

Series: Questions

Title: What Doest Thou Here?

Text: 1 Kings 19: 1-

Date: April 27, 2017

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

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

This is the next question in our series where God asks sinners a question, “**What doest thou here?**” Remember, God never asks a sinner a question to get information. God asks to teach us of who we are and who God is and how he works.

James said Elijah “*was a man subject to like passions as we are.*” (Ja 5: 17) So every believer can put our name in the place of Elijah. We have the same problem from our sin-nature as Elijah.

Where was Elijah? Elijah had quit the ministry in Israel. He fled into Judea where he left his servant. Then he fled into the wilderness. He was full of anxiety and depression 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.*” (1 Ki 19: 4)

All those symptoms are summed up in one word, “unbelief.” Elijah said that about himself when he said, “*I am not better than my fathers.*” He was saying, “I don’t even have the faith of my fathers.” So those symptoms—*anxiety, depression, a desire to die just to be free from trouble of life—*come upon us when we are in unbelief.

We never suffer any of those symptoms when God fills our hearts with the good news of Christ. It is only when we turn to ourselves. The world proposes ways to treat the symptoms. Scripture teaches the believer the cure for the disease, “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*” (Col 1: 1-4) Let us keep our ears and hearts filled with God’s word, the preaching of the gospel while casting all your care on Christ who cares for his people.

What caused Elijah to flee? Elijah answered God’s question, “*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.*” (1 Ki 19: 10) But if Elijah was jealous for God what caused him to quit the ministry? Elijah thought when Israel saw the great displays of power that God wrought through him, it would turn their hearts from idolatry back to God.

One, God demonstrated a great display of his *righteousness*. (1 Ki 18: 21-38) Elijah issued a challenge to the false prophets of Baal. He and they would each make a sacrifice and the God that answered by fire would be the true God. After crying from morning until noon, after cutting themselves, the prophets of Baal got no answer from their gods. Then Elijah poured twelve barrels of water over the wood of his altar. When Elijah called on God, God sent down fire and consumed the sacrifice and dried up all water. It pictured the righteousness of God declared in Christ who bore the sin of his people and suffered divine judgment in our

place on the cross. But instead of the fire of divine justice consuming Christ, Christ consumed the fire. That is, Christ satisfied justice for all whom he represented bringing in everlasting righteousness for us.

Two, God demonstrated a great display of his *judgment upon the wicked*. (1 Ki 18: 40) There were 450 false prophets of the idol, Baal, and 400 false prophets in the groves. God used Elijah to slay all the false prophets of Baal.

Three, God demonstrated a great display of his *absolute sovereignty*—Elijah “*prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18: And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*” (Ja 5: 17-18)

Yet, those three great displays converted no one in Israel. God did not even dethrone wicked Ahab or his wicked wife Jezebel. Instead, she sent word to Elijah that she would kill him next day! (1 Ki 19: 1-2) And because God used none of these things to convert a single person in Israel after Elijah had been so jealous for God, Elijah quit and fled into the wilderness.

There is a valuable lesson in this. At times, we think God is about to teach our lost loved ones by the things God is doing. Then God reveals that God did those things to teach us who already believe. Such was the case with the prophet Elijah.

Proposition: It is not the great displays of God’s power that convert sinners, it is the power of God revealing Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

NO GREAT DISPLAYS

1 Kings 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:

God used the wind, earthquake and fire to teach Elijah that no great displays alone will turn a sinner from his idols to faith in Christ. Just as “*The LORD was not in the wind:...the LORD was not in the earthquake:...and the LORD was not in the fire:...*”, God was not in any of those three great displays which he worked through Elijah. (1 Ki 19:11)

God worked those things. But just as God did not speak effectually to Elijah in these great things, God did not speak effectually to anyone through the three great displays he used Elijah to work in Israel. For that reason, not one sinner repented from his idols and turned to God.

Great displays alone will never penetrate a sinner’s hard heart. Dead sinners can hear the word preached concerning the righteousness of God in Christ on the cross but that alone will not break the stony heart. God sends strong judgments, slaying thousands in the earth, but it never breaks the stony heart. Instead, men say things like, “Why would God let such things happen?” It is a foretaste of judgment. God sovereignly sends tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes. But it will never penetrate the heart of a sinner. Affliction and sickness will not do it. The law, with its threats and curses will never break the heart of man. If men came back from hell it would not break their rebel hearts.

They may frighten sinners into a false profession. After the fire consumed Elijah’s sacrifice, “When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.” (1 Ki 18: 39) But it did not last. Refuge taken because of the storm will be forsaken in calm.

Most of the grand displays that religion calls revival is just men putting on a grand display but God is not in it.

GOD ALONE QUICKENS

1 Kings 19: 12...and after the fire a still small voice.

God teaches his people that he alone must quicken the dead sinner. At this point, Elijah is in a state of unbelief. How does God rescue him? We saw that God did not use those great displays of power.

First, Christ comes in secret. *“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”* (1 Ki 19: 5-6) Christ is the Angel of the Lord. No one saw Christ come to Elijah, not even Elijah, he was asleep. So it is with every sinner God quickens. As the gospel is preached, without anyone noticing, especially not the object of his grace, Christ speaks his word into the heart, saying, “Arise and eat!” It is a secret work, not a grand display.

