

1. The Spirit and Power of Elijah

IN THE WILDERNESS PREPARE THE WAY OF YAHWEH

Jesus Christ declared there was none greater than John the Baptist (**Mt 11:11**). One reason was because of his absolute humility. There is a powerful lesson in this. Today, self-promotion has become central to our culture. Pride is considered a virtue by many. "So proud" has become a commonly used saying today. Not so with John. Significantly, all four gospels describe John as simply a **voice** (**Mt 3:3; Mk 1:2-3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23**). This voice is this secret to understanding John's life.

Luke 1:17 He will go before him 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 for the Lord a people prepared." (c.p. **Matt 11:14**)

John was **the Elijah** to his generation. Jesus' disciples asked why the scribes taught that Elijah must first come (**Matt 17:10-13** cp. **Mal 4:4-6**). Jesus responded in a powerful and practical way, saying in effect, yes that's true, but if you reject the teaching of John, then it's worthless looking for Elijah.

Matt 17:10-13 Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That **Elias is come already, and they knew him not**.... Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of **John the Baptist**.

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH? TO SAVE PEOPLE!

This is the spirit that Elijah learnt **at the end** of his life. He learnt that God wanted to save men's lives, not destroy them.

Luke 9:54-56 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, **even as Elijah did**? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye **know not** what manner of **spirit** ye are of. For **the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them**.

WHERE WAS THE POWER OF ELIJAH? HIS VOICE!

Elijah learnt at the end of his life that the real power of conversion lies in the still small voice of persuasion. Not in earthquake, wind or fire. Those displays of raw power are used by God to judge the wicked, however it is God's Word that changes hearts (**Heb 4:12**).

John 10:41 And many resorted unto him, and said, **John did no miracle**: but all things that John **spake** of this man were true.

KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 KINGS 19 - ELIJAH ESCAPES TO SINAI

Elijah fled from Jezebel to Horeb (Sinai) 40 days and 40 nights. When he came to Sinai he pleaded for God to bring about the "great and dreadful day of Yahweh". He fled to the cave where Moses had been many years before. He wanted God to bring judgment upon Israel. Elijah "made intercession **against** Israel" at Sinai (**Rom 11:2**). God however taught him an important lesson.

Elijah was **drawn out** of the cave (**19:13**). Earthquake, wind and fire could not bring him out, but the voice could. **Mark 1:5** says the people **went out** to hear John the Baptist. The power God has to change people's lives is the gentle spirit of persuasion, the still small voice. God will send Elijah **before** the great and dreadful day of Yahweh, not to bring it about. To **save**, not destroy! Elijah learnt he could not force Israel to follow God's ways.

Throughout Elijah's life, God was working with him to develop his character. In **1 Kings 17:1-24** Elijah is sent by God to care for a widow and her young boy! Elijah was a teacher, an instructor of Israel. Very useful, but his character was not complete. He learnt to become **a father**. James alludes to this in **James 1:27** ("*visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*"). James concludes his letter with a reference to Elijah and how it relates to the way we interact with each other, particularly the conversion of those who have lost their way and erred from the faith (**5:17-21**).

This principle is described by Jesus (in **Luke 15:2-5**) as being like a shepherd seeking out the lost sheep and returning it to the fold. This is significant, because Elijah's future work is constantly referred to in terms of being a father and a shepherd. Many times, Israel are described as sheep returning to Zion by the shepherd's rod (**Mic 4:8; 5:2; 7:14-15; Jer 3:15; Jer 51:19; Ezek 20:36-37**).

Isaiah 40:11 He shall feed his flock like a **shepherd**: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall **gently lead those that are with young**. (compare **Psalms 103:13**)

ELIJAH LEARNS - HANDING THE MANTLE TO ELISHA

In **2 Kings 2:1-15** we see the old man Elijah now working behind the scenes to teach and nurture the young man Elisha. The close bond between them is revealed in **2 Kings 2:6-8** where 3 times it says "*they two*", a rare phrase used elsewhere of Ruth and Naomi (**Ruth 1:29**), David and Jonathan (**1 Sam 23:18**), and husband and wife (**Eph 5:21**). Elisha asked for a double portion of the spirit to be upon him, a reference to the right of firstborn child under the law (**Deut 21:17**). Elisha became like a firstborn son to Elijah.

