

YHWH vs Baal

In our passage today, we have a contest between the “Gods” – YHWH against Baal. On the side of Baal, there are 450 prophets. On YHWH’s corner, there is only one – Elijah. How is Elijah supposed to win? The odds are stacked against Elijah. However, this is not the first time that the odds are stacked against YHWH’s agents. It was very similar in the episode between David and Goliath. Before David and Goliath, we also have the episode between the army of Gideon against the Midianites. YHWH’s people has always defied the odds. Why is that? What is it about YHWH’s people that makes them “win” time and time again against terrible situations?

Let’s turn to 1 Kings 18:16-39 to find out what happens between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

Launch

- 1) In what areas of life do you feel that the odds are constantly stacked against Christians?

A BATTLE BETWEEN YHWH AND BAAL

Read 1 Kings 18:16-39

- 2) According to Elijah, who has been the troubler of Israel? Why is that? (v18)
- 3) What does Elijah ask Ahab to do? (v19-20)
 - a. What does Elijah say to the people? (v21)
- 4) What do you think Elijah is proposing by his suggestions in v22-24?
 - a. What would have gone through the minds of the 450 prophets of Baal with that proposal?
- 5) Read 1 Kings 18:25-38. Take the time to draw (to the best of your ability) how it may have looked like. Take into account the number of prophets, how they prayed, and the results.

- 6) What advantages did Elijah give to the prophets of Baal for them to succeed?
 - a. What “disadvantage” did Elijah give himself?

- 7) Compare and contrast the prayers of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. What did Elijah appeal to YHWH in his prayer? (v26b, 28-29, 36-37)
 - a. What do you think explains the differences between the two prayers?

- 8) What was the result of Elijah’s prayer? (v38-39)

- 9) What are some things that people are sacrificing to their gods today? In what way are they praying in a frenzy to their gods?

- 10) Compare your prayers to the prayers in this passage. Which one does it look like more – Elijah’s or the prophets? What does that show about your trust in God?

Conclusion

One of the most damning verse in this passage is v29b – “But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.” Despite the sincerity, fervour, and sacrifice of the prophets of Baal in their prayers, it was all in vain. Their “god” was silent. On the other hand, Elijah had everything going against him, but yet he only needed to say a simple prayer to YHWH. Elijah’s prayer was powerfully answered – proving to the people there that YHWH is the only one true God.

Many people today sacrifice a tremendous amount to their “god. This can be the god of comfort, pleasure, money, status or power. This is all done in an effort to provide eternal security for themselves, or to elevate themselves to the level of godhead. They sacrifice their family, health, time, dignity, sexuality, or other people. When their “prayers” are not answered, like the prophets, they sink deeper into a frenzy – louder, longer, and calling for more sacrifices.

Christians today can be easily pressured by everyone else to sacrifice to these “gods”. However, these gods are silent – no response, no answer, no attention paid. However, YHWH alone is the true God of all. Elijah’s “victory” is not because of his prayer, or godliness, or character. Rather, it is to *whom* Elijah is praying to – YHWH, the covenantal, all-powerful, all-loving God who answers our prayers. There’s no need to be in a frenzy when praying to YHWH, because we know that he listens to our prayers, and he is the God who loved us and gave his Son for us.