

## DRAMA BEFORE A CAVE

I KINGS 19:9-13

### Introduction

We would first want to set the stage, get all the properties ready for the drama begins and before the curtain is drawn. We get Elijah housed in a cave at Mount Horeb, which is called the Mount of God, because on it God formally manifested His glory. Perhaps this was the cave, or cleft of rock in which Moses was hidden when the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed his name. Exodus 33:22. We remember reading in Jerimah 9:2-"Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them; for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." This is exactly what happened to Elijah in setting the stage, getting ready for this drama. The prophets efforts to restore Israel to the faith of their fathers had apparently failed. The mighty miracle on Carmel did not produce the fruits desired. Jezebel wanted to murder the prophet, so he left fleeing for his own life. He thought himself forsaken of God and he closed himself in a cave on Mount Horeb. As it

45  
He applied this to his conscience. Many a one has been shaken out of his sinful security for the rest of his life, like the prodigal son when he heard a voice within his heart speaking to him, he comes to himself and returns to his father's house and finds a welcome. But alas, how many among us are there of whom they bear the name of a Christian. It is to be feared that they are wandering in the wilderness out of the way of God. Oh that today this question, might be their question.

"What doest thou here?"

Here doubtful whether or not this was a voice that was loud, but perhaps God spoke through the conscience, through the Holy Spirit. Have we never heard this question in our secret souls? Perhaps when we stood in the way of sinners, or we sat in the seat of the scornful, we heard this question in the quietness of our souls. The question suggests that Elijah perhaps should have been employed somewhere else, that he should have been carrying on some great work for God in the kingdom where he was prophet.

This is God's visit to the prophet. This first



2 -

was on Mount Horeb that the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, as it was the smitten rock of Horeb that yielded a wonderful supply of water to the host of Israel, as it was on Horeb that the up lifted hand of the man of God enabled him to prevail against Amalek, and gave Joshua his glorious victory. On Horeb, God renewed His gracious covenant with His people after He had delivered them from Egypt.

Elijah arrived and I can imagine as the stage was being set, we see him climbing to the top of the mountain. It is late in the evening and he is up upon the peaks of Horeb. Doubtless he has prayed for help from God, but out before him, he sees the rugged layers of stone and the brush growing on the side of the mountain. There is no trace of a human being anywhere in sight, and he is all alone. It seems, forsaken in this situation. Should he travel on, he could not do it. He deals the limit of his journey, and his assignment here. And so he seeks out a retreat where he might find shelter from wild beast. He wraps his mantle about him and creeps into a gloomy cave. Here he is most anxious for the night of his life to past. It must

3 -

be easily supposed that no sleep could close the good man's eyes. And yet in this time of trouble, he should remember, as we ought to remember, that if the keeper of Israel himself could sleep, or if not he could delight in knowing that God was watching over his own, and is

V.9  
Horeb with out  
I. Act I

The first act of the drama is in the form of a question. "What doest thou here?" Elijah recognizes at once that this is the voice of God. He did not expect such a question as this. Perhaps he thought that his old journey had brought him to a place where he would be away from the people, and that he would be restful and that not even God would disturb his peace on the mountain-side. It remains us especially of how his faith must have weakened. That it must have made his ashamed. For God is gracious, and made known our sins to us, and how satisfied we are at times. We seem as if nothing more was necessary to make us happy. "What doest thou here?"



8.5  
forth, with the clouds being driven about the sky and a great conflict with the dust raging on the desert below like a sea tossed in the wind.

He saw the terrible effects of his sin.

V. 11-12

III. Act III - The earthquake

The next part of the drama was in the form of an earthquake, the sky is darkened, the earth is moved, the mountains tremble, and fresh masses of rocks or stones come thundering down from the mountain. But the Lord is not in the earthquake. The prophet gazes and has the privilege of seeing the whole earth reeling to and fro. The very foundation of the hills shake and are removed. The mountains and the rocks are renched and one is threatened by another and the valleys seem to rise, and the hills sink down. But God is not in the earthquake.

act of the drama helps us to understand that God comes with a reproach, "for what brings you here far away from home? Do you flee from Jezebel? Could you not depend upon God's power for your protection? What are you doing here?"

We need to put emphasis upon thou. Here is a great man, a great prophet. He is famous for the revolution that he has led in his country, and now it seems that he has forsaken this good work.

What does thou here in this cave? Is this a place for a prophet to lodge in? Is this the time for such men to retreat, when the public has so much need for them? Is this a time of retirement, or is there no opportunity?

