

## Message Two

### **Four Crucial Journeys to Enter into the Ministry of the Age by Closely Following the Minister of the Age with the Vision of the Age**

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 18:21-40; 19:2-12; 2 Kings 2:1-14

- I. Elijah was a minister of the age with the vision for his age (cf. Mal. 4:5-6; Luke 1:13-17, 76-80; Matt. 17:1-13; Rev. 11:3-12); in every age the Lord has special things that He wants to accomplish; He has His own recoveries and His own works to do; the particular recovery and work that He does in one age is the ministry of that age; Elijah's ministry was for him to be an anti-testimony, telling the children of Israel that idolatry is a sin that offends God; when all Israel worshipped idols, Elijah told them that the idols they worshipped were false gods, and only Jehovah was the true God:**
- A. Elijah's name means "My God is Jehovah"; this speaks of his mission and message; he was the most prominent and the most representative of the prophets before the captivity, and he was an overcomer.
  - B. At the time of Elijah all Israel was worshipping Baal, and only Elijah said that Jehovah is God; he was a prophet raised up by God at one of the darkest hours of Israel's sad history, when their desolation and darkness were most severe; the entire kingdom of Israel was following a pattern of idolatry—1 Kings 18:19.
  - C. Their worshipping Baal was actually their worshipping Satan; 2 Kings 1:2 says that the god of the Ekronites was Baal-zebul; in the New Testament Beelzebub means "the lord of flies," referring to Satan as the ruler of the demons; this name was changed contemptuously by the Jews to Beelzebul, which means "the lord of the dunghill"—Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15:
    - 1. As the lord of the dunghill, Satan specializes in leading flies to feed on dung; since he is also the lord of flies, all sinners are like flies that follow Satan to "feed on dung"; all the fallen descendants of Adam are captives of Satan, who leads them about to commit sins and makes them "a slave of sin"—John 8:34.
    - 2. We need to follow the apostle Paul's pattern, who said that all the things that were once gains to him in the past, he counted as "refuse" (dregs, rubbish, filth, dog food, dung) that he might gain Christ—Phil. 3:5-8.
  - D. Ahab provoked Jehovah to anger more than all the kings before him; consequently, God raised up Elijah to declare that the children of Israel had been troubled because of idolatry and that only Jehovah is God—1 Kings 16:33; 18:4, 17-18, 37:
    - 1. As New Testament believers, we need to take heed to the apostle John's word—"Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21); idols refer to anything that replaces or is a substitute for Christ as the true, genuine, and real God (John 20:28-29); we need to see that the man Jesus is the very God (1:1-2; 5:18; 10:33; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; 1 John 5:20).
    - 2. Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts"; an idol in our heart is anything within us that we love more than the Lord and that replaces the Lord in our life—Ezek. 14:3.
    - 3. In the word *antichrist*, the Greek prefix *anti* has two main meanings—first, it means "against"; second, it means "in place of," or "instead of"; to be an antichrist is, on the one hand, to be against Christ, and on the other hand, it is to have something instead of Christ, something that replaces Christ—1 John 2:18-19.
    - 4. We need to ask the Lord to save us from having a living that is in the principle of antichrist, the principle of replacing Christ, who is both the anointed One and the

anointing; to have a living in the principle of antichrist is to have a living in the principle of being “anti-anointing,” which is to be “anti” the moving, working, and saturating of the Triune God within us—vv. 20, 27.

5. Satan’s aim is to receive worship from men by hiding behind numerous idols and religions (Matt. 4:8-9); idols have evil spirits and demons hiding behind them because Satan is behind them; the Father has to seek for worshippers because Satan is trying to rob God of worship (John 4:23-24; cf. 1 John 2:20, 27).
- E. Elijah represents the principle of not caring for one’s own life in order to maintain God’s testimony; he was strong and courageous to stand before the king, the people, and the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal; when the church is desolate and the majority of the believers are lukewarm, God raises up overcomers to be an anti-testimony, who do not care for their own life and care only for God’s will (such as “Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells”)—Rev. 2:13-14; 12:11.

