

When Will Elijah Return to Earth for His End Times Ministry?

- All right, we saved the best for last. Final week of the Elijah Sermon Series. If you've got a Bible, go to 2 Kings Chapter 2 and lemme just say this, this has been one of my, if not the most favorite sermon series in my entire 30 years of teaching God's word and... And so for me, I just wanted to say thank you. I wanna thank all the wonderful people in our church family that give me the honor of teaching God's word. When we started this series, I was like, this is gonna go good or bad. And praise God, it went good. And then for everyone who's joined us online, it's really been incredible. And the online ministry is RealFaith. And this is the most popular sermon series in my 30 years in the pulpit and 27 years as a senior pastor. Just in this sermon series online with social media clips and live stream and such, we've reached 100 million people just with the series in Elijah. And if you've missed any of it, you can go to realfaith.com. There's 12 sermons. They're audio, video, and also transcript as well as the sermon notes, all free thanks to generous people. In addition there, you'll find four bonus sermons under the Real Men category on Ahab and Elijah, or Jezebel rather, and their head-on collision with the Man of God Elijah. There's also daily devotions there. There's also the free study guide in the store. And brand new book will be out July 1st, "New Days, Old Demons." And it's not published, so you can't cancel it. There's no endorsements, you can't attack them. And I'm not getting paid, so you can't question my motives. But it's literally a book that I sat down and I believe that the Holy Spirit anointed me. And I basically wrote the book in 24 hours. And I didn't intend to. It was an accidental book. And so we're wanting to get that away to as many people as we possibly can to understand the world we live in through the lens of the story of Elijah. And so just wanna say thanks to everyone and I'm so grateful to have the freedom to kinda just say what I need to say and what I think needs to be said. In most churches, this sermon series would get me fired, but instead you brought your friends, so thank you very, very much. And so we will finish up today and just pray as well. I was in New York this week, congratulations. I made it out alive. And I did an interview for a movie that's coming out in October. It's gonna be in a few thousand theaters and they're looking at cultural issues through a biblical lens. And so I got to share what we've been in Elijah studying and hopefully that goes to millions in theaters this fall. So God's been doing some really incredible things and I'm super, super grateful. So lemme do this. Lemme pray and let's finish strong. Father, thanks for an opportunity to study Your word. And, Lord God, we just say that we come under the authority of Your word, that You spoke this world into existence. And, God, nothing good happens unless Your word goes forth in power. So as we open Your word, we invite you, Holy Spirit, as the author of the scriptures, to be the empower of the preaching of the scriptures. And, God, I pray that You would annoy our time together and that You would bless Your word, in Jesus' name, amen.

- Amen.

- All right, well here we go. We're at the end of the life of Elijah. And the question in 2 kings Chapter 2 is, when will Elijah return to Earth for his end times ministry? And if you're new, he's had an incredible life. Here's what we've learned about Elijah thus far in our time together. He raised a young man from the dead. He prayed for no rain and it didn't rain for more than three years and then he prayed and it started raining. And when it started raining, he actually outran a

chariot and a horse to flee the coming flood. In addition, his life is so incredible that he called down fire from heaven, not once, not twice, but three times. He defeated the prophets of Asherah and Baal. He slaughtered hundreds of false prophets. His life was constantly in danger, but God preserved and protected him, hid him and fed him with ravens who were like the first DoorDash, bringing him a meal every day, taking care of him faithfully. And what we see as well is that it says in James Chapter 5, Verse 17, that he was a man just like us, but he prayed. And his life looks a bit like a Marvel comic superhero, but what we see is a fully surrendered life that is fully anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, this is the end of his life, and today this will be his departure from the earth. And in the old westerns, literally, the good guy, after he took down all the bad guys and protected all the people that needed to be saved, he would quote/unquote ride off into the sunset. And we still use that language and nomenclature. And this is literally the moment in Elijah's life where he literally rides off into the sunset. I dunno if he's wearing a cowboy hat, but I just kind of see it that way. And so we're gonna jump right in. And the first point is live for your last day. 2 Kings, Chapter 2, Verses 1 through 8, "Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven, he's going to go home by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha," So Elijah's the senior leader, Elisha is the secondary leader. It's his right-hand man, it's his associate pastor, it's his number two leader, "Were on their way from Gilgal and Elijah said to Elisha, 'Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As as the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.'" They're coming to the end. How many of you, you've had a moment when they're someone you care about, you're saying goodbye, they're moving and you're not going to see them again, or maybe they're dying and they're heading to heaven? That's where they find themselves. This is the goodbye. Elisha really loves Elijah. Elijah's like a pastor and a friend and a spiritual father. And he wants to get as much time with him in these fleeting final moments as he possibly can. So they went down to Bethel. Bethel is a historic place of worship for God's people all the way back to the days of Genesis. And so they're going to an old place of worship. And ultimately what we see here is what makes a good friendship is two people who worship together. And so it's two men here, and this is very, very rare. When men are friends and worship together, God does something very special, and that's what he's doing here. "And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elijah and said to him," fellow godly spirit-filled ministry leaders, "'Do you know that today the Lord will take the master from you?'" This is Elijah's farewell moment. It's his last day. "And he said, 'Yes, I know. Keep quiet,'" Elisha's struggling to accept the fact that Elijah is going. Again, this is someone you love being deployed in the military. This is someone taking a job transfer and moving away. This is sending someone you love off to college. This is someone leaving for an international mission field. This is someone who is on their deathbed. You're saying your goodbye. "And Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.'" So they came to Jericho, the sons of the prophets who are at Jericho, drew near to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master away from you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know, keep quiet.'" You've ever had annoying friends that keep saying the same thing? It's biblical, okay? They keep saying the same thing. "Then Elijah said to him, 'Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.'" And the Jordan is a river. And it's significant because some years later someone is going to be baptized in that river, who is it? It's Jesus Christ. So all

of this is preparing and foreshadowing for the forthcoming of Jesus Christ. And he's gonna be baptized in that river. That's why Elijah and Elisha are having the fight. They're trying to preserve the nation of Israel for the coming of Jesus Christ. That river is still there. I baptized my dad there and then my dad and I turned around and baptized my son and his grandson in that same river. And so that's where they find themselves. So he goes on to say, "But he said, 'As the Lord lives and his you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on, 50 men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood at some distance from them as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his cloak," that's his coat, his outer garment, "rolled it up and struck the water. And the water was parted to the one side and the other till the two of them could go over on dry ground." For those of you that know the story of the Bible, who does this sound like?

