

What Elijah Discovered in the Cave

By Rev. Mel C. Montgomery

The Lord revealed Himself and His ways to the prophet Elijah in the cave on Mount Horeb. If we Charismatics will allow ourselves to learn from what was demonstrated to Elijah, we will leave the superficial spiritual things behind and press through into the same kind of spiritual power that Elijah had.

Elijah was a remarkable prophet of the Old Testament. God raised him up during the reign of King Ahab and his treacherous wife Jezebel, who had led Israel into sin and the worship of false Gods. (I Kings 16:30-33). Elijah prophesied to King Ahab that the Judgment of God would fall on Israel in the form of a drought. (I Kings 17:1). The drought came and it was severe. Crops failed and animals died.

After three years the Lord sent Elijah back to Ahab to tell him that He was about to bring the drought to an end. Elijah told Ahab to gather the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel. It was agreed that two sacrifices would be prepared upon two piles of wood. The false prophets would pray to Baal and Elijah would pray to the Lord. Whichever God answered by sending fire down from Heaven, thus consuming the sacrifice, would be declared the true god.

The numerous false prophets prepared their sacrifice and prayed and cried out over it to Baal all day with no response from Heaven. Elijah then prayed to the Lord, and God answered by sending fire down from Heaven and consuming the sacrifice in the sight of everyone. (I Kings 18:19-30). Elijah promptly killed all of the false prophets. Afterwards, Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah, and he left to go to Mount Horeb in order to protect his life and to seek God. It was as Elijah lodged in a cave on Mount Horeb that God revealed truths to Elijah that we need to understand today. Please read with me the account, and then I will draw your attention to the truths we need to see:

And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.

And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.—I Kings 8:16"

In this account we see some very strong manifestations of God. We see first a wind, then an earthquake, and then a fire. Then afterwards, the still small voice of God gave Elijah specific instructions to carry out. The Bible makes some curious statements about these manifestations of God.

Please look at these statements with me, and I will underline the parts of this that we need to notice:

. . . the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind:

and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire:

and after the fire a still small voice.

Please notice what the Bible says about these specific manifestations of God. The Lord caused the wind, but “the Lord was not in the wind.” God caused the earthquake, but “the Lord was not in the earthquake.” The Lord caused the fire, but “the Lord was not in the fire. . . “ In other words, the wind, earthquake, and fire had no significance or meaning other than to give an outward and visible sign of God’s presence and power.

So many times God gives a sign as the indication of His presence, and human beings overreact to the sign and begin worshipping the sign and being obsessed and distracted by the sign and lose sight of the God who gave the sign.

Had Elijah been one of us Charismatics, he would have reacted by saying, “Woo-hoo! Lord! What a manifestation! You are giving me a whole new ministry aren’t you? Wow. People need to experience this.” Then a Charismatic Elijah would have left Mount Horeb and gone from city to city saying, “Have you experienced the wind, earthquake, or fire yet? You haven’t? Well, you need to! You see, God still does these things today. Why, in the last cave I was in, we had all three of these manifestations. Come up here and let me lay my hands on you so that you can receive these manifestations!” Thus would have been birthed a whole new Charismatic charade.

Had Elijah gotten caught up in these manifestations, and raced from the cave to proclaim this “new move of God” to Israel, he would have actually missed the wisdom and purpose of God. Instead of interpreting these manifestations as the beginning of a “new move of God,” Elijah simply observed them, and did not “enter in” or respond to them in any way. He waited for them to pass, and he pressed in with God until the “still small voice” of the Lord came to instruct him on the next steps to take. We need to follow Elijah’s example and not allow ourselves to become distracted by manifestations the Lord causes in our midst.

My friends, allow me for a moment to speak to you concerning unusual spiritual manifestations, in particular, Laughing in the Spirit and Falling in the Spirit. I believe the manifestations of Laughing or Falling are identical in a way to the manifestations of the wind, earthquake and fire that Elijah witnessed. Specifically, the Lord caused them, but He was not “in them” to the extent that many people assumed then and now.

We can always rely on God’s written word. We can always count on the consistency of God’s merciful and graceful character. God is eternal, and nothing about Him ever changes. However, when you begin talking about special or unusual manifestations of the Holy Spirit, you have to be careful to not overemphasize or misinterpret them. I think it is beginning to dawn on many fellow Charismatics that we are overemphasizing and possibly even misinterpreting Laughing and Falling.

Look for a moment a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit that is described to us in scripture, and what Paul and the other Apostles did, and did not do, in response to this manifestation.

Paul’s Experience with a Special Manifestation of the Holy Spirit

The Book of Acts describes to us an unusual spiritual manifestation that occurred in the Apostle Paul’s ministry:

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. -Acts 19:11,12.

