

Finding God In The Still Small Voice

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1Kings 19:1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

1Kings 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

1Kings 19:3 And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.

1Kings 19:4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

1Kings 19:5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat.

1Kings 19:6 And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

1Kings 19:7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise *and* eat; because the journey *is* too great for thee.

1Kings 19:8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

1Kings 19:9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

1Kings 19:10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

1Kings 19:11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake:

1Kings 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

1Kings 19:13 And it was *so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

1Kings 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

I. People almost always associate the presence of God with mega-incidents. It is the nature of men to respond with awe and even superstition when large scale disturbances of the environment, the planet, the cosmos occur. Astronomers tell us that there are millions of comets out in our solar system, but it is Halley's comet that gets all the attention every 75 years or so, and a large number of people begin to talk about the wrath and judgment of God and the end of the world when it is time for the comet.

The news has lately been full of reports about large scale cataclysms...earthquakes killing thousands, hurricanes devastating coastland cities, tornadoes leveling towns. These are times and incidents which cause people to give some extra thought to the raw power that is exhibited by these things we call natural phenomena, and thankfully, to the God who controls them.

Elijah witnessed some of these things in our text. It is about this that we want to speak today. In looking at this, we want to try to set these things in perspective spiritually, so that we as God's people can benefit from a proper understanding and consideration of them.

II. God demonstrates here (in our text) that He is not always IN mega-incidents Our text clearly testifies that the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake, the fire...this is similar to other large scale things shown to us in the bible:

- ❖ The Lord was not in the waters which rushed IN and drowned the Egyptian army in the sea as they attempted to overtake the Israelites in **Exodus 14**. However, it was the Lord that commanded Moses to stretch forth his rod to bid the waters close on that horde.
- ❖ But, God **was** in the burning bush that Moses saw on the Mount of God; he was there by proxy in the person of the angel. There scripture says (**Exodus 3:2**) "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him **in a flame of fire** out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed."
 - And He **was** in the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire which moved with the Israelite camp as they traveled the wilderness (**Ex. 13:21**): "And the LORD went before them by day **in a pillar of a cloud**, to lead them the way; and by night **in a pillar of fire**, to give them light; to go by day and night:

- ❖ The Lord was evidently **not IN** the earth cataclysm that may have been an earthquake which swallowed up the entire household of Korah, Dathan and Abiram when they withstood Moses in **Exodus 16**; because the bible states that “the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up...”. Also, the fire that shortly after that consumed the 250 Levites who had stood with those men was said to have come **FROM** the Lord.
- ❖ But, it is likely that the Lord **was in** the fire that fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice laid on the altar by Elijah in his contest with Baal’s priests on **1 Kings 18**; scripture there states that “the fire **OF** the LORD fell” on the sacrifice and the altar and consumed everything there, including the water and the stones.
- ❖ The Lord was **not in the wind** that we read of in our text, which broke the mountains.
- ❖ But, the Lord **was manifestly in** the supernatural event that was described as “the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (**Acts 2:2**) that came on the day of Pentecost and He was also in the “cloven tongues like as of fire” that rested on the church members that day.
- ❖ So, what may we learn from the fact that God is sometimes in these mega-incidents, and sometimes He is not?
 - We should refrain from reading every large scale or spectacular event as evidence that God is **IN** them.
 - We are to remember that God is always either the author or permitter of such things, but is not necessarily manifestly present **IN** them.
 - The Lord gives Job a short lesson (**Job 38:4-41**) about all the things that He has ordered, determined, made, permitted, organized, and defined. From His review we can see plainly that He has control of all things.
 - **Heb. 2:10** speaks of God, "...by whom *are* all things...."

III. He also demonstrates here in our text that revelation of His presence may often **follow mega-incidents**

(Notice the Hebrew phrasing of the chronology of this occurrence with focus on “And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks **before the LORD**”).

- ❖ Because this is true, it is spiritually prudent to look for a message from God that relates to such incidents
 - As thunder and lightning are precursors to the fall of rain, or a sudden winter drop in temperature is a forewarning of frost, so God’s unleashing of some mega-incident may be a signal that He has a message for His creatures.
 - We should, however, avoid reading the wrath or judgment of God into such incidents. Some such incidents in our recent past:

