

The Cave

1 Kings 19:1-19:18

¹ Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

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¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

Elijah goes from the mountain top, to a broom tree and from there Elijah's next stop is a cave.

Why is Elijah hiding in a cave?

The answer is fear!

The bible says Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah had done, how he slew the false prophets and called down fire and rain from heaven,

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with the message that She was going to kill him!

The bible says 1kings 19:3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. (KJV-when He saw that, he arose, and went for his life,).

This means Jezebels words painted a picture in Elijah's mind and in his heart,

Just as faith comes by hearing, so also fear come by hearing!

Driven by fear Elijah finds himself in a cave!

There are all kinds of reasons that people find themselves in a cave:

It could be divorce, it could be an abusive situation, it could be a financial disaster, it could be broken dreams, It could be all kinds of things!

I don't know all the many reasons for finding yourself in a cave,

I just know if it could happen to a mighty prophet of God like Elijah, it can happen to you and me.

It also happened to David while he was running from Saul.

1Sa 22:1 - David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there.

I know as soon as you start talking about this, people shudder!

Why? Because People dread the thought of a cave experience!

Why? Because to us the cave is a dark, dismal, confusing, cold and lonely place!

And although that is a fair description, it all depends on how you look at it!

Illus: All part of the adventure(Africa)

I've come to believe that at some point in our lives every one of us will come to a cave experience!

It's not a question of if, but when!

If I am going to come to a spiritual cave in my life then it is of utmost importance that I know what to do, and equally important is knowing what not to do!

The first thing I would say to you is don't despise your cave!

The cave may very well be safest place you could be!

There was a man named Obadiah who hid 100 of the Lords prophets in a cave and sustained them with bread and water, and saved them from Jezebels hand, her plan was to destroy every prophet of God from the land!

I am sure this was hard for these prophets because, prophets are not generally the kind of people to hide, they are usually in your face with, "Thus says the Lord"!

But the fact is sometimes God says show yourself, and sometimes God says hide yourself,

and the truth is the hide yourself time is just as, if not more important than the show yourself time!

In fact, had Elijah not obeyed the Lord and hid himself at the brook cherith,

He would have never shown himself on Mt Carmel and called fire down from heaven and turned the nation of Israel back to God.

It's interesting to me that Elijah comes to the place called the Mountain of God and finds a cave there!

1Ki 19:8-9 - So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God. There he went into a (the) cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Everybody won't know what I'm talking about, but somebody knows what it feels like to be in a cave,

To come to the mountain of God where there should be glory all around,

Where there should be unspeakable joy,

Where you should be enveloped in the presence of God,

But instead you feel like God is a million miles away!

It seems like every one around you is experiencing heaven come down, and you can't even feel God!

You question your experience,

you question your calling,

you question whether you're really anointed or not,

you question if you've missed God somewhere!

Have I been disobedient?

Did God turn right and I turned left?

I can't understand it, what is happening to me?

The answer is "Yes, you could be out of the will of God"!

And if so, get back in it QUICK!

But it could be that you are experiencing what Elijah experienced

The Cave!

For somebody this is going to be good news!

No you are not backslid,

No you have not been disobedient,

No God hasn't forsaken you,

Yes you are still called,

Yes you are still anointed,

And No God has not changed his mind about using you!

It's just a temporary condition called "the cave"!

I am convinced that the cave was exactly what Elijah needed at that point in his life!

Why is it that we dread the cave?

Lets analyze the cave for a minute.

A cave is a dark place with no vision.

It's a lonely place!

It's a confining place!

It's a dead end!

I am convinced that a cave is a very critical place in the Christian's life!

I believe that when you find yourself in a cave, you are actually in the process of transition!

But let me warn you, the cave is a potential Tomb!

A place of death!

Death to fear!

Death to flesh(sin dominating you)

Death to self centered ambition!

Death to pride!

And a refusal to let those things die will mean death to your ministry!

Or at least a very lengthy prolonging of the cave experience!

It all depends on your attitude as you go through it!

But also let me encourage you, the cave is also a potential Womb!

A place where life is birthed!

You can either die in the cave, or you can actually be transitioned to a whole new level!

Ministries either die in the cave or else ministries are birthed in the cave!

And it all depends on the way you conduct yourself!

Our first tendency is to despise the cave,

To fight against it,

To do everything we can to avoid it!

The cave represents a place of darkness where there's no vision,

You can't see where you're going!

When you lose your vision you lose your sense of purpose!

And when you lose your sense of purpose you lose your passion!

Here is where we begin to learn the blessing of the Cave!

Though no one wants to lose their vision and their sense of purpose and their passion,

It seems like at some point it happens to most people if not everybody!

The cave is the place where we are forced to stop!

It's the place where we are left alone to wrestle with God,

It's the place where we are forced to examine ourselves and take inventory!

It's where we have to answer the question, "Am I moving with the anointing or just going through the motions?"