- Moses.

- Sounds like Moses. There's a guy named Moses back in the book of Exodus. He too is a prophet of God, filled with the spirit of God, like Elijah, and he was leading God's people into freedom from slavery. And they arrived at the precipice of a mighty river and God didn't want his children to swim for it. So what happened is Moses put his stake in the ground and literally the sea parted and they walked through dry ground. He's doing that here. This had to be an amazing moment. There's some amazing things that happened in Elijah's life. Imagine you came to a river and it's like, how're we gonna get across? Are we swimming? No, I'm a grown man. I'm not gonna swim, here's what we'll do. We'll part it, that's awesome. That's such a great, that and the fire from heaven. Like if I had to pick one, I would go with the fire from heaven, I just would. But if I got two, parting the water would be my second choice. So he drops his cloak and God spreads the water so that they can walk across on dry land. This is his final miracle and it's kinda like the last moment that he will have a public appearance. This is kinda like a great athlete, that it's their final game. This is like a basketball player taking a final shot or final at bat for a baseball player and it's a walk off, home run, and he just sorta trots around the bases, and everybody's cheering. This is that moment in Elijah's life. He parts the sea and walks across. Now here's what I wanna tell you, God knows our last day. I don't know about you, I don't like to think about it. I got a beautiful wife, great kids, couple grandkids on the way, wedding later this year, I'm preaching books of the Bible, I like my life, I like my job. I got a Bronco. You know, I'm doing good. I'm doing great. So I know I'm gonna go to heaven when I die or Jesus comes back, but you know what? I've got a lot that I'm looking forward to. But for all of us, there's a last day and the last day of your life is the most important day of your life. And the most important decision you will make is whether or not you're ready for that last day. What we're seeing here is the last day of Elijah's life. He's ready, it keeps talking in the book about his surrender and submission to the Lord. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Elijah knows Jesus. Elijah loves Jesus. Elijah belongs to Jesus. And when he's is done with this life, he's gonna meet Jesus face to face. Sometimes you know your last day. Elijah and Elisha and all the 50 prophets of God, they all know the last day. They're like, "Today's the last day." Apparently God told them. And I have seen times where God will tell someone, "This is your last day." Other times you don't know. Many times, if not most times, you don't know your last day. You think you're doing

okay and suddenly heart problem, car wreck, something happens, you weren't expecting, and that's your last day. The key is this, to live every day, that if it is your last day, it's a good day and you don't have any regrets. And so what you need to prepare for your last day is the same thing that Elijah's doing, number one, you need Jesus. There's only one who said he's God that founded a religion, His name is Jesus Christ. There's only one that said he came down from heaven, His name is Jesus Christ. There's only one who said that he was without any sin, His name is Jesus Christ. There's only one who said that when He died, He would come back conquering sin and death, and His name is Jesus Christ. And there's only one who's gone before us into heaven to pave the way for us so that we could follow Him, And His name is Jesus Christ. And so we love Jesus. We worship Jesus. We believe in Jesus. And if you belong to Jesus and believe in Jesus, the day of your death is not the worst day, it's the best day.

- Hallelujah.

- It's the best day, 'cause the Bible says, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." Okay, the Bible says, "To depart and be with the Lord is far better." There's nobody in heaven right now regretting their decision to accept Jesus. There are some folks in hell who are not happy with their decision. So my first question is, are you ready for the last day? Do you know Jesus? And then you need a plan. If you're married, this is like life insurance, and tell your spouse what the passwords are and tell your kids you love them and have a will and make a plan. For Elijah, he's coming to the end of his life and so he has a plan. And so the next point I wanna look at is successful succession. 2 Kings, Chapter 2, beginning in Verse 8, "When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.'" So Elijah looks at Elisha, he's like, "Okay, I'm gonna be gone. Any final requests? Anything you want, anything you need?" "And Elisha said, 'Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.'" This is anointing. Elijah did his ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Elijah transitions out of his ministry and Elisha takes over, here's what Elisha's decided, "I need the Holy Spirit if I'm gonna do this job and I'm gonna need a double portion," right? So what he's basically saying is, Elijah, you're strong, you're tough, you're confident, you're confident. You have the Holy Spirit. I'm gonna need a double portion to do your job. It's gonna take more Holy Spirit for me to do the job. There's a humility here and there's a recognition that without God's power, he's in grave danger. "And he said, 'You have asked a hard thing.'" He's like, "I don't really choose who the Holy Spirit anoints. The Holy Spirit is God, so he makes that decision." "Yet if you see me as I'm being taken up, it shall be so for you. If you do not see me, it shall not be for you." He says, he has a revelation here, it's a prophecy. He says, "When I go up, if you see me, you're gonna be anointed. If not, you won't. That's God's decision. Let me say this, God's anointing is God's deciding. God determines who the leader is. God determines who He gives. God determines who He raises up. God determines who He calls. Goes on to say, "And so as they went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire," that's where we get that language for that great movie and book. "Chariots of fire and horses of Fire separated the two of them and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." He's gone, "And Elisha saw it and he cried." He's devastated, he loves Elijah. They've been together and they've been through a lot, "My father, my father," we'll talk about that. "The chariots of Israel and its horseman, and he saw him no more. Then he took hold of

