

THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

I Kings 18 and 19 are a contrast of extremes. In chapter 18 Elijah is doing wonders for God. He challenged the authority of Ahab and Jezebel, prayed down fire on Mount Carmel, executed the false prophets of Baal and outran Ahab (who was driving his chariot) in a 24-mile journey from Carmel to Jezreel. In chapter 19 Jezebel has threatened Elijah's life and the mighty prophet is so dominated by fear that he flees to Beersheba and then further into the wilderness and ends up under a juniper tree totally absorbed in self-pity and paralyzed by the present state of affairs.

Time would fail to tell about all the famous mountains of the Bible such as the Mountains of Ararat where Noah's ark landed after the flood. Mount Moriah is a very famous mountain where Abraham offered Isaac and the place where Solomon built the Temple. Then there is Mount Nebo and upwards to the peak of Pisgah where God took Moses to heaven. There is Mount Tabor where God gave the victory to Deborah and Barak. Mount Gilboa is the place where King Saul and brave Jonathan died in battle with the Philistines. The city of David, Mount Zion, is in the heart of Jewish history in Jerusalem. It is also typified as the heavenly city. Mount Hermon is the highest mountain in the region, believed by many to be the mountain where Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James and John. Mount Carmel is the spot where God answered Elijah by fire. The Mount of Olives is where our Lord prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Although Calvary is not specifically called a mountain, it is part of Moriah's chain that runs through Jerusalem. We see in the Bible there is a place called the mount of God, which is Mount Horeb, also called Mount Sinai, where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. It is also the place where Elijah had a most unusual experience, which we shall be discussing as we take four ascents to the mountain of God.

1. Enough Is Not Always Enough

The Word of God informs us, *"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"* (I Kings 19:4). In Scofield's notes he

calls this episode, "Jehovah's tender care of His overwrought prophet." Elijah, who seems unsurpassable, invulnerable and virtually "bulletproof" when it comes to overcoming all oppositions, shows us a very human side of himself. James refers to him in the New Testament in these terms, "*Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are...*" (James 5:17). Elijah was so depressed and disheartened that he requested God to take his life. He said, "*It is enough.*"

Have you ever gotten to the point that you have said, "Ok, enough is enough, I'm through." A preacher once phoned his fellow pastor and said, "I 'm throwing in the towel." His friend said, "You cannot do that." The distressed preacher said, "I can and I will." His pastor friend said, "You used a boxer's term when you said you were throwing in the towel. Only the manager, only the trainer has the authority to do that." The pastor then reminded His friend, "You are not through until Jesus throws the towel in. Until then you keep on going!" We are disciples of the Lord; we are not finished until the Lord declares it so.

God has ordained winter to be part of the cycle of life. "*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*" (Genesis 8:22). "*Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter*" (Psalm 74:17). Do not be discouraged; it will not last forever. The Lord promises, "*For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone*" (Song of Solomon 2:11). John Bunyan wrote, "It is said that in some countries trees will grow, but will bear no fruit because there is no winter there." Winter is necessary for a good harvest.

When James Garfield (later President of the U.S.) was principal of Hiram College in Ohio, a father asked him if the course of study could be simplified so that his son might be able to go through by a shorter route. "Certainly," Garfield replied. "But it all depends on what you want to make of your boy. When God wants to make an oak tree, He takes a hundred years. When He wants to make a squash he requires only two months." Read I Peter 5:6: "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*"

2. Everyday Cures for Unusual Day's Quandaries

In I Kings 19: 5-7 we see an amazing thing. God comes to His stressed servant through an angel and cooked him a meal while Elijah slept. Then he allowed Elijah to go back to sleep. We sometimes overlook the common everyday remedies for what ails us or even depresses us. God is saying through this touching story that sometimes we just need to eat and sleep. God knew all

the stress he had gone through and what he was about to undertake and decided to give him something he desperately needed: rest and a proper diet. *"...He giveth his beloved sleep"* (Psalm 127:2b). *"For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee"* (Psalm 128:2).

3. Escape to the Glory Place

In I Kings 19: 8-10 we see that Elijah has chosen to travel to far away Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. Mount Horeb is 280 miles from Mount Carmel and approximately 200 miles from Beersheba (near where Elijah was refreshed by the angel). If you travel by car, it is estimated that it would take you a little over 6 hours to get there. Elijah travels in the strength of the meal God gave him forty days and forty nights. The Bible says Elijah got to the mount and lodged in a cave (I Kings 19:9). Three outstanding facts now confront us. He has come to Mount Sinai, like Moses. He has fasted for forty days and nights, like Moses. Now he has come to a cave, like Moses who came to the cliff. One scholar I gleaned after said this cave was the same exact location where Moses was when this event transpired 585 years earlier, *"And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by"* (Exodus 33: 21,22). The cliff where God revealed Himself to Moses was the cave where Elijah now stood! Elijah desperately needed to find God. Elijah wanted what Deuteronomy 34:10 was referring to: *"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."*

4. Exaltation of the Lord

In I Kings 19:11-18 Elijah discovers a message in the wind, the earthquake and the fire. God revealed these three things to him, but finally it was in a still small voice that God spoke to him (I Kings 19:12). On the mount where Jesus was transfigured it is recorded, *"And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:29-31). The significance is stunning! Elijah wanted to experience what Moses experienced. Remember Jesus said of Abraham, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad"* (John

8:56). The closer the patriarchs got to the Lord, the more Christ was revealed to them. When Moses was placed into the cleft of the rock, he saw Jesus! When Elijah needed encouragement: *"...behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks..."*(1 Kings 19:11). God showed Elijah that He is our Rock, He takes the blows for our sins. On Calvary the earthquake came: *"...and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent"* (Matthew 27:51). What did Elijah see in the fire? I submit he saw what John referred to in Revelation 14:10a, *"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...."* Christ took our Hell!

For over 1,500 years Moses had been waiting and for just under 1,000 years Elijah also had been waiting to talk to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Moses, who represented the Old Testament law, and Elijah, who represented the Old Testament prophets, had a lot to talk about. I would like to believe they started with what they had learned on the mountain of God and why Christ's death was so important and what it would do for all who would believe. *"And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"* (Luke 9: 30,31).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.