

Sending Elijah

Past – Present – Future

William P Goff
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Scriptures from the KJV

I want to start today's message in the book of Malachi 4:5. Here we find a very familiar verse; yet a verse that has puzzled many in God's church for a long time.

Malachi 4:5 *“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 hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”*

Well I ask: what do we know about this Elijah, the one Prophesized to come before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord? Has he already come? Is he here somewhere on this earth today turning hearts? Or is this prophesy still a future event waiting to be fulfilled?

Those of us with “World Wide Church of God” backgrounds know that many in the church believed that Herbert W Armstrong was the end time Elijah. Some of the splinters from that organization still preach and teach to this day that Herbert Armstrong fulfilled that role.

But is it true, did this man who died almost 30 years ago fulfill the role of the Elijah who was to come before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord?

Or how about John the Baptist, is it possible that he had already fulfilled the role of the “Elijah to come”? After all, speaking of John the Baptist, Christ told His disciples that *Elijah “is come already” and they knew him not.*

Then, what seems to further complicate the issue, and add to the puzzle, is the fact that Christ also told His disciples that Elijah *“truly shall first come, and restore all things”* (Pointing to a future event.)

So again I ask, what do we know about this “End Time Elijah”, is his “prophesied coming” already history, or is it a future event? And how about the “turning” of the hearts of the fathers and of the children, and the restoration of all things, has that been accomplished by either of those two men, or do we look for another?

I want to discuss this “puzzling” issue today, because we're the church, the pillar and ground of the Truth, the ones who have been given to “know” the mysteries of the Kingdom. The ones told to “study” and “rightly divide the word of truth”...

A while back I gave a message concerning the “Two Witnesses”, and a man (after listening to that message) sent me an E-mail with an article attached to it that was written by Frank Nelti titled: “End Time Elijah”. The man told me that he felt the two messages were both Biblically sound, and that they seemed to connect with each other.

I read Frank Nelti's article and liked it a lot. Although I didn't agree with all his reasoning, I was quite intrigued by the many points he made concerning who (or "what" may be a better way of putting it) this prophesied "Elijah" is.

I feel the two messages go hand & hand, maybe even "complement" each other. And I use the word "complement" carefully, because I'm not claiming to have all the answers concerning the End time "Elijah" or the end time "Witnesses".

But I do firmly believe that our Heavenly Father wants us (His church, His ecclesia) to know all Truth. He wants the puzzles solved, and the mysteries revealed, like we're told in Proverbs 25 *"The Glory of God is to conceal a thing: but the honor of Kings is to search out a matter"*.

I also firmly believe (as the Scripture says) that God will do "nothing" without "first" "revealing" His secrets to His "servants the prophets". And I'm not claiming to be His exclusive "prophet".

But I do feel the "servants the prophets" (The ones He reveals His secrets to) refers to His church, His "little flock". The ones Christ says in another place (speaking to His disciples) that "everything" He hears from the Father, He makes known to His "friends" (the commandment keepers who love Him.)

(Commandment keeping" and "good understanding" go hand in hand.)

Like we're told in another place: *"if you love me, keep my commandments"*. And in another: *"A good understanding have all they that "do" His commandments."*

So if want to have a good understanding of the Scriptures? If want to know what's "coming down the Road"? If we want to be on the same page with our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son? If we want to be a part of His "servants the prophets"? Then we need to reverence Him, How? By keeping His commandments and walking in all of His Ways.)

I also feel that Iron still "sharpeneth Iron" so I believe that we can learn from each other (no matter how seasoned we are, or pious, or bold in our tongue) we can learn from one another, the more perfect way of God.

Just like Aquila & Priscilla expounded the way of God more perfectly to a man by the name of Apollos, who was from Alexandria.

Apollos was a man who was already "mighty" in the Scriptures, and he was a man who was on "fire" in the Spirit (The Holy Spirit that is) and a man who spoke God's Word "Boldly".

But he was also a man who was not yet perfect in his understanding of all things concerning the way of God, so he was helped, he was helped by his brethren "Aquila & Priscilla". (And according to the Scriptures, he "listened" to Aquila & Precilla, and "heard" what they had to say.

(I want to digress here for a moment before moving on with today's message, I want to address something concerning our telephone hook-up that may fit right in here.)

