

Elijah ~ Part 12

In my last post, **Elijah** hears **The Angels Message of Grace** in **1 Kings 19:5-8**. In this post, **Elijah** hears the **Creator's Message of Power** in **1 Kings 19:9-14**.

The Creator's Message of Power

⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night. Then the word of Adonai came to him; He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for Adonai the God of armies because the people of Isra'el have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. Now I'm the only one left, and they're coming after me to kill me too." ¹¹ He said, "Go outside, and stand on the mountain before Adonai"; and right then and there, Adonai went past. A mighty blast of wind tore the mountains apart and broke the rocks in pieces before Adonai, but Adonai was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but Adonai was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake, fire broke out; but Adonai was not in the fire. And after the fire came a quiet, subdued voice. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his cloak, stepped out and stood at the entrance to the cave. Then a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for Adonai the God of armies; because the people of Isra'el have abandoned your covenant, broken down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. Now I'm the only one left, and they're after me to kill me too." ~ 1 Kings 19:9-14 (CJB)

It was about 250 miles from **Be'er-Sheva** to **Sinai**, a journey of perhaps ten days to two weeks. It had been three weeks at the most since **Elijah** fled from **Yizre'el**, but the trip expanded to consume forty days (19:8)! If **Elijah** was in such a hurry to put miles between himself and **Izevel's** executioners, why did he take such a long time to do it? Perhaps the Lord directed his steps (Psalm 37:23) - and his stops - so that he would spend one day for every year the Israelites had been in the wilderness after they were delivered from Egypt.

Perhaps, **Elijah** made the cave his home and waited upon the Lord. We might say he was "*making a retreat*" to solve some problems and get closer to the Lord. He was so depressed that he was willing to give up his calling and even his life.

When the Lord finally came and spoke to **Elijah**, it wasn't to rebuke him or instruct him but to ask him a question: "*What are you doing here, Elijah?*" The prophet's reply didn't answer the question, which explains why God asked it a second time. **Elijah** only told **Adonai** that he had experienced many trials in his ministry, but he had been faithful to **Adonai**. But if he was a faithful servant, what was he doing hiding in a cave located hundreds of miles from his appointed place of ministry?

In this reply, **Elijah** reveals both pride and self-pity, and in using the pronoun *they*, he exaggerates the size of the opposition. He makes it look as though every last Jew in the Northern Kingdom had turned against him and **Adonai** when it was **Izevel** who wanted to kill him. The *I'm the only one left* refrain makes it look as though he was indispensable to God's work when no servant of God is indispensable. God then commanded him to stand on the mount at the entrance of the cave, but it doesn't appear that **Elijah** obeyed him until he heard the still, small voice (v. 13). Another possibility is that he did go out of the cave but fled back into it when God began to demonstrate His great power.

When **Adonai went passed** it reminds us of the experience of Moses on the mount (Exodus 33:21-22). All **Elijah** needed to get renewed for service was a fresh vision of the power and glory of God. First, **Adonai** caused a great wind to pass by, the wind so strong that it broke the rocks and tore the mountain, but no divine message came to the prophet. Then **Adonai** caused a great earthquake that shook the mount, but nothing from God came out of the earthquake. **Adonai** then brought fire, but it, too, gave **Elijah** no

message from **Adonai**. Certainly the prophet must have thought of the giving of the law as he witnessed this dramatic display of power (Exodus 19:16-18).

Try to place yourself in this scene. How would you react to these supernatural displays by the Creator? What was God trying to accomplish in **Elijah's** life using these remarkable and frightening object lessons?

For one thing, He was reminding His servant that everything in nature was obedient to Him (Psalm 148) - the wind, the foundations of the earth, the fire - and He didn't lack for a variety of tools to get His work done. If **Elijah** wanted to resign from his divine calling, **Adonai** had someone else to take his place. As it turned out, **Elijah** didn't quit but was given the privilege of calling his successor, **Elisha** and spending time with him before being taken to heaven.

The wind, the earthquake, and the fire are all means that **Adonai** has used to manifest Himself to humanity. Theologians call these demonstrations "theophanies," which means *"the manifestation of God."* The pagan nations saw these great sights and worshiped the powers of nature, but when the Jews saw them, they worshiped the God who created nature. Perhaps **Adonai** was saying to **Elijah**, *"You feel like you've failed to judge the sin in Israel, but one day I will judge it, and my judgment is final and complete."*

After this dramatic display of power, **a quiet, subdued voice**. When the prophet heard that voice, he stepped out of the cave and met **Adonai**. The mighty power and the great noise of the previous exhibitions didn't stir **Elijah**, but when he heard that **quiet, subdued voice**, he recognized the voice of God. For the second time, he listened to the same question, **what are you doing here, Elijah?** And once again, **Elijah** repeated the same self-centered evasive answer.

God was saying to **Elijah**, *"You called fire from heaven, you had the prophets of Baal slain, and you prayed down a terrific rainstorm, but now you feel like a failure. But you must realize that I don't usually work in a manner that's loud, impressive, and dramatic. My still, small voice brings the Word to the listening ear and heart. Yes, there's a time and place for the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but most of the time, I speak to people in tones of gentle love and quiet persuasion."*¹ **Adonai** wasn't condemning the courageous ministry of His servant; He was only reminding **Elijah** that He uses many different tools to accomplish His work. God's Word comes down like the gentle shower that refreshes, cleanses, and produces life (Deuteronomy 32:2; Isaiah 55:10).

In my next post, we continue to explore the Biblical story of **Elijah**. In this passage, **Elijah** hears **The Lord's Message of Hope** in **1 Kings 19:15-21**.

¹ Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament by Warren Wiesbe.