

Listening to Jesus

Study 3: 1 Kings 19:1 – 21

How can this study help me?

We often want God to speak to us. We imagine that we could manage the experience and somehow hold our head up. But do we really know what we are asking?

God often speaks through dreams and visions. But only rarely does he grant an interview. We ought to learn from that. It is the experience of only two men: Moses on Mt Sinai and, later, Elijah on the same mountain.

We live in a society that worships self-confidence and self-esteem. These are what make us think we could manage the experience of talking with God. But neither of these will help us draw near to God and trust him more. Instead we need God-confidence and Jesus-esteem.

This study ought to confirm that it's for our own good "that in the past God spoke to forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ..." (Hebrews 1:1,2).

What's going on in this story?

Elijah goes from one mountain top experience to another. He goes from success at Baal's Bluff to the awe-inspiring encounter on Moses' Mountain.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-9.

- While the crowd on Baal's Bluff acknowledged the Lord (18:39), is there any sign of a change of heart in Ahab or his queen Jezebel, the patroness of Baal and the power behind the throne (19:1, 2)?
- If the leadership was unrepentant, what might this mean for the future of God's covenant people?
- With the help of a good map, try and trace the journey of Elijah from Mt Carmel to Mt Sinai (Horeb). Why do you think Elijah went to Mt Sinai instead of the temple in Jerusalem to interview God?

Now read 1 Kings 19:10-18.

- How do you explain the similarity and difference between God's presence on Mt Sinai in Exodus 19:16-19 and Elijah's record of the phenomena?
- What do you think is meant by distinguishing the Lord's "gentle whisper" from the wind, earthquake and fire?

Elijah comes away from Mt Sinai without a blessing and with the ominous job of appointing others to begin a judgement on the nation.

- How do you think he felt about this outcome, given his expectations as he travelled to Mt Sinai?

What about us – here and now?

- After the clear demonstration of God's power on Baal's Bluff, why do you think Ahab and Jezebel stuck with Baal? Are they typical?
- We often wish for a clear, dramatic demonstration of God's power today, like what happened on Baal's Bluff. But long term would it really make a difference to what people worshipped? (Remember Jesus' words in Luke 16:31.)
- What are the implications for us of Jesus meeting with both Moses and Elijah on a mountain and hearing the voice of God (Luke 9:28-36)?

So what can I do?

- The voice of God to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration said, "Listen to him," that is, Jesus. What other voices have you been listening to instead of him?
- Jesus says to watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Are you watching out and what exactly are you looking for?
- What comfort and certainty can you draw from Jesus' words that knows his sheep and "my sheep know me" and "listen to my voice"?