**Day 3 April 30, After Caesarea we visit Megiddo, Carmel, and Nazareth overlook**

In this study we want to show pictures from Mt. Carmel and tell the story of Elijah. The second stop will be at Megiddo which is most famous, not for its bloody past but for being the scene of the final battle of the ages. Then we want to show that when Elijah and Israel dealt with the false prophets and those leading God’s people astray it was in the same valley as the Battle of Armageddon. The idea that we are working on is that how God dealt with the false prophets in Elijah’s day is how he will deal with the rebels when he returns. With this approach the notes for this section will necessarily be a little different than usual.

**Mount Carmel** is the scene of one of the most dramatic encounters with God ever recorded. It is where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and God sent fire to consume the sacrifice and assert that he alone is the one true God. In response they all cried, “The Lord is God!” Carmel overlooks Jezreel Valley also known as the Valley of Armageddon where the epic battle of the end time will take place.

The first question I want to ask is why Carmel and where on that mountain range did he call the meeting. The only clue I can find as to why is what Elijah did in the contest. (1 Kings 18:27-33) “*At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. 30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "****Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which was in ruins.*** *31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel." 32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. 33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood*."

 I think Elijah chose Carmel because of that ruined altar. The ruined altar was symptomatic of the state of true faith in Israel, broken down.

The Bible doesn’t say who built the altar or how long it had been broken down. The Rabbinical tradition says it was built by King Saul 250 years earlier during his better years. Saul, who would die on the mountain on the other end of the Jezreel Valley on Mount Gilboa for his sin was the one who built the altar that now lay is disrepair. One has to wonder what prayers were said at that altar and how they might have played a role in Elijah’s answer that day. Maybe Saul dedicated that altar and called on the Lord. In any case it became a famous altar so all Elijah had to say was meet me on Carmel and people knew to go to the famous altar of Carmel.

The Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius both mention an altar on Mount Carmel which Emperor Vespasian went to consult. There was never a temple nor statue, but simply an altar that was respectable for its antiquity. (Tacitus, Hist. lib. ii., c. 78.) A priest named Basilides officiated at that altar, and assured Vespasian that all his projects would be crowned with success. The point is the altar was given great reverence for a very long time even when others converted it to other purposes than the worship of Jehovah.

1 Kings 18:17-39 “***17****When he (Ahab) saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”****18****“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals.****19****Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”* ***20****So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.****21****Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing . . .****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.* ***39****When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”*

The eight minute video clip is a presentation I made on Mt. Carmel a few years ago. It is a simple telling of the Elijah story from that mountain with the Jezreel valley in the background. We visit the Carmelite monastery on Carmel because it has a great view of the valley and a cool statue of Elijah slaying the false prophets.

**Megiddo and the Nazareth Overlook**

 The eastern tip of Carmel is only a few miles from Megiddo.We will consider it on its own before making the connection between Carmel and Megiddo.Probably no city on earth has seen more of war than Megiddo, nor will any other city see more bloodshed in the future. Megiddo watches over the trade routes and valley that will host the future Armageddon. On this tell, excavations have uncovered no less than twenty cities built one atop the other, as wave after wave of wars have destroyed this city. From 4,000 B.C. onward it has been an important city overlooking the Jezreel Valley in Northern Israel. From the hill on which Megiddo is located, there is a commanding view of the valley which is also known as the Valley of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16. Indeed, “Armageddon,” means “mountain of Megiddo.”

 The strategic location of this city is the principle reason why it has been the center of so much fighting. Through this valley the ancient caravans traveled from Egypt and Africa to Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylon, and later, Persia. Megiddo marks the site where the northern route joined the eastern route. The Arah Pass which connects the valley with the coastal plain is to the southwest. From this city one has a commanding view of the valley and anyone who might try to pass by. Once called “Megiddon,” meaning “place of troops,” it has become synonymous with war.

 Armies arriving by sea landed at Akko and moved inland, up this valley into Central Palestine. Armies from the east followed the main route ending here. The “Kings of the East” of Revelation 16 will follow the route of so many previous eastern armies and end up in this same valley. (The recent news that a Chinese company Shanghi International Port Group will be taking over the management of Haifa port in 2021 with a 25 year contract presents an interesting possibility for the “Kings of the East.” Another Chinese company will be taking over Israel’s port at Ashdod.)

