
BIBLE STUDY—THE THREE ELIJAHS

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Elijah has always been someone of renown and interest. There are two famous prophets that come later who are called by his name – John the Baptizer and the last Elijah. The last Elijah precedes the return of Jesus Christ so it meshes with the Feast of Ingathering—Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles. Understanding the work of the first and second Elijahs provides clues to the work of the last Elijah.

2) THE FIRST ELIJAH (ELIJAH THE TISHBITE)

- a) So who was Elijah the Tishbite?
- b) Elijah was born in Tishbe in the region of Gilead across the Jordan River southeast of the Sea of Gallilee. The Bible tells us very little of Elijah and lists no lineage or history of his life except for a brief account in 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 2. It begins with Elijah bringing a message to Ahab, king of the northern tribes, that God would bring a drought upon the land that was so severe that not even dew would fall. The story continues and describes how God took care of Elijah during the drought. Several miracles are mentioned including the healing and resurrection of the son of a widow that provided food for him. Afterwards, Elijah returns to Ahab to announce the end of the drought. It is at this time that Elijah tests the powers of Ahab's priests of Baal and Asherah against the priests of God. The death of the Baal priests enrages Jezebel, Ahab's wife, and she vowed to kill him.
- c) Elijah then fled to Beersheba in Judah where he was fed by an angel. Afterwards, he traveled for forty days and forty nights without food to Mount Horeb, where God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. At this point in his life, Elijah is frustrated and worn out so God sends him on a mission to anoint the next kings of Syria and Judah as well as to Elisha, his replacement. His final mission begins with an encounter with Ahab over the murder of Naboth for his vineyard and then to bring news to Ahaziah, Ahab's son, of his impending death for calling upon the priests of Baal instead of God for healing. Elijah then vanishes from the scene except for a letter that he later sent from his place of retirement to Jehoram, king of the southern tribes in Judah.
- d) ELIJAH WAS A PROPHET:
 - i) 1 KINGS 18:22 Then Elijah said to the people, "**I alone am left [remain] a prophet of the LORD**; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.
- e) COMMISSION #1—WARNING TO ISRAEL:
 - i) 1 KINGS 18:17-18, 20-21 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "*Is that* you, O troubler of Israel?" 18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, in that **you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD** and have followed the Baals. ... 20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? **If the LORD is God, follow Him**; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.
 - 1) Elijah warned all the people of the northern tribes of Israel including Ahab, their king, against FORSAKING THE LAW OF GOD.

f) COMMISSION #2—WARNING TO JUDAH:

- i) 2 CHRONICLES 21:6-15 And **he [Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat] walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab** had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and **he did evil in the sight of the LORD**. 7 Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. 8 In his days Edom revolted against Judah's authority, and made a king over themselves. 9 So Jehoram went out with his officers, and all his chariots with him. And he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots. 10 Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah's authority to this day. At that time Libnah revolted against his rule, because **he [Jehoram] had forsaken the LORD God** of his fathers. 11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray. 12 And **a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet**, saying, Thus says the LORD God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, *who were better than yourself*, 14 behold, **the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction**—your children, your wives, and all your possessions; 15 and you *will become* very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.

- 1) Elijah warned all the people of Judah including Jehoram, their king, against FORSAKING THE LAW OF GOD in a letter he sent from his place of retirement because Judah followed after the sins of Israel.

g) SUMMARY OF THE FIRST ELIJAH

- i) 1 KINGS 18:22: A prophet of God.
ii) 1 KINGS 18:17-18, 20-21: Warned Israel of punishments for forsaking the covenant.
iii) 2 CHRONICLES 21:6-15: Warned Judah of punishments for forsaking the covenant.

