

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#05-1106

Mount Carmel Forest Fire

January 6, 2011

On December 2, 2010, fire broke out on Mount Carmel in northern Israel, south of Haifa. It spread quickly and continued to December 5. When it was over, 12,000 acres had been consumed, 74 buildings destroyed, 17,000 people evacuated, and, tragically, 44 people killed.

Israel prides itself on self-reliance and its preparation and ability to handle anything that comes its way, especially war; however, they found themselves so unprepared for this raging fire that they had to appeal for international assistance. It was as if a chink appeared in their near-invincible armor.

This is not the first time that this chink has been manifested. In the 2006 Lebanon (Hezbollah)-Israeli battle, which some call the July War of 2006, Israel did not seem as invincible as it had in previous wars. Israel was surprised by the depth and range of Hezbollah's missiles, which landed as far south as Haifa, bringing major civilian centers under attack. Further, an Israeli naval ship was crippled.

The point is this: Israel seems to be more vulnerable and less invincible than it has in its entire 62-year history. This poses a question: Is God lifting His hand of protection from Israel? If so, why would He be doing so at this point in time? See issues #04-1091 through #04-1094, August 2010, which deal with Edom and modern Israel.

Could it be that Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the people of Judah and Jerusalem, which foretells of the final destruction of the earthly Jerusalem in order to make way for **New Jerusalem, the heavenly, holy city of God**, is very near to fulfillment?

'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial. (Jeremiah 19:11 NASB)

Paul exhorts us to **cast out the bondwoman and her son**, which **corresponds to the present Jerusalem** (Galatians 4:21-31). See issues #04-1086, August 8, 2010, *Two Jerusalems*, and #04-1087, August 9, 2010, *Cast Out Judaism and Present Jerusalem*. Why? Because God's name is no longer attached to the present Jerusalem; His name is upon New Jerusalem (Revelation 3:12). The present Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt several times in its long history, but the Lord has declared that it will be broken in such a way that it will never be repaired, that is, rebuilt again. Topheth signifies that it will be destroyed by **the gehenna fire**.

Now, returning to the Mount Carmel fire, we are reminded of a great biblical event that occurred on this mountain nearly 2,900 years ago when Elijah the Tishbite was called forth as a prophet to Israel to confront 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah showed up on the scene when Ahab the son of Omri reigned over the northern Samarian kingdom of Israel for 22 years. [Note: For further understanding of the significance of the name *Omri*, see issues #04-10104, August 26, 2010, *Two Distinct Prophetic Histories*, and #04-10108, August 30, 2010, *The Israelite Diaspora*. Also, after Solomon's death, his kingdom was divided into the northern kingdom (Samaria), which took the birthright name of Israel, and the southern kingdom (Judah and Jerusalem), which retained the scepter under the name of Judah. See issues #04-1079, August 1, 2010, *Graftage*, and #04-10103, August 25, 2010, *Solomon's Divided Kingdom*.]

Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all before him (1 Kings 16:30). He married Jezebel and began to serve and worship her god Baal. **So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria and also made the Asherah** (wooden symbol of a female deity). **Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel before him** (1 Kings 16:32-33).

It is most likely that the Baal Elijah confronted on Mount Carmel was *Melqart*, the god of Tyre, Jezebel's home and a place where human sacrifices were offered. This connection is made by Jeremiah as he spoke against what had been similarly going on in Judah.

"They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech..." (Jeremiah 32:35 NASB)

Thus, the condition of Israel in the day of Elijah was deplorable. It wasn't as if the kingdom of Israel had fallen into some minor level of spiritual declension that could be easily reversed, or as if they had accepted some error in their understanding of the Lord and His ways. It wasn't as if Elijah needed to merely show up and speak an exhortation to them to lead them back to the path of righteousness.

No! The condition in the house of Israel was more than very serious; it was deadly. The kingdom was in total apostasy. They not only had turned from the Lord, but they had turned to false gods. But it was even worse than this, for Baal was a wicked, evil god that called for their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, that is, to be sacrificed to the gods.

Elijah, who had a nature like ours (James 5:17), had to be given divine authority, a special anointing or empowering, if you will, to turn the tide for the kingdom of Israel. He had no ability in himself to undertake such a task, and some of his actions proved it, such as running from Jezebel and hiding in a cave. Elijah had to be given authority from God for what he was called to do. It was a sovereign act of God that raised up Elijah and called him to do what he did. Satan and its mighty forces of wickedness were behind what was going on, and Elijah needed special equipping for the battle to confront these unseen forces of darkness.

So, Elijah was called forth to confront the 450 prophets of Baal. The story of what happened on Mount Carmel is so well known that I won't repeat it. What is relevant to our day is what Elijah prayed and what the Lord did after the foolish display of the impotence of the false prophets and their god.

(36) "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. (37) "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." (38) Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (39) 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 18:36-39 NASB)

The fire coming down on the mountain was not to simply display the impotence of Baal and the power of God or even to prove Elijah was right; it had a purpose, and it was to turn the heart of the people back to the Lord God.

Is there a parallel in our day to the condition of ancient Israel? Ancient Israel sacrificed their children. Is present-day Israel sacrificing their children as well? Today, civilized countries do not sacrifice their children to gods by passing them through fire. However, many have legalized abortions, which could be likened to sacrificing children. The US and many countries around the world are guilty in this regard, just as Israel is. In the US, on average, about a million children are legally aborted each year; nearly 50 million have been aborted since 1973. In Israel, about 20,000 legal abortions are performed each year; some estimate that both legal and illegal abortions total around 50,000; about 1.5 million children have been aborted since 1948 in a country with a population of 7.5 million. Will God not judge the nations (i.e., trees, as in trees of the forest), even the US, through **the gehenna of fire** (i.e., metaphorically, as in forest fire) for these sacrifices, just as He did ancient Judah and Israel? Could it be that the Mount Carmel fire is God's way of warning about what is coming to the Middle East, especially to Israel, and perhaps other nations? Is it not time to repent and return to the Lord?

What is the condition of the heart of the people of the state of Israel? As a nation, do they know Yeshua, the Lord and Savior of both the Old and New Testament? Or, have they rejected God's Son, the Messiah? Surely, there are individuals within her borders that know and love Jesus, but, as a nation, at best, they are described as secular. May many turn to the Lord Jesus while there is still time and be kept from the hour that is coming upon Jerusalem as Jeremiah foretold. **Lord, have mercy!**