

In April of 1966 Time magazine asked “Is God dead?” Their question really centered on whether or not God was relevant anymore to society. People seemed to care less and less about God and so it seemed that God would just be erased from the world. Yet the article sparked huge backlash. 3,500 people sent letters to the editor stating that God was not dead. There seemed to be people that did actually care about God. Two sides to the same question and a whole world wavering in between.

Elijah too lived in such a world. There seemed to be all too many people who were willing to abandon God or leave him behind for what they felt was something better. Elijah was hard pressed to find even some people who were willing to stand up for God. But there were two sides. There always is. And in the first lesson we see just how easily...

The world wavers between two sides

You know the feeling if you're a boss. Blame. It happens to the people in charge. Why isn't he a better manager? We could be so much more successful if she simply got out of everyone's way. Can you believe the way they're running this place into the ground? God knows blame too. He's been hearing about it since the garden when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed Satan. Really they both were blaming God. Blaming him because of a perception that he hadn't sufficiently taken care of them.

We blame him for our problems too. He's got to be the source of our heartache and headache because he's in charge. If he wanted to he could keep us from ever hurting. He doesn't so he's to blame. But we're the reason for our own problems. It's our sinfulness and our desire to escape from God's control that gets us into trouble. We're wavering between two sides. We want God to change things when it isn't going well, but we want nothing to do with him when things are.

The worst king in Israel, that's what the history books would record. King Ahab welcomed worship of idols. His wife brought her own idols; idols that poisoned the whole country. Grippled by an awful drought the whole country was looking to blame someone. King Ahab blamed Elijah and ultimately God, **“Is that you, you troubler of Israel? I have not made trouble for Israel, Elijah replied. But you and your father's family have.”** The people wavered between two sides. Foggy distant memories of a time when they followed God but they largely just wanted him out of their lives. They're new gods were cooler more their kind of gods. Baal was their god of rain and fertility. As far as they figured Baal was responsible for the rain so long as they sacrificed to him. It was odd then because they hadn't experienced rain in three years.

Very rarely can you ride the fence in anything for too long. Eventually you have to vote for one over another. Riding the fence isn't voting. In life you decide on a career path. Riding the fence won't support the family. In sports you pick one team to root for. Riding the fence and rooting for both teams isn't being a fan of either. Spiritually speaking riding the fence isn't believing. It means you don't have God at all. No faith, no belief, and no Savior. Riding the fence is saying I want some of this religion and some of that one. In reality you have everything except Christ.

The time for the showdown between the two sides had arrived. Mount Carmel provided the background. Elijah set the rules. Each side would select a bull. The prophets of Baal could go first. With everyone watching the prophets of Baal set their bull on top of cut wood on top of an altar. The challenge was now Baal had to light the sacrifice on fire. The prophets of Baal were confident. There were 450 of them. Mount Carmel was still lush and green from moisture that the rest of the country hadn't seen. Baal would come through.

For hours 450 prophets of Baal called on his name. They shouted. They danced. They shouted some more. They tried getting louder. Past noon they started slashing themselves. Baal would certainly respond to a little shed blood and their devotion. They were passionate about arousing their god. Frantic, dancing, shouting, yelling, crying out they did anything to try and get Baal to answer. But the sacrifice just sat there. No fire. **“There was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.”** There never would be any fire. They were calling for a god that existed in their imagination. No fire would come on their bull as long as they called to a god who wasn't real.

How secure is the truth about Jesus in your mind? Neighbors must think you're crazy for getting up so early on a day off to come to church. Friends must think you're out there when you trust in someone you've never seen or heard. You're literally staking your life on someone you've never met personally. We don't need the miraculous fire from heaven or the whisper in our ears. We don't need the stampede of new visitors or members. We don't need these things to prove the existence of Jesus. Sometimes we get them anyway.

When you bring your children to this font and ask that they be baptized you're getting a miracle from God. When you tell your children that they're going to catechism class for two years, missing games, and time with friends so they can learn the truths of God's Word you're connecting them to a miracle. When you pray about something you desperately want or need and get your answer you witness a miracle. We don't need them to know the truth, but it sure is amazing when God gives them to us.

Their time was up. Elijah gathered everyone close so they wouldn't miss what was about to happen. Meticulously he restored the altar of the Lord. Twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of a united Israel were selected. They would remind the people that they were still united under God even if they were split here on earth. Around the altar he dug a trench. This trench was wide and deep. Then came the water. Not once, not twice, but three times the wood, bull, and altar were drenched with water. Elijah was making a point. No magic or trick of the eye. Only a miracle would start this soaked sacrifice on fire.

Then Elijah prayed. **"O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel."** It sounded familiar. The people remembered this God. He had done so much for them in the past. Immediately fire fell from heaven. In an instant the bull was burned up as was the wood. The stones were gone, the altar too. Amazingly the water in the trench as well as the dirt around the altar were all gone. God had showed his power without wavering. The God of Elijah was the winner, the true God.

There's only one response to the God who sent his son to die for you. Only one response to the God who with power brings little children to faith, and with the same power protects us from the attacks of this world and Satan. There's only one response to the message of the cross. That response is faith, thanks, and love that overflows from us to others like God's love overflows from him to us. Any other response results in destruction and hell.

The people responded. From their knees they cried out the truth. **"The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!"** Their eyes wouldn't lie, and now their hearts wouldn't either. The power of God on display had convinced them and changed their hearts. Their faith came just in time. Moments later the prophets of Baal, all 450, were put to death. They held no place among God's people. In fact they needed to be eliminated so their false ideas wouldn't corrupt the people again. God's people needed to be cleansed. Soon after, the rain started. The Lord God saved his people numerous times that day. Saved them wavering into believing false gods and dying, saved them from the drought by sending rain.

God is not dead. Idolatry and sin aren't dead either. Both are very much alive and they show themselves in our lives. Because of that we think we can ride the fence, believe in God when it works for us and have our fun with sin at other times. The world wavers between two sides. It's God who has won a victory over all false gods and idols. Won a victory over sin, death, and the devil by his death on a cross. God's Word won't allow us to waver between the two sides. The only place for our trust is in Jesus who saves us.