



October 1, 2017

Meditation

**The following is a Meditation written by Doug Hood's son,  
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**READ:** 1 Kings 19: 11-13 (Common English Bible)

*“The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand at the mountain before the Lord. The Lord is passing by.’ A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the Lord. But the Lord wasn’t in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn’t in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the Lord wasn’t in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his coat. He went out and stood at the cave’s entrance. A voice came to him and said, ‘Why are you here, Elijah?’”*

**MEDITATE:**

God had won. His fire had come down from the heavens and devoured the sacrifices of grain and meat, scorching the very altar to ashes. The 450 prophets of Baal who had desecrated his temple with pagan worship and idols had failed to summon their god, and in the face of the God of Israel’s majesty were seized and slaughtered on the spot. We don’t know how many witnessed this miracle orchestrated by the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel, but all who did were amazed. All fell on their faces and worshipped the God of Abraham and Isaac. Among them was the wicked king Ahab, the very king who had welcomed the prophets of Baal. For a moment sanctity seemed to be restored to the throne of David, and Elijah rushed to the then-capital city of Jezreel in triumph.

But it was in this greatest moment of victory that Elijah experienced one of his greatest moments of defeat. Unmoved by her husband’s recounting of the miracle, queen Jezebel threatened to have Elijah executed, forcing him into exile in the wilderness. And if we pay close attention to the text, we see that nobody tried to stop or help him, not even those who had seen the Lord’s fire with their own eyes.

After fleeing over 250 miles south of Jezreel, an exhausted Elijah hides in a cave on Mount Horeb—the same mountain upon which Moses received the Ten Commandments. After spending the night, the Lord arrives and asks what he was doing there. Elijah explodes in panicked fury: he’s hiding for his life! Despite all his work, despite the prophecies and warnings, despite the miracles and wonders, the Israelites haven’t repented of their wickedness and now seek *his* life! He has, in short, done everything right. How can he be repaid like this?

What follows is one of the most famous theophanies—or physical appearances of God—in the Old Testament. God calls Elijah to come outside the cave and stand before Him. But before Elijah can, three calamities wrack Mount Horeb: a calamitous wind, an earthquake, and a fire. And yet, the Lord was not in them. Pay very close attention to the language being used here. Before Elijah’s eyes three earth-shattering, world-ending cataclysms erupted. And yet the Lord was *not in them*. As Terence E. Fretheim points out in his commentary on First and Second Kings, the pagans believed that Baal manifested in such disasters; he was “in” them. But these pass “before” the God of Elijah’s fathers. He is absent from their ravages and destructions, absent from the despair they cast and the ruination they bring. Only then does a soft, quiet sound come. Only then does Elijah wrap his face in acknowledgment of being in the presence of the one true God. Only then does God speak to him again, asking him the same simple question. Why are you here, Elijah? You still have so much work to do.