his own clothes and tore them in two pieces." He's mourning, he's saying goodbye to someone he loves. And at certain points we all do this. I could still remember going to the funeral of my grandfather. I could still remember taking the children to the funeral of their grandfather. There's a grieving and a mourning and a lamenting. And we know that they're having a good day, but for us it's a hard day, because we miss someone we love. And I want you to see too that when someone dies, the same thing happens. If they die in the Lord, they're just moving into the kingdom. They're just moving into the kingdom. "And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan." So Elijah lost his coat on the way up. "Then he took the cloak that Elijah had fallen from him and he struck the water saying, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?'" What he's asking is, "Lord, are you with me, like you were with him? Will you do through me what you did through him?" And he picks up Elijah's coat. And I love this because what he's doing is he's not starting a new ministry. He's continuing the legacy that preceded him. And he's honoring that. "And when he had struck the water, the water was parted on the one side and the other and Elisha went over." So this is a great day for Elisha. He's like, "I got the coat, I got the spirit, I'm good." "Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.'" So this is Captain obvious and his 49 supporters. And they're like, "Hey, if you part the sea, you're the leader." It's pretty obvious who the leader is. They came to meet him and they bowed down to the ground. You know what that is? That's respecting and honoring God-given anointing and authority. You're the leader. God has chosen you. We are going to support you. "They said to him, 'Behold, there are, with your servants, 50 strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the spirit of the Lord has caught him and cast him into some mountain or into some valley.' And he said, 'You shall not send.' But they urged him till he was ashamed and said, 'Send.' They sent therefore 50 men. And for three days they sought him, but they did not find him. And they came back while he was staying in Jericho and they said to him, and he said to them, rather, 'Did I not say do not go?'" Here's what they're saying. Elijah went up, but maybe he didn't go to heaven. Maybe God just relocated him. We wanna go look for him. We're gonna send out a search committee, a search party. And Elisha's like, "No, he went to heaven." They're like, "No, no, we're not sure." He is like, "All right, go look." And they came back three days, they're like, "He went to heaven," and Elisha's like, "Yeah, I know. I told you guys that the first time." And what's interesting here, this had to be an amazing moment. This is the greatest first class flight in the history of the world. I mean, this is before airplanes, right? And there goes Elijah, that was incredible. It's like Santa without the reindeer, it's unbelievable. And he just goes all the way up. Some would say that this is a precursor to something called the rapture. The rapture is a Christian belief that is quite frankly newer in Christian history and theology. But it is that when things get really dark, God will remove his people from the corrupt earth and he will preserve and protect them. There was a guy who experienced that previously. There's only two men in the Bible actually who didn't experience death, Enoch and Elijah. Enoch is back in Genesis 5 and it says this regarding him in Hebrews 11:5, "By faith, Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death." Now Elijah is the second guy who didn't die and he was taken to heaven. Some would say that these two men are a precursor to something called the rapture. And I don't know. I know this, I don't know. And what happens is people are like, "How's it gonna be at the end?" I don't know. I know Jesus comes back and I'm gonna be happy.

- [Congregation Member] That's right.

- And so my general view is I'm on the welcoming committee, not the planning committee. I don't have the date on the calendar, but my kazoo is always ready just in case. And so within Christian Bible study, what I like to say is there are closed-handed issues and open-handed issues. The closed-handed issues give us unity, the open-handed issues give us diversity. Here's what I know, Jesus is coming back.

- That's right.

- Amen.

- Okay, I know that for sure, I know that. And, Jesus, if you wanna come before the election, that's great. And then, but in the open hand it's like, well, when is he coming and how is he coming? And will we get raptured? That's all in the open hand. So we can dialogue and discuss that, but we don't need to divide over that. What I do wanna talk about next though is successful succession. What we see here is that Elijah had a very successful ministry and he's passing the proverbial baton to his successor, Elisha. My wife, grace is here. And when we first met, we first met, March 12th, 1988. And we were in high school and she ran track. And I didn't know anything about track, but I liked Grace, so I had to figure out some things about track. And so what I learned was that Grace was a sprinter. She's fast, but I caught her and she ran the 200 and then she ran the 4 x 100 relay. And if you're familiar with that race, they run around the track and then they have to pass off the baton to the next runner. And so succession is literally the passing of the baton. That analogy is used. Well, I never ran track, but watching Grace, what I noticed was, number one, at some point you need to hand off the baton. Like if one person just ran all the way around the track, they're disqualified. You need to hand off the baton to the right person at the right time in the right place. And that transference is crucial and many races are won or lost at the baton handoff. And what happens is that the runner who's carrying the baton, they'll slow down a little bit as they enter into that box of transition and then the person who is going to carry the baton, they start to speed up. And all of this has to be synchronized so that the baton is not dropped. Leadership is like that. One generation runs their race and then they need to pass the baton off to the next generation. That's what's happening here. And I wanna talk a little bit about succession. Businesses, churches, ministries oftentimes struggle with succession. This is why you can drive around any major US city and there's a lot of buildings that are just dead. There was a day that they were running a race and someone dropped the baton. There's certain denominations and networks that have gotten woke and apostate, they handed the baton to the wrong person. There are places where the senior pastor should have retired 40 years ago. And at this point he's still walking around the trek with the baton and somebody needs to come take it from him. And if you laugh, it's 'cause you came from that church. Welcome, we're glad to have you. And so let me say this, the reason why I think it's good to talk about this is I'm not near that, I'm 52. I've been preaching for 30 years. I feel like I probably got 30 years left, so I'm somewhere around halftime, depending what I do with my diet