Really the question was, "Am I where I should be, about the business that God would have me doing?" God had sent him to make known his will and fulfill his purpose.

Moses while tending the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, and commissioned him to deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt. "What doest thou here, Elijah?"



6 -  
You are so far away from the place where I sent you. What now is to be expected? Who is to do the work of Israel when you are not there?" His want of faith in God had brought him up here on the mountain, and we are in the midst of the first act of this great drama. How often do men forsake God's way to choose their own way, feeling that they have knowledge that will lead them to do and to accomplish much. But here he is in isolation, far away.

He was alone, yet not alone. A voice he could neither mistake, nor misinterpret sounded in his ears, "What doest thou here? Life, and none should know better than thee, is a great doing. In these degenerate days, thou whom I have called above all fellows, who has had proof upon proof of my faithfulness, what are you doing here?"

"In this desolent spot, away from duty Baal's altars are being rebuilt, and my altar is being ruined. The very name of God is being abused. Where are the prayers and vows Carmel?"

That voice is responded to by an answer in which are filled the evidences of pride. "I have been very jealous for the Lord," he said, "And I risk my life, and

7 -  
only I am left and they seek my life to take it away." The question is repeated over and over again, and yet the sinner will excuse himself time enough yet, a more convenient season. A backslider may blame difficulties, or associates, or a change of circumstances. The Luke - warm Christian hides beneath the increase of other duties, for the want of success in his work for God. All of these excuses reveal a departure from God in heart and the only safe course is to acknowledge this and return to him at once. This sets the stage and the curtain is drawn upon act I.

## VI. II. Second Act

The second act come in the way of a windstorm or a cyclone for a great and strong wind rent the mountains, breaking pieces of rocks before the Lord. This storm went down upon the mountain and the wind rushed from mountain peak to mountain peak, with the sound of a mighty army in battle. Rocks were torn loose from the sides of the mountain and scattered in the valleys beneath. So the first sign was a mighty dreadful wind breaking



12)

in their midst. The great fire was a symbol of God's judgment upon his people. But now the Lord comes and speaks with a small voice to direct this prophet to do strange works. A wind came shrieking over the mountain and we see that there was secret force in it all. The earthquake moved the solid ground and caused it to reel. The fire from heaven swept across the mountain with the uproar of nature, and yet the thing that broke the silence was the still small voice of God.

Though the drama has passed before the cave.

VI. The narrator describes the fifth act.

V.13

I would like for us to consider God as the narrator describing the fifth and final act of the drama as too its intention or its peculiar significance. Because one could hardly be in this cave without realizing that the Lord had intended to lead the prophet and to speak

IV. Act IV The Fire

V.12

The next part of the drama is that of fire. In that dim twilight hour the sky was red with flame and it converted every mountain top into a blaze of light. It seemed that there was a heat like that of a furnace and one flash succeeds another flash in brilliance, and this was the most terrible of all, because it was recognized as the emblem of divine wrath. It was a fire as the fire that was hurled down from the heavens upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Fire as the fire that consumed Nadab, and Abihu the sons of Araon. It was fire as that which burnt on the top of Mount Sinai when Jehovah gave the commandments. It was fire as Elijah had witnessed on Mount Carmel, which devoured the sacrifices. There was nothing like this last manifestation of the force of nature, in this drama before the cave, and yet the Lord was not in the fire.

What an awful sight now as we look upon the flames below and about, the awful mess of it all seemed to move



105  
the prophet's heart.

V. Act V The still small voice

We come to this fifth act of the drama, a still small voice a soft whisper, as the words may be rendered like sweet music falling upon a person's ear. Scripture tells us the Lord is there. Here is a strange contrast, the hurricane, the earthquake, it is a voice a still voice, a small voice. When we compare it with the riotous elements and thou all nature is quiet, the sky is clear, the soft evening shadows fall gently upon the mountainside and nature's vast volume opens all of her pages and at last we come to see that God is Love. It is enough. A prophet reads, he rejoices, he wraps his mantle about him, he comes forth to stand at the entrance of the cave.

Like the stillness in a church, there spreads gradually over all nature and it seems as if every hill and the whole earth and the sky lay silent at the footstool of God's throne. That the very mountain seems to worship

115  
Him, as he hears the still small voice.

The terror of the Lord brought awe to his soul, but love melts and wins. What the law could not do the gospel had done. Romans 8:3 "There is nothing beyond the sweet attraction of the cross." John 12:32 "The lightning the thunder the trumpets and the voices of Sinai do not move the world as the last seven words of the crucified Christ. It was not the wind that parted the Red Sea, it was not the fire that swept the top of Sinai, but it was when God came down that was heard in the streets of Bethlehem the voice of a small child. What drama, drama before a cave. The traveler was made to wrap his garments closely about him and now to come out before the power of God's voice.

