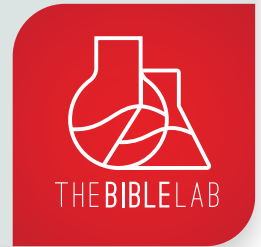




GOD OF FIRE & RAIN

—THE STORY OF—
ELIJAH & GOD

7



YES, NO & MAYBE

1. When I'm sick or injured, I tend to look online for whatever might be the latest treatment.
2. I have injured myself by falling from a significant height.
3. If you show respect, even when you're doing wrong, God will not punish you.
4. God will destroy your enemies when they attack you.
5. God gets upset when you don't consult Him about your problems.

DIG DEEPER

➤ READ 2 Kings 1:1-17 (NIV)

After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel. 2 Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, "Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury." 3 But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' 4 Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" So Elijah went.

5 When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you come back?"

6 "A man came to meet us," they replied. "And he said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, "This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!"'"

7 The king asked them, "What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?"

8 They replied, "He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist."

The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite."

9 Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "Man of God, the king says, 'Come down!'"

10 Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men.

11 At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, this is what the king says, 'Come down at once!'"

12 "If I am a man of God," Elijah replied, "may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!" Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

13 So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. "Man of God," he begged, "please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! 14 See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!"

15 The angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king. 16 He told the king, "This is what the Lord says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!" 17 So he died, according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken.

» **2 Baal-Zebub** - Literally "the fly god," or Baal of (the) fly." The Phoenicians styled their principal god Baal Same, 'the lord of heaven,' (in the Phoenician language). The Jews called him Baal-Zebub, 'lord of a fly.' Some commentators suppose that the original name was Baal-Zebahim, 'lord of sacrifices,' contracted, by way of contempt, to Baal-Zebub, 'lord of flies,' to mean he could not keep flies away from his sacrifices, or with the name Baal-Zebul 'lord of the dung.'

» **2-6 “Go and consult Baal-Zebub.”** - Apparently the king believes this “Baal” is in charge of healing. Ahaziah injures himself in a domestic accident. Because of the injuries he incurs, he sends messengers to Baal-Zebub of Ekron to ask if he will recover.

- Why is it more natural for people to consult so many other sources than God?

» **8 “He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist..”** - The description (kind, AV ‘manner’, cf. Judg. 13:12) of the prophet was sufficient for recognition by a king whose father had met Elijah many times. He wore camel or other animal-skin clothing which may have been distinctive of a prophet (Zech. 13:4; Matt. 3:4, cf. 1 Kgs 19:19).

» **9-12 Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men.** - Rather than repenting, Ahaziah sends a squad of fifty and its captain to detain Elijah. The king seems to think he can control and intimidate this prophet, but he is mistaken. Ahaziah is desperate to get a reversal of the prophecy against him and would use massive force if needed. To many readers this story seems like an unnecessarily cruel demonstration of God’s power. However, the issues at stake justified severe action. Ahaziah showed complete contempt for Elijah and the God he represented by sending a band of soldiers to arrest the prophet like an outlaw and drag him before the throne.

- What does it say about God that He would defend Elijah in this way and in this circumstance?

» **10 Fire fell from heaven** - God’s reputation was at stake. Was Ahaziah in charge, able to command God’s servants to obey him? Or was God in charge, able to command Ahaziah’s servants to obey Him? By sending fire from heaven to consume the soldiers of the king, God was reminding Ahaziah that He was Israel’s Ruler and that the king should submit to His sovereignty.

« Why is it so important to God to insure that our spiritual leadership keeps Him as the highest authority?

» **11-12 At this the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men.** - Ahaziah disregarded this tragedy and tried again to force Elijah to submit to him. This time the captain ordered the prophet, Come down (cf. v. 9) at once! Again Elijah reminded the captain, undoubtedly for the benefit of those looking on who would report the incident as well as for the officer, that he was indeed God’s man. The fire of judgment fell again (cf. v. 10), proving that the first miracle was not just an accident but was the hand of God at work in judgment.

- Why do you think mankind does not always acknowledge the signs of God?

» **13-15 The third captain** - Still Ahaziah hardened his heart. The third captain he sent had more respect for Yahweh and His representative than Ahaziah did. Rather than demanding surrender from a position of assumed superiority this man submitted to Elijah’s authority, falling to his knees before him. He too recognized Elijah as a man of God, but unlike the first two captains (cf. vv. 9, 11) he pleaded for mercy. He acknowledged that the fire that had fallen had come from heaven (i.e., was caused by God). This whole incident, like the contest on Mount Carmel, was designed to demonstrate God’s sovereignty to the king and the people of Israel.

• What does it say about God that He did not send fire down on this third captain, although he was still going to take Elijah to Ahaziah?

» **16-17 “Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult...?”** - Once in the king’s presence, Elijah delivers his life’s message one last time. He declares that the Lord and his prophets have the only divine word. Seeking direction from other so-called gods is foolish. Again, it is this message that matters most to the man of God, and any judgment he pronounces is secondary to this truth.

« What matters most to God in this story, and what does that say about Him?



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MY PRAYER...

1. How am I seeking answers from sources other than God?
2. In what ways am I showing respect to God and acknowledging His authority?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?