and so I like cheese and that might shorten things. So lemme talk a little bit about succession. And when it comes to succession, we see this with Elijah and Elisha. The key is to honor the founder and the future, okay? This word came to me some years ago. Many years ago I was at a conference in Europe. There was like 4 or 5,000 pastors. I was the guest. And as I was getting ready to speak, I felt like the Lord spoke to me and said they need to start working on their succession plan. And the handing off of the proverbial baton from the senior leader. And this is a great, I won't say the name. This is a wonderful network of awesome, great, spirit-filled Bible-believing, gracious, loving, joyful people, they're fantastic. And their founder is one of the greatest men. He is fantastic. And so I'm like, Lord, I'm the guest, I'm not the father. This isn't my house. This isn't my network. I mean, they think Americans are rude to begin with. And I'm a very rude American. You know, like I don't, you know, like I don't... I was like, "Lord, I don't feel like this is my place to tell them what I think they need to do." So I went to the senior leader and I said, "I feel like God's talking to me about talking to your people about succession. And I said, "But you're the father. This is your house. You're the leader, and I love you. You're a good man. I don't wanna overstep my bounds." I said, "So I'm asking your permission and if you say no, I honor spiritual authority, then I'm not gonna preach this message that God just sorta gave me while I was sitting there." And he said, "No, you can preach it." And he said, "But after you're done, I'm gonna get up and say whether or not I agree with it." I was like, ah. Ah, just so you know, that'll never happen here. I will never, that's just too scary. I was like, ah, okay, so, I was like, okay, so I'm gonna preach and then we'll decide if you throw rocks at me. Okay, that sounds great. So I preached and what I preached on was the word that God gave me and that was that we need to honor the founder and the future. And the question is, well, if you had a godly leader in the past and God anointed them and did good things, how do you honor that? How do you honor the founder, but how do you have a future? And usually what happens in succession, they honor the founder or the future. Some churches, ministries, denominations, networks, it's like they're museums. Some businesses, here's our founder, and here's what we used to do, and here's when we used to have plans and vision and God showed up. It's like, well that's great, but do we have any future? Other organizations, they just sort of dishonor, disrespect, disregard the founder. Like we're gonna move on, new vision, new leadership. Now what about the past and all the things that got done? And in a church or a ministry, this dishonors the older saints who gave and served faithfully to get us to that point of opportunity. And so I talked about honoring the founder and honoring the future. And they received that word and God has been gracious, it's going great. But true or false, Elisha honors the founder and the future. He honors Elijah and everything that God has done and the future. Every church, every ministry is one generation away from the end of their work for the Lord. And so it's raising up the next generation and handing off the baton. The key here is how the senior leader is chosen in the process of succession. So number one, who picked Elisha? Well, God did. If you remember the story, he was just plowing a field and Elijah came along and he's a man of God and he loves the Lord. And God calls him, who's the other person that calls him? It's Elijah, the senior leader, the founder. And then it's confirmed by Elisha. He's like, I believe God is calling me to this. And then it's also confirmed by the 50 other men who call him master and bow down and honor his leadership. Some of you have been in church for a long time and one of the worst things that we do in the church is succession. And usually there's a board, not a father. And what happens with

the board is they treat the founder or the father like an employee. He comes to an age where they fire him or retire him. And then they have a long gap before they choose another leader. And they form a committee. Lemme just say this, God so loved the world that he didn't send a committee. Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher, I'm way off my notes, but he said one time, he said, "I love committees. The best one is three men, two of whom stay home," and so... And so what happens is then they form a committee and then the committee spends a few years arguing over what the ideal candidate would look like. And by the end, Jesus wouldn't even qualify 'cause he offends people and wears sandals. And then what they do, then they start interviewing people. And during this entire process, the family has no father. The church family has no leader and they're like, where are we going? What are we doing? What is the plan? And then they hire somebody and it's like, well, they're a total stranger, we don't even know them. I took a break from ministry and I got a call from a church and they said, "Hey, we'd like you to candidate to be our next senior pastor." I was like, "I'm not really looking for a job." And this was before we planted Trinity. And I had a bit of a spicy conversation. That's why I didn't get the job. But I'll share it with you. They said, "We're looking to hire a new senior pastor." I said, "Well, what happened to the old senior pastor?" They said, "Well, we've removed him from staff." I said, "Did he disqualify himself?" They're like, "No, he's a good guy. He loves the lord. He planted the church. He served for decades. You know, we just decided that his time was done and now our committee is doing a search." I said, "Is he part of the committee?" They said, "No." I said, "That's very dishonoring if he's a good man." I said, "Why doesn't he get to at least have a voice, let alone a vote, in who the next father of this church family is?" And I asked, "Is there anybody on the committee that's ever been a pastor?" They said, "No." And I said, literally, I said, "I've flown in planes, but I don't feel like that qualifies me to pick pilots."

- [Congregation Member] Amen.

- Right, like I've been on a plane, I don't know anything about being a pilot. Right, you've been in the church, but you know anything about being the leader. I was like, "So nobody on the committee's ever been a pastor, let alone a senior pastor? The one guy who's done it for decades, he doesn't get to be a part of the decision." I said, "No, I can't take the job." I said, "If you're gonna treat the leader that way, why in the world would I wanna be the leader?"

- That's right.

- Amen.

- I said, "In a healthy church, what should happen is like a healthy family, the senior leader goes from dad to grandpa." I'm in that process. We've got grandkids on the way. And so my open prayer and goal is someday, like I'm dad, and then someday there's a new dad. And I'm grandpa. And grandpa gets to hang out with the kids and love the kids and stand up and say crazy things and we forgive him 'cause he is grandpa. Just so you know, that's where we're going. And so I see ministry, I see ministry in church like a family, like brothers and sisters and older men are like fathers and older women are like mothers, and the church should do things

