If you have been watching the news recently I'm sure you have seen the reports about the raging wildfires that are burning in the mountains of four western states and Alaska.

As of this past Monday (July 27) firefighters were battling 22 major fires that have burned up over 850,000 acres of mountain timber and threatened some residential areas in California. Since the beginning of the year 5.5 million acres have been burned, which an area as large as the state of New Jersey.

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Tonight, as we continue with our “Hot Summer Nights” series we are going to travel back in time about 2,800 years to the days of the prophet Elijah, and look at a dramatic showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal that resulted in a “Fire On The Mountain.”

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Old Testament Book of I Kings, chapter eighteen. And let's read vs. 20-24.
I Kings 18:20-24 (NKJV)

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it.

24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

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Background Information

To set the stage for what happened that day on Mt. Carmel, let me give you some important background information.

When I was growing up, a buddy of mine used to have a saying to describe someone who was rugged and tough. He would say, “He is tougher than bent nails.”

The prophet Elijah was “tougher than bent nails.” We are told in I Kings 17:1 that Elijah was a Tishbite from the land of Gilead. The people of Gilead were rough, tough, rugged people who lived off the land. Elijah was no “softy.” He had a rugged, weather-beaten appearance and a blunt, straightforwardness in his manner. He never sugar-coated anything. Like the late Vance Havner used to say, “He told it like it was, not like it ain’t.”
But despite his “tougher-than-bent-nails demeanor” the days of Elijah prophesied during a very difficult and dangerous time.

You see, King Ahab ruled over Israel in Elijah’s day. And I Kings 16:30 tells us “Ahab did evil in the sight of the LORD more than any king who lived before him.”

And verse 33 tells us “Ahab did more to provoke God’s anger than any king who lived before him.” To make matters even worse, King Ahab had married a foreign wife by the name of Jezebel. Jezebel was so evil that her name is synonymous with wickedness throughout the scriptures.

King Ahab and Queen Jezebel led the Israelite people into the gross, idolatrous worship of BAAL. Baal worshipers believed Baal was the most powerful of all gods. They believed Baal was the god of the weather and he had control over the rain, wind, thunder and lightning. Now plug that thought into the back of your mind because it is going to come up later in the message.

Determined to force the Jewish people to abandon their worship of Jehovah God and get them to worship Baal instead, Jezebel ordered the executions of every true prophet of GOD; and the very first man on Jezebel’s list was the prophet Elijah.

Little did Ahab and Jezebel know that they had a “secret operative” right inside their own palace who was “aiding and abetting their arch enemies.” His name was Obadiah, the head of Ahab’s household affairs. Obadiah was a God-fearing man, who had hidden 100 prophets of God in two different caves, and provided them with bread and water. He did this to spare their lives from the ruthless, wicked Jezebel.
Well one day, King Ahab sent Obadiah out into the country to search for some fresh grazing land for his horses and mules. While Obadiah was roaming the countryside looking for fresh pastures, Elijah suddenly appeared. Obadiah fell down before Elijah and asked if it was truly him? After assuring Obadiah he was who he thought he was, Elijah told Obadiah to go back and tell King Ahab, “Elijah is here.”

Knowing Elijah was at the very top of Jezebel’s “hit list” the thought of going back to tell Ahab he had seen Elijah, but didn’t bring him in, scared the sandals off of Obadiah. In fact Obadiah knew he would be executed for not bringing Elijah in.

Elijah assured Obadiah that he would show up at Ahab’s palace that day and that his life would not be in danger. Sure enough, just as he promised, Elijah showed up at Ahab’s palace later that day. And when Ahab saw him coming, Ahab said to Elijah, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel.”

Not being one to “mince his words” or “beat around the bush,” Elijah looks Ahab squarely in the eyes and says, “You are the one who has brought trouble on Israel by forsaking the commandments of God and leading our people into the idolatrous worship of Baal.”

It was at this point, Elijah told Ahab to have his 450 prophets of Baal meet him on top of Mount Carmel. And so the scene now shifts from Ahab's palace to nearby Mount Carmel.

This brings us to the scripture text I read earlier. First I would have you to notice......
I. Elijah's Challenge To The PEOPLE (vs. 20-24)

I Kings 18:20-24 (NKJV)

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the L ORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the L ORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it.

24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the L ORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

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1. This was "no little event!" This was like the ancient version of the Superbowl.

On one side you have Elijah, the lone righteous prophet of Jehovah God.

On the other side you have the 450 unrighteous prophets of Baal.

And then there's this huge crowd of spectators who can't make up their minds whether to worship Jehovah God, the God of their forefathers or to worship Baal, the false god of Jezebel.
2. So Ahab first issues a challenge to all the people.

v.21 “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is GOD, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”

In other words, “How long are you people going to keep straddling the fence?” “How long are you going to keep waffling back and forth?” “When are you going to make up your minds?”