- We all remember the tsunami that hit the coasts along the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004 (death toll approx. 228,000).
 - Was this an act of God punishing the citizens of these countries where the tsunami struck? Or was it something else?
 - Remember Myanmar, where Cyclone (“hurricane”) Nargis struck May 5th, 2008 leaving more than 130,000 people dead or missing and displacing as many as 2 million others.
 - Was this God’s judgment on the people of Myanmar, or was it something else?
 - ◆ A bit of information about Myanmar (Burma); religious plurality, but Christian religions have been marginalized and discriminated against. What if God intends that the gospel gain ground there...what might he do to break up this social pattern in Burma?
 - A huge wildfire in California in 2018 caused at least 85 civilian fatalities, with one person still missing, and injured 17 people (some were firefighters). It covered an area of 153,336 acres (almost 240 sq. miles), and destroyed 18,804 structures. Was this God’s judgment upon California, or was it something else? Do we think about the fact that California is one state where there is a lot of persecution and discrimination against Christians? What might a catastrophe like this do to open a door for God’s people to be influential there again with the message of Christ?
- Twenty eight verified tornadoes swept through TN last year and this year (2019-20) and killed at least 28 people, doing more than \$2 million in damages These winds leveled neighborhoods and destroyed property. It is almost certain that both believers and unbelievers lost property and experienced the horror of those winds. Was this a chastening hand of God, a judging by Him who rules the storms, or was it something else?
- Hurricane Maria was a deadly Category 5 hurricane that devastated Dominica, St Croix, and Puerto Rico in September 2017. It is regarded as the worst natural disaster in recorded history to affect those islands and was also the deadliest Atlantic hurricane since Jeanne in 2004. It killed an estimated 3,059 people and did billions of dollars of damage on those islands. Was this vengeance from God, or was it something else?
 - Beginning at the end of 2019 and still going on, the COVID-19 virus pandemic swept across the world. Inflated infection rate and death statistics claim that there have been 3,392,771 confirmed cases worldwide, and 241,193 total deaths. Is this a judgment of God upon the world, or is it something else?
- When thinking about these things, it is wise for us to use the rule that was introduced by Jesus as He lectured the Jews about repentance in Luke 13:1-5

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

- What is the rule for thinking that He introduced here?
 - He does not deny that these Galileans, or these eighteen people in Siloam were sinners (all men are sinners)
 - He does not condemn Pilate's violent act against the Galileans, nor does He seek a reason linked to great sin for why that tower fell on those 18 at Siloam
 - In this way, He doesn't say that these people were not worthy to be killed; he does not say that their sudden death WAS a visitation from God; BUT He also does not say that their sudden death WAS NOT a visitation from God.
 - What He DOES say (by the choice of words) is that every man should take a warning from such sudden catastrophes to look to themselves; to realize that repentance is critical because eternity could come suddenly, as it did to these He speaks about. It was not extreme wickedness that brought death to these He speaks of; yet death came suddenly.
 - So, the eternal danger of sudden personal death without repentance is the real lesson to take away from witnessing a human tragedy.

IV. Elijah, as a representative human, has his **attention captivated by the mega-incidents**

(What is the proof that Elijah's attention was rooted in the awesome exhibition here? Who else could have told us in Holy Writ about the details; who else could have been a more appropriate narrator?)

- ❖ Various large scale environmental or cosmic phenomena are sometimes God's acts to get man's attention to focus on Him (that is exactly where Jesus points to in the account in **Luke 13**).
- ❖ Let us learn to think on the Lord...to focus on the Lord and His things when we see mega-incidents
 - We will gain an appreciation of His power
 - And of His control of the cosmos (if there is this much so-called natural power in the elements, how much of His power does He keep in check; how much control does He exert over natural forces?)
 - And His restraint (if earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis kill dozens or hundreds, or thousands, how many could be killed?)

- And His mercy - in the zone of any natural mega-incident we may easily see the hand of God's mercy; with every spared human dwelling place; with every human walking around alive

V. So, in our text, God was not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire. But He was in the still small voice that followed it all. What is He telling us here?

- ❖ Communion with God is not about trying to find Him in cataclysmic events.
 - We don't often get smart statements from celebrities, but years ago Pearl Bailey a longtime actress said, "People see God every day, they just don't recognize Him"
 - When God speaks to men in peace He does not unleash His power, but approaches us in a calm
 - The calm communication of God to our souls does not come to us as a jolting shout, not in a hurricane, a tsunami, a tornado, nor other disaster. As I said earlier, He may use these things to get our attention, but, for His people, He speaks peace to our souls.
 - Question: do we listen for it?

VI. Looking again at our text, we should learn that the observant servant of God will perceive **when the Lord speaks to him** despite mega-incidents (note that in **v. 11**, God tells Elijah: "...Go forth, and stand upon the mount **before the LORD**...") Then we notice that the wind, earthquake, and fire follow this instruction...but Elijah stays in the cave...BUT when he hears the still small voice, scripture tells us that "...when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and **went out**, and stood in the entering in of the cave...." He did not disobey the Lord by not going out when the mega-incidents were happening...they were going ahead of the Lord. But, when the still small voice spoke, Elijah went out.

- ❖ What does this tell us?
 - Elijah somehow knew that the Lord was not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire...but HE KNEW the Lord was the still small voice.
 - **John 10:27**: "My sheep hear my voice...."
 - When we are attentive to the Lord, we will be able to separate the attention getter from the very communication of God
 - ◆ Honoré de Balzac was a French writer in the 19th century and he made a profound statement about God revealing himself to men. He said, "God reveals himself unfailingly to the thoughtful seeker."
 - When the Lord **HAS** our attention, we will be able to recognize His communication with us.
 - I believe the still small voice following those mega-incidents has another

lesson for us:

- Time with the Lord will teach us that His communications with His people are about mercy, kindness, love, things of peace and joy. (We hear this truth preached, but time spent serving God will give us an experience of this that does not need reinforcement... we come to KNOW it as a reality).
 - In the verses that follow our text (in **1Kings 19**) the Lord speaks words to Elijah that he has been needing and wanting to hear.