Our Lord and Savior want us to become perfect in understand the Scriptures. He wants us in the "unity" of the faith, and of the "knowledge" of the Son of God. He wants His Spirit to "guide" us into all truth.

I think the particular type of phone-hookup that we conduct here each Sabbath (where everyone has the opportunity to comment on the issue at hand) can be a very helpful tool in our growing in Biblical knowledge and understanding.

As long as we can be “mature” & “converted” enough to engage our discussion at the end of our messages, decently and orderly, and not allow it to get out of hand.

We need to be careful not to become to “dogmatic” in our beliefs. Remember there’s another Scripture that says: “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*”...

Now Paul may have been referring to “standing firm” in that comment he made, but I think we can also apply that verse to being “arrogant” and to “opinionated” in our beliefs.

Let us not think that we know it all, because even the astute who are knowledgeable, usually comment that the more they know, the more they realize just how much they don’t know.

Usually when the discussion we have after the message begin to get a bit out of hand (and thankfully, it a rarity) the ones who begin to get a bit heated, usually start talking over the other person, not even fully hearing what the other person is trying to say.

Let us remember, we need to be “*swift*” to hear, “*slow*” to speak, and “*slow*” to wrath. But if we’re not, but rather “slow” to hear (maybe dull in hearing) and “quick” to speak, and “quick” to wrath, well, that behavior is just a display of ones immaturity.

And please, don’t get me wrong here; I’m not criticizing anyone on our hook-up,, on the contrary. Most groups do not have open participation; they “can’t” because it would turn into a shouting match, as some try to shove their beliefs down other people’s throats.

Last week should have been a wakeup call, being a “visitor” to our hookup had to step in and admonish us by saying “He fella’s, wake up – this discussion isn’t going anywhere. I’ve been down this road before, and it’s not a good one, its not uplifting, it’s not edifying, and it’s not important, it’s only sad, uninformative and totally useless.”

Now that might not be an exact quote, but it pretty much sums up her comment, and it was a good comment.

I’m not looking to criticize here; I’m looking to maximize. Maximize a “good thing” that we already have going amongst us on this hook-up. It’s a good thing because the type of interaction we normally have (and should always have) allows God’s spirit to flow, and God’s people to grow, by not being locked up in a box, unable to have a voice.

I also want to encourage others who don’t participate all the time, to please do so. We need one another’s input, it will help us to become more balanced and in accord with one another.

Especially when someone is inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, and has just the right words to say (like that lady did last week). But if one stifles their tongue, and holds back, then the spirit is quenched, a practice we are admonished not to do.

Anyway, I just wanted to say that because we live in tough & depressing world, and when Sabbath comes around, we need to be uplifted & edified.

(Now getting back to today’s message, concerning “who” or “what” this “Sending Elijah” is all about.)

Frank believes that the “end time Elijah” will not be Elijah the Tishbite “himself” but someone with the same “spirit” as Elijah. Yes, one with the same “personality” (if you will) the same “disposition”.

Now I agree with that, because the Scriptures seem to back it up (at least in the case of John the Baptist.)

It was foretold that John would come in the “spirit” of Elijah, with the job of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and preparing a people for the coming of the Christ. And it was going to be a mission of preaching “repentance”.

(Let’s go to Luke chapter one please, and try to understand what it means to be in the “spirit” of someone.)

We know this story; it’s where Zacharias the father of John the Baptist was performing his priestly duties of burning incense, and the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the Temple.

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth had no child, but they had been praying for one for a long time, and now (even though Elizabeth was barren in her old age) God was going to perform a miracle and have her bring forth a child, a man who would possess the same “spirit” yes, the same “disposition” as Elijah the Tishbite.

(Let’s pick up the story in Luke 1:12 where the angel appeared to Zechariah, and then let’s focus on what the angel specifically said about this “John” that was to be born, concerning how John relates to Elijah.

Luke 1:12 *“And when Zacharias saw him (the Angel that is) he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. [13] But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

(Dropping down to verse 16)

[16] *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. [17] And he (John the Baptist that is) shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.*

This verse tells us that John the Baptist was going to come in the “**spirit**” and “**power**” of **Elijah**, to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord, and the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the “disobedient” to the “just”.