Before he had sought to excuse himself, even as Gajehu said, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord." Yet the scripture tells us that he did not walk in the law of God. Or we see Saul who had zeal for the children of Israel, or we look at Paul who said he had zeal, but not according to knowledge, when he persecuted the church. And now here by the still small voice the prophet comes out and listens to God speak.

A great wind had been a sign of how the people were to be invaded, the great earthquake was a sign of a revolution



16.

ed among people that have aflitions, conflicts, calamities, revival preachers and all these things to promote God's work, and yet we know that people still absent themselves from God, but cannot many people remember how God lays his hand upon them, upon a sick bed or when they were broken up, or in a moment when their dreams of earthly happiness had been crumbled at a tomb, you felt that everything had been crushed. That you were unprepared to die, you were standing on the verge of eternity, or perhaps you were in high fever and the dim lamp of life burned below. Your mind was filled with black despair and there were many visions of unrepented and unforgiven sin rising up behind and before. Do you remember how conscience opened up before you as the drama opened up for the prophet on the mount. That God is righteous and holy, and he spared you. Do you remember how the still small voice, a ray of hope, whispered in your heart, "Awake, thou that sleeps and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee life." Outward circumstances may be helpful in bringing men to acknowledge God, but we cannot depend entirely upon these outward circumstances, because we know that the thing which touched the prophet's heart here was the still, small voice that spoke to his heart.

13.

to him in some definite way.

I think first, the narrator says, "God says, we want to understand the heavenly power. It seems that Elijah needed to know that he could trust God's power. Elijah said, "I am alone". Then it was pointed out to him that he was not alone. He had forgotten that there were 7,000 who had not bowed a knee to the idol in the nation. And God gives him an exhibition of his mighty power, and he causes the prophet to have conviction revived in his heart. To know that the Lord God still reigns over the earth, the hurricane, the earthquake and the fire. And God spoke to him saying, "Power belongeth to me. Will you distrust me after this? Can I, who have the elements in my grasp able to whip the mountains and beat the hills, can I not be trusted to protect your life? Why are you afraid, when you have God to stand beside you? We recognize it all through these tremendous natural performances of nature that the Lord himself was not either in the wind or the fire or the earthquake. We must regard them therefore as conveying to the prophet additional symbol of meaning. that they somewhat revealed his own moods of his mind and



16

ed among people that have afflictions, conflicts, calamities, revival preachers and all these things to promote God's work, and yet we know that people still absent themselves from God, but cannot many people remember how God lays his hand upon them, upon a sick bed or when they were broken up, or in a moment when their dreams of earthly happiness had been crumbled at a tomb, you felt that everything had been crushed. That you were unprepared to die, you were standing on the verge of eternity, or perhaps you were in high fever and the dim lamp of life burned below. Your mind was filled with black despair and there were many visions of unrepented and unforgiven sin rising up behind and before. Do you remember how conscience opened up before you as the drama opened up for the prophet on the mount. That God is righteous and holy, and he spared you. Do you remember how the still small voice, a ray of hope, whispered in your heart, "Awake, thou that sleeps and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee life." Outward circumstances may be helpful in bringing men to acknowledge God, but we cannot depend entirely upon these outward circumstances, because we know that the thing which touched the prophet's heart here was the still, small voice that spoke to his heart.

13

to him in some definite way.

I think first the narrator says, "God says, we want to understand the heavenly power. It seems that Elijah needed to know that he could trust God's power. Elijah said, "I am alone." Then it was pointed out to him that he was not alone. He had forgotten that there were 7,000 who had not bowed a knee to the idol in the nation. And God gives him an exhibition of his mighty power, and he causes the prophet to have conviction revived in his heart. To know that the Lord God still reigns over the earth, the hurricane, the earthquake and the fire. And God spoke to him saying, "Power belonged to me. Will you distrust me after this? Can I, who have the elements in my grasp able to whip the mountains and beat the hills, can I not be trusted to protect your life? Why are you afraid, when you have God to stand beside you? We recognize it all through these tremendous natural performances of nature that the Lord himself was not either in the wind or the fire or the earthquake. We must regard them therefore as conveying to the prophet additional symbol of meaning. that they somewhat revealed his own moods of his mind and



14  
heart, that he was troubled unnecessarily and that even though the clouds were dark he expected the famine to bring the people their needs. He expected the fire to complete his mission and to cause Israel to come to repentance. But it was strange work and it did not bring Israel to repentance. The demonstration before the priest did not bring repentent tears to the eyes of the queen.

