

“ Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.” (1 Kings 18:38)



Serve God, or Baal?

Elijah was a prophet chosen to bring his people to repentance. They had long been divided in their opinions about religion, and many were serving Baal, not the God of Israel.

Elijah challenged all the prophets of Baal to a showdown at Mount Carmel. They could show their power by making a sacrifice to their god; they were to call upon Baal to answer by fire, showing that he accepted their offering. Unfortunately, they worshipped a god of wood and stone; there was no answer from Baal.

Elijah then took his turn, making the task even more difficult by pouring barrels of water all over the offering. Nothing is impossible for the true God of Israel, and He answered by fire, which consumed the offering.

This proved without a doubt that Baal was a false god, those who worshipped him did so in vain.



Who do We Serve?

We have our own struggles with two opinions. We want to serve God, but we also enjoy materialism and serving the flesh. We are double minded and unstable, even as portrayed by James. (James 1:8) John exhorts us:

“ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2: 15-17)

The Lord will again answer by fire. This world is reserved unto fire, a day of judgment against all ungodliness, as described in 2 Peter, chapter 3. Will we be found serving God, or serving the desires of the natural man?



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Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (2 Kings 2:11)

When we read this account about Elijah being taken up in a chariot of fire, we cannot help but wonder what ever became of him.

Elijah was one of God’s special messengers, and his role in God’s plan has left us with more than one mystery.

Where did he go when he left Elisha in a chariot of fire? Will he come again to call his people to repentance, as prophesied by Malachi? (Malachi 4:5-6)

Where didn’t he go?

To be consistent with the revealed Word of God, we can be certain of one thing. He may have been taken up into the atmosphere, but he did not ascend into heaven.

It is now within the experience of man to understand travel into space. A mortal man can be propelled by rocket to the moon and back, but he is still just a man, a dying creature. But no man has ascended into heaven to the throne of God, except for Jesus. We read proof of this in John’s gospel:



“No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man.” (John 3:13 NIV)

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“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” (Psalm 115:16)

No man hath ascended into Heaven

Elijah did not ascend into the heavens. He was taken up from the earth in a chariot of fire, and like Moses, no one knows the location of his grave. Elijah was a mortal man and he certainly died in faith, as all of the worthy men of old, many of whom are mentioned in the 11th Chapter of Hebrews.

Curiously, both Moses and Elijah were chosen to appear in vision, along with Jesus at his transfiguration.

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” (Matthew 17: 1-5)

Moses and Elijah were chosen as representatives of the two great influences in the development of the Nation of Israel. Moses representing **the Law**, and Elijah **the prophets**. The purpose of this vision was clear. The disciples were familiar with the Law and the Prophets and they had great respect for these portions of the Holy Scriptures. But now, they were being instructed to listen to the son of God. His message would be more important than all of the writings from the Old Testament period. The writer to the Hebrews explains this in another way:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

During the Old Testament era, God chose many and diverse ways to communicate to His people. He spoke through dreams and visions unto the prophets, He used the voice of a donkey, He allowed Saul to hear the voice of Samuel after Samuel was dead. Through the power of God, Moses and Elijah, who had been sleeping in the dust for many years, appeared in a vision to the disciples.

Samuel, Moses and Elijah were not raised up for these special visions. God has power much greater than men. Men may dream on occasion of their loved ones who are dead. God can create a vision for men who are wide awake, a vision that is powerful and full of meaning, using images and even the voices of sleeping prophets to enhance the message.

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)

The Return of Elijah?

This message from Malachi is very clear. It is a promise from God that can not be broken. Elijah still had a mission with the Children of Israel. He would visit them and call them to repent.

When would Elijah come? Has he already fulfilled this mission? It has been suggested that this mission for Elijah is still future; that after the resurrection, he will be sent to preach to natural Israel. This view is reasonable and may well be what was intended in Malachi's prophecy. God is not willing that any perish and He will certainly provide opportunity for His people to repent.



John the Baptist?

The other prominent view is that Elijah's mission was fulfilled through John. There is good reason to support this. We read concerning the promised birth of John:

“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1: 13-17)

The Testimony of Jesus

After his transfiguration, Jesus provided his disciples with his answer to these questions: “And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.” (Matthew 17:10-13)