(The point I’m trying to bring out here, is that John was to come in the “**spirit**” & “**power**” of **Elijah**.) Now in verse 15 (we didn’t read it) it says that John would be filled with God’s Holy Spirit (even from his mother’s womb) but the “spirit” spoken of here that John would come in (the spirit of Elijah) is not speaking of God’s spirit, but of “Elijah’s spirit”.

John was going to come with the same type of “personality” same kind of “disposition” that Elijah the Tishbite had.

I believe that understanding this, resolves the mystery of Matthew 17:10 that many have puzzled over for a long time concerning how John the Baptist could be the fulfillment of the prophesied Elijah to come, when Scripture also says that Elijah is yet to come.

(Let's go to Matthew 17:10 and see how that somewhat confusing passage of Scripture, can be properly understood.)

Matthew 17:10 *“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? (The Scribes were familiar with, and speaking of the prophesy of Malachi 4:5) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. (He's speaking here of that same Elijah that the Scribes were talking about, the Elijah we are still waiting for today, the one who's going to come, and restore all things.)”*

But then in verse 12 He goes on to say: *But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not,[13] Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*

Yes, “Elijah” has already come “in the spirit” that is. John came in the “spirit of Elijah” and prepared the way for Christ's first advent. I don't think anyone can dispute that.

The Angel said John would go in the *spirit & power of Elijah*, to prepare the way for Christ's first coming, and he did just that by boldly preaching a message of repentance.

It was going to take that kind of “spirit” to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

It takes certain kind of personalities to accomplish particular missions. Ever notice how a company will use someone with a particular type of “personality” to do their “hiring” and especially their “firing”? Not everyone can accomplish certain tasks that need to be done, it takes certain personalities.

I can remember when the “local” township I live in desired to dramatically raise everyone's property taxes. They hired a particular man, and empowered him in a particular position to accomplish their goal.

I came to find out later that this particular man had previously been employed by other townships to accomplish the same feat, and had been very successful at it.

It was the type of “spirit” the man had, his “personality” his “disposition” that got the job done.

Back in Malachi chapter 4, it was prophesied that “Elijah the prophet” would be sent (when?) before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. But back in Malachi chapter 3, it was prophesied that the Lord's “messenger” would be sent (when?) before the sudden appearance of the Lord.

The prophesy of Malachi chapter 3, was fulfilled with the sending of John the Baptist... This is verified by Christ Himself in Matthew 11:10 where (speaking of John) He says: *“For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare the way before thee.”*

It was John that was prophesied to be sent, to prepare the way for Christ's first coming. And he was prophesied to come with a particular type of “spirit” or “disposition” Yes, that of “Elijah”.

Well what kind of “disposition” or “personality” did Elijah have? How does Elijah's “spirit” compare with John's?

I want to quote a little from “Lockyer’s” book titled: “All the Men of the Bible”. Lockyer starts out by stating that Elijah was “a man who had no fear of man.” I think we can say the same about John.

John told both the Pharisees and the Sadducees - they were a generation of “vipers”, and that if they didn’t repent and bring forth fruits for repentance, they would be hewn down and cast into the fire.

Most would “coward up” in the presence of the self-righteous Pharisees & Sadducees, but not John, he had no fear of them. He told them that the “AXE” was already leaning against the root of the tree.

John feared no man, He even openly proclaimed that it was not lawful for Philip (brother to Herod the king himself) to have Herodias as a wife. That proclamation took “guts” to stand up and speak out publicly against the Kings brother; it’s what caused him to be imprisoned.

Lockyer goes on describing Elijah with this: “The New Testament attests to Elijah’s greatness and reveals what an indelible impression he made upon the minds of his nation. All we know of him before his dramatic appearance can be summed up in the words: “Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead”.

Then suddenly and with rash action, the figure of the prophet burst upon the scene (to do what?) To rebuke the godless, and to reawaken and restore the nation of which he was a part. (Again, same with John the Baptist.)

O, we know more of John’s ancestry than that of Elijah the Tishbite, but John also came bursting on the scene (Luke 1:80 says: “*he was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel.*” (showing here means “exhibition” presenting to view.

