

I KINGS 18: MOUNT CARMEL



1 giant **king's** crown has a mountain of caramel (**Carmel**) rising from it, an **18** on the slope. Atop is the prophet Elijah battling the prophets of Baal. The Lord sends down fire from Heaven to consume the offering in a display of his power.

+ Imagine how bent toward evil a person must be to willfully provoke the Lord to anger! The depravity of the human heart knows no bounds. Godly people still sin daily, but the unrighteous attempt to defy God. Wealth or leadership is no insulation against ungodliness. In fact, often it is the rich and powerful that think they can get away with defying God's will. The Lord often has to crush them utterly as they are so obstinate that they will not repent.

+ The Lord often had to save Israel from her enemies, but in the latter days of the two nations, Israel and Judah, the Lord had to deliver the people from their own rulers! When Israel had demanded that the Lord give them a king to have a figurehead like other nations the Lord warned them through Samuel the prophet that they would suffer at the hands of such a king. Due to the secular intrigue of the kings of Israel and Judah, and the conformity of the people to such ungodly standards, the Lord sent both countries into captivity. Israel was overrun by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. and never recovered. Judah followed suit in 586 B.C., dominated by the Babylonians. But the Lord was gracious for his name's sake, and in order to preserve the lineage of David to produce our Messiah, about 80 years later the Babylonian captives were allowed to resettle Jerusalem under the edict of Cyrus the Persian!

+ There are occasions when it feels like it is God and us vs. the world. Elijah was not just opposing a crowd, but a small religious army! Surely had not the Lord shown his power Elijah would have been killed by the mob. It has been said, "You must pick the hill you will die on," regarding principles we will not surrender. Elijah motivates us to "pick the hill" that we will never surrender to God's enemies!

+ Christians quote the comforting words of Psalm 50:15, "...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Often forgotten is the first half of the statement, "Sacrifice thank offerings to God, and fulfill your vows to the Most High." Our sinful flesh tempts us to be light on commitment to God, yet makes us think we still deserve all the blessings God can give! The Lord is happy to help those who are faithful to him, but he makes no promise to deliver the one who plays games with commitment! Note that this does not support the non-biblical notion, "God helps those who help themselves," but rather God, out of love and mercy, rescues those who commit themselves to him.

+ Christians might be uncomfortable with a great prophet of the Lord taunting, even outright mocking, other religious leaders. We are in an age of hypersensitivity. It should be remembered that the prophets of Baal and Asherah were not innocent, ignorant people, but willfully taking advantage of the Israelites. They were government funded spiritual mercenaries. This was a *spiritual war*. Remember, Baal and Asherah did not exist, so Elijah was mocking a fictitious character, much as we might mock Darth Vader from the Star Wars movies. Note that the people quickly forgave Elijah when the Lord demonstrated his power! They immediately wanted to forget all about Baal and Asherah so that they would not come under condemnation by the Lord!