

Finn-01 Elijah the Prophet

by Art Katz

The sermon calls for an Elijah people to come forth, one that is willing to obey God's word and be a prophetic presence in the world.

Duration: 45:18

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:4, 1 Kings 18:38, Matthew 6:33, John 1:1, Romans 9:11, Romans 10:14, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal journey of seeking philosophical answers and being pursued by God. He emphasizes the power of a word spoken in authority and how it can turn someone's life around. The speaker also discusses the importance of obedience to God's word, even when it contradicts our own reasoning. He challenges the church to be a prophetic presence and to speak a word that can bring judgment and transformation. The sermon references the story of Elijah being commanded by God to hide by a brook and be fed by ravens, highlighting the need for trust and obedience in following God's instructions.

Transcript

Bless the Lord. What if... What if... God had greater intentions tonight than to bring a message? What if God intended an event? A mystery. A word spoken.

That you would not necessarily even understand. But needs to be spoken. Into the earth.

And before the elements. And this is the time and place that God has intended. Would you hold steady for that? I'm inviting you to share my predicament.

It's so heavy I have to take off my coat. I have a certain weight of things in my heart. And I don't even understand it myself.

That somehow I should speak about Elijah. And I don't know what we're going to hear. But somehow it is necessary to speak that.

So will you be patient with us? And be participants with us? For that word to come forth. Because Jesus said it is necessary that Elijah must first come. Must restore all things.

Before the Son of Man comes again. I'm not sure what that means. But something must come.

In the spirit of Elijah. To bring restoration. To reconcile the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers.

Whatever that means. Must come. So I want to pray.

That the Lord will bless this speaking. That a word will go forth. To somehow bring the reality of these things.

Does God mean another Elijah, a person as Elijah? Does He mean a church in the spirit of Elijah? Some corporate expression of the genius of Elijah? I don't know. I'm not required to know. I'm only required to obey.

Let's pray. How like you precious God. To choose this night.

This occasion. This little church. This people.

This insignificant nation. To speak a word. To birth an event.

That must come. Must come. Do it Lord we pray.

Choose the foolishness that we are. Speaker and hearers together. And we give you the praise and the glory and the honor.

As we wait upon you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Let's turn to the text in 1st King 17. To the abrupt introduction of the prophet to us. All of a sudden.

In a point of time. Without preparation. He comes.

Fully formed. In the enormous authority of God. To confront the powers that are.

Which are completely opposed to God. And to turn and apostate Israel. To the knowledge of their God again.

And Jesus says Elijah must come. And he stands before King Ahab. Who represents the political forces of the world.

Wedded to Jezebel. Who represents the religious. Whoredoms of the world.

An unholy alliance. Of fearful alliance. And one that has intimidated the nation Israel.

Is that a picture for us. Of what it will be at the end of the age. Of what is already in formation.

Of realities that are presently working. Which will need to be confronted yet again. One more time.

One final time. In that same spirit. In order to release Israel.

To the knowledge of their God. Who will come as fire. I don't know.

But what a man this is. Who comes out of obscurity and hiddenness. Fully formed.

In the full authority of God. The man of ultimate faith. And ultimate authority.

I'm Jewish. And this much I know. This is what it's going to take.

Someone of this stature. This authority with God. This power.

Nothing less. Can speak to our Israel. And say.

How long do you hold between two opinions. If God be God. Follow him.

And the people answered him. Not a word. Their mouths were stopped.

Maybe they thought till that time. They were serving God. Only they mixed it together with a little of this and a little of that.

And until they heard the word. They did not know that they were apostate and unbelieving. They were religious and deceived.

Until the word came. And they answered without a word. Their mouths were stopped.

His speaking constituted the fact. The reality of what actually was. In which they themselves were seduced.

And did not know it. Until the word came. And this man can stand before the powers of this world.

That have already killed the prophets of God. And yet be without fear. Does that describe us? I think God is waiting for an Elijah people.

Who cannot be intimidated. And are not afraid. And do not love their lives unto death.

The powers of the air must be confronted by such a people. Coming in the spirit of Elijah. And in that authority.

And that fearlessness. And such a one is formed in hiddenness and obscurity. And brought forth in the moment of time.

That God appoints. To confront. I think we would much rather send missionaries.

