

Families in the Family of God
Turning Hearts in the End Time

Lesson #12 for March 25, 2006

Scriptures: 1 Kings 16:29–17:24; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 3:2; 11:14, 15; 17:10; 18:20-45.

1. Read Malachi 4:5,6: "But before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, I will send you the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; otherwise I would have to come and destroy your country." What do you think this passage means? Who is Elijah? What is his message? Is the great Elijah still to come?
2. What does it mean to "turn hearts"? (Malachi 4:6)
3. **If your life work was to find a way to reconcile parents and children and to bring both of them back closer to God how would you go about it? What needs to happen?** "A boy ran away from home. After years of no word from him, the parents got a postcard. He was coming their way and wanted to see them. 'I'll be riding the train that runs behind our house,' he wrote. 'If it's okay for me to stop and see you, hang a white handkerchief on the fence, and I'll get off at the next station. If it's not there, I'll just keep riding.'
"As the train hurdle toward his boyhood home he wondered, will the handkerchief be there? Finally, the fence came into view, covered with handkerchiefs, towels, bedsheets, and pillow cases, not only on the fence but on the shrubbery and the trees a great mass of white, saying WELCOME HOME!" If true Christians could discover a way to reconcile families and build true Christian relationships in those families how would it impact the world?
4. **If Elijah is still coming how will we identify him when he shows up? What should we look for?**
5. What was special or unique about Elijah? What does it mean when we say he will bring fathers and children together again? What about mothers? Several possibilities have been suggested: 1) it refers to the reconciliation of the people of Israel with Yahweh. 2) it refers to the reconciliation of later generations with their faithful ancestors to covenant renewal. 3) it refers to the restoration and renewal of family relationships. What was Malachi trying to say to his people?
6. What do you think is the relationship between restoring a proper loving Christian relationship in the home and the finishing of the Gospel? How are these two issues or factors related to our relationship with God?
7. Have you ever known a family that were true Christian examples and who were recognized as such by others in the community? What was different about them?
8. Do you believe that a restoration of correct relationships in families will be a harbinger of the second coming?
9. Think of the life story of Elijah as we know it. What family relationships were impacted by Elijah? How would you respond if your pastor (apparently single) moved in with a widow and her son? How do you feel about the widow's response to Elijah's initial request? Was it reasonable for Elijah to make such a request? Read 1 Kings 17:24. What was the basis for this woman's statement of faith? "Elijah took the boy back downstairs to his mother and said to her, "look, your son is alive!" 24 she answered, "now I know that you are a man of God and that the Lord really speaks to you!"
10. **Are miracles the best kind of evidence on which to base our faith?** Review God's message to the younger and older prophets in 1 Kings 13.

Moses warned us to beware! Read Deuteronomy 13:1-3: "Prophets or interpreters of dreams may promise a miracle or a wonder, ²in order to lead you to worship and serve gods that you have not worshiped before. Even if what they promise comes true, ³do not pay any

attention to them. The LORD your God is using them to test you, to see if you love the LORD with all your heart.” (GNB)

John wrote: Revelation 13: 13-17: “¹³This second beast performed great miracles; it made fire come down out of heaven to earth in the sight of everyone. ¹⁴And it deceived all the people living on earth by means of the miracles which it was allowed to perform in the presence of the first beast. The beast told them to build an image in honour of the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵The second beast was allowed to breathe life into the image of the first beast, so that the image could talk and put to death all those who would not worship it. ¹⁶The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free, to have a mark placed on their right hands or on their foreheads. ¹⁷No one could buy or sell without having this mark, that is, the beast’s name or the number that stands for the name.” (GNB)