 When Joshua entered the area it had its own King whom Joshua killed as recorded in Joshua 12:21. Judges 1:27 describes it as one of the cities Israel was unable to take during the period of the Judges. The ruins give evidence of a huge fire, but the city was again rebuilt, possibly by Saul. Solomon saw the strategic importance of the city and made it one of three fortified cities in Israel (1 Kings 9:15). It is described as one of his Royal chariot cities. The city survived until about 815 B.C. when it was again destroyed, possibly by Hazael of Syria (2 Kings 13:3-7).

 2 Kings 23:29 tells us that King Josiah of Judah was killed by the troops of Pharoah-Necho in the valley below (see also Zechariah 12:11). 2 Chronicles 35 tells the story of his death and the mourning for Josiah. King Ahazian, King of Judah, also died in battle here as recorded in 2 Kings 9:27. Modern opinion is that the city’s famous water system dates to the time of King Ahab.

 The Roman sixth legion was stationed there at the hamlet known as el Lejjun.

 The last city to exist at Megiddo was an unwalled city of residential character. It ceased to exist as a city early in the fourth century B.C.

 Megiddo is important to us because of its connection to the final battle described in Revelation 16:12-16. “*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. 15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." 16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”*

I would like for part of our biblical discussion to come from 2 Thessalonians 2 where it discusses the events prior to the coming of the Lord particularly as it relates to lawlessness. Lawlessness is fundamentally an opposition to the rule of Christ on the earth, an opposition to obeying all that Christ commanded. That contest is the last battle against Christ and his rule and it is directly tied to battles about sexuality and whether Christ should rule on the earth.

 *“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered[[1]](#footnote-1) to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.”*

 By way of historical background, a report had apparently been circulating in Thessalonica that the day of the Lord was already present. It was at hand. This had caused alarm among the Christians there. Paul set their minds at ease by explaining to them the conditions under which the coming of the Lord would occur. His plan was that this information would convince them that the great “gathering” of God’s people had not already occurred. The last book and earlier chapters have added details that are still important to us today.

 We can learn some important facts from this discussion. First, **the Lord is coming.** We can look forward to the coming of the Lord. Christians in every ago have hoped for that day. To miss it would be terrible.

Second, **there is going to be a gathering of God’s people to him**. There is going to be a huge Assembly of the people of God and God will be the one gathering his people. I think this is the rapture. It could be the gathering of the people to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, but I think this is the upward movement at the time of the Rapture.

 Third, **this event is also called the day of the Lord**. In this passage, Paul is not writing to distinguish between what leads up to the Rapture and what leads to the descent of Jesus to the earth. It is not a subject he has in mind at this point. If we want his description of the rapture, we would have to go back a couple of pages to the book of 1 Thessalonians where we have the most complete description in the entire Bible

 Here we just want to accept that he is writing to them to let them know that it had not already occurred, nor were they in the middle of it right then.

 The next verses show that rebellion or falling away from the truth along with lawlessness will precede the Day of the Lord. “*3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion[[2]](#footnote-2) occurs and the man of lawlessness[[3]](#footnote-3) is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.*

**Don’t be deceived by any means or in any way.** What Paul is pointing to are the three things that will happen on the earth before the day of the Lord.

First, there is **a falling away from the truth**. Literally, the word is *apostasia*. What God has said in the Bible will cease to be the measure of truth. What God said about creation will be changed into evolution; what he said about people being created in his image will be changed into all nature is equal with people not being different from animals; when God said Jesus is the one and only Son of God will be changed into many sons of God; when Jesus said he was the only way to heaven will be replaced with the acceptance of many religions and ways to God; when God says marriage is between a man and a woman will be changed into justifying homosexuality saying “love is love.”

The present battle over the Supreme Court nominee is really about rebels not wanting the rule of Christ over their lives particularly around matters of sexuality. They think a more conservative court will go back to the earlier consensus in America about sexuality. They cannot allow this to happen because it would expose their sin as sin. So they are willing to do everything and anything to stop that from happening and the lawless demons of hell are willing to help them.

Second, **every person will want to define truth for themselves**. We call this post-modernism. Its visible manifestation today is around discrimination. In the Bible the description of lawlessness is specifically related to sexual morals and even more particularly to homosexual issues. The Apostle Peter said it like this: *“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)--if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

We know that Sodom’s sin was homosexuality and not primarily inhospitality as some try to argue. Jude 7 is clear enough about that. “…*Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire*.” Further, inhospitality was not a capital crime while homosexuality was punishable by death in Israel (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13). God did not ignore the capital crime of homosexuality while leveling two cities for inhospitality which is nowhere listed as a serious offense.