Much rather finance programs. And feel in that that we have discharged our duty. Then we can sing Aveinu Shalom Aleichem.

And enjoy the mystique. And the atmosphere. That so titillates our souls.

Do you understand me? Hallelujah. And what was the first word that this prophet spoke? It shall not rain nor dew. But according to my word.

For all these years according to my word. And as his word was so it happened. He stopped the heavens.

From bringing rain. Is the same man who later opened the heavens. To bring fire.

By the same man. By the same word. What an authority.

It's almost like unto God himself. To command the elements. And to bring judgment by his word.

And Jesus says Elijah must come. Maybe this is God's ultimate mission program for Israel. To form such a one.

In the places of obscurity and hiddenness. That he might be brought forth. In the final hour of ultimate confrontation.

Against the religious and the political forces. To command the elements. To bring judgment unto the earth.

And to raise a question. Which God's people cannot evade. How long do you hold between two opinions? Is that one being raised in your midst? In your obscurity? In your hiddenness? Does that characterize our church life? It's conducive to bringing forth prophets.

It lends itself. It's conducive to bringing forth prophets. It's conducive to bringing forth prophets.

It's not just the mere succession of Sunday services. It's a people with a conscious intent. Viewing the end of all things.

And that which must come. And desiring to be part in it. Their Christianity is more than.

The sum total of all their services. What if Israel is waiting for that? They don't know it. And yet this is the key.

To their release and their restoration. It's such a one coming. Who must come.

In that spirit and in that power. Out of hiddenness. Suddenly in the historic moments.

To stand before the powers of the world. And to judge them. This is more than Pentecostalism.

This is more than what we ourselves desire. But I don't think that we can evade it. It must come.

And it perhaps is that it must come through us. We would be much more comfortable remaining in the pew. Putting the few marks into the collection plate.

Singing our choruses. And saying amen and hallelujah. To someone else who speaks.

What if God wants the church itself to be such a prophetic presence? That it's word itself is a judgment. It's word can compel fire from heaven to fall. It's word can confront the backslidden.

He said according to my word. How do we come to such a place? I think the Lord shows it. Says the word of the Lord came to Elijah.

Get away from here and turn eastward and hide by the brook sheriff. Verse three. And you shall drink from the brook and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

That's not reasonable. That's not logical. That's not even Jewish.

Ravens are an unclean bird. Every ordinary Jew knows that. How much more the prophet.

This can't be God speaking. This will take me away from where the action is. And bring me to a yet more obscure place.

And there the brook will dry up. And there the ravens will not come. And I'll perish.

So he went and did according to the word of the Lord. No ands, no ifs, no buts. No maybes.

No questions. The word spoke. He went and did.

Does that describe us? Our obedience? Our immediate obedience? That does not require an explanation. Even when it contradicts our reason. And what we think we know about God.

God is waiting for such a people. He speaks, we go. And only one who is obedient to such a word can speak a word to which others are required to be obedient.

What is our authority tonight as the church of Jesus Christ celebrating the Holy Spirit filled with the Holy Spirit at the gospel? What is our authority tonight in the nation and in the earth? It's relative. It's proportionate to the degree to which we ourselves have been obedient to the word. And it's a word which is never convenient.

It's a word that calls us away from convenience. Away from the things that are familiar and dear. To where we have not been before.

Another way, another brook, another feeding. Whether by ravens or by a widow. So he arose and went and did according to the word of the Lord.

Elijah must come first Are we holding back the program of God? Because we have no stomach for this kind of obedience. This kind of knowledge of God. This kind of relationship.

We prefer sentimentality both in our Pentecostalism as well as in our relationship with Israel. I spoke earlier today to a small audience of ministers how God arrested my Jewish life. I was not even seeking him.