like a good healthy family. And so what we see here is we see this relationship where, I think it's Chapter 2, Verse 12, Elijah goes up and do you remember what Elisha says? "My father, my father." This is a father-son relationship. This is the best succession by the way. And there are two kinds of fathers. There are physical fathers where dad gives birth to somebody and then there are spiritual fathers. Lemme explain this. Spiritual fathers raising up spiritual sons and physical fathers raising up physical sons is how succession works in the Bible. Lemme talk about physical fathers raising up physical sons to do ministry. In the Old Testament it was called the Levites. These are the priests, and you were born into a family, your whole family did ministry and if you were a son, you were gonna grow up and do ministry. There's a guy who did this, his name is John the Baptizer. He comes in the spirit in power of Elijah. We're gonna talk about him in a moment. His dad was a priest. His mom came from a Levitical family. He was born into a family that they did ministry together. And so it's like, well, how did John learn? He didn't go to bible college. He didn't go to seminary. Like Elijah, he comes out of the woods, but he grew up in a family where they were doing ministry together all the time. And that's great. Other times it's spiritual father, spiritual son. Timothy, Titus, Onesimus are three guys in the New Testament. Paul calls them, "My sons." It's like a father-son relationship. Elisha, again, calls Elijah, "My father." it's a spiritual father-son mentoring relationship. And it's kind of like this, how many of you grew up in a musical family? Any of you grew up in those really musical families? I didn't, I find you fascinating. When I meet these people, I'm like, you know how to play all these instruments, and you guys sing and you got a family band, that's amazing. And you look at those people you're like, "Well, how did you learn all that?" And the answer is, "I don't know. We just, when I was little, they just hand me an instrument. Our family's a music family." Some families are ministry families, like they're just serving Jesus doing stuff. The kids grow up and they're like, "Like how'd you learn to do that?" Well, we just did bible study and prayer and I've been to weddings and funerals and, you know, I've been doing this my whole life. I don't know, it's just, this is what we do, okay? Whether it's physical or spiritual, if it's a father-son, the son then can honor the founder and the future. And what's awesome is the family knows him. You see that? It wasn't like Elijah goes to heaven, there's no work for a few years, a committee hires a total stranger off of Craigslist and now everybody needs to get to know him. They're like, oh, it's Elisha. We've known him. He's been here for years. He's been serving, doing a good job. He'll just pick up where, and Elijah is good with him and we're good with him and God is good with him. And so what happens then is they get lots of time, lemme just explain this to you, so, the Trinity is one God, three persons, Father, Son, and the Spirit. God the Father does ministry with and through God the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. That must mean that the best ministry are physical and/or spiritual fathers doing ministry with and through their physical or spiritual sons by the power of the Holy Spirit. We should just follow God's example for leadership. That's how he does it. That's how we should do it. That's how Elijah and Elisha do it. And what we see is this long handoff in that proverbial box. There's a long period of time where Elijah and Elisha are doing ministry together. So when it's time for Elisha to take over, he knows everybody, everybody knows him. He's up to speed, he knows who the enemies are, he knows what the past is and he knows what the plan is for the future. And so what he gets is impartation. There's a big difference between information and impartation. Information you can get from a podcast, a book, Bible college or seminary. I write books, I give away podcasts. I've

got a master's degree in Bible. I'm a big fan of information. I've got a giant library. But you can't do ministry unless you also get impartation. And what that is in the New Testament, Paul talks about the laying on of hands. What that means is somebody's close enough that you're doing life and relationship together 'cause all ministry's relational. And at the end of the day, what Elisha asked for is, I need impartation. I need a double portion of the Holy Spirit to do this thing that God has called me to do once you depart. And so impartation only comes from someone who you know and then they lay their hand on you and God the Holy Spirit comes down and anoints and appoints you to do spirit-filled ministry. That's what happens here. The problem in our day, we think that information qualifies a leader. Information begins the qualifying process. Impartation is what finalizes the process. Just because you went to school doesn't mean anything. If you don't have the spirit, you're not gonna do the job. And so what we see here, impartation. And what happens at this moment, Elisha goes from number two to number one, I love this, his name means God says, and he's called a man of God. Up until the day that Elijah goes to heaven, Elijah's the number one, Elisha's the number two. He's the secondary leader and he's okay with that. He doesn't nominate himself to be the number one leader. He doesn't push to be in the first position. What we see in Elisha is humility and patience. What he's saying is, you know what? I love Elijah. I love what he's doing. He needs trustworthy help and a friend. I'm gonna support him and do all I can, but I'm very comfortable being in the passenger seat, not the driver's seat. And this is humility. And humility allows you to take a lesser position, because you care more about the ministry and the people and the leader than yourself. Lemme explain this to you, it says this in the New Testament, "God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble." So humble yourself and when it's your time, he'll lift you up. This is Elisha's time. He's been humble and he's been patient and now God's going to lift him up. The converse of this is a guy in the New Testament named Diotrephes. He's in 3 John 9. He only gets mentioned once in the Bible. And I'm guessing when he heard, hey, you know, they came out with a new book of the Bible and you made it, woo, woo! I did? Yeah, they mentioned you, really? What'd they say? It says Diotrephes always had to be first, ah. Every time there's a meeting, he's like, "I wanna be at the head of the table." Every time there's an org chart, "I have to be at the top." Every time there is an award, I need to make sure that I get one. Every time that there's a compliment, I need to make sure that I'm complimented first. Every time something good happens, I need to share in the credit. You know, where my office is and where I'm at on the org chart and what my title is, it really matters a lot to me 'cause I have to be first. And what happens is oftentimes those who are most qualified to be the senior leader have the humility and willingness to not be the senior leader. I'll give you another example. The first time that there was an associate that wanted to be the senior was Satan. In heaven, God was the senior leader and the angels were the associate leaders. They're in the number two position. Satan decided, "I wanna be the number one." And he got some demons, they were at the time angels, but they joined in the rebellion. And he said, "I've got a plan. We've been number two. I think we should be number one. I think that we should replace God as the senior leader." The heart of Satan is that he has to be first. And Jesus comes as a humble servant. And he doesn't come to be served, but to serve. And he takes the lower lesser position, unlike Satan. Well, what happens here is Elisha goes on, and this is so encouraging. He has a 60-year faithful, fruitful ministry run, 60 years. He preaches, he teaches. God uses him to perform miracles. He

fights demons. He argues with the government. He's our guy. Okay, someday maybe I'll do another series on Elisha. It's really incredible. But how fantastic would it be if there was an incredible ministry that after the founder and father is gone, it was another 60 years and they didn't veer off course? How many denominations and networks and churches, you're like, you went liberal, you went woke, you gave up on the gospel, you started editing the word of God instead of declaring the word of God. We live in a day when there is an entire generation of people who are not returning to church and it's because the church has abandoned them.