Defining truth for ourselves instead of following God’s truth is a classic form of lawlessness and we see it everywhere in the modern world. It is also the chaos that will pave the way for a strongman to be revealed who will enforce world order.

These ideas are the tentacles of the rebellion against God. At this moment, you can only see the tentacles, not the main body. The day will come when you will see the person who embodies these values. You will be seeing the anti-Christ. At that time, all so-called freedom of thought will disappear. Rebels want to throw off the rule of Christ but will inadvertently take on the rule of the anti-Christ. The person who screams out that they want to be free has no idea who will ultimately answer the call. They have no idea that their demand to be free of all restraint is the invitation to be enslaved.

Finally, the **anti-Christ will set himself up as truth** proclaiming himself to be god. To set himself up in God’s temple, is to be himself in the place of God, defining truth. We sometimes see this as an actual event related to a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. I do see it that way and as one argument why a Jewish Temple will be rebuilt on Temple Mount. However, it could just as easily be the content of what is preached in God’s temples or for that matter, in the Temples of Law and Justice.

The stage is being set for the final step. The increasing intellectual chaos will pave the way for a new intellectual order led by the anti-Christ himself. This in turn precedes the return of Christ. When Christ returns he will deal with the rebels just like Elijah dealt with the false prophets and he will do it in exactly the same spot.

 When we stop at the Nazareth overlook of Jezreel we will see the valley from the other side opposite Megiddo. When the villagers tried to throw Jesus off the cliff they were already rebelling against him. How ironic that Jesus simply walked through the crowd and went on his way just as he will go through the armies of the anti-Christ in the great and final battle of Armageddon.

**Elijah, Carmel and Armageddon**

**Malachi 4:5-6 *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."***

The Old Testament thus ends with the anticipation of the return of Elijah, a prophet already dead for four centuries. We don’t know if Elijah himself will return as the plain reading of the text would indicate. He might also return by way of another person who, though a distinctly different person from Elijah, will operate in the power and spirit of Elijah.

 The latter is suggested by *Luke 1:11-17: “Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

 It is clear that Elijah’s prophesied return was fulfilled at least in part by the coming of John the Baptist, although he explicitly denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21). But I would suggest that though it was a fulfillment it was not the complete fulfillment. We should expect another in the future. I say that because Malachi said Elijah’s return would coincide with or be before a “dreadful” day which certainly would not have been true of the first coming of Jesus.

 The last verses of Malachi anticipate a “*great and dreadful day of the Lord*” connecting Elijah with that dreadful day. Let’s **consider the Day of the Lord** as it is described in other parts of the Bible.

When we read about the Day of the Lord it has a very bitter component. Joel 2:31 indicates “*The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*.”

Zephaniah 1:14-18 “*The great day of the Lord is near — near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth.*"

Isaiah 13 is an oracle concerning Babylon but it seems like another of those with double fulfillment describing the end of the age as well. *2 Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. 3 I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath — those who rejoice in my triumph. 4 Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The Lord Almighty is mustering an army for war. 5 They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens — the Lord and the weapons of his wrath — to destroy the whole country. 6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. 7 Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. 8 Terror will seize them, their faces aflame. 9 See, the day of the Lord is coming— a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. 10 The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.*

2 Peter 3:10 gives us a New Testament perspective: “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*

So if Elijah is going to come before the terrible day of the Lord it must be something yet future and not fulfilled with John the Baptist.

In my recent study of Elijah on Mt. Carmel I literally saw something I had never seen before. I gave my talk on Mt. Carmel with my back to the valley below. That valley is the Valley of Jezreel also known as the Valley of Armageddon. Immediately below Carmel is the Kishon Valley. Seeing all that from Carmel I saw a connection I had not seen before. I saw the connection between Elijah and the judgment of the false prophets with the judgment of the sinners at the great end time battle of Armageddon. That leads me to think of Elijah on Carmel as a foreshadowing of Armageddon. Here is why.