As Elijah is taken away in a storm, Elisha calls "**my father, my father**" (i.e. Dad). Many years later, at Elisha's death, Joash King of Israel came to Elisha saying "**my father, my father**" (**2 Kings 13:14**). Elisha had learnt to also be a father in Israel. Elisha calls Elijah his **chariot**. The **cherubim** is often referred to as a chariot (**1 Chr 28:18; Psa 68:17 Isa 66:15; Ezek 1:1-28**). The saints are Yahweh's chariot that He rides. In the Kingdom, the saints are called **Yahweh** as they reflect perfectly the Divine nature, morally and physically. **Elijah learnt to be like God**. As such he will be ideally suited to become Yahweh's chariot in the Kingdom.

Shepherds in Israel numbered them by using a rod to mark sheep with red dye. Similarly, Jesus knows **all** his sheep **by name** (**Jn 10:2-4**). He cares for **each** of his sheep **personally**. Shepherds care for the ecclesia when it is threatened: **Jn 10:10-16**. Jesus is like a **father** to us, as God is (**Isa 9:6; Mt 23:37**). This is what it means to "**know the Father**" (**Jn 10:15**). To "**know God**" is to **be like Him**. We can also show this principle in the ecclesia (**1 Cor 4:15**). No matter what age, male or female, we can all take on this role. There are always younger ones looking up to us. If we love Jesus Christ we will feed his **lambs** and **sheep** (**Jn 21:15-17**).

A father cares, loves, nurtures, protects. **Isaiah 49:15** also likens Yahweh to a mother feeding a child. **Hosea 11:3** likens Him to a dad teaching his child to walk. If we earnestly seek to **save others**, God will give us the desire of our hearts in the Kingdom, bringing the mortal population to Christ (**Psa 37:4; Rev 14:6-7**).



SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ELIJAH AND JOHN

Elijah was therefore not just **a type** of John, but the lesson he learnt became **the very essence** of John's life and calling. Both John and Elijah came at extreme times of wickedness. Elijah had the challenge of Ahab and Jezebel. John had Herod and Herodias. Both men were dressed in nature, leather and camel's hair. Both pronounced stern judgments. Elijah handed his mantle to Elisha. John handed his mantle to Jesus at the same place, Jordan. Both denounced the alliance with king and false religion.

ELIJAH'S FUTURE WORK OF SALVATION

The Old Testament concludes with the beautiful principle of the still small voice of persuasion. Elijah is best equipped to turn the hearts of world Jewry because he himself learnt personally. That is to eliminate self-sufficiency and put all his trust in God. He will not come to bring judgment on God's people, but to save them.

Malachi 4:4-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, **lest** I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Ezekiel 20:33-39 I will bring you into **the wilderness** of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

Hosea 2:14 Therefore, behold, I will **allure her**, and bring her into the **wilderness**, and speak **tenderly** to her... I will give her vineyards from hence... and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there...

Hosea's prophecy is an emotional story using the analogy of husband and wife to describe God's relationship with Israel. God will allure Israel as Hosea did with his wife Gomer, speaking to her heart. That is the spirit and power of Elijah. **Hosea 14:4-7** applies beautifully the principles of **Song of Songs 2:1-4; 8:5,11-13** to Israel's forgiveness. This tells of the loving, tender, overshadowing care of a faithful husband to his bride. This is the message John brought. He was the friend of the bridegroom (**John 3:29**). Jesus himself was the ultimate still small voice, the Word made flesh (**Jn 1:14**). A wilderness is a quiet place where there is no self-sufficiency. Here Israel will finally hear the whisper of God's Word.

Isaiah 40:1-5 **Comfort ye, comfort ye** my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem... The voice of him that crieth, **in the wilderness**, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight **in the desert** a highway for our God. (**comfort ye** literally means **speak to the heart**)

Jeremiah 31:31-33 This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, **I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Cited in **Heb 8:8-12; 10:16-17**. A similar principle is in **Rom 11:24-27**)

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