- [Congregation Member] That's right.

- If you have given to a church and it veers off course, if you have served a church and it veered off course, if you have committed to a church, but they have not committed to the word of God, why should you be committed to a place that is not committed to him?

- That's right.

- Amen.

- And this is what's going on in our world. What I love about Elisha, 60 years. Everybody that gave and served, boom, it was all an investment and they just kept it rolling. That's my heart in prayer for everything that we are doing. Lastly, he is mentioned by Jesus in Luke 4:27. He speaks of the prophet Elisha. I mean, I'm telling you, when Jesus names you in a positive way, that is well done, good and faithful servant. Just tangentially too. So Elijah goes to heaven. And then I wanna hit my next point. There's always more points, by the way, if you're new. So Elijah goes to heaven without dying. Enoch went to heaven without dying. Jesus died, rose, went to heaven. We tend to think of heaven as this place where disembodied spirits dwell until the resurrection of the dead. But there are at least three people right now in heaven in a body, Enoch, Elijah, and Jesus. Somebody asked me, they're like, how's that work? I have no idea. I went to public school. I can't wait to see for myself. So what happens is Elijah goes up, but the spirit of Elijah continues to do ministry. His name is the Holy Spirit. And what we've looked at in our study of Elijah is that we have new days, but old demons. That demons in every epoch of history do the same anti-ministry through different people. But the good news is the Holy Spirit is also at work in every generation. And so what we see is that Elijah goes up, but the ministry of Elijah continues. So the spirit of Elijah came with John. I wanna look at Elijah, even after he goes to heaven, through the remainder of scripture in our remaining time together. Malachi 4:5, this is the end of the Old Testament. There's 400 years of silence between this prophecy and the coming of our Savior Jesus. We dealt with this last week in Father's Day, more fathers, less government. But here's what he says, "I will send you," who, who's coming? Elijah, the prophet, before the Lord comes. So Jesus is coming. But before Jesus comes, Elijah needs to come to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. There is a dual fulfillment in this prophecy. A prophecy is where God predicts and anticipates the future because he rules and controls it. Okay, lemme say this, the future is not open, it's closed. It's not uncertain, it's certain. I'll give you a weird analogy that comes to mind. How many of you are sports fans, like me? I like sports. I like

baseball, basketball, football. I like mixed martial arts. I'm a sports fan. How many of you, how many of you have ever seen like ESPN Classics, okay? When you watch a game, are you pretty amped if it's your team and it's a big moment? Yeah, usually pretty emotional. How 'bout ESPN Classics? Little more chill, why? 'Cause you know the outcome. The game was 20 years ago. And if you are on the edge of your seat, you're a strange person, okay? Like, oh my gosh, are the Celtics gonna win? They did, you know? And so for God, everything is ESPN Classics, nothing.

- [Congregation Member] Ah.

- Ah. This guy just got delivered, okay, so... For God, everything is ESPN Classics. Now for us it feels like it's open, but for him it's closed. And so prophecy is where God says here's what's gonna happen. And so with the coming of Jesus, it's prepared and preceded by the coming of Elijah. And then I'll show ya, the second coming of Jesus is also preceded by the coming of Elijah. Before Jesus comes the first time and the second time, Elijah precedes him. So then Matthew 17:10 through 13. So Jesus comes, "And the disciples asked, 'Why do the scribes,' the Bible nerds, "'why do they say that Elijah must come?'" Because Malachi said he was coming. "He answered, 'Elijah has already come.' And they did not recognize him. Then the disciples understood, ah, he was talking about John the Baptist or John the Baptizer." He comes in the spirit and power of Elijah. He has the prophetic ministry of troublemaking, same as Elijah. Just think about it, he fights with the government, they put a death sentence on him. He does miracles. He lives in the woods. He wears camels' hair and a leather vest, or a belt rather. And the dude looks like he's homeless and dangerous. So he actually looks and he fulfills the ministry of Elijah. And then Luke 1:17, "John the Baptizer came," quote, in the spirit," that's the Holy Spirit, "and power," that's the holy Spirit's power, "of Elijah." Then Jesus lives without sin, dies for our sin. But before he returns to heaven and goes up, what's really shocking is Elijah comes down. I'll read this to you. So Elijah goes up and then Jesus comes down. And then one day Elijah comes down to hang out with Jesus. I'll read it to you, Matthew 17: 1 through 3, "Jesus took with him Peter, James and John." This is his inner circle of three disciples. These are like his three Elishas. "And John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured." He came in humility, but here he is revealed in divine glory. And his face shown like the sun and his clothes became white as light and, behold, there appeared to them," two dudes, "Moses and Elijah." This is an amazing moment. Number one, it proves that there's life after death. Elijah goes to heaven and Moses died. So Elijah did not taste death and Moses did. And they come back down. They're like, Hey, we were in heaven hanging out. Jesus said it was, you know, come visit day. It was an amazing moment, right? And Peter's there and Peter's always really good, foot, mouth, foot, mouth, foot, mouth. Dude's super flexible and he is like, "Hey, let's make tents and everybody just stay here." And Jesus is like, "Actually we gotta go down the mountain and do some more stuff. So no, Peter, good idea. But here what happens is Elijah comes down to meet with Jesus. What an amazing moment. And Moses and Elijah are considered by the Jewish people to be the greatest prophets. And so little kids growing up, for them, Moses and Elijah were like superheroes. They're like The Avengers. They would dress up as them and like 'cause they kinda have these superhuman powers. Moses can

