

What Are You Doing Here?

Wednesday, 28 September 2005

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

That’s what God asked the prophet Elijah who was hiding in a cave in the mountains, after fleeing in fear of his life from King Ahab of Israel who was willing to allow his people to turn their backs on God in order to please his mephistophelian queen Jezebel, worshipper of Baal.

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In a fit of self-righteous enervation Elijah declared that he had had enough. In 1 Kings 19 we read that, after 40 days on the lam, Elijah was tired and angry at the stubbornness and apathy of Ahab and afraid of the wickedness of Jezebel. As he lay, prostrate, imploring God to end his life; he lamented that all the Israelites had rejected God’s covenant and that he, Elijah, was the only faithful one left.

In answer, God told Elijah to go out of the cave and stand on the mountain, in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord was about to pass by. Elijah stood on the mountain, eagerly awaiting God’s wrath through which he would witness judgment on Israel and justification of his own faithful service.

Elijah witnessed a tremendous wind that shook the mountains and sent rocks crashing to the ground. At last! God’s judgment on Israel!

But God was not in the wind.

Then, Elijah witnessed a great earthquake; surely, THIS was God’s judgment on Israel!

But God was not in the earthquake.

Finally, came the fire; God’s judgment? No, God was not in the fire.

Only after the fire, after Elijah had retreated back into the cave in which he was hiding, did he hear the gentle whisper of God.

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

“The Israelites have rejected you. I am the only one left,” he “reminded” God.

“Go back the way you came, Elijah,” was God’s answer.

Go back the way you came. You see, God knew something that Elijah did not. There were still 7000 men in Israel who had not “bowed on their knees to Baal;” men who, unbeknownst to Elijah had kept the decrees of God.

In Elijah’s weariness and haste to judge, he thought he knew the proper time for God’s judgment, and in a kind of temper-tantrum, cried to God that the time had come and that, basically, Elijah was ready to throw in the towel on the ministry to which he was called.

Note that God did not respond in anger toward Elijah, but rather with tender compassion, understanding, and refreshment of his spirit.

What are you doing here?

Do we believers respond to tragedy or natural disaster by running around in fear, seeking to save ourselves while yelling “This is the end! This is God’s judgment on a stubborn and immoral America?”

I hope we can take a lesson from Elijah’s experience. God is in control. God knows men’s hearts. God’s timing is unknown, but perfect. We are to run the race to the end, not only sharing the GOOD NEWS that

Jesus has already paid the price of all men's sins, but to obey God's command that we, who accept this gift of grace, live a life worthy of Jesus's sacrifice.

"Be still and know that I AM God." Psalms 46:10

Selah