Luke 17: 20: [Christ] said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Elijah was awakened to *“A cake baken on coals and a cruse of water.”* Christ awakens us to Christ the Bread and Water of Life who suffered the coals of divine justice. Can a sinner resist Christ the grace of God? Not at all, *“And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”* Christ makes his child believe on him and find rest in him.

Then, once quickened and called to faith in Christ, the believer does not cease needing Christ’s strength nor does Christ cease being the believer’s strength—*“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. 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.”* (1 Ki 19: 7-8) We need the strength of Christ because indeed *“the journey is too great for us.”* Only Christ’s strength is sufficient—*“Elijah went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights”*

John 15: 5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Philippians 4: 13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

God plants his child on one foundation, Christ the Solid Rock. Elijah came to the mount of God. *“Elijah came thither to a cave and lodged there.”* God asked him, *“What doest thou hear, Elijah?”* I am certain the answer was from a heart of pride in self-justification. But God had the cure! *“And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by...”* (1 Ki 19: 9) Does that remind you of something else? God did the same thing to Moses in the very same place (Mt Horeb) when God showed Moses his glory. It is not man’s grand displays by which God quickens his people, it is God who gets all the glory because God puts his people in the *“cleft of the rock”* and plants our feet on the rock, and that Rock is Christ!

1 Corinthians 1: 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Psalm 40:2: He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Psalm 62:2: He only is my rock and my salvation;

Moreover, we only hear in spirit and in truth by Christ speaking through the Holy Spirit into the inward man in *that still small Voice*. “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: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 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?” (1 Ki 19: 11-12)

Did you notice the difference in the first time the Lord asked this question and this time? In verse 9, “behold, *the word* of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?” In verse 13, “behold, there came *a Voice* unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?”

Remember, after Adam sinned? “And they heard *the Voice* of the LORD God walking in the garden...And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” And Adam answered immediately. (Gen 3: 8-9)

It is not only the word-preached that makes it the ministry of the spirit but *Christ's Voice together* with his preacher. As his preacher lifts up his voice, together with his preacher, Christ speaks his word with his voice into the heart. Christ said,

Isaiah 52: 6: Therefore my people shall know...that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, it is I!... 8: Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with *The Voice* together shall they sing:...

John 6: 63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Only when when the *still small Voice* speaks do we worship in Spirit and in truth—“*Elijah heard*.” The first time, Elijah heard *the word of the LORD* just like everyone here now hears it. But when the *still small Voice* spoke in spirit and truth into that new heart which God had made, *Elijah heard* in faith.

The effectual result was then—“*he wrapped his face in his mantle*.” Elijah covered his face in his cloak like the seraphim's crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Is 6: 3) We never truly worship God until we are quickened to behold God's chief glory, his holiness!

The first time God asked the question, Elijah was in the back of the cave in the dark. But when he heard the still small voice then—“*he went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave*.” Elijah was made to come out of darkness into the Light.

John 3: 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

But God gave Christ for a covenant—Isa 49:9: That thou mayest say...to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.

John 10:27: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

Now, I tend to believe that even though Elijah answered with the exact same words as the first time, his second answer was from the inward man of the heart with a broken and contrite spirit. There is a good lesson here. It is the heart that makes all the difference in our worship and service toward God. Two sinners may speak the same word and perform the same work. While the unquickened heart is full of the motives of legalism so that the sinner is merely trying to earn salvation the quickened heart is full of that one true motive of Christ's love. While the unquickened is trying to receive all the glory for himself, the quickened wants God alone to receive all the glory!

One reason I say that Elijah's second answer may have been different is because the first time after he answered, God did all this work to make Elijah hear and cover his face. This time, God sent Elijah back to the ministry—"Go, return..." (1 Ki 19: 15) God told him who to anoint and that God would use them to slay his enemies. God told him to anoint Elisha to take his place. And God told Elijah he was not the only one left. God said, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (1 Ki 19: 18) When we get discouraged thinking no one is hearing the word we preach remember these words of sovereign, electing grace. Paul quoted from here and said,

Romans 9: 5: Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6: And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.

Only sinners renewed spiritually can believe and obey this good news of salvation by God's sovereign, effectual, irresistible grace. Did Elijah obey?—"So he departed thence, and found Elisha..." (1 Ki 19: 19)

THE LESSON

The lesson Elijah learned is for God's preachers, for his saints individually, for his whole church together and for lost sinners God is calling by his grace. Here is the lesson.

Zechariah 4: 6:...This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

God has given us one charge, preach the blood of Christ who purged the sin of God's people, making us the righteousness of God in him: no grand displays are needed! We wait on the Lord because nothing but the blood of Christ applied to the sinners heart by Christ speaking through the Spirit of God can break the hard heart and give a new heart, soft, contrite, obedient heart. Sinner, come to Christ believing on him. If you do it will be because God made you hear *the still small voice* in the inward man of God's creating. May God speak to us now in that *still small voice!*

Amen!