

## Elijah and the prophets of Baal 1 Kings 18:20-40

What a story! Elijah, God's faithful prophet goes head to head with over 400 prophets of the god Baal. My guess is that the crowds who were watching were expecting a show, a great day out, but that they weren't expecting what happened.

It seems like a simple enough suggestion – each side prepares a bull for sacrifice and asks their God to provide the fire for the sacrifice. Baal doesn't respond, Elijah's taunting of the prophets of Baal might seem odd in a world where we tolerate other gods and their worshippers, but these were different times and a very different society. After Baal's prophets have exhausted themselves with dancing and bleeding it's Elijah's turn.

He methodically prepares an altar, digs a trench round it and then gets the bull, the wood and the altar soaking wet before asking God to show the people that He was the true God at which point God not only burns the wood and the bull but the stones as well and dries up all the water in the trench. Unsurprisingly the people are impressed and declare their belief in God.

This story about meeting God on a mountain is different to the others that we have considered, Moses was alone when he met God on the mountain, Abraham accompanied by just Isaac, and Jesus made his way round the mountain to Martha, Mary and Lazarus with just a few friends, but in today's story Elijah has an audience – lots of people looking for something to convince them that God was real and of course 450 prophets of Baal – who were actively standing against God. God's response is very dramatic, perhaps to make sure that all those people see what happens if God had just set fire to the wood and burned the bull perhaps some people at the back of the crowd would have doubted what had happened but God left no question but that He was powerful and listened to his prophet.

It's a great story, but what about us, whatever challenges we face as we seek to live our lives in obedience to the God whose power was demonstrated so dramatically I don't imagine any of us will ever find ourselves at the top of a mountain surrounded by people who worship another God, but that doesn't mean we can appreciate this as a good story and then ignore it like it was some kind of fairy tale. This is a story that was included in the Bible for a reason – it reminds us that our God is special and can be trusted. **There is one God and we have the privilege of being able to know Him and trust Him just as Elijah did.**

As we continue our journey through Lent we can remember that the God who was with Daniel in the fiery furnace, and who met with Abraham, Isaac, Moses and Elijah is with us.

When we celebrate Easter in a few weeks time, we will be celebrating the God who was known and trusted by His People for thousands of years before Jesus birth - the same God whose Son died for our forgiveness and rose from the dead – the same God that we can know and trust and love.