When Elijah won his great victory on Carmel the people repented and turned to God. But presumably the prophets of Baal and Asherah were not among those who acknowledged God. *“Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.”* It was a long ways to go from Carmel to the Kishon Valley below and would have required quite a bit of effort. But I would suggest a future event was being foreshadowed. The Kishon Valley is a valley set in the greater Valley of Armageddon. It is a valley within a valley running all the way from Mt. Gilboa to the Mediterranean, nearly the full length of the Valley of Armageddon. Literally the prophets of Baal and Asherah were judged, not just in the Kishon Valley, but in the Valley of Armageddon just like the end time great battle of Armageddon.

Eight centuries before Christ Elijah came and the people turned from their wicked ways. Those who didn’t were judged in the Valley of Armageddon. Before that great and terrible day of the Lord Elijah will return with a similar mission. He will preach right relationship with God and with each other. Those who repent will be saved. Those who rebel are described in Revelation 16:13-21 “*Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. 15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." 16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (Mount of Megiddo) 17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”*

 Notice in the Revelation description that the “whole world” of Zephaniah is involved as is “Babylon” of Isaiah 13. The day of the Lord happens when they “gather them for the battle” to the place called “Mount of Megiddo” or Armageddon. Standing on the end of Mt. Carmel Megiddo lies in the distance while the Kishon flows in front of them both. Elijah, who saw judgment fall at the Kishon River, will come again before the “great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

 Visiting Carmel today I can look back 28 centuries and see Elijah participating in God’s judgement. But I want to look forward as well. Looking forward maybe only a seven years I can see Elijah coming again to this same place only this time joining Jesus to fix the rebellion once and for all time.

 Elijah forced Israel to choose between Jehovah versus Baal and Asherah. But what choice were they actually making? What were these religions of Baal and Asherah that Israel found so alluring?

 Baal was portrayed as a man with the head and horns of a bull. He was seated on a throne and was the “lord.” He held a lightning bolt in his hand which was to represent both his ability to destroy and his ability to control storms and the sea both of which were connected to fertility and prosperity.

 To worship Baal the people offered animal sacrifices. They also sacrificed their children for personal prosperity. These practices morphed continually but included putting their children into the fiery image of Moloch where the child was burned to death. All this was to bring about prosperity. People wanted to succeed and Baal worship was their means of achieving it.

 Asherah was actually quite similar. She was the female fertility goddess. This goddess form took many names and variations over the centuries. The Romans had Diana. The Greeks had Artemis. The Phrygians had Cybele. In Cappadocia she was known as Ma. The Syrians knew her as Atargatis or Mylitta. The Assyrians called her Ishtar, following the lead of the Phoenicians who knew her as Astarte. The Hittites also had a similar female deity whose images are carved at Yazili Kaya, near the Hittite city of Boghazkeui.[[5]](#footnote-5) For Israel it was Asherah.

 In whatever context there were certain similarities. The animals and plants were the result of the mother goddess’ blessings. The herds and fish are sacred. The groves of trees are sacred guarded by the green man who protects the forests around her temple. The goddess is typically shown as a nude female, sometimes pregnant, with exaggerated breasts apparently the symbols of fertility and prosperity. In the Bible Asherah is worshipped near trees and poles.

 Ritual sex was always a part of it. They believed if they engaged in sex, Baal and Asherah would see it and want to do the same thereby producing the offspring resulting in prosperity among the animals and crops. Bear in mind this was a couple of centuries before the invention of money so wealth was still measured primarily in animals, crops, children and other human possessions. Baal was represented by the male and Asherah by the female. Sex thus became prostituted and perverted in every possible way and completely separated from marriage between a man and a woman.

 Distilled to its essence Baal and Ashareh were alternate means of blessing and prosperity separated from God’s laws and his promises to meet the needs of their lives.

 The modern reincarnation of Asherah is the environmental movement. The reincarnation of the prophets of Baal are those who promise prosperity outside of God. The chief prophets of Baal are many of the politicians. They promise everything the priests of Baal offered. You will have good income jobs. There will be all kinds of free stuff that Baal will bless you with. You will not have to restrain yourself sexually to obey God or to receive his blessing. We will bless you no matter how you act, and indeed if you act bad enough sexually we will take care of everything.

1. Episunagoge. a complete collection; especially a Christian meeting for worship: [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Apostasia. defection from truth or "apostasy": KJV-- falling away, forsake. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. anomia (an-om-ee'-ah); illegality, i.e. violation of law or wickedness: KJV-- iniquity, transgress (-ion of) the law, unrighteousness. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2 Pet 2:4-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, James Orr, General Editor. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1929) p.842 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)