

# MAKING UP YOUR MIND TIME

## (Sermon Summary)

**Reading: 1 Kings 18: 20-40.**

This is one of the most dramatic events in the whole Bible. It is the test of who is the true God – Baal or the God of Israel? The question is resolved emphatically when the Lord answers from heaven with fire. Through this, God vindicates His own name and also His prophet Elijah. There is much to take in but we are dwelling on v21 and the question that is put to the people. Why can't they make up their mind? If God is God, then serve Him. If Baal is God, then serve him. Do not try to serve both. For the people of Elijah's day and for us, it is time to make up our minds.

### 1. Are you stuck?

Is this where we are today? We are taken up with the God of the Bible to some extent but not entirely. We are also keeping something back from Him and having 'other gods' as well that we pay attention to. Most people in fact believe 'a bit' in God. They do not believe sufficiently to think it worth going to church to worship that God, however.

Baal was one of the most commonly worshipped 'deities' in the Middle East of this time. He was regarded as powerful and ensured the return of the harvests each year. Worshipping him involved all kinds of sacrifice and violence. The people that met with Elijah on Mount Carmel kept a foot in both camps, worshipping God but also worshipping Baal. God, however, will suffer no rivals but it is jealous for the honour of His name.

Yet for flawed and sinful people, what is false can seem more real and fulfilling than the true way. Baal was more immediate with tangible idols that could be made and worshipped. The Lord seemed more remote and 'far away' by comparison. It can seem like hard work and unrewarding to serve Him by comparison to Baal. People often turn to things that offer a quick reward without the need for deeper thought or obedience. They are looking for something to relieve their fears or anxieties, rather than a God they should obey and who requires us to repent. People believe in the 'Law of Attraction'. In other words, if you proclaim the right things, those right things will come your way, as though there was law of nature that made it happen to plan. This is the essence of the false doctrine of 'positive confession' that a lot of professing Christians are deceived by. They think that if they declare that they are healthy or rich, then this is what will happen. What is false can seem more attractive, offering answers to immediate problems, achievable by following certain rules that 'work'.

In this thinking, the God of the Bible, setting out how we are to know and worship Him, requires something more, a supplement of one kind or another. It is like an extra insurance policy, in order for it to 'work for us.' We end up believing 'a bit' in eternity, of the after-life, of judgment, but we do not believe enough to give up some of our pleasures, our sins, our comforts and our conveniences.

Today's prophets of Baal, like those on Mount Carmel, can seem numerous and be very sincere, loud and vociferous. Yet, as events would show, they were so wrong.

## **2. Time for decision.**

The Bible is always facing us up with choices. We are to choose whom we will serve (Joshua 24:15). The Lord Jesus put it to the disciples whether they also wanted to go away as others had done (John 6:67). The rich young ruler was faced up with decisions that he had to take (Mark 10:21-22). The towns that the Lord and the apostles visited also had to recognize the day of their visitation and choose where they stood. Will we build on rock or on sand? Will we obey or not? This is not easy. We are not making up our minds while in possession of all the facts or having every question answered. We have to come with our 'What abouts...What ifs...and Yes, buts...'.

To help us make up our minds, when Elijah prayed, fire came down from heaven. The Lord has not left Himself without a clear witness. The flawed theory of evolution offers itself alongside the creation account. Some limp between the two opinions with theistic evolution, the idea that God used evolution to fulfill His purposes. Yet evolution requires us to suspend known laws of science to accommodate it. Creationism may not have all the answers, but it meets the evidence to hand and offers a credible answer to the question of our origins.

But as we face eternity and life after death, where can we find any help or any answers? Can the world give us anything here that counts for anything? All it can do is try to help us live as long as possible, and to try to make us as happy as possible. But it has nothing else to give us. Whereas, to know God is the supreme blessing we can have (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Yet we cannot possess it while we still try to hold on to what Baal and the world offer us. We have to forsake this. For our sin is the stumbling block to our eternal joy and hope. God sent the fire on the sacrifice of His Son, fully consuming Him. The Lord's coming into the world was evidence of the problem of our sin, but was also the answer to that problem. Payment needed to be made for our sin and this was rendered in full on the cross. Just as the people of Elijah's day were left in no doubt, neither are we as the Lord was raised from the dead. The continuing existence of the church is proof that He is alive.

We should then turn from half-heartedness and believe in Him, trust Him and serve Him with a whole heart. We should not delay. We need to make up our minds!