

“Whose Side Are You On?” Response Guide

1 Kings 18:1-40

Bethany Assembly of God

11/8/2020

- Tell about a time when you talked to someone who claimed to believe or support two mutually exclusive things. (e.g. “I’m a Patriots fan, but I also like the Jets.” or “I don’t think Jesus was a liar or insane, but I don’t believe His claim to be divine.”)
- Have you ever held mutual exclusive beliefs? What were they?
- Read 1 Kings 18:20-24.
- Pastor Stephen talked about Baal, the Canaanite storm god. He was said to provide rain. There may have been fertility rituals, like religious prostitution, associated with worshipping him. And he was backed by the social elites and politicians. Why do you think the Jews found worshipping him appealing?
- Define *syncretism*. If you need to, you can look it up. This is what the Jews were doing with the Lord, God of Israel, and Baal. Their loyalties were divided.
- Have you ever had to choose between two relationships or lifestyles? What made it a difficult decision? Did you try to hold them together? Why wouldn’t that work?
- Read 1 Kings 18:25-29. What strikes you about Elijah’s taunts in verse 27?
- The pagans made up gods in the image of man. Their gods had to eat, drink, sleep, marry, have kids, and all the other things that people do. As a result, pagan religions focused on appeasing or manipulating those gods. Since they were so much like people they could be manipulated. How is the God of the Bible different? How is the God revealed in Jesus different?
- Read 1 Kings 18:30-40. How does Elijah’s prayer differ from that of Baal’s prophets? Does this teach us anything about the nature of God and the nature of prayer? See Matthew 6:7-13 for additional insight.
- Was the fire from heaven a magic show or why did God respond with that particular sign?
- Why don’t you think God always responds with fire from heaven when people demand a sign?

- Having read the whole account, what do you think the Big Idea of the story is?

When we read these epic stories in the Bible, we often want to locate ourselves with the hero; we want to be Elijah. Elijah does give us an example of great courage, faith, and boldness, but is that really why this story is here? Maybe the point isn't so that we assume we're all supposed to go about calling fire from heaven but so that we can see with a dramatic picture the claim that God makes on our lives. He is our Creator and Savior, so more is owed Him than some religious fervor mixed with whatever else we think will give us meaning, pleasure, comfort, and safety. This story is here so that we can hear the call of Elijah: "How long will you go on limping between two opinions?"

- Do you think idolatry still exists? What does it look like in our culture? (Remember, the worship of Baal was apparently motivated by at least these three things: an extra layer of protection economically by worshipping the god who supposedly controlled the rain, the opportunity to indulge sexual appetites, and staying on the good side of the queen and society.)
- Read Colossians 3:5 if you need a concrete, New Testament example of idolatry.
- Based on this story and your previous discussion, are you fully devoted to Jesus? What's the evidence of that? Where's the proof?
- Like Elijah and Obadiah (1 Kings 18:1-19), will you call others to full devotion? How will you do it?