3) **THE SECOND ELIJAH—JOHN THE BAPTIZER**

a) PROPHECY OF A SECOND ELIJAH:

- i) MALACHI 3:1 "Behold, **I [the LORD of hosts] send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me [Matt. 11:4, 9-10]**. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even **the Messenger of the covenant [Jesus Christ]**, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

- 1) This scripture is well after the lifetime of the First Elijah (the Tishbite). Both "messengers" are referred to in a future tense.
2) The first messenger prepared the way for the Messenger of the Covenant (Jesus Christ) who preached a Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God, was sacrificed for mankind's sins, and established a New Covenant. After His resurrection, Jesus became the Mediator of that covenant (1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 8:6). His second coming will not be to bring a message **about** the New Covenant but to ESTABLISH it.

- ii) The messenger who prepares the way is BOTH a prophecy of John the Baptizer (confirmed in Matt. 11:4, 9-10) and the end-time Elijah as we will see.

b) THE SECOND ELIJAH = JOHN THE BAPTIZER

- i) MATTHEW 17:10-13 And His [*Jesus Christ's*] disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” 11 Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 12 “But I say to you that **Elijah has come already, and they did not know him** but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that **He spoke to them of John the Baptist.**

- 1) The second Elijah was John the Baptizer.

c) JOHN THE BAPTIZER WAS A PROPHET:

- i) MATTHEW 11:7-14 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning **John**: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 “But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings’ houses. 9 “But what did you go out to see? **A prophet? Yes**, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 10 “For this is *he* of whom it is written: ‘Behold, **I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You [Mal. 3:1].**’ 11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 “And **if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.**

- 1) Jesus Christ confirmed that John the Baptizer was both a prophet and the “Elijah” prophesied to come during His days on earth (Mal. 3:1).

d) INSET—THE TRANSFIGURATION

- i) Why did Jesus say “if you are willing to receive it”? To understand this, skip forward to the transfiguration:
 - 1) MATTHEW 17:1-6, 9-10 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and **Elijah appeared** to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for **Elijah.**” 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” 6 And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ... 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.” 10 And His [*Jesus Christ's*] disciples asked Him, saying, “**Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?**”
- ii) The transfiguration finally FULLY convinced the disciples that Jesus was the Messiah. However, they knew that Elijah was prophesied to precede the Messiah. When they finally understood that Jesus was the Messiah, they asked why Elijah

had not yet come. They did not realize that John the Baptizer fulfilled that role until Jesus said:

- 1) MATTHEW 17:12-13 “But I say to you that **Elijah has come already, and they did not know him** but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that **He spoke to them of John the Baptist.**
- iii) Earlier, in Matthew 11:14, when Jesus told them that John the Baptizer was the prophesied Elijah the disciples still did not fully believe Jesus was the Messiah. By naming John the Baptizer as the Elijah, Jesus was saying HE was the Messiah! That is why he said “if you are willing to receive it.”
- e) COMMISSION—TURN THE HEARTS, PREPARE A PEOPLE, ETC.
 - i) LUKE 1:11-17 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him [*Zacharias, father of John the Baptizer*], standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw *him [the angel]*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name **John**. 14 “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. 16 “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 “**He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children [Mal. 4:5],’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”
 - 1) The ministry of John the Baptizer preceded the ministry of Jesus Christ. He baptized many people and prepared them for baptism with the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) John the Baptizer may have been a Nazarite (v. 15).
 - ii) LUKE 1:67-79 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who *have been* since the world began, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, 72 to perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers and **to remember His holy covenant**, 73 the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. 76 “And **you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins**, 78 through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, **to guide our feet into the way of peace.**”
 - 1) John the Baptizer taught the people of salvation through remission of sins in the New Covenant sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - 2) The “way of peace” is a reference to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that makes peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

iii) MATTHEW 3:1-12 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”** 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: **‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight //sa. 40:3/’** 4 Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were **baptized by him** in the Jordan, **confessing their sins**. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 “Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, 9 “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 **“I indeed baptize you with water** unto repentance, but **He who is coming after me** is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**. 12 “His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

1) John the Baptizer preached of Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. His commission prepared people to receive Jesus as The Christ. Think of it this way. Before the president comes to a city, the city receives notice of the coming visit and prepares for his visit. The people of the city are notified so that they can come and hear what he says.

