

# *The Spirit of Elijah*

by

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*“And he (John the Baptist) will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” (Luke 1:16-17 ESV)*

As we enter the Christmas season and prepare for a celebration of Jesus’ birth, we need to include the story of the birth of John the Baptist in our preparation, for his life was all about preparing people to receive Jesus. We do not celebrate his birth as we do the birth of Jesus, for he is not our Messiah and Savior. But he was part of God’s plan for announcing and preparing God’s people for their Messiah. He would be a baby who grew up as an adult dedicated for one purpose, which was to *“make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”* This is what the angel told John’s father, Zachariah, when John was conceived. The angel also said about John, *“he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (verse 15)*. So we see John’s life was birthed for the dedicated purpose of preparing the people for Jesus.

I find it interesting that John was given the *“spirit and power of Elijah,”* and it would be this spirit that would turn hearts and make them ready to receive Jesus. This makes a confusing question clear that John was not a reincarnated Elijah that some thought would need to happen before the Messiah was birthed. John made clear to the Jews that he was not Elijah. But, what we now know and Jesus made clear is that John had the *spirit of Elijah* in him, and this fulfilled the prophecy that Elijah would come before the Messiah began His public ministry. John, with Elijah’s spirit in him, fulfilled his life’s purpose and once that was done, he was delivered to his home in heaven by an executioner’s axe, sent by Herod to do the deed.

As I read this story of John the Baptizer in preparation for Christmas, I could not help but think of John’s role, and how much God’s family needs the *spirit of Elijah* today to prepare our hearts for Jesus’ return. These days we have pushed aside the promise that Jesus would return to claim His Bride the Church, just like it was promised that He would be born on Christmas day. Just like then, it is not on our minds or in our hearts to live as if this makes any difference in the way we live our life. As it was not in the thoughts of the Jews of those days, it is rarely in our thoughts that Christ will return and we must be ready for Him. The people then were busy with life, just as we are now. They didn’t think their Messiah would come in their lifetime, and it was a vague promise that was *“way out there”* in their thinking. This kept the promise in their minds as a futuristic event, and it kept them from being prepared for Him when He came.

Just like today, living a life with expectation, and hope, and purpose was not in the thinking of the Jews of that day. They had more of their attention placed on the Romans and how to adapt to its pagan rule than living godly lives. Their hearts had grown cold because they forgot who they were as God’s people, and because of this it ushered in legalistic rules that now governed the people. The Jewish leaders at that time no longer represented the heart of God, and they, along with everyone else needed a wake up call. God sent them John the Baptist for this purpose. He was the *wake up call*. John’s message was to prepare their life to receive the Messiah by repentance and turning toward God to be forgiven and made ready to receive Jesus.

This was the *spirit of Elijah* speaking through John. How do I know this?

If you will look at Elijah the Prophet's life, you will see an ordinary man raised up when the nation of Israel had fallen into moral decay and spiritual apostasy. The Jews had abandoned God and were now worshipping Baal and Asherah. Though Elijah was a common man, he was a man of great courage and willing to risk his life for God's glory. His life's purpose was to turn *God's people* back to God. As we have seen with men who live in close proximity with Christ, courage comes from intimately knowing Him. It was the same with Elijah. He had an intimate relationship with the Living God. From this relationship not only did he receive courage, he also embraced God's values, burdens and purpose. These things made him go public and take on the Prophets of Baal and Asherah in a spectacular showdown. If you haven't read the account, it would be a good one to read. Bottom line? Notch up for God and Elijah the lives of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. For those prophets of their lifeless and powerless gods? ... Zero!! This demonstration brought the heart of the people back to the God who called them, ***His people***.

Elijah was an ordinary man who knew God intimately, and God was able to do a magnificent thing through his life. It was God's Spirit that empowered Elijah to be the man he was. In the same way, John the Baptist was an ordinary man set apart from birth to have breathed into him the *spirit of Elijah*. This same spirit was courageous, purposeful, and empowered to create heart changes in people, just like it did for Elijah. Both men accomplished their purpose and turned God's people back to Him.

As I read this event and thought on the *spirit of Elijah* and what it meant to those two men, I also thought of what it could mean to the Church today. I could not help uttering this prayer:

*“Lord will you send the spirit of Elijah to the men and women of Influencers?” Would you give us the persuasive power to influence **Your people** back to You? In this great Country called America, many people who are called by Your name do not know you intimately. We call ourselves by Your name. We say that we are Your people. But, do we really know You intimately as we need to know You. Like in Elijah's day, do we serve idols and ideas of You, but not truly know You? Oh Lord, what would Your Church become if we knew You as Elijah and John knew You? Would we not have their courage? Would we not have their passion? Would we not have a persuasive ability to demonstrate Your power, and to convince **Your people** that they too may have fallen into idol worship, and never recognized how easily it occurred? Maybe we could remind them that You are returning soon, and they need to live with urgency to prepare for that day? Would it help if they looked at this world and its events and see that the signs of the times are evident, as it was before Your birth? It sure helps me, for I am reminded everyday that like the shepherds the day Jesus was born, it could be soon that I see You face to face. Can we look at these times and not recognize that You are coming back soon? But, will Your Church be ready to receive her Bridegroom? Lord, we need the spirit of Elijah coursing through our lives to prepare the Church for You. So I ask You. Will You let the spirit of Elijah come into the men and women of Influencers? Will You consecrