occasion, with the account that we have read. Elijah describes a challenge that will serve to determine who is indeed God.

He's posed the question. He's asked the people to respond. They have said nothing. And so he moves on, and he says, Well, there will be this challenge, and this challenge will determine, for once and for all, who is indeed God.

Is it Baal, or is it the Lord? Is it Yahweh? And while the challenge involves, as we've read, calling on the name of each respective God, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.

It is clearly stated for us in verse 24. The God who answers by fire, He is God. This will be what will determine the credibility, the claims of these respective gods.

[ 4 : 16 ] Who is indeed God? Well, He who answers by fire, He will be recognized as God. The challenge is clear enough.

The people agree. They see it as reasonable, what Elijah is proposing. There we read in verse 24, Then all the people said, What you say is good.

We agree with the challenge. It's reasonable. It will perform that function of determining who is God. The people are up for it, and seemingly the prophets of Baal are also up for the challenge.

Or in any case, they can see no way of avoiding the gauntlet that is laid down for them. And so they are willing to go along with this challenge that Elijah proposes.

And as we consider this challenge, there is a key word that repeats itself in the passage around which this morning's message is constructed.

[ 5 : 25 ] And the key word is the word answer. For each god in the Carmel challenge, for Baal and for the Lord, there is an answer sought and an answer given.

An answer sought and an answer given. And that is what we want to do this morning. We want to consider the answer that is sought of each god and the answer that is given by each god. And we'll begin in the order that it is presented to us in the passage. We begin with Baal. Elijah gave the prophets of Baal the opportunity to have the first shot, as it were, of securing fire from their god.

And we read the manner in which they seek an answer from their god. It's related for us there from verse 25 through to verse 29.

And very particularly there in verse 26, having prepared the altar, the bull, and all that was required, we read, then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon, and then significantly, O Baal, answer us.

[ 6 : 46 ] An answer is sought from the prophets of their god. O Baal, answer us. And I want to think about some characteristics of this answer that is sought.

The first thing I want you to notice is the faith with which an answer is sought. And we'll see this not only of the prophets of Baal, but also in turn of Elijah.

The faith with which an answer is sought. Well, the faith of these prophets, as far as we can judge, as far as we can measure on the information available to us, it is seemingly a sincere faith.

They would seem to have a sincere conviction that their god will answer them. The manner in which they cry out is very much one that evidences great sincerity.

They sincerely believed in their god. Their faith certainly is intense. We notice the manner in which they cry out from morning till noon, how they dance around the altar, how they then go on to perform all kinds of rituals in a very intense fashion, seeking an answer from their god.

[ 8 : 08 ] Their faith is a sincere faith, so it would seem. It's certainly a very intense faith. But the sobering conclusion given, and we're getting ahead of ourselves a little in anticipating the answer, but anticipating the answer, though their faith is sincere, though it is intense, it is sincerely wrong and intensely misguided.

And that already is a very important lesson for us, a warning for us. Let us not think that the sincerity of a man's faith is any guarantee that it is a faith that is well directed.

These prophets were sincere, they were intense in their seeking after their god, but they were sincerely wrong and intensely misguided. But we can also say this of their faith, and it follows on really from what we've been commenting, it is, in many ways, a very impressive faith.

The faith of the prophets of Baal is very impressive, and it's very impressive given the lack of foundation. Now, what do I mean by that? I ask you, do you think that any of these prophets had ever before in their service of prophets of Baal, had they ever cried out to their god for fire, and he had responded in the manner that they are hoping for?

Had that ever happened? Well, I suspect it had never happened, because their god is incapable of giving them the answer that they require. They had never experienced this, and yet they feel that on this occasion Baal will answer them.

[ 9 : 54 ] They had no reason to have such a deep faith in their god. And so, I stand back and I am impressed at their faith. These are men of great faith.

They have no reason to believe that Baal will answer. He's never answered in such a fashion before, and yet, here they are, believing that on this occasion, when the gauntlet has been laid down by Elijah, somehow, for the first time, he will be up to the challenge that has been presented to him.

This is an impressive faith. And then we fast forward three thousand years or so to our own day. What about today? What is this to say to us today? Some might reasonably respond, well, this is all very interesting and it's of historical curiosity, but we don't see many folk in Aberdeen doing weird rain dances to Baal of a weekend.

I don't think over this weekend there have been many of our fellow citizens been crying out to Baal for some weird and marvelous answer. And yet, though that may be so, we live in a day where there is no shortage of idols.

[11:16] The human heart, as has been rightly said, is an idol factory. There are plenty idols alive and kicking, certainly being sought after, whether alive is another matter today.

What is an idol? Well, an idol is a God substitute. It is that which you most desire. It is that which your life revolves around.

Paul, in the first chapter of Romans, speaks of how the human heart is drawn to his greatest desire. There's a Greek word that he uses there that a few months ago we were considering, epithumia, your greatest desire, your deepest longing, that which is most important to you.

That is your idol. And it can be one of many things. For many today, it is money or financial prosperity. That is their idol.

The Bible itself very explicitly tells us that greed is idolatry. It can be the security that money affords. It can be the status that money can grant us.

[12:32] People can desire money and have lives revolve around money for different reasons, for a variety of reasons, and yet at heart it has become their idol.

It can be self-autonomy, doing your own thing, living your life as you please, being able to set the agenda of your life, being in charge of your life, and so in a bizarre way you yourself become your idol, your own opinions, your own agenda, your own way of living life without the intrusion of God or of authority figures who would tell you how you must live.

It can be power. Power can be an idol. It can be a good time. People live for a good time. That can be sex. It can be pleasure in its different forms.

It can be partying. People live for the weekend. They endure work. They endure the drudgery of Monday to Friday because the weekend is their idol and the weekend is what they live for.

For others, it's maybe more respectable. It's traveling the world. It can be holidays. It can be looking good. It can be acceptance. It can be the perfect relationship.

[13:51] People searching after the perfect relationship that will make them whole, that will make them happy, that will give them satisfaction. All of these things and many others.

Many of them, note, legitimate in themselves, in their right place, but many of these things take on idol status when they become your greatest desire, when they become the thing around which your life revolves.

And so, let us be very clear, idolatry is alive and well today in our world, in Aberdeen, and, let it be said, often in our own hearts.

And as with the prophets of Baal, whose faith in their God was sincere and intense, they sought after their God.

They sought an answer from their God with great sincerity and with great intensity. So, today, men and women seek an answer from their own gods with great sincerity and with great intensity.

[15:01] Their gods are pursued with a blind faith, impressive in its own way, despite the fact that there is no evidence to convincingly suggest that these idols can ultimately deliver, that these idols can ultimately satisfy, that these idols can ultimately answer our deepest longings.

And yet, they are sought with such intensity. And there is this very impressive blind faith in these idols of our own creation. That perhaps is your own experience.

Perhaps you have allowed yourself to rebuild your life around your own idol. And you have found, as many have found through the ages, that your idol does not satisfy, that your idol cannot answer the deepest longings that you have.

So, we can notice, and we have noticed, the faith with which an answer is sought of Baal, but also notice the manner in which an answer is sought, the manner in which these prophets seek an answer from their God.

Well, it is increasingly desperate. We've read the account. Time doesn't allow us to go into the details, but even in the reading of the account, it's so apparent that there is an increasing desperation on the part of these prophets as no answer is given.

[16:27] And so, we notice how following and in response, in some measure, to the taunting of Elijah, we read there in verse 28, So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

They began crying out, they began shouting, they began dancing, but there is a growing desperation on the part of these prophets as no answer is given. And that is true so often of men and women today.

They have their idol, and their idol isn't satisfying, and with increasing desperation, they seek an answer from their idol. If indeed, the idol in question is money, people get increasingly desperate to secure the money that they wish, so they're willing to be dishonest at work, they're willing to water down the values that they once held, they're willing maybe to stick in a job that they hate because of the money that it provides them.

There's an increasing desperation to find an answer from the idol, though the idol is silent, as we shall soon discover in this case also. But the manner in which the answer is sought here, and in the case of these prophets of Baal, it's irrational, it's destructive, they're involved in self-harm, they're doing themselves damage in their seeking after their idol.

We've read the verse in question. They were cutting themselves with swords and spears. There is a self-destruction in their seeking an answer from their idol.

[18:00] And this is very true today. People do themselves damage as they seek after their idol, as they seek an answer from their idol. And again, we could illustrate this in many ways, but if we stick with money, explicitly described in the Scriptures as idolatry or greed as being idolatry, how many people destroy their families in their search for money?

They have no time for their wife, no time for their children because they have to work all the hours of the day. They work weekends because they want to make more money. They need that promotion. And so, money consumes, and they do themselves damage because in this increasingly desperate and irrational and destructive, seeking after an answer from their idol.

We see it in destructive relationships. A man or a woman who is seeking that perfect relationship, seeking that relationship that will give them happiness and a sense of meaning and fulfillment, and they think that they found it in one man or in a woman.

And even though the relationship is increasingly damaging and destructive, they're doing themselves harm by sticking with this person, yet there is no longer any rationality in their thinking, and they do themselves damage as they would worship their idol.

We sometimes use even the language of worship in the context of relationships. We think of somebody worshiping the ground that she walks on or that he walks on, and we say, oh, well, that's just a phrase.

[19:37] But it's a phrase that reveals the idols that there can be in our lives. Indeed, the manner in which these prophets seek an answer from their God becomes—and this is something we need to think carefully about—but it becomes laughable.

It's really pathetic. Elijah finds it pathetic. He taunts them. In verse 27, at noon, Elijah began to taunt them, shout louder, shout louder. And the questions that he poses are dripping with sarcasm and irony.

How are we to understand this response of Elijah? Was it legitimate of him to taunt and to mock these prophets in this way? I think it clearly was legitimate for him to do so.

But what I do think, as we would apply it to our own circumstances, I think we do need to be careful to distinguish between mocking the peddlers of idolatry, if you wish. These prophets, these were the prophets of Baal.

They were the peddlers of idolatry. They were the ones who were seeking to draw others into this idolatry. Theirs was a particular responsibility and burden of guilt.

[20:52] And they, together, are worthy of being mocked. They are worthy of being scoffed at by the prophet of God. But when we consider the victims of idolatry that we will meet day by day in our daily walk, there our response will be a tender and a caring one that we would help them to see the idol that they are chasing after and the damage that such idolatry is doing to their lives.

So we have Baal. We have an answer that is sought by the prophets of Baal, the faith with which the answer is sought, the manner in which the answer is sought. But there is also described for us the answer received, or not received, as the case may be.

What is the answer? Here the prophets are crying out, what answer do they receive? Well, we're told there is no answer. There in verse 26, it is stated so eloquently, but there was no response. No one answered. And then once again in verse 29, there was no response. No one answered. No one paid attention. There is no answer.

Why is there no answer? Is it that Baal doesn't care? Is it that Baal doesn't want to help his prophets? No, the reason there is no answer is because Baal doesn't exist. He doesn't hear these cries.

[ 22 : 22 ] Indeed, that would seem to be the suggestion, even in the manner in which the answer or the non-answer is described. There was no answer.

No one answered. Why? Because no one was there. There was no response because there was nobody there to respond. The problem is that Baal is not God.

He is a man-made idol, a pale and pathetic imitation of the real thing, incapable of answering the cries of his prophets. And so today, with our twenty-first century idols, be they money or the love of money, be it our own self-autonomy, the image that we seek to portray and to cultivate, our thirst for acceptance, our thirst for power, for security, all these things that we crave for as our greatest desire, persuaded that they will ultimately bring us happiness and satisfaction.

But there is no answer. There is no response. They fail. They cannot answer. They cannot fill that longing in our hearts. Perhaps that is your experience.

Why do these idols fail to satisfy? Well, because we're asking them to fill a hole in our lives that only God can fill. They are incapable of doing so.

[ 23 : 45 ] They're not designed to do so. C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* in the following terms, If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world, for something supernatural, for that which is eternal.

And of course, that is true. That which is created will never be able to satisfy the eternal longings of the human heart. They cannot do so.

And so, with the prophets of Baal, there is no answer received. But what of the Lord? He is the other one who is presented as the possible God. He is the other one of whom an answer is sought. Well, what can we say of the answer sought? Well, as we did with the prophets of Baal, we can notice the faith with which an answer is sought. From verse 30 to 37, we have this described for us. What can we say of the faith with which an answer is sought? What can we say of the faith of Elijah? Well, we can certainly notice that in contrast to the prophets of Baal, this is a solitary faith.

[ 25 : 03 ] Elijah is alone. He's not surrounded by others who join with him in this cry to God. He is as small a minority as you can get.

His was a solitary faith. And that is a salutary reminder that not to be deceived by the majority. Yes, it is true we live in a day when the majority think differently.

Well, the majority are wrong, as has been very vividly illustrated by one particular commentator in commenting on this solitary faith of Elijah.

Yahweh's power has never been dependent on how many cheerleaders he has. Just the one. But one was enough.

The faith with which an answer is sought, a solitary faith, but also a historic faith. It's grounded in history. It's grounded in God's dealings with his people.

[ 26 : 06 ] Notice the language that Elijah uses as he addresses his God and as he seeks an answer there in verse 36. O Lord, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel.

This is a historic faith. This is no creation of Elijah. This is no faith that Elijah has conjured up for himself. No, his is a faith that is grounded in history and God's dealings in history.

And he recognizes the God to whom he cries is the God of history, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Israel, the God of the covenant.

This is the God to whom he cries. And it is a faith also grounded in revelation. He approaches his God with confidence because his God has already assured him that he will act, very particularly concerning the need for rain.

And the fire, in a sense, is a precursor of the rain that will come. But the coming of the rain is not some aspiration of Elijah. It's not some hope that Elijah has.

[ 27 : 16 ] No, his confidence is grounded in God's revelation. There in chapter 18, at the beginning of the chapter, the Lord came to Elijah. Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.

There is already a revelation of God, a truth from God, upon which Elijah can build his faith. See, he's not just hoping that, well, I hope there's an answer.

I hope God hears me. I hope he responds. No, God has already said, I'm going to send rain. Go and do what you have to do in the confidence of this word that I am giving to you.

A historic faith, grounded in revelation. A God-honoring and people-loving faith. Why is it? Why is it that Elijah would have God respond?

What is his motivation for God responding to his cry? Well, we read the answer there in verse 36.

[ 28 : 17 ] O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel. That God would be known and recognized in Israel. And then he continues, and he expresses his concern for the people, even in their state of rebellion.

Verse 37 in the second half of the verse, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.

This is his concern. Not simply that he would be vindicated, not simply that he would be, he would come out good, but that the people would be turned back to their God.

May these be also the motivations that drive us as we would speak out for God in our generation.

The faith with which an answer is sought.

But also, and this we can deal with so briefly because it doesn't require more than a brief reference, the manner in which an answer is sought. And the contrast with the prophets of Baal is so striking.

[ 29 : 25 ] The prophets of Baal are desperate. They're frenzied. There is a chaotic characteristic to their crime.

But notice Elijah. Elijah, he seeks an answer in a calm and in an assured manner. He prays. Fire falls.

He doesn't need to get into a frenzy. He doesn't need to shout at God. He doesn't need to fast for 30 days. He doesn't need to secure God's audience.

He prays. Fire falls. Calm and assured. His faith grounded in history. His faith grounded in God's Word that has come to him. His faith grounded in his seeking that God would be honored and recognized and people would be brought back to God.

And if the Lord is not yet your God, be assured that if you would have Him be your God, you don't need to work yourself into a frenzy before He will answer you.

[ 30 : 32 ] You pray, and He will answer. You seek His faith, and He will show you His faith. You seek His forgiveness, and He will grant you His forgiveness. An answer sought, but also an answer received.

And with this, we draw things to a close, but we'll do so as we focus on this answer received. The answer is received and described for us in verse 38.

Elijah calmly, assuredly, confidently, has made his request known to God. And then we read in verse 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.

And in this answer, I would suggest we have what we might call, and perhaps there would be a better way of describing this, but we'll work with this. We have what we might call the text and the subtext.

The text, that which is evident, is about recognition, and the subtext is about reconciliation. Bear with me as I would explain what I mean by that.

[ 31 : 47 ] We're thinking about the answer that is received from God, and we're saying that there are two elements here. The text is about recognition, about God being recognized as God, but there is a subtext that is crucial to understand, and it's about reconciliation.

The original challenge at face value was just about recognition. Remember the challenge. The challenge was to decide who was God. That's what Elijah said.

We're going to decide who is God. Is it Baal, or is it the Lord? Well, I think any reasonable observer would have to recognize that that challenge has provided an eloquent answer.

Who sent fire? Did Baal send fire? No, Baal didn't send anything. Did the Lord send fire? Yes, the Lord sent fire. So, it's very clear.

There was a challenge, and the Lord has won the challenge, hands down. That is about recognition. It's about recognition because the people who are observing this are able to conclude, as they do, the Lord, He is God.

[ 32 : 59 ] The Lord, He is God. The Lord has been recognized for who He is. He is indeed the living and true God. Baal is a fake. He's an imposter.

The Lord, He is God. So, this matter of recognition has been clearly established. established. But the Lord is not interested just in recognition.

He's not interested only in being recognized as God. He is interested in reconciliation. Now, where is this coming from? Well, let's take a step back and remind ourselves of the fundamental problem that is the origin of this entire spectacle.

was it the drought? Was the drought the fundamental problem that led to this challenge and then subsequently the Lord sending rain? No, the fundamental problem was the rebellion of the nation against God that led to the drought as a direct act of judgment upon the people.

The people of Israel were under judgment because of their sin, because of their rebellion, because of their idolatry. this is the problem. Rebellion.

[ 34 : 11 ] The rejection of God. The idol factory that Israel had become. And so, they are under judgment. But judgment is not God's final word.

It is a means to an end, we might say, certainly on this occasion. His desire is to reconcile his rebellious people to himself, to provide an opportunity for the people to return to friendship with himself.

But there is this barrier, and the barrier is their sin and rebellion. What to do? Well, this is where we can discover what's going on with this altar and the sacrificed bull.

What's all this about? Why did this challenge involve an altar and a bull to be sacrificed? The challenge could have been carried out without a bull and without an altar.

Simply, let's cry out for fire, and if fire comes, then we'll discover who God is. But no, there is an altar and there is a bull who has been sacrificed on the altar. What's all this about? Well, the Lord is securing a way back for his people, not only that they would recognize him as God, but that they would be reconciled to him as God.

[ 35 : 24 ] He is looking, as the text explicitly states, to turn their hearts back again. And to do that, the obstacle of their sin and their rebellion must be removed.

Their sin must be punished. The wages of sin, that is death, must be paid. The pure and just wrath of God must be satisfied. And who will pay the price?

Well, the bull on the altar is the substitute sacrifice. The bull on the altar is the one who dies in the place of the rebellious people.

And so the bull is sacrificed in the place of the people. The altar of the Lord is raised up, as we're told. The bull is killed and sacrificed on the altar.

And what of the fire? What of the fire? Well, the fire, as we've stated in the text, is clearly an evidence of the power of the Lord. And so, as such, he is recognized as being truly God because of the fire that comes down.

[ 36 : 31 ] But the fire also is a symbol of his sin-hating wrath as he consumes that which is taking the penalty of sin.

And the fire reveals his holy and just character and how that wrath must be satisfied. There must be a death without the shedding of blood.

There can be no forgiveness of sins. But the fire not only is a symbol of his sin-hating wrath, it is wonderfully and gloriously a sign of his acceptance of the substitute sacrifice.

From heaven on high, God is saying, I accept this sacrifice in the place of sinners. But can a dead bull really provide forgiveness of sins?

Only in as much as that bull points forward to the one who died on another hill, to the one who died on Calvary's hill, only in as much as that bull points to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, the perfect and all-sufficient and once and for all sacrifice for sin, the symbol that is the bull replaced by the reality that is the Lamb of God, God's perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

[ 37 : 58 ] And so just for a moment, ponder on what is happening in God's plan of salvation. The very Lord to whom Elijah cries out, the very Lord who sends fire from heaven, that very Lord in the person of Jesus will become the sacrifice upon which the wrath of God will descend.

He will, in God's perfect time, be consumed by the fire of God's wrath in the sinner's place, in your place, if you will but believe.

And of course, that time came when Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice for sin. And why would the Lord do such a thing? Why would he stand in your place?

Why would he die in your place? Because of his great love. Because he loves you. And he demonstrates his love for you in dying in your place.

And one who loves so much, to bring us back to this matter of our recognition of who will be our God, one who loves so much is worthy of being the one around whom your life revolves.

[ 39 : 17 ] He is the one fit to be your greatest desire. He is the one who will always satisfy and never disappoint. And so I say, can't you see the folly of idolatry, chasing after that which cannot answer and cannot satisfy and cannot bring you happiness, building your life around false idols when before you there is the Lord Jesus Christ, the living and true God, the one who died in the sinner's place, that men who have rebelled against God might be reconciled to God.

You see, God is not interested only in recognition. Yes, He is worthy to be recognized for who He is, but He is interested in reconciliation, and this we have eloquently before us in the altar that was built and the bull that was sacrificed and the manner in which God responds to it.

And so if you do indeed, and if you are indeed able to recognize the folly of idolatry and of your own idolatry, so I would commend to you and urge you that you would choose the Lord, that He might be your God, that you would close in with Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that He would take the place that only He is able to take, and that He would satisfy you in the way that only He is able to satisfy an answer given to the answer sought by the prophet of the Lord.

But as we close, there is a solemn epilogue. If only the story ended with the fire, or in any case, if only the story proceeded directly to the rain that was sent to end the drought.

But it doesn't. We must deal with verse 40. And what do we find in verse 40? Then Elijah commanded them, Seize the prophets of Baal.

[ 41 : 24 ] Don't let anyone get away. They seized them. And Elijah had them brought to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. And I can just imagine, perhaps not here this morning, I hope not, but I can imagine many who would read these words and would respond, oh, classic Old Testament gore, sub-Christian violence, vindictive revenge.

Isn't this horrendous? What we read here, that Elijah would do such a thing, would slaughter these prophets. It's obscene.

It's repulsive. It's repugnant. But it is none of these things. What we have here is justice. This is justice. This is the just punishment for unrepentant idolaters.

These men are not just idolaters. They're unrepentant idolaters. And this is the just punishment prescribed by God himself. And not just way back then, but today.

The same fate awaits unrepentant idolaters on the day of judgment. The same fate. The same fate. Listen to the Lord who sent fire on Carmel.

[ 42 : 42 ] Listen to the Lord who offered himself up as a sacrifice for sinners. Listen to him who is today seated on the throne in heaven. Listen to the words that he will speak on that great day.

We find them in the book of Revelation. He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. Then he said, write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.

He said to me, it is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.

But, the story doesn't end there, but the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

This is the second death. These are the words of the Lord. And so, there is a solemn epilogue to this incident, but it is one that we must take on board ourselves and recognize that unrepentant idolatry is a solemn thing.

[ 44 : 05 ] And so, if you recognize that you are an idolater, that you have built your life around anything or anyone who is not Jesus, then repent of your idolatry.

Cling to Jesus that he would be your God, that you might be spared the just fate of unrepentant idolaters. Flee from the wrath to come.

Flee into the arms of Jesus. Let us pray.