I was an atheist and an ex-Marxist a disillusioned modern cynic a humanist an idealist trying to change the world in my history classroom and failing for I could not even change myself and came to a final crisis and took a year's leave of absence from the profession and became a hitchhiker in the world looking for philosophical answers and in that condition because I was being prayed for a hound of heaven was pursuing me and there came a critical moment when a word came to me from the mouth of an ordinary man there was nothing about him that was commanding but it was a word that turned my life it was a word sent a word in authority and power and penetration that came in the critical moment from God through man and is that a picture of what it will be such a word to this people Israel who

have heard but not heard Paul says in the mystery of Romans 9-11 how shall they call upon him of whom they have not heard what does he mean what modern Jew has not heard of Jesus of Christianity they've heard but they've not heard and he says how shall they hear except one preach and how shall they preach except they be sent for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of the Lord can I read to you from a Norwegian theologian he was not very respected from the seminary from where I've recently come but I was impressed I was so impressed I wrote this in the margin of my Bible where Paul speaks about how shall they call upon him of whom they've not heard and how shall they hear except by the sent word you know what he writes one cannot hear unless an apostle speaks in place of Christ

because he who has been sent speaks for Christ through him they hear Christ's voice and speech it's no ordinary word it's a special word it's not just a word of information it's not a word about Christ it's the very word of Christ it's a sent word in the hearing of which faith comes it's a word which is an event that can

only come in my opinion out of the mouth of one who is sent it's in the fullness of that apostolic and prophetic spirit the word that is event by those who have been led by the word because the word that has come to them has been event for them and so the word that they will speak will be in time the event for others even the event of faith for a people who are presently out of the faith even the Jewish people it's a word that has to come out of our corporate mouth so to

speak of a church itself which is ascending an apostolic body in apostolic reality apostolic authority that has gone beyond Pentecostalism it's formed in hiddenness and obscurity by a people who are obedient from obedience to obedience from passivity to participation in the mystery of God in the mystery of God Elijah must come we know that God led him to a widow's house and a widow who was ready to perish because there was famine in the land and I think that is coming again I think we are going to see worldwide economic crisis the bottom is going to fall out and those that will survive are those that live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God and who are led of him and are obedient to him in that time and so the word of the Lord came to the widow and she did eat and her son

and Elijah also she did eat because he said that your flour shall not run out nor your oil until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth and she went and did according to the word of Elijah his word to her was an event a life-saving event and she obeyed it though it was foolish and then her son became ill suddenly and mysteriously and she came down to him what have I to do with thee thou man of God have you come to call my sins to repentance in slaying my son this is a Gentile woman speaking who has not been trained up in the things of God and recognizes the prophet sent of God and somehow senses that the calamity of her son's death has to do with her sin what a remarkable perception would to God that the church itself had it and could recognize the meaning of its calamities as not

being accidental but related to the God of judgment in accordance to our sins Elijah did not know how to answer for God had not shown him this this came without explanation without the word of the Lord to him it was sudden so he took the son up to the place where he abode and stretched the dead son out on his own bed and stretched himself out over the son so to speak eyeball to eyeball and fingertip to fingertip and cried out to God three times let this child's soul come back to him verse 21 I don't know what this represents but I know this it is a critical episode in the Elijah story and it is much further than we ourselves are willing to go we may be willing to put some marks into the collection plate and finance the missions and even that not well but to take the dead body up to the

place where we dwell and to put it on our bed and to disturb our privacy and our lifestyle and to stretch ourselves over that death to exchange our life for it that we are not yet willing and Elijah must come a people like that who are willing to go beyond convenience and to bring the dead right into their own bed and themselves over it so as to give their life for the other and God heard Elijah's cry and he'll hear ours also when it will be of that kind and life came back again into the son maybe that's what it's going to take our prostration our extending of ourselves over the thing that is dead and lifeless to give our life for it that's what Paul said I would wish myself a curse for my brethren's sake that they might know Christ have I come to that place myself to be willing to

forfeit my life for theirs that they might live that they might be brought forth out of death this is what God gives us and Jesus says Elijah must come first and restore all things and restore that that faith that obedience that love that willingness it's beyond convenience it's beyond religion it's beyond and life came back again into this dead son and he brought the son down to the mother and said see thy son liveth she was astonished she said to Elijah now by this I know that you are a man of God and the word of the Lord

in your mouth is truth may our hearts be branded by that we who have been so simplistic to think that if we speak the correct word the technical word the scripturally appropriate word that somehow that makes it a sent word a powerful word a word of event that brings

life Jewish people are waiting for a word it's the word of truth in your mouth by this it's a demonstration of life out of death by a people who have more than just a sent word a sentimental preoccupation with Israel who are not relating to the Jew out of a guilty conscience or even out of direct response to the Jew because they're attractive because they have a mystique but it's a response out of God's heart in relationship to Him for them it's a different kind of response this is beyond sentiment beyond responsibility beyond guilt I don't know that you're understanding me and I don't know that you're required to but that God wants to birth something that must come we don't know very much about Elijah except that he was a Tishbite of the inhabitants of Gilead up in the northern part of