Am I moving in a Word from God?

If we respond rightly, the cave will become the womb of a brand new vision, and a place of birthing for a brand new anointing!

You will come out with a renewed sense of purpose and an unquenchable passion for God!

What looked like Elijah's tomb, where his life and ministry would end, actually became the launching pad for the next phase of Elijah's Ministry!

What can we learn from Elijah's Cave Time?

#1 - Don't despise the cave

Listen, before Joseph was promoted to the palace he spent time in the pit and the prison!

#2 - Stop (Wait on the Lord)

#3 - Listen (2 ears, 1 mouth)

Vs. 11- 13 - ¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

(Sometimes you have to get in a place where you can't be distracted by the turmoil around you!

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (This was the second time he was asked this question)

Now remember in vs. 9 it says, There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (This is the first time)

One reason for "The cave" is so you can let the Lord ask you, "What are you doing here?"

The answer to that question is vital for all Christians,

What are you doing here?

It was the place where Elijah had to acknowledge that he was powerless without God!

A recognition that he could DO nothing!

His strength to do was played out!

Notice how Elijah begins to present his "resume" to God in vs. 10

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

Tell your neighbor, "God is not impressed with your resume"!

What did we say the 3rd principle was, LISTEN!

Stop auditioning and LISTEN!

Self promotion only makes "the cave" last longer!

Sometimes you can become a "Legend in your own mind"!

But the second time God asked that question, it was a commissioning to GO!

Elijah tries the same answer and God shuts him down!

Vs. 15-18 - The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

Quit tootin' your own horn Elijah, there are 7000 more!

I've got a new mission for you!

But if you don't want to do it, I've got 7000 more to pick from!

That brings us to:

#4 - Quit looking back

Elijah was so overwhelmed by what was behind him that he couldn't see what was in front of him!

As far as he was concerned, his ministry was over!

What was it that launched Elijah from his cave into the final phase of his ministry?

It was a Word from God!

One Word from God changes everything!

When the Word of the Lord came to Elijah, it brought a new vision, a new sense of purpose, and a new passion!

Elijah left "the cave" with a new anointing!

The fear of Jezebel was gone!

Elijah was no longer looking back, but now he was consumed with taking this anointing to the next generation!

One word from God turned a potential tomb, into a womb and his ministry was reborn!

The cave is a place of two anointings!

It's the place where we either transition into the anointing for the future, or we resign ourselves to the anointing of the past!

When Saul was pursuing David, it just so happened that Saul decided to rest in the same cave where David and his men were hiding.

1sam. 24:3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.

David's men encouraged him to kill Saul, but he would not put his hand against the Lord's anointed.

1sam. 24:6 - He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD."

Here in the same cave there are two anointings, there was yesterday's king with yesterday's anointing.

Saul was a king and he was anointed, and he had been used of God, and he had done some great things in the anointing, but Saul had failed to make the transition.

Then there was tomorrow's King (David) who represents the transition to the fresh, the new, and the future.

In every cave there are two anointings, and there are two kings.

There is the old and the new.

And it's up to you which one comes out of that cave!

You can either come out transitioned into the new and the fresh!

Or you can come out resigned to yesterdays anointing and see your ministry die!

If you do, you will live the rest of your life looking back, talking about how it used to be, what God used to do and how God used to move!

At some point we will all come to this place!

It's here that we must decide whether we are going to transition into the new or we are going to resign ourselves to the old!

The old was not bad, it's just time to change!

Saul had a genuine anointing, but it was time to change!

Elijah had a great anointing, but it was time to change!

The cave is the place of change!

When Elijah left that cave he was a new man!

He was fearless!

Jezebel meant nothing to him anymore!

He wasn't looking back anymore, he had a new anointing!

What changed?

Did Jezebel change?

Did Ahab change?

No nothing changed outside the cave!

The change took place inside the cave!

Elijah changed!

He transitioned from the old to the new and because he made the transition he was able to pass it on to Elisha!

Maybe like Elijah you feel like you are in a cave;

Like your life and potential ministry are at a dead end!

I'm telling you that it's not a tomb it's a womb!

And it's not the end, it's just the beginning of a brand new chapter!

And God hasn't taken his anointing from you, it's just time to transition to the new anointing!

In actual fact, the cave is one of the greatest blessings that you could ever know!

The caterpillar would never make the transition into the incredible butterfly were it not for the dark confines of its cocoon.

In other words, if it never felt the constraint of the cocoon, it could never fly!

And you and I would never make the transition to the fresh and the new if it wasn't for our cave time!

Listen, you may be in a cave right now, but this is just a temporary condition because you're in transition!

And like Elijah you're coming out slinging oil!

You're coming out with a fresh fire, a fresh vision, and a new passion, and a new sense of purpose!

And the very thing that ran you into the cave is ultimately going to be responsible for pushing you to your next level!