It pointed out to him that the spiritual weakness of what seemed to be mighty, he had done many mighty works. The people were startled, but they were not reformed. The wind represented the drought, the earthquake represented the raising of the child from the dead, the fire represented the answer which he had received on Mount Carmel. He had left his commission, forsaken his people and gone to Symaria to recover backsliden Israel to the faith of their forefathers. The means for which the work had been placed in his hands by God Himself. He was given him to shut heaven, and to open it again, to perform signs and wonders. He probably hoped for nothing less than for the people to repent immediately and to further this man of God was not according to his thinking. The result of his faithful labor was not as he had hoped for, as in early moments.

15  
when he had hoped to lead the people back to God and have them sing hymns and rejoice at the altar of the Living God. His life was in danger, they were thinking about putting him to death. Such a thing was so mysterious that it caused him to doubt, thus he climbed a mountain and found refuge in the cave. I Corinthians 10:1-4

The narrator has a word to say to the believer. Now he experiences in his own heart that grace alone can really soften, melt and convert the heart, and that the blessed results which he has anticipated from the thunders of the law could only be produced by loving kindness and tender mercy from Jehovah. And he is once again pleased with the prospect that God is pleased with the work. He had come to see that in spite of many fine wonders, men finally had to believe in their hearts as individuals. You remember in the days of our Lord the rich man prayed that Lazarus would return and warn his brothers. But it was pointed out to him that many signs had already been performed, and yet they did not believe. And today, there are many signs and wonders being perform-



17  
The narrator tells us how the prophet responded to all of this, how that he wrapped his face with his mantle, and came forth from the cave. It is not the overpowering of the majesty, but the goodness of God that leads to repentance. Because we know that if I am only be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me. And so the silent heat and the power of the hammer and the anvil will bend and mold a piece of metal and so we realize that a still, small voice is needed in this age in which we live, to break the silence and the earthquake and the storm we are now in the midst of. We know that power according to Rome was symbolized in the eagle, the bird of prey with keen eyes and strong claws. We know that the emblem of Babylon was a beast, dreadful and terrible, with power to break in pieces. But what was Rome and what was Greece? With all her physical and intellectual power nothing--when compared with that of Christ. We know that Ceasar conquered by arms, but Jesus Christ conquers by love.

...the voice of the prophet...  
...the power of the hammer...  
...the eagle, the bird of prey...  
...the emblem of Babylon...  
...dreadful and terrible...  
...But what was Rome...  
...physical and intellectual power...  
...with that of Christ...  
...arms, but Jesus Christ conquers by love...

Sp. - Nov. June 28, 59 - AM. (P)



10  
The narrator gives warning to the sinner. Yes  
God is telling here each soul that they need not resist  
Him, that God has ways of melting and bringing unto  
Himself. That God through his providences can bring  
one to hear His voice. God speaks to those who are  
prosperous. God speaks with a tender voice to those  
who are heavy laden.

The narrator says, what could he have done more  
for you than He has done. Look back on the past. It  
isn't a picture to be resented. You look back on past  
of the prophet's life, it was a symbol of power. Can  
it be that God has failed him. Why of course not.

The Lord passed by, God is passing, soon He will  
be passed altogether. Your means and privileges will  
be at an end. It is an awful thought that there is  
a time coming when your opportunities of the drama  
before the cave will be passed.

The Narrator reminds us again of the question  
"What doest thou here?" It is the question that God  
puts to every careless sinner. What doest thou here?  
Still in thy sin, still unawakened, still unconverted,  
unscattered, unsaved, ye have passed by time and time  
again and there was no thought of repentance in your

19 -  
heart. But the voice gets fainter and fainter, like a  
vessel passing along on the water, soon it leaves no  
trace behind it. And you need to go and stand at the  
mouth of the cave in which you have been confined, and  
listen to the voice of God.

A man needs a hiding place but not a cave.

Elijah had all his difficulties cleared up in a  
wonderful, glorious manner and the Lord had new work  
for him to do. He sent him off to anoint kings and  
to perform Christian service which was needful in the  
kingdom.

Rebel → Have to listen to the voice -

Aerial → conscience must be  
connected to pick up  
the faintest whisper →

(19) MA - 172 - 25 - 1918 - 1918 - 1918 - 1918