Israel we can't even say with assurance that he was Jewish but maybe something both Jewish and Gentile coming from a place where one would not expect a great prophet of God and not an accident but a picture a suggestion of that prophetic thing for which God is yet waiting to come out of that which is Jewish and Gentile the mystery of the church itself in its weakness hiddenness, obscurity such a presence coming forth such an authority such an ability to travail over death to cry out and to be heard by God who will answer because it itself hears from God and obeys willing to move toward that together that we will be prepared for the final showdown when between the false prophets and ourselves they are much greater in number than we and they jump and dance on their sacrifice but fire does

not come though they expected it and were so deceived and thought that they were in real communication with a God who could not answer who did not answer and then Elijah called all Israel to himself come up to me and saturate this sacrifice with water and that did they with twelve barrels full the number of the tribes of Israel the apostolic number the foundations of the faith and then he cried out to God hear me O Lord, hear me that this people might know that you have turned their hearts back to you again everything was staked on a final moment that God would hear him because if God did not answer he himself was finished it would have been the true prophet of God slain instead of the false hear me Elijah cried to God and the prophet who heard God was heard by God and the fire fell and

the sacrifice was consumed and when the people saw that they cried out with one voice the Lord he is God the Lord he is God these are remarkable episodes each one significant not only for our understanding of the past but for the final future for Elijah must first come who can bring again fire from heaven over a saturated sacrifice consumed by God and when the people saw that an apostate people torn between many alternatives they cried out with one voice the Lord he is God I think it's going to take that again such a demonstration such a fire from heaven maybe the Lord himself coming down the God himself who is a consuming fire waiting for such a sacrifice maybe it will not be an ox it may be us saturated with the apostolic life 12 barrels full who is waiting for the restoration of all

things maybe that sacrifice is that statement and when he has that on the earth God himself will come as fire as demonstration even the most unbelieving to hear the cry the Lord he is God the Lord he is God I didn't prepare this tonight I'm only trying to be obedient myself and it's in my heart Elijah must first come of whom it says in James he was flesh and blood like as we and yet when he prayed God answered this is an invitation tonight for those who really love Israel not because Israel is attractive or a sentimental darling but because God loves them and we love the God who loves so much so that we're willing to be inconvenienced stretched out even over death it's more than the few marks in the collection it's a call to

inconvenience so he arose and he went he got up and he did he

left the security of the pew and the religion of convenience by whatever name we have called it to obey God so let's pray tonight for the Elijah that must come even if we ourselves must be part of him such a people such a church such a prophetic presence such an authority such a word it costs something to produce this and will cost us also but there's a dead son waiting for such a one to come a man of God in whose mouth God's word is truth let's pray for that and ask God that we ourselves might be part of him let's bow before him thank you Jesus Lord have your way let there again be on the earth such a one as this even a corporate one in such obedience such faith such authority such power that is not afraid that lives by the word of God bring forth the Elijah that must come to restore all

these things that you might come again and be the revealed king of Israel hear the great cry of your people the Lord he is God the Lord he is God receive us tonight as many as will who will be fashioned at your hand in the hidden place to constitute such a one this is the event your response how many will go beyond convenience beyond security beyond religious familiarity into a new place in the wilderness to be formed as such a one are you willing where are you raise your hand before God where are you stand before God to say me stand before God right now hallelujah I'm very conscious right now of the extraordinary presence of God I'm not an American who has come with evangelical tricks this is a holy moment before God the Lord wants to transact with those who will say send me form me

whatever the cost even my own life that Elijah might come don't stand lightly God will require this precious Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus seal these who have stood to your call they have not understood all that has been said they have been mystified and perplexed it has not spoken to their minds but to their spirits a word has come a call an event something that must come out of hiddenness and out of obscurity to a people like this flesh and blood like Elijah see them hear them call them seal them send them in Jesus' name

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