

## Fire from Heaven

Commentary for April 1, 2017 — **For King David, King Solomon, and the Prophet Elijah**

The "[April 1, 2017 Newsletter](#)" introduces this month's article "Israel and Judah: 23. King Ahab's Decline." The article begins after God sent fire down from heaven to settle a contest that Elijah had with 450 pagan prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel on the central Mediterranean coast of Palestine (1 Kings 18:20–46).

King Ahab and likely a retinue of officials from his court attended, as did a large audience of Israelites. They hoped to see a spectacle, what today might be advertised as, "**Baal versus YHWH, the Battle of Gods.**" They expected something interesting would happen. The audience knew Elijah. He proclaimed YHWH's punishment of drought because of gross sins (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah predicts the outcome:

**"Then you will call your elohim by name, and I myself shall call Yahweh by name. And it will come to be: The One Elohim Who shall respond with fire, He is the One Elohim.'**

**All the people answered and said, 'Good is the word which you [Elijah] have spoken.'"**

• **1 Kings 18:24, Concordant Literal Version**

They agreed on the terms. The preparations by each side are at 1 Kings 18:25–36.

**"Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me! Thus this people may know that You, Yahweh, are the One, Elohim, and that You Yourself will turn their heart around back again.'**

**Now the fire of Yahweh fell and devoured the ascent offering and the sticks, the stones and the soil, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said, 'Yahweh, He is the One, Elohim, Yahweh, He is the One, Elohim.'"**

• **1 Kings 18:37–39, CLV**

The crowd saw a spectacular show. Fire from heaven and the burning of the offering and surroundings awed everyone, but the crowd was angry with the false prophets of Baal. Elijah, YHWH's prophet, ordered the seizure of the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of Asherah who viewed the contest. All the false prophets were killed.

The people likely knew of other times when God sent heavenly fire. Fire from heaven recognized YHWH's covenant with Abram (Genesis 15:17). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24). And before Elijah, two other instances of fire from heaven occurred, one during King David's reign, another during King Solomon's reign.

### **King David and Fire from Heaven**

When King David completed his purchase of Ornan's threshing floor as the site of God's Temple, David built an altar and sacrificed a bullock on it. YHWH approved David's purchase

of the site with a display of fire from heaven:

**“So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the place. Then David built there an altar to Yahweh and offered up ascent offerings and peace offerings. He called on Yahweh Who answered him with fire from the heavens upon the altar of the ascent offering.”**

• *1 Chronicles 21:25–26, CLV*

### **King Solomon and Fire from Heaven**

After David died, his son Solomon built the Temple at Ornan’s threshing floor, where God wanted it to be. During the dedication after the Temple’s completion, heavenly fire again occurred before all the people of Israel:

**“As Solomon finished praying, the fire itself descended from the heavens and devoured the ascent approach and the sacrifices; and Yahweh’s glory itself filled the House. ...**

**And all the sons of Israel were watching when the fire descended and the glory of Yahweh was upon the House; and they bowed their brow to the earth, on the pavement, and worshipped and acclaimed Yahweh: ‘For He is good, for His benignity is for the eon.’”**

• *2 Chronicles 7:1, 3, CLV*

### **Then Elijah Acts**

After Solomon there were no instances of fire from heaven (or from below) ... until Elijah. After the Mount Carmel event, Elijah will have another occasion to pray for God to bring down fire. That time will kill enemies of Israel and will have nothing to do with a sacrifice.

No other instance of fire from heaven occur for the rest of the Old Testament or intertestamental periods. However, during Jesus’ ministry His disciples James and John wanted to call for fire from heaven to burn towns and people who disrespected and rejected Jesus:

**“Now perceiving it, His disciples, James and John, say, ‘Lord, are You willing? May we be telling fire to descend from heaven and consume them, as Elijah also does?’ Now, being turned, He rebukes them.”**

• *Luke 9:54–55, CLV*

Jesus said in effect, “No thank you. We don’t do that.” Jesus was in no mood to punish ignorant people.

### **Future Fire from Heaven**

There will be two instances of fire from heaven at times future to us. The first occurs when the second of two “beasts,” humans doing beastly things, led and aided by evil spirit powers, somehow **“makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,”** with the purpose to deceive mankind (Revelation 13:13–14). The second and last instance in Scripture occurs after Christ’s 1000-year rule. The people of Gog and Magog rebel and fire will devour all of the rebels (Revelation 20:7–9).