iv) John the Baptizer taught the people of repentance of sins and a water baptism for the remission of sins, prophesied of the coming Holy Spirit, and warned of a fiery destruction for the unrepentant. THIS MESSAGE WAS COMPLETELY UNIQUE TO THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES! These are all components of the NEW COVENANT.

v) Elijah the Tishbite was a prophet of God who warned Israel of God’s punishments for FORSAKING THE COVENANT. Like the first Elijah, John the Baptizer warned the people against FORSAKING THE NEW COVENANT. But he also prepared the people to accept and receive the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

f) SUMMARY OF THE SECOND ELIJAH (JOHN THE BAPTIZER)

i) MATT. 11:9: A prophet of God;

ii) MATT. 3:3; 11:10; LUKE 1:16-17: Prepared people for the Messenger of the Covenant (Jesus Christ), turned many to God, turned the hearts of fathers to the children (teaching The Law), turned the disobedient to righteousness,

iii) MATT. 3:1-12: Preached a message of repentance, baptized with water, and prophesied of a baptism with the Holy Spirit;

iv) LUKE 1:72: Preached a message to remember the covenant;

v) LUKE 1:76-77: Preached of salvation through repentance and remission of sins;

vi) LUKE 1:79: Preached of the way of peace (a covenant).

4) THE THIRD ELIJAH (END-TIME)

- a) MATTHEW 17:11 Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, **Elijah is coming first** and will restore all things.
- i) While answering the disciples about Elijah preceding Him, Jesus makes an interesting and almost unnoticed comment. The phrase “Elijah **shall** indeed COME” prophesies of a Third Elijah that is still yet to come. John the Baptizer was dead at this time so the text is clearly future tense.
- b) COMMISSION—RESTORE ALL THINGS
- c) MATTHEW 17:11 Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and **will restore all things**.
- i) What will he restore?
- 1) MALACHI 4:4-5 “**Remember [be mindful of] the Law of Moses**, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *with the statutes and judgments.* 5 Behold, **I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD [Luke 1:17]**.
- a) Malachi is speaking to Israel and prophesies of a future Third Elijah that will precede the “Day of the LORD”.
- b) His message will be to REMEMBER THE LAW!
- ii) MALACHI 4: 6 And **he [the Third Elijah] will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”
- 1) What does it mean to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers? The answer is in the book of Luke, where John the Baptizer is said to have done the same thing:
- a) LUKE 1:13, 16-17 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name **John**. ... 16 “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 “**He will also go before Him [Jesus Christ] in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children [Mal. 4:5],’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”
- 2) “Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children” is accompanied by the statement “and *the* disobedient to *the* wisdom of *the* righteous.” The Third Elijah will turn people back to the covenant by teaching them to obey the Law of God (“REMEMBER the law of Moses ...”).
- iii) This is an indirect reference to an OT Scripture about The Law, the hearts of the people, and teaching children that would have been familiar to the disciples:
- 1) DEUTERONOMY 4:8-9 “And what great nation *is there* that has **such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law** which I set before you this day? 9 “Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and **lest they depart from your heart** all the days of your life. And **teach them to your children and your grandchildren**,
- iv) Like John the Baptizer that came before Jesus Christ in the flesh, and the Third Elijah will come before His return and “turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and

the heart of the sons to their fathers,” a reference to having The Law written in the hearts of the fathers who then teach their children of The Law of God.