**II. James 5:17 and 18 say, “Elijah was a man of like feeling with us, and he earnestly prayed that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted forth with its fruit”:**

- A. For Elijah to pray “earnestly” means literally that he “prayed in prayer”; this indicates that a prayer from the Lord was given to Elijah, in which he prayed.
- B. He did not pray in his feeling, thought, intention, or mood, or in any kind of motivation, arising from circumstances or situations, to fulfill his own purpose; he prayed in the prayer given to him by the Lord for the accomplishing of His will—cf. Psa. 27:4; John 15:7.
- C. On Mount Carmel Elijah said to all the people of Israel and to the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal, “How long will you go hopping between two opinions? If Jehovah is God, follow Him; but if Baal is, follow him”—1 Kings 18:21:
  1. Elijah prayed to “Jehovah, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,” and “the fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench”—vv. 36-38.
  2. “When all the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said, Jehovah—He is God! Jehovah—He is God!”; afterward, all the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal were executed—vv. 39-40.
  3. When Jezebel heard about this, she threatened to kill Elijah; because in his weakness Elijah was afraid, he ran for his life; he went forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God, and he went into a cave and lodged there—19:2, 9-10.
- D. While Elijah was on the mount of God, suddenly Jehovah passed by, and He was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire; after the fire, God spoke to Elijah in “a gentle, quiet voice”; this indicates that God was ushering Elijah into the New Testament age, in which God speaks to His people not by thundering but gently and quietly—vv. 11-12; Rom. 8:6b; 2 Cor. 2:13; 1 John 2:27.
- E. God then said, “I have left Myself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18; Rom. 11:2-5); these faithful overcomers are His “hidden ones” (Psa. 83:3b), and our God is “a God who hides Himself” (Isa. 45:15).

**III. Elisha’s following of Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to the river Jordan shows that in order to enter into the ministry of the New Testament age, we should intrinsically follow the minister of the age according to the vision of the age; to do this we must follow the Lord through four crucial places—2 Kings 2:1-14:**

- A. Elijah is a type of the Old Testament age with the Old Testament economy, and Elisha is a type of the New Testament age with the New Testament economy.
- B. The age was changed by passing through Gilgal, the place where God's people were circumcised to deal with their flesh; it is the place where the flesh is judged and the place where God gives us the light to judge the flesh—Josh. 5:2-9; Gal. 5:24; Phil. 3:3-8:
  - 1. The flesh is everything we possess from our birth (John 3:6); the flesh is the uttermost expression of the fallen tripartite man, and the Spirit in our spirit is the ultimate realization of the Triune God; the fallen flesh is the strongest and most evil enemy of God (Rom. 7:5—8:13) and is thoroughly and absolutely hated by God (Gen. 6:3; 1 Cor. 2:14-16; 3:1, 3).
  - 2. All that we possess from our birth—not only sin, uncleanness, and corruption but also natural goodness, kindness, talent, zeal, wisdom, and ability—is displeasing to God.
  - 3. Rejecting the flesh is the highest expression of the spiritual life; all those who have not learned to reject the flesh have not started on the spiritual pathway, and they do not truly know the spiritual life.
- C. The age was changed by passing through Bethel, which is the place to give up the world and turn to God absolutely, taking God as everything; Bethel refers to victory over the world—Gen. 12:8; 1 John 2:15:
  - 1. According to Genesis 12:8, Bethel is the place where Abraham built an altar, the place of fellowship and communication with God; it is the place where we consecrate ourselves to God and are totally given to Him to overcome the world—13:3-4.
  - 2. Victory over the world is a condition for being raptured and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit; if a believer truly desires to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be raptured, he must pay the price to forsake the world and learn to fellowship with God on the altar of total consecration.
- D. The age was changed by passing through Jericho; it was the first city that Joshua and the people of Israel had to defeat when they entered into the good land, and it signifies God's enemy, Satan—Josh. 6; Rev. 12:11:
  - 1. Joshua 6 speaks of overcoming Jericho, which means “cursed”; the Canaanites signify the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies mentioned in Ephesians 6:12.
  - 2. Satan is the ruler of this world (John 14:30), and the evil spirits are the world-rulers of this darkness, which refers to today's world; the evil spirits are the rebellious angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and who now rule in the heavenlies over the nations of the world—such as the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece (Dan. 10:20).
  - 3. We need to be those who “put on the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11, 13); the whole armor of God is for the entire Body of Christ, not for any individual member of the Body; we must fight the spiritual warfare in the Body, not as individuals.
  - 4. The way to overcome the world is to exercise our spirit of faith to believe in God's word, act according to His word, and believe that we will receive the results of carrying out His word (2 Cor. 4:13; John 17:17; 6:63; Eph. 6:17-18); Jericho fell by the Israelites relying on God's word and standing firm in their position; when the Lord was being tempted by the devil three times, the Lord responded three times by saying, “It is written...” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).
  - 5. In order to overcome the attack of the evil spirits, we must disregard every situation and feeling and exercise our spirit of faith to believe in God's word of promise; we must also stand in the position that Christ has given us, which is in the heavens, and must put down Satan and his evil spirits to their inferior position—2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-2.

