

Mt Carmel

Thoughts, actions and intentions revealed through fire.

What really matters in life, and what will truly count when all is said and done? Only those things tested and refined by fire. Mt Carmel is a place of blessing, prosperity and tranquility. It is also known for a fiery confrontation between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Carmel is actually a mountain range rising just off the Mediterranean Coast and stretching 25 miles inland to the beautiful Jezreel Valley. Atop its highest peak wide-open vistas extend in every direction. In Hebrew, Carmel is *Kerem El*, meaning “vineyard of God.” It is symbolic of blessing, and is described in [Isaiah 35:2](#) as excellent, lovely or majestic. Indeed, God graced Carmel with those characteristics yet, just as in our lives, there was testing by fire at Carmel.



When God called a pagan Gentile (Abram) out of Ur of the Chaldees and made him father of the Jews, a uniquely called people group was born. Uniquely called because, though spiritually and civically rebellious, they were still God’s chosen. Eventually, though, they were fed up with a religious leader and demanded a political one like everyone else. To this day, each time Israel compromises to be accepted or to “fit in” with the world, they fall into a snare. Have you ever noticed that being “set apart” is not easy!

Nonetheless, God gave them what they asked for, but after 3 kings (Saul, David and Solomon), the kingdom split, and time after time the kings of Israel (north) and Judah (south) did evil in the sight of the Lord. Some even built altars, instituted worship to pagan gods, and allowed unthinkable things to take place.

Then, along came Ahab, perhaps the most wicked king of all!

*²⁹ In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel...
³⁰ Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. ³¹ And it came to pass, ...that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. ³² Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. ³³ And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:29-33)*

It wasn’t enough that Ahab and his equally-evil wife, Jezebel, allowed idol worship by setting up an altar for Baal in the temple. But imagine this: the king of Israel served and worshipped false gods! No wonder the God of Israel was provoked to anger. Ahab totally rebelled against the One who said, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:3)

Straying from God’s commands typically produces stern warning or discipline. In this case, God sent Elijah to confront Ahab with the warning there would be no dew or rain. Elijah knew the impending drought was related to the spiritual state of the kingdom. Indeed, consequences apply to individuals and nations alike. We see it in our own personal lives, as well as in our nation and our world. The more we

rebel against Almighty God, the more we eventually encounter His wrath. In fact, Romans 8:22-23 reminds us that all creation groans as we await redemption. Why the groaning? Sinful rebellion.

A read through 1 Kings 18 tells us “the rest of the story.” Severe famine struck the land (v2), but rather than turning to the God of Israel, the people were obstinate, continuing to worship Baal and blaspheme God. Sadly, Revelation 16:8-9 tells us the same will happen in the tribulation. While the fourth bowl of wrath is scorching men with fire, they will continue to blaspheme the One who has the power over those things.

Refusal to repent is devastating, but think of the destruction upon others when leaders blaspheme the name of God. Husbands and fathers bring wrath upon families, church leaders bring wrath upon congregations, civic leaders bring wrath upon cities, states and nations. Thankfully, God has a few “troublers” (v17) that will not bow the knee to other gods and idols.

Interestingly, it is often “troublers” (those who follow the Lord God) who bear the brunt of evil rebellion. We become the accused by those who perpetrate evil. Stand firm anyway, as Elijah did! We know what happened next. Elijah summoned both the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal and Asherah to the top of Carmel (v20). He knew the false prophets were not likely to change their tune, but his focus was the people of Israel who would witness the confrontation. So, it was the Israelites to whom he addressed:

²¹ “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” (1 Kings 18:21)

Elijah’s message was this: “If you want to see rain and blessing, choose rightly!” Yet, the people did not listen. As if to warn the rest of us throughout earthly history, that message would later translate through the words of Jesus: “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Matthew 12:30) and “[if you are] lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:16). We must learn to heed the message as well!

Knowing he was whistling in the wind, Elijah called out a challenge to the prophets of Baal and Asherah. In view of the people, they were to lay a sacrifice on the altar and call upon their god to answer with fire. When they did, no god replied. Next, Elijah called all the people to come near as he prepared the altar, soaked it in water three times, then petitioned the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. (vv 30-37)

³⁸ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” (1 Kings 18:38-39)

Elijah acted in faith to God and God delivered! But the faith test wasn’t quite over! God had also promised rain. Sending his servant out six times to look toward the Mediterranean Sea where rain would be expected to come, there was no sign. But on the seventh trip, a cloud the size of a man’s hand was seen rising out of the sea, the sky then became black and the wind blew in a heavy rain! (vv 41-46)

Elijah built on a firm foundation, fire came down, and God confirmed His faithfulness by sending rain!

¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed

by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

Our lives are filled with Mt Carmel moments. Just as the fire of God tested the hearts of the people of Israel, New Testament teaching tells us our hearts are tested as well. Will we receive a reward, or will we simply be saved as through fire? Our Carmel moments will produce spiritual prosperity, tranquility and blessing as we present works of gold, silver and precious stones. Do all to the glory of God!