11. **Where do you think the faith of Elijah came from? What do you think his background training was?** Is God posing a challenge to families in our day like the one which Elijah posed on Mount Carmel? What would that imply?
12. What lessons does God want us to learn from the experience on Mount Carmel? Read again 1 Kings 18:20-45. Does our family, our church, our nation need a Mt. Carmel experience?
13. Could a whole church or a large group in a church serve as a collective Elijah at the end of time?
14. What was the impact of the Mt. Carmel experience? Did the fact that Elijah ran away and hid lessen the impact of this experience?
15. We have the example of one person who was an “Elijah” in Jesus’ day. What should we learn from the experience of John the Baptist about what an Elijah might be like at the end of time?
16. How do you explain the apparent contrast between John the Baptist’s statement about himself and Jesus’ statement about John? John said “He must become more important while I become less important.” (John 3:30) But Jesus later said “I assure you that John the Baptist is greater than anyone who has ever lived. But the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.” (Matthew 11:11).
17. Do the members of your Sabbath school class or even your local church feel like a family? Do those who come in for the first time feel really welcome?
18. Think of the challenges John the Baptist faced in trying to present his message. How would you begin an independent ministry in the days of the Sadducees and the Pharisees? What do you think John the Baptist would do if he suddenly were brought in to the world of the 21st century here in America? **“If we and our families are going to be ready to meet Jesus someday soon, some of us will need to return home, and some will need to change our reasons for staying. Some will need to seek forgiveness and healing in certain relationships, while some will need to seek new ways of confronting. It is called the Elijah message; and it promises to revolutionize our denomination.”** (Teacher’s comments: p. 145)
19. Would you say that our homes need to be healed before we can be a part of that final Elijah movement? If God called you to live and carry an Elijah message would you be willing? Would you be willing to stand up in front of your church or in front of your national Congress or even before a state group to speak the truth as you know it would you be willing?
20. Read Luke 1:17. What do these words say to us about the Elijah message: “he will go ahead of the Lord, strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; he will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous; he will get the Lord’s people ready for him.” (GNB). Could we as a Sabbath school class reach out with loving and understanding arms to draw in new members and make them feel welcome into God’s family?

21. Does Revelation 19:10 suggest that the entire group of God's true people at the end of time will serve in a prophetic role?

Revelation 19:10 (last phrase):

- "...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (*Tyndale, KJV, NKJV, ASV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, Authentic, Concordant Literal, Confraternity-RC*)
"For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." (*N. Scarlett, Darby*)
"...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy." (*Young's Literal*)
"...for the testimony to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (*Noyes*)
"The testimony about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (*Anchor*)
"(The testimony of Jesus means the spirit of prophecy.)" (*Original NT*)
"For the testimony of Jesus is what inspires prophecy." (*Goodspeed*)
"...for the testimony of Jesus is the vital breath of prophecy." (*Montgomery*)
"(For the testimony borne by Jesus is the breath of all prophecy.)" (*Moffatt*)
"For the truth revealed by Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy." (*Weymouth*)
"The witness Jesus gave is the same as the spirit of prophecy." (*Jerusalem*)
"Witness to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (*NAB-RC*)
"The witness of Jesus is the spirit prophecy." (*The Message*)
"Everyone who tells about Jesus does it by the power of the Spirit." (*CEV*)
"...for the bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying." (*New World*)
"The truth Jesus told is the Spirit's Word." (*Beck*)
"For the truth that Jesus revealed is what inspires the prophets." (*GNB*)
"The purpose of all prophecy and of all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus." (*TLB*)
"...because the message about Jesus is the spirit that gives all prophecy." (*NCV*)
"For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus." (*NLT*)
"For the testimony concerning Jesus is a sure mark of the prophetic spirit." (*Kleist and Lilly-RC*)
"...Jesus' own testimony, which is the spirit of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit." (*Clear Word*)
"(This witness to Jesus inspires all prophecy.)" (*Phillips*)
"For the substance (essence) of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy -- the vital breath, the inspiration of all inspired preaching and interpretation of the divine will and purpose [including both mine and yours]." (*Amplified*)
"For the testimony borne by Jesus is the inspiring spirit of prophecy." (*C. Williams*)
"Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets." (NEB) [Footnote: For testimony to Jesus is the spirit that inspires prophets.]
"For to bear testimony to Jesus needs the inspiration of the Prophets." (TCNT)
"It is the truth concerning Jesus which inspires all prophecy." (*Knox-RC*)
"For it is the testimony which Jesus bore that inspires prophets." (*Translator's*)
"For the testimony about Jesus is the spirit [i.e., the purpose, or source] of prophecy." (*Wm. Paul*)
"For those who have the testimony of Jesus are the ones through whom a spirit of God manifests itself." (*Greber*)

22. Are we bearing a true testimony about Jesus? Isn't this supposed to be one of the identifying marks of God's remnant church? Does this have anything to do with the Elijah message?

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