turn a river to blood, split a sea and bring about plagues. They're like, that's awesome. And then Elijah would like, "I call fire down from heaven and I can make it rain or make it not rain. That's what I do and I can raise dead people and I go to heaven in a chariot." So kids growing up, they literally just thought of Moses and Elijah like we would superheroes. So then where we find ourselves, Elijah ministered a thousand years before the coming of Jesus. He goes up, Jesus comes down. Elijah comes down for a momentary meeting on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Moses. And where we are at now in human history, we're waiting for the second coming of, not just Jesus but Elijah. Before the second coming of Jesus is the second coming of Elijah. You need to know that Elijah's ministry's not done. God has one final assignment for him in the last days. That brings us to the Book of Revelation where the second coming of Elijah prepares for the second coming of Jesus. Again, Elijah comes first and then Jesus and then Elijah comes first and Jesus comes again. Revelation 11, this is the moment, friends. What we're doing now, we are peering into the future. And I don't know how far this future is. This future could be very near or it could be very far. But what we're waiting for is Elijah. I'll say this too before we get there. How many of you are Jewish or you're Jewish ancestry or history, okay? For my Jewish friends or those who come from Jewish background, what's interesting is they confuse the first and second coming of Jesus. So they don't understand that God, the Messiah Savior already came, so they're waiting for him to come, but they don't understand he came the first time in humility, comes the second time in glory. He comes the first time to die, he comes the second time to raise the dead. And so what they do, they have something called the Passover. And Passover is the celebration that finds its origination all the way back in the days of Moses in the Book of Exodus where God wanted to deliver His people and so he told them, take a lamb without spot or blemish and sacrifice it and then literally paint the doorpost of your home with the blood of the lamb. And then death will come to the firstborn son in every household with the exception of those who are literally covered by the blood of the lamb. All that points to Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, John the Baptizer says. And Christ our Passover lamb who was slain, says the Apostle Paul. Just hang with me, I'm verbal processing, I'm gonna get to to a point, I'm off my notes. And so what happens is they start celebrating the Passover meal at that moment when the wrath of God passed over them 'cause they're covered by the blood of the lamb. To this day, in the Seder Passover meal, two things happen that are very curious. For those who are my Jewish friends, is the door open or closed? It's open and at the table there's always one additional cup that is poured for a special guest, Elijah. To this day, every year at the Passover Seder, Jewish people, whether they know Elijah was serving Jesus or not and whether or not they know Jesus, they're like, we leave the door open and we pour a cup just in case Elijah wants to come. And the Jewish people are waiting for Elijah. Well, he came as John the Baptizer to prepare the way for Jesus. And Elijah is coming again to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus. And so what we're waiting for is the second coming, not just of Jesus, but Elijah. Back to my point, Revelation 11, God says, "I will grant authority to my two witnesses." The Bible talks repeatedly, as does the Lord Jesus, in places like Matthew 18, about two or three witnesses. Here, there are two human witnesses and there's one divine witness. Two human witnesses and the Holy Spirit. So that's the two or three witnesses, "And they will prophesy or preach for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth." This shows repentance, remorse, and regret. This is coming before the Lord saying, you're right, I'm wrong,

you're good, I'm bad. I'm sorry, "They have the power to shut the sky." Who does that sound like? That sounds like Elijah, "That no rain may fall during their prophesy." That sounds exactly like Elijah, "And they have the power over the waters to turn them into blood." That sounds like Moses in the days of the Exodus, "And to strike the earth with every kind of plague." That sounds like Moses who brings plagues, "When they have finished their testimony, the beast," and there's a counterfeit demonic trinity, the beast, the false prophet, and the antichrist. The Father, Son, and Spirit are the real Trinity. The beast, the false prophet and the antichrist are the counterfeit trinity. And every time that God is doing ministry, Satan is doing anti-ministry. This is literally antichrist. It's removing Christ and replacing Christ with the demonic. It's the exact same battle that was waged in the days of Elijah through the Ahab and Jezebel spirits at work in the nation of Israel. "The beast that rises from the bottomless pit," he literally comes up from hell, "will make war on them and conquer them and kill them and their bodies will lie in the street." We're awaiting this. This is coming, friends. This is more assured, this is more assured than anything you are preparing for tomorrow. I feel inclined in the spirit to say this, whatever you have on your calendar tomorrow may or may not happen. This is going to happen no matter what. The Bible, when it was written, 25% of its writing was prophetic and prophecies have been fulfilled and there are a few remaining. And those are promises under God's authority. When God makes a promise in Revelation, I just remember, it says that it was sealed up. And what that means is it's fixed and unchanging. It is certain to occur. There will be no editing of God's plan. We're awaiting this moment in history and it's coming, I promise you it's coming. "Their bodies will lie in the street. For three and a half days, peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb. And they will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents." They will murder, Satan and the demonic, will murder the two witnesses and the earth will throw a global holiday. Right now the biggest global holiday is Christmas. This will supersede Christmas as the great global holiday. Everyone will take time off of work and they will exchange gifts and they will celebrate the murder of the two prophets, the witnesses of God. "But after three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them and they stood up on their feet," resurrected from the dead. This is the beginning of our rising. This is the anticipating of Jesus coming. And great fear came upon those who saw them. It had to be a moment. They're like, "You need to repent. Jesus is Lord, I kill you." And then they get back up and they're like, "I told you so." You're like, oh, boy. I shoulda listened the first time." What a moment this is. "They heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Come up here.'" Just like Elijah went up, "'Come up here.' And they went to heaven in a cloud and their enemies watched them. There was then a great earthquake and a 10th of the city fell," they died. "7,000 people were killed in the earthquake and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven." What we see here is that progressivism is a lie. Progressivism is that we're good and we're getting better. If we could just unshackle from tradition, God, scripture, external authority and just be and do what we want to do and who we want to be, then we would evolve. It's this progressive evolutionary myth that I am good and getting better and we are good and doing better. And just give us time, give us education, give us money, give us pride, give us high self-esteem. And we don't need Jesus to come back and make heaven. We can make heaven ourselves through our own progress. And it's a demonic lie. And the truth is that our progress is external. It is not internal. We can go to the moon. We can look through a microscope and see

