

The Last Elijah

The last words of the Old Testament reveal a stirring and powerful prophecy that has often been misunderstood. Take a moment to become familiar with this passage. With the Spirit's help, we intend to inject new life to these words: "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" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

Reincarnation?

Perhaps we should first spend a moment explaining what this verse does not mean. In the time of Jesus, many people believed that Elijah would literally return from heaven to live again on earth, or possibly be reborn into a new man. Jesus once asked the disciples, "Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias [the Greek form of Elijah]; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again" (Luke 9:18, 19).

The Jews lived with a sense of expectancy that Elijah would soon come to announce the advent of the Messiah. However, this prophecy in Malachi was never intended to imply that the Old Testament prophet would be reincarnated.

Instead, Elijah's spirit of revival and reform was predicted in Scripture to return. Speaking of the birth of John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel said to Zacharias: "He 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" (Luke 1:17).

Gabriel was the first to identify that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy in Malachi. John was to precede the Lord to do a special work of revival and reform. Jesus later confirmed this fact when He said, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matthew 11:13, 14).

Malachi's prophecy, however, did not end with John the Baptist because there is also a modern-day fulfillment. Notice that the prophecy says, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The "great and dreadful day of the Lord," which is also called "the great day of his wrath" in Revelation 6:17 is synonymous with the second coming. So this other fulfillment points us to a period just prior to the return of Jesus the second time.

Spirit and Power of Elijah

To better understand this prophecy, we need to look back at the time of Elijah. Here we discover that the first person filled with the "spirit and power of Elijah" was not John the Baptist, but rather Elisha, the servant of Elijah.

When God revealed that He was about to take Elijah to heaven, Elisha asked that he might receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit. "Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he [Elijah] said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so" (2 Kings 2:9, 10).

As Elisha witnessed Elijah's rapture, he was baptized with the double portion of Elijah's spirit that he had requested. "When the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho

saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha” (2 Kings 2:15).

What will the Spirit and power of Elijah do? “He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Malachi 4:6). In a literal sense, real revival brings about a new expression of love to the family and then spreads from there into the community. The most basic unit of any society, government, or church is the family.

The outpouring of God’s Spirit will always result in love that leads to obedience to His commandments. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

This would, of course, include the commands that say: “Honor thy father and thy mother,” and “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Exodus 20:12; Colossians 3:21).

The Elijah message will bestow the power of love and blessing into the families who receive it, and a curse upon those who reject it (Malachi 4:6). “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5, 6). The angel Gabriel rewords the prophecy a little: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he 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” (Luke 1:16, 17). So in a spiritual sense, the Elijah message will also work to unite disobedient earthly children with their heavenly Father.

Twelve Characteristics of the Elijah Message

Let’s look at the twelve outstanding characteristics of Elijah and John the Baptist that will also be present in the Elijah message of the last days. Amazing Facts has adopted these points as a prominent part of its aim and mission.

1. They were bold and fearless in preaching, even before kings.

Elijah: Elijah told King Ahab, “I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim” (1 Kings 18:18).

John: “John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife” (Mark 6:18).

Both John the Baptist and Elijah were fearless in preaching a straight message before rulers and governors. Jesus said that this would happen again in the last days. “Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them” (Mark 13:9). We must not seek to find our approval among men but rather with God. In order to effect a great revival, the Elijah message must be a bold proclamation of clear, uncompromising, and sometimes unpopular truth.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3, 4)

2. They had a simple diet and lifestyle.

Elijah: “Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand” (1 Kings 17:11).

John: “He did eat locusts and wild honey” (Mark 1:6).

Both Elijah and John were known for their simplicity in diet and for wilderness living. These basic rigors kept their mental faculties clear and their bodies strong, so that they might be prepared for the special work God called them to do.

Likewise, the church in the last days must be revived to the truth so that a strong connection links the body and the spirit. What we eat and drink, as well as our personal living habits, have a direct effect on our mental clarity and ability to discern truth. The power to resist temptation can be traced in part to a simple diet and moderate lifestyle. Remember, sin came upon the human race as a result of eating the wrong thing.

Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! (Ecclesiastes 10:17)

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

3. **They dressed in modest, simple clothing.**

Elijah: “He was an hairy man [with a garment of hair], and girt with a girdle [belt] of leather about his loins [waist]” 2 Kings 1:8.

John: “John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of a skin [leather belt] about his loins [waist]” (Mark 1:6).

In the time when kings and priests loved to wear ornaments and long, flowing robes, Elijah and John’s modesty and simplicity were a stinging rebuke. We live in an age when there has never been more arrogant attention given to flamboyance and fashion. The main goal of modern clothing designers is to highlight a person’s sexuality. Sadly, everything from body piercing to tattoos is being indulged even among professed Christians. Once again, the church desperately needs last-day Elijahs to witness for Christ by their example of humility and simplicity through modest clothing and appearance.

Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [propriety] and sobriety [moderation]; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array [clothing]. (1 Timothy 2:9)

4. **They believed in discipling others.**

Elijah: “So he departed thence, and found Elisha . . . and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him” (1 Kings 19:19).

John: “And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things” (Luke 7:18).