And what did John burst on the scene doing? Same as Elijah rebuking the godless by powerfully preaching a message of repentance, and also leaving an indelible impression of the minds of his nation much like Elijah did.

Remember, not only Jerusalem went out to see John, but also ALL Judaea, and ALL the region round about Jordan. Judea alone back then applied to the whole of the country west of the Jordan. And the province of Jordan included the territories of the tribes of Benjamin, Dan, Simeon, and part of Ephraim.

(Were talking a lot of people that were highly impressed by John, no wonder Herod feared to put him to death when he spoke against his brother Philip.

Then Lockyer goes on to say this, as “he” compares Elijah & John:

Both were familiar with deserts and solitude.

Both had austere manner of dress.

Both were quick & strong to reproof prevailing evils.

Both had intrepid fidelity in calling all classes to repentance.

Both had exposure of the wrath of a wicked king.

Both had fruitful labors that turned many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

So it's no wonder that Christ (referring to John) told His disciples that Elijah "*is come already*" because John came in the "spirit" and in the "power" of Elijah, just like the Angel foretold he would.

Now let's take a further look at the kind of "spirit" Elijah the Tishbite had, and see how that spirit relates to a couple of other characters, "end time" characters prophesied to arise at the end of the age just prior to "The Day of the Lord" to do what? To preach repentance & to restore all things.

As I read about Elijah here in Lockyer's book, something jumped right off the page at me. Seems that much of Elijah's life coincides or harmonize with the mission of the two witnesses.

The two witnesses display the same "spirit" and "power" that Elijah had. And exactly what kind of spirit was that? A rough & tough one, Elijah was no man to mess with; he was no namby-pamby or PANSY by any means.

On the contrary, Elijah was more of the order of "dynamite" quite explosive, and not to be taken lightly.

Now why would God send a rough and tough spirited man (like Elijah was) to prepare the way for His second coming? Why? For the same reason he sent John to prepare people for His first coming, Because it was going to take that kind of personality to get the job done.

Elijah the Tishbite comes on the scene, and the first thing he does is shuts the heavens from dew & rain for 3 ½ years. The "witnesses" come on the scene, and what's the first thing they do? Yes, "shut heaven that it rain not, for one thousand two hundred and three score days) 3 ½ years.

Elijah the Tishbite called fire down from heaven numerous times, sometimes to devour those who opposed him. Well those who opposed the two witnesses will also be devoured by fire, fire that proceedeth out of their mouth. (Not necessarily literally) but they will be just as dead as those who threatened the Tishbite.

And speaking of the Tishbite, will one of the two witnesses "literally" be Elijah the Tishbite himself?

As I begin to wrap this short message up, I want to say this (and it refers back to my message titled: "You are My Witnesses". Many have speculated and tried guessing who the two witnesses are, and one guess is as good as another, but guessing verifies and proves nothing.

On the other hand, Scripture can't be broken, His Word is Truth, It has all the answers, and can Always be relied on. And when we look to His Word concerning the "End Time Elijah" and "The Two Witnesses" we have to be willing to understand that "*With God, all things are possible.*"

And that God is one who says what He means, and means what He says. And when we read where He says: "I will send you "*Elijah the Prophet*" before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord".

Don't rule out the possibility that He may do just that. He may be speaking "specifically" of sending Elijah the Tishbite himself. After all, he's the only "Elijah the prophet" that I know of. And there that old saying "What goes up, must come down." So if you happen to see a "flaming chariot" and "horses of fire" don't be totally shocked.

And when the Apostle John himself, was specifically told that "*he*" must "*rise*" and "*prophesy*" "*again*", *before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*"

Don't rule out the possibility that the Apostle John "himself" may "literally" be back to do just that. After all, Christ already suggested the possibility that John might "tarry" till His return.

And don't think for moment that the Apostle John doesn't possess that same type of "spirit" yes, the same type of "disposition" as Elijah the prophet had. After all, Christ didn't "surname" John a "*son of thunder*" for his sweet talk & soft personality.

Whoever this "End time Elijah" & "witnesses" turn out to be, they will be men of God, carrying out His will. But the world in general, will "hate" them, and want them dead.

Let us pray that we recognize them for who they are, and don't find ourselves deceived, and amongst the many who will oppose them.