The latter part of verse 21 says, “But the people answered him not a word.”

3. So Elijah tells the people, “Alright, here's what we are going to do. I am the lone prophet of Jehovah here today, and there are 450 prophets of Baal. We're going to have a contest right here in your presence today that will reveal who the real GOD is.

4. And then Elijah explains to the people what the “ground rules” are going to be for this contest.

Elijah said, “Bring us two bulls. We'll let the prophets of Baal pick which bull they want. Then they are to cut the bull into pieces and lay the meat on the firewood, but they are NOT to start a fire. And then I will do the same exact thing with the other bull.

5. Then Elijah told the people, “Now here's what I want all of you to do. I want you to pray to Baal or whatever god you worship, and I will pray to Jehovah God, and whichever one answers, He is the true God. “Fair enough?” And the people agreed.

As we move on to verses 25-29 we see.......
II. Elijah's Challenge To The PROPHETS of Baal (vs.25-29)

I Kings 18:25-29 (NKJV)

25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.”

26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.”

28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

1. The prophets of Baal put on quite a performance. In fact, it was so comical, Elijah just sat back and enjoyed watching them make fools out of themselves in front of all the Israelite people.

2. Now I want you to think about something. This contest had actually been set up to “cater” to Baal's supposed strengths. Remember earlier I told you those who worshiped Baal believed he was the god of the weather and that he had control over the wind, rain, thunder and lightning.
3. The prophets of Baal truly believed this contest would be a “piece of cake.” All they had to do was get Baal to throw down a bolt of lightning and set the altar on fire. **NO PROBLEM! At least that's what they thought.**

4. They start calling out to Baal and nothing happens, so they get louder and louder and still nothing happens. And then they start jumping up on the altar thinking, “surely this will get his attention,” but it didn’t. And then they become hysterical and started cutting themselves with knives and lances. **Blood letting is a mark of all false religions. It is very demonic in origin.**

5. Well this goes on for several hours and 'ol Elijah is having a great time. He hollers, “Maybe he is on vacation and you're going to have to wait until he gets back.” Or “maybe he is taking an afternoon siesta and you're going to have to holler louder to wake him up.”

6. The prophets of Baal continued their futile attempt to arouse the attention of their god until late in the day and **verse 29** says, **“But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.”**

Now as we move on to **verses 30-40** its as if Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, **“OK boys, you've had your chance, now step aside and let the One True God reveal His mighty power!”**
Let's look at......

**III. Elijah's Call To GOD**

1. In **verses 30-35** Elijah makes all the necessary preparations for GOD to reveal His mighty power to the children of Israel.

   - First, Elijah had all the children of Israel gather around as he began to repair the broken down altar.

   The lives of the Jewish people had become “fragmented” both physically and spiritually. The only way the nation could be healed was to rebuild their broken relationship with GOD. And so as Elijah went about the process of re-uniting the twelve separate stones, he was helping the Jewish people take their very step back to GOD.

   - After rebuilding the altar, Elijah then dug a large trench around the altar. Then he laid the firewood upon the altar, then cut up the bull and laid the pieces of meat upon the altar, just as the prophets of Baal had done earlier that day. But this is where the similarities ended.
Elijah then gave the command to bring four water-pots of water and pour it on the altar. Then Elijah had them bring four more water pots and pour it on the altar. Then he had them bring four more waterpots and dump the water on the altar. By this time so much water had been dumped on the altar that not only was the fire-wood completely soaked, but the trench Elijah had dug around the base of the altar was filled with water.

By drenching the altar in water, Elijah was eliminating any possibility that the altar might be ignited in any other way than by a miracle of God.

2. Now, let's pick up the record in verses 36-40.....

I Kings 18:36-40 (NKJV)

36 And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.”

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!”

40 And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

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CONCLUSION

Throughout history, Satan has introduced a vast array of false gods into humanity in his attempt to lure people away from worshiping the One True God.

The battle on Mount Carmel that day wasn’t between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, it was a battle between God and Satan.

The Fire On The Mountain that day exposed the deceptiveness of the prophets of Baal and exposed the foolishness of the Israelite people for putting their faith and trust in Baal. But more than anything else, that Fire On The Mountain left no doubt in the minds of those wavering, waffling Jews, which God they would choose to serve.

If there is one lesson we can all learn from this wonderful account it would be this: There comes a time when each of us must take a stand for God. Like Elijah, we must have the bold courage to take that stand even if we are the only one standing, whether its at home, at work, at school, or wherever it may be. May God ignite a fire in you and me that will burn so brightly that everyone in we meet will know there is God in Heaven! And that is our message on this “HOT SUMMER NIGHT.”