the stars. We can look, through rather a telescope, and see the stars. We can look through a microscope and we can see incredible detail of God's creation. Make no mistake, our progress is external, but it's not internal. Our hearts are no more humble, our souls are no more pure, and our minds are no more truthful than anyone who has gone before us. And the myth of evolution is contradicted by the truth of revelation that God waits patiently and it gets so demonic and so dark and so despicable that when God sends two preachers, he has to protect them for more than three years. And when he removes his protection, the entire earth murders them, celebrates their murder, calls a holiday, and shares gifts and presents. That's the human heart unrestrained and unvarnished. And these two witnesses, there's a debate over who they are. I'll just hit this briefly. Some say it's Elijah and Moses. Others say it's Elijah and Enoch. Most people, Bible teachers believe at least one of these guys is Elijah. He never died. The question then is, well, who's the second guy? And some would argue it's Moses, 'cause this dude makes plagues and splits the water. Others would say, no, actually it's probably Enoch 'cause there was only two guys that didn't die. So if they're gonna come back and get killed, it would make sense, it's those two guys. The argument for Enoch is this, I think it's in Hebrews 9:27. It says, "It's appointed, once to die, then judgment," that everybody dies once. Well, Enoch and Elijah didn't die, so they come back, they preach, they get killed, that's their death. Those who would argue for Moses, they're like, actually, you know, the river to blood, the plagues, that's Moses. And they would say, remember at the Mount of Transfiguration, who came down? Moses and Elijah. The question is, who is it? We'll see, we'll see. And it's going to happen. Now what is interesting is the entire earth, we are told, sees their dead bodies in the street and they don't bury them. For three days, everyone is celebrating, oh, they're dead. Good, lemme see it again. True or false, it feels like our culture is getting that dark. And Pastor Jimmy Evans, my pastor, was here some months ago and he made an interesting observation. He said, "This is the first time in the history of the world that this prophecy can be fulfilled." That if people from every nation are looking on the dead bodies, how in the world can they gaze upon the dead bodies? Technology has now made that possible. Now through television and the internet and live streaming and social media platforms and the smartphone, the whole world, people from all the nations can simultaneously gaze on the dead bodies of the murdered witnesses. This prophecy is for the first time in our history able to be fulfilled. And it's interesting because there are now 8 billion people on the earth. In 1900, it was only a billion. And the thought of billions of people going to one place, that was impossible. But now technology, broadcasting to old people from one place, is now possible. And what's interesting too is it says that they're witnesses. And I was thinking about this today. When God does something, he has witnesses, because God is always just. Imagine these two witnesses, having been in heaven, in the presence of God for thousands of years. No lies, only truth, no death, only life, no demons, only angels, no darkness, only light, no sickness, only health. No poverty, only prosperity. And then Jesus looks at them and says, "It's time to go back." See, you and I, we don't understand how dark this world is 'cause we're always in it. How many of you have turned off your phone for a week, turned it on, and you realize, oh my gosh, I was poisoning my soul every day. How many of you go on vacation in the woods and then you come back to the city and you're like, oh my gosh. Once you get out of it, you see it. Once you've been out of it for a few thousand years and all you've seen is the glory and goodness of God. And now human history has gotten as dark and depraved and demonic

as possible, and you enter back in, they are witnesses to the corrupt, evil nature of humanity. This is like the days of Noah when everyone was only doing evil all the time. And, friends, we're getting near that day. Now I don't know when that day is coming, but it is closer than it was yesterday. And I'll close with this. This is what inspired me to write "New Days, Old Demons." When I sat down, I just, as I was praying for us and this series way back in December, I just kept hearing in my spirit Jesus' words, "These are the beginning of the birth pains." And what Jesus says is that the end of human history is like a woman giving birth. And I was there when our five children were born. And what happens when a woman prepares to give birth, it's discomfort, it's pain, it's difficulty, it's laborious. But as she gets closer to the birth, what happens? The pain is with greater frequency and intensity until the contractions start. And then it's just overwhelming pain. And then the pain increases until the woman feels like she's dying and then she births new life. The way that you were born is the way that history will be reborn. As we enter into the last days, what we are now feeling and sensing is the birth pains. As you look at our culture, you're like, how much longer can we go? How many wars can we wage? How many dollars can we waste? How many children can we mutilate? How many babies can we murder? How many lies can we tell? How many things can we steal? How many people can we traumatize before it's over? It's the birth pains. But let me say this, our God has a plan. Our God knows exactly what he is doing. Our God knows exactly when he is coming. And the same God who delivered Elijah ultimately promises to deliver us. And just as he brought Elijah into the kingdom of God, our king promises to bring us into the kingdom of God. And I will close with this. Here's the process. There's a remnant. It was Elijah and Elisha and 50 guys. And then in the last days, it's the two witnesses and a few believers. It's just a remnant. Friend, I want you to be part of that remnant, be a true believer, remain filled with the spirit and loyal to the Lord, no matter what the price. Keep talking about Jesus, no matter whether they cancel you or crucify you, just continue to testify. And what we see in the days of Elijah and we see in the days of Revelation with the second coming of Elijah, that remnant then becomes a revival. There's a massive outpouring of God's spirit and many are saved and come to trust in Jesus. And suddenly the number of people who love the Lord increases. So it's a remnant and then a revival, and then the return. And that's what we saw in Revelation. There's a remnant that preaches, there's a revival that saved and then there's the return of Jesus. I'm telling you this, friends, this is the day in which we live. Father, thank you for an opportunity to study your word and to teach it. Holy Spirit, I pray that you would take the preaching of your word and you would use it to glorify yourself and to do good for the people. God, we thank you that history is not open, it's closed. We thank you that there is a plan and our king is over that plan. God, we thank you that just as demons were working in every age, the Holy Spirit is working in our day as well. Lord, I pray against the enemy of servants, their works and effects. I pray that we all would have the Spirit of Elijah and I pray, God, for our last day, that would be our greatest day. That we would be prepared to stand before the Lord Jesus every day. And, Lord Jesus, we may die and see you, or we may see Elijah come before we die. And, Lord, just give us the grace to live by your spirit as that remnant, seeking that revival until we see the return of Jesus in whose name we pray, amen.