If this were all the information that the Bible gave us, we could easily draw the wrong conclusion. We could reason along this line: Paul laid hands on cloths and transferred the healing anointing into them. These cloths were taken to the afflicted, and people were healed and delivered. God is no respecter of persons, so we can do the same thing. Let’s have a big “cloth anointing service,” and we’ll send out cloths too to the sick and oppressed.

That kind of reasoning is flawed on at least two counts. First, while it is true that Paul sent out these anointed cloths, you need to also notice that neither Peter nor any of the other Apostles copied Paul by sending out blessed cloths. Why not? Evidently God didn’t direct them to do so. Second, we have no record of Paul sending out cloths before or after his ministry in Ephesus. This appears to have been a one-time spiritual manifestation. Third, many miracles took place throughout the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, however this situation is specifically identified as an example of “special miracles.”

Special miracles, or unusual manifestations of the Holy Spirit must be treated as situations that are “*special*” indeed. You cannot always take a unique Bible situation and mass produce it.

We Charismatics are quick to grab at a spiritual experience described to us in scripture, and run with it, without looking at the context of that spiritual experience. Please read with me the scriptural account that led up to this example of “special miracles”:

⁸And he [Paul] went into the synagogue [at Ephesus], and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

⁹But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

¹⁰And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

¹¹And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

¹²So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

The sending out of blessed cloths was preceded by over two full years of Paul boldly preaching the Gospel and teaching from the scriptures. We need to see that Paul did not go to Ephesus, introduce them to the manifestations of Falling and Laughing in the Spirit, and then start sending out cloths. He boldly preached *Christ* to them for an extended period of time. The preaching of the scriptures took precedence over everything else for over two years. Towards the end of Paul’s mission to Ephesus, God chose to work “special miracles by the hands of Paul . . .” God did the choosing. Paul did not do the choosing, and you and I do not get to choose whether special spiritual manifestations will be wrought. If God specifically directs to do so, we too can lay hands on cloths and send them to the sick with the confident expectation that they will be healed and delivered. But if we take examples at random from the scriptures and copy them, God is under no obligation to cause special miracles or experiences to manifest or work for us. This is one of the reasons why so often sending blessed cloths produce few or no results—God didn’t tell us to send them.

What I want you to see in particular is that we cannot necessarily mass produce various miracles, experiences, and manifestations. Yet that is exactly what we are trying to do today with Falling and Laughing in the Spirit. Some ministers go from town to town, church to church, with the express purpose of “introducing people to this experience” of Laughing or Falling. But I can find no scriptural precedent for this specific form of ministry.

Now the Scriptures tell us plainly that ministry can “confirm” or “strengthen” the saints (Acts 14:22, 15:41), and “refresh” the saints (I Cor. 16:18, II Cor. 7:13, II Tim. 1:16, Philemon 1:7). I think it is scriptural therefore for itinerant ministers to go from church to church, exhorting, and bringing truths to the saints that serve to refresh them. As solid scriptural truths are preached, God may choose to manifest Laughing in the Spirit and Falling in the Spirit as a part of this refreshing process. However, when we get to the point where we try to get the saints to Laugh or Fall regardless of whether they are actually getting anything out of these experiences, or when we consider a refreshing service to be unanointed or a failure unless numerous people Laugh or Fall, we are exalting a spiritual experience over the preaching of God’s word, and this will lead only to error and extremes.

Dr. Charles Goodwin and I wrote a book entitled “To Fall or Not to Fall” which you can read on my website at www.brothermel.com. In this e-book we take an objective look at Falling in the Spirit. We document that Falling in the Spirit occurred in a widespread manner in the series of revivals that are referred to as the First Great Awakening, which occurred from 1730 – 1755 and the Second Great Awakening, which took place from 1790 – 1840. Falling in the Spirit occurred not among fringe groups, but in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist denominations and in the meetings of the founder of the Restoration Movement from which are descended today the Churches of Christ, and the Disciples of Christ.

The startling fact we uncovered though was that these ministers and churches interpreted Falling, Laughing, and other spiritual manifestations in an entirely different manner than we do today. They saw Falling as only a visible sign of invisible presence of God, and an outward sign of an inward working of God. They flatly rejected the idea that was floating around in their day that if you Fell in the Spirit, it was conclusive proof that you had just been saved or had received a spiritual blessing. They had the same reaction to the Lord causing Laughing and Falling that Elijah seemed to have at witnessing the Lord cause wind, earthquake, and fire—he and they interpreted these only as signs of God’s presence, not as proofs of the receiving of specific blessings. Ours is the first generation in the history of the Church to interpret Falling and Laughing as proof of receiving from God.

Consequently, they treated these manifestations differently than do we. Like Paul, the first thing they did was to “boldly” preach the Gospel. When and if Laughing, Jerking, or Falling manifested, they did not try to stop them. They accommodated these signs. However, they continued preaching their sermons and pointing people to Christ, regardless of the Laughing or Falling that may be occurring. They did not allow these manifestations to distract from the clear presentation of the Gospel message. Once Laughing or Falling began to occur, they did not stop preaching and encourage the saints to “enjoy” these manifestations. Like Elijah, the old revivalists of the 1700’s and 1800’s gave little or no reaction to these special manifestations, and continued pointing sinners to Christ.

I believe that because these revivalists accepted, but did not major on, these manifestations, God was able to work in a much more powerful manner than we see Him do today in our churches. For instance, in Charles Finney’s revival in Rochester, New York in which he preached daily for several months, virtually the whole city and surrounding villages came almost entirely to Christ. The taverns closed down, not because of restrictive legislation, but because the tavern owners and just about every customer for miles got saved. They closed the local jail because no one committed crimes anymore, and they disbanded the police force. These sort of saturating and sweeping revivals of the First and Second Great Awakenings are unknown today.

We need to face the fact that the eternal God never changes, and He is no respecter of persons. Many are seeking from Him today another Great Awakening, and they read these old accounts of the Falling and Laughing that took place in the old revivals, and believe that if we just get enough people praying, falling, and giggling, we will have a revival that will sweep the world. But those who believe this overlook a major component of these previous revivals. Namely, the preachers preached *Jesus Christ* to the people. They warned that the Judgment of God was about to fall on sinners. They preached sound theology and doctrine. They preached the Cross, the sufferings of Christ, the mercy and grace of God, and the preciousness and effectiveness of the Blood to cleanse from all sin.

They did not merely preach, “Have you Fallen in the Spirit yet? Have you Laughed in the Spirit? Come up now and let me lay my hands on you!” As the Laughing and the Falling occurred in the days of old—as the Lord chose to manifest these experiences—the revivalists kept everyone’s attention focused firmly on Calvary. There is no dispute that God blessed this approach. He gave them revivals that lasted decades, as compared to the revivals we see today which we consider to be major “outpourings” if we can somehow keep them going for a few weeks. Those old revivals also transformed this country, and the revivals we have today barely go outside our church walls, as we watch our country and world descend into degradation, darkness, and madness.

My brethren, I believe we will NEVER have the revival from God that we seek, until we handle these special manifestations of the Holy Spirit in a more mature way, and refuse to allow ourselves to be distracted from the clear preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must follow Elijah's example of pressing past the wind, earthquake, and fire of his day, which is the Laughing and Falling of our day, and join him going on in God until we hear His "still small voice" again giving us specific wisdom, breakthrough, and earth-shaking revival.

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About the Author

The ministry of author, lecturer, reformer, and revivalist preacher, Mel Montgomery is an example of God fulfilling a word of prophecy.

Mel was mentored in ministry by Sister Goodwin. She and her late husband, the Rev. J.R. Goodwin had sat in meetings conducted by Smith Wigglesworth, Raymond T. Richey, and other early Pentecostals. Then God had used the Goodwins as a bridge to the leaders of the Word of Faith move. The Goodwins taught John Osteen and Kenneth Hagin Sr. about the gifts of the Spirit. Kenneth Hagin patterned his prophetic ministry after the spiritual flow he had witnessed in the Goodwins.



Before her passing, Sister Goodwin laid her hands on Mel, asked God to use him in spiritual gifts, and prophesied that Mel would have “a strong ministry, and an anointed ministry, like *some of the men of old.*” Years after Sister Goodwin’s passing, the Goodwin descendants and others asked Mel to host on his website rare audio recordings of early Pentecostal preachers that were recorded at the Goodwins’ church and elsewhere. Mel uploaded the recordings to his website, www.brothermel.com, making these treasures available to the world by download, for free.

Mel’s message and concept of ministry began to change as he listened to the recordings of the “men of old” like Howard Carter, Stanley Frodsham, F.F. Bosworth, the Goodwins, and others. He discovered that what the Pentecostal giants preached bears little resemblance to the extreme teachings common today in the Charismatic and Word of Faith branch of Christianity to which he belongs. Sister Goodwin’s prophecy is fulfilled as Mel continues to speak in churches, preaching as did the “men of old,” the transforming power of the Cross and Pentecost. He authors articles and e-books, identifying which of our teachings are biblical and which ones are not. Brother Mel calls for a Reformation in Charismatic and Word of Faith circles.

Mel’s teachings have been well received, with some being translated and published in foreign countries. In 2007 and 2008, Mel’s website received over 723,000 hits from people in 78 countries. Mel’s monthly e-mail newsletter currently goes out to subscribers around the world.

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