The Scriptures record that Elijah not only disciplined Elisha, but he also visited the schools of the prophets (also translated “the disciples of the prophets”), which were in the land of Israel (2 Kings, chapter 2). These training centers combined spiritual instruction with practical work skills. The young men trained at the schools of the prophets traveled throughout Israel, teaching others the ways of God.

John, likewise, reproduced his faith by teaching the disciples who followed him. Both John and Elijah spent most of their time training the common people rather than the priests and the Levites. Similarly, the last great movement of God will not only be led by clergy alone, but also by Spirit-filled lay persons. This is why the Elijah message must give attention to training, discipling, and mobilizing every member of God's church.

5. **They preached a baptism of repentance and death to self.**

Elijah: "Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan" (2 Kings 2:6).

John: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5, 6).

One identifying mark of the Elijah message is that it calls people to the Jordan River—a symbol of repentance and baptism. The children of Israel had to cross the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land, just as we enter the waters of baptism to cross from our sinful lives to new lives in Jesus. The great commission of Jesus to the church will have its finest hour in the future when once again these modern Elijahs will baptize converts to Christ in explosive, Pentecostal numbers.

Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:14)

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

6. **They both manifested humility.**

Elijah: "And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees" (1 Kings 18:42).

John: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11).

Before Jesus comes again, the people of God will have learned to reflect the meek and humble character of Jesus in an age of arrogance and pride.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

7. **They both endured religious persecution.**

Elijah: "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them [who had been killed] by to morrow about this time" (1 Kings 19:2).

John: "She went forth, and said unto her mother [Herodias], What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist" (Mark 6:24).

In the Old Testament, a pagan queen named Jezebel married Ahab, the king of Israel. Jezebel and her daughter, Athaliah, persecuted God's people and tried to entice Ahab to kill Elijah and the other prophets. In the New Testament, Herodias, the pagan wife of king Herod, and her daughter Salome succeeded in enticing Herod to kill John the Baptist.

The persecution experienced by Elijah and John will soon be repeated. In the last days, Revelation tells us, the “Mother of harlots” and her daughters will persecute God’s remnant people, the last-day Elijahs.

The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 12:17)

Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Revelation 17:5, 6)

8. **They both ran before the king.**

Elijah: “The hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel” (1 Kings 18:46).

John: “As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Luke 3:4).

When a monarch traveled in Bible times, servants often ran ahead to prepare the path for the approaching king. They cleared the road of rocks and obstacles, filled in potholes, cut down high spots, and straightened the crooked turns. In the same way, those preaching the Elijah message in the last days will help prepare people for the coming of our King Jesus. They will proclaim a message that makes the way of salvation clear, plain, and easy to understand.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. (Revelation 14:6)

9. **They were both supremely interested in glorifying God.**

Elijah: “Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again” (1 Kings 18:37).

John: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Those preaching the Elijah message will make glorifying God their top priority. They will be wholly consecrated to God’s cause, just as were John and Elijah. They will be willing to make any sacrifice in order that others might be saved—in other words, to spend and be spent in the work of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

10. **They repaired the altar of God.**

Elijah: “Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down” (1 Kings 18:30).

John: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1, 2).

The Elijah message will be a trumpet call to return to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Today, when so many tell us that the teachings of the Bible are old-fashioned and need to be revised to better fit our times, we desperately need to be reminded that God said, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).

They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:12)

11. Their messages sparked revival and reformation.

Elijah: “Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel,” “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:19, 21).

John: “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1:4, 5).

In the days of Elijah and John the Baptist, God’s people had been corrupted by the pagan influences around them and had compromised God’s truth (1 Kings 19:14; Matthew 3:1, 2). These two brave prophets delivered a message that sparked revival and reform among God’s people.

Today, once again, it seems that much of Christianity is lukewarm and worldly. If judgment is going to begin at God’s house (Ezekiel 9:6; 1 Peter 4:17), then certainly the revival must start there too! Since God’s plan is for His people to reach the entire world, He must first send the Elijah message to reach the church.

In the Old Testament, Elijah led the people to repent and return to God on Mount Carmel. Then he prayed, and God sent abundant rain to end the drought. Likewise, John the Baptist called upon the people of his day to repent and accept Jesus. Shortly thereafter, they received the former rain of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Modern Elijahs will also preach a message of repentance. Then, when the church humbles itself, the latter rain of God’s Spirit will fall.

12. The Elijah message will point people to Christ.

Elijah: “Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God” (1 Kings 18:36).

John: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The burning desire of modern Elijahs will be to turn people to Jesus that they might know Him and have everlasting life.

God’s Army

If the Lord deemed it important to send a special messenger to prepare Israel for Jesus’ first coming, how much more important is it for Him to send a special message and messengers to awaken the church for Jesus’ second coming, the very climax of redemption?

In the same way that the Lord empowered Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist to do a work of revival and preparation, God is today preparing an army of last-day Elijahs to do a great work of revival! Jesus invites every one of you in this great gathering of Adventist youth to

be a part of delivering this great, end-time Elijah message: “To make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

When a man is filled with the Spirit, the more severely he is tested and tried, the more clearly he proves that he is a representative of Christ. — 6SDA Bible Commentary, pp. 1117, 1118