6. The bearing of the Ark by the priests at Jericho signifies that in spiritual warfare the first thing we should do is to exalt Christ, giving Him the first place, the pre-eminence, in everything; the blowing of the trumpets and the shouting (the seventh time around the city) signify the testifying and proclaiming of God with Christ (the Ark) through faith in God's word of instruction—Josh. 6:1-20.
- E. The age was changed by passing through the river Jordan; this river, where the New Testament baptism began, signifies death; crossing the river Jordan is overcoming death in order to live and minister in resurrection—Matt. 3:5-6; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 2:20:
1. The Lord's baptism signifies death, and His coming out of the water signifies resurrection; by the power of resurrection, the Lord overcame death; by being baptized, He was able to live and minister in resurrection even before His actual death and resurrection three and a half years later—Matt. 3:13-17.
  2. We obtained Christ as this resurrection life at the time of our regeneration; the man-God, Jesus, was nailed to a cross and killed by the hand of lawless men, but God raised Him up, "having loosed the pangs of death, since it was not possible for Him to be held by it"—Acts 2:23-24; John 11:25; 1 Pet. 1:3.
  3. To walk in newness of life is to live in the reality of our baptism (Rom. 6:4); to serve in newness of spirit is to serve in the reality of our baptism (7:6).
  4. We need to pursue knowing the power of Christ's resurrection; it is by the power of Christ's resurrection, not by our natural life, that we determine to take the cross by denying our self and are enabled to be conformed to His death by being one with His cross—Phil. 3:10-12; Matt. 16:24; S. S. 2:8-10, 14.
  5. While preparing to be raptured, we must learn how to cross the Jordan and overcome death; we must learn how to resist the power of death that exists in us and in our environment, and we should demonstrate and manifest that we are joined to our resurrected Lord, knowing and expressing Him as the power of resurrection in all things—1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 5:4; 3:17; cf. 4:5, 10-12.
  6. The life of the cross is lived by the power of resurrection and is encouraged by the riches of resurrection (Phil. 3:10); the concluding word of Song of Songs is Christ's loving seeker praying for her Beloved to make haste to come back in the power of His resurrection (gazelle and young hart) to set up His sweet and beautiful kingdom (mountains of spices), which will fill the whole earth (8:13-14; Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:35).
- F. If we want to receive the rapture of Elijah and a double portion of the spirit with the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Kings 2:9-15), we must pass through Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the river Jordan; in order for the age to be changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament in our experience, we must deal with our flesh (Gal. 5:24; Phil. 3:3), give up the world and turn to God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17), defeat Satan (Eph. 6:10-20; Rev. 12:11), and pass through death into a living that is in resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 2:20).
- IV. This present age is the age of the overcomers, and the ministry of this present age through the ministers of the present age is the sounding of the Lord's call for the overcomers (those who see the vision of eternity, live the life of eternity, and work the work of eternity—this is to see God's ultimate goal and live out and work out the New Jerusalem); these overcomers are for the building up of the reality of the Body of Christ, the preparation of the bride of Christ, and the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ; in order to meet God's ultimate need in these last days, we have to make a resolution to be the overcomers, the vitalized ones—Judg. 5:15-16, 31; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-29; 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22.**