- v) The Third Elijah will also have a message for the rescued captives after the Day of the LORD:
- 1) ISAIAH 40:1-5 “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. 2 “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her **warfare [time of hard service] is ended**, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” 3 **The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for [or to—YLT] our God. [Matt. 3:3; John 1:23]** 4 Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; 5 the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”
 - a) The word WARFARE needs some explanation:
 - i) (Albert Barnes Notes on Isa 40:1) The Hebrew word [*for warfare*] properly means an army or host and is usually applied to an army going forth to war, or marshalled for battle. It is then used to **denote an appointed time of service**; the discharge of a duty similar to an enlistment, and is applied to the services of the Levites in the tabernacle. Hence, it is applied to human life contemplated as a warfare, or enlistment, **involving hard service and calamity**; an enlistment from which there is to be a discharge by death. ... The word then means **hard service**, such as soldiers endure; **an appointed time** which they are to serve; an enlistment **involving hardships, toil, privation, danger, calamity. In this sense it is applied here to Jerusalem - to the trials, calamities, desolations to which she was subjected for her sins, and which were to endure a definite and fixed time - like the enlistment of an army.** That time was now coming to an end, and to be succeeded by a release, or discharge.
 - 1) Other Bibles translate warfare as *time of trouble* (BBE), *punishment* (CEV), *suffering* (GNB), *hard labor* (GW), *time of service* (JPS), and *served her sentence* (MSG).
 - ii) Warfare or time of appointed service refers to the Tribulation, a time when God punishes Israel for disobedience.
 - 2) The voice of one crying in the wilderness is the end-time Third Elijah. He delivers a message of hope to the remnant that survives the Tribulation and the Day of the LORD.
- vi) What is the road?
- 1) ISAIAH 11:16 **There will be a highway for the remnant of His people** who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.
 - a) The highway is the road to Jerusalem where Jesus Christ will be waiting after His return for the remnant.
 - 2) ISAIAH 35:3-10 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *with* the recompense of God; **He will come and save**

you.” 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. 7 The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, *there shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. 8 **A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.** The unclean shall not pass over it, but it *shall be* for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall *any* ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But **the redeemed [ransomed] shall walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion [Jerusalem]** with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

- a) The highway is for the captives rescued after the Tribulation and Day of the LORD to walk as they journey to Jerusalem where Jesus Christ will be waiting. It will be called the Highway of Holiness.
- d) SUMMARY OF THE THIRD ELIJAH
 - i) MATT. 17:11: Will restore all things;
 - ii) MAL. 4:4-6: Preaches a message to remember The Law. Turns the heart of fathers to the children and the heart of children to their fathers (teaching The Law);
 - iii) ISA. 40:1-5: Preaches a message of comfort to the rescued captives that their punishments (Tribulation and Day of the LORD) are over. Prepares them for the highway in the desert to come to Jerusalem into the presence of Jesus Christ.

5) CONCLUSION

- a) John the Baptizer came “in the spirit and power” of the First Elijah. The same will be true of the end-time Third Elijah. All of them have a commission pertaining to a covenant with God. The First Elijah reminded people to remember and not forsake the Old Covenant; the Second Elijah prepared people to receive the New Covenant by the blood Jesus Christ; and the Third Elijah will prepare the remnant who come to Jerusalem to enter into a Covenant of Peace with Jesus Christ. All of them PREPARE people to receive Jesus Christ! (NOTE: The two witnesses brought a warning to rebellious people. The Elijahs are sent to those who are humble.)
- b) But that is just the beginning. After the work of the Third Elijah, the resurrected SAINTS will continue his work to RESTORE ALL THINGS!
 - i) MATTHEW 24:42-47 “**Watch** therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 “Therefore you also **be ready, for the Son of Man is coming** at an hour you do not expect. 45 “Who then is **a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?** 46 “Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 “Assuredly, I say to you that **he will make him ruler over all his goods.**
 - ii) MATTHEW 25:21 “His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, **I will make you ruler over many things.** Enter into the joy of your lord.’

- iii) LUKE 19:17 “And he said to him, ‘Well *done*, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, **have authority over ten [five—v. 19] cities.**’
- c) These are not prophecies AFTER the Great White Throne Judgment. They begin with the events of Yom Kippur and continue into The Millennium. The saints will be shepherds of the future generations of children of GOD!
 - i) JEREMIAH 23:3-4 “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 **“I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,”** says the LORD.
 - ii) JEREMIAH 3:14-15 “Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. 15 **“And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.**

6) MAY GOD’S GRACE AND PEACE BE UPON YOU!