

THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH

The Raising Up of Forerunners at the End of the Age

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I. MALACHI'S PROPHECY

A. The prophet Malachi ministered to the nation of Israel during a season of national sin and compromise. His focus was almost explicitly on the priesthood.

B. He ended his four chapter message with a promise related to the generation of the Lord's return:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and (turn) the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6)

C. There are 3 key dimensions to this prophecy. The "what" is the sending of the prophet Elijah. The "when" is before the return of Jesus. The "why" is to turn hearts. All 3 dimensions need to be understood by the church globally as we approach the end of the age. This prophecy is one of the most important prophecies in Scripture related to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in the generation the Lord returns.

D. The future tense coming of the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord refers to a **specific fulfillment in a literal sense** and to a **general fulfillment in a spiritual sense**.

E. In its **specific and literal** sense, it speaks of the coming again of Elijah, the prophet to Israel, the man that never died, but was taken up to heaven in a chariot and whirlwind of fire (2 Kings 2:11). Jesus declared that he will come again and "restore all things" (Matthew 17:11). In its **general and spiritual** sense, it speaks of an operation of the Holy Spirit upon a believer that imparts a mission like unto Elijah's that carries the same message as Elijah and is accompanied by similar manifestations of power that rested upon Elijah.

Matthew 17.10 His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? (Before Messiah)" ¹¹ Jesus answered... "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things (future tense, literal, 2nd coming). ¹² But I say to you that Elijah has come already (past tense, symbolic, 1st coming), and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished..." ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

II. THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH

A. The Bible first records Elijah's ministry in the days of King Ahab who "did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all (the kings of Israel) who were before him" 1 Kings 16:30. He married "Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him" 1 Kings 16:31.

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- B. Earlier, the Lord warned King Solomon concerning the Sidonians, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will **turn away your hearts** after their gods” 1 Kings 11:2. Jezebel clearly did this as King Ahab “went and served Baal and worshiped him… set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria …made a wooden image and …did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” 1 Kings 16:31-33. Jezebel then “massacred the prophets of the Lord” 1 Kings 18:4, 13 and established “four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table” 1 Kings 18:19.
- C. It was in this climactic state of spiritual apostasy and national idolatry led by the King and Queen that God sent in the Prophet Elijah **to confront** and **to call back** the nation.
- D. Elijah’s **primary mission** was to prepare the people for the Lord by being a “catalytic messenger” that would “**turn their heart**” back to God by confronting a compromised nation, a dead religious system and sinful political leaders. The **message** of “**turning the heart**” confronts that which is false and magnifies that which is true in that historical context. It was in context to this **mission** that God released unusual amounts of **power** to confirm the **message** of “**turning the heart**” and to empower the responsive to change at the heart level (“spiritual violence” Matt 11:12; “rending” Joel 2:12; “cutting” Matt 5:29-30).
- “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him… 22 Then Elijah said… “let them give us two bulls… 24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” ³⁷ “Hear me, O Lord, …that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!” (1 Kings 18:21-39)

III. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH IN HISTORY AND IN PROPHECY

- A. Three primary generations have been unusually anointed with what the angel Gabriel called the “**spirit and power of Elijah.**”
1. The generation of Elijah and Elisha
 2. The generation of **Jesus 1st coming** beginning with John the Baptist, Jesus and the Apostles
 3. The final generation just prior to **Jesus 2nd coming** with the return of Elijah, the Two Witnesses and the worldwide company of prophetic messengers.
- B. In each of these three generations, the **three-fold power** that is released upon these forerunner messengers is given to **articulate, confirm** and **empower** the same message – “**Turn your Heart!**” The promise of Acts 2:17-21 describes the unique activity of the Holy Spirit that will be manifest in and through the church to produce mass turning to the Lord among the nations.

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‘...in the last days ...I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophecy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ (Acts 2:17-21)

1. **Supernatural Revelation** (vs 17-18) Prophecy, visions, dreams, open heaven, “Jacob’s ladder” angelic ministry, heavenly visitations, translations, etc.
2. **Miracles, Signs and Wonders** (vs 19-20) Wonders in the heaven, signs upon earth, raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out demons, multiplying provision, releasing plagues and judgments, transportations, “greater works than these” John 14:12, etc.
3. **Apostolic Preaching** (vs 21) Supernatural clarity, boldness and authority upon the preaching of the Word, grace upon the hearts to receive releasing authentic conviction and repentance concerning “sin, righteousness, judgment” John 16:8.

- C. **The spirit of Elijah produces a two-fold turning in hearts:** first to God and secondly toward one another, with a special emphasis upon the family, as God’s chosen institution upon earth to reveal His heart as tender **Father** and as a passionate **Bridegroom**.

But the angel (Gabriel) said...¹⁶ And he (John) will **turn** many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.¹⁷ He will also go before Him (Jesus Messiah) in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:13, 16-17)

IV. THE TWO CLEAREST EXAMPLES OF THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH IN SCRIPTURE: ELISHA & JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. Elisha

9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.” 10 And he said, “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.” 11 And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. 13 And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. 15 Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, “The spirit of

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Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. (2 Kings 2:9-15)

B. John the Baptist

But the angel said...¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him (Jesus Messiah) **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:13, 15-17)

11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of **John the Baptist** until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, **he is Elijah who is to come.** (Matthew 11:11-14)

His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? (Before Messiah)” ¹¹ Jesus answered... “Indeed, **Elijah is coming first and will restore all things** (future tense, literal, 2nd coming). ¹² But I say to you that **Elijah has come already** (past tense, symbolic, 1st coming), and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished...” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of **John the Baptist.** (Matthew 17:10-13)

C. Jesus and Gabriel declared that John was operating in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. And John himself declared that he was the “voice” of Isaiah 40:3 who was sent to “prepare” the people for the coming of the Lord. But contextually Isaiah 40 is to be fulfilled in the generation of the Lord’s return when “all flesh” see the “glory of the Lord.” John was a foreshadow and a downpayment of what is to be released among the nations at the end of the age.

3 A **voice** cries: “In the wilderness **prepare** the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and **all flesh shall see it together,** for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

D. Elijah was a weak, frail and fickle man like us. What made Elijah, Elisha and John the Baptist great was their spiritual violence, their resolve to press in for the fullness of that which God had ordained for their lives and their discontent to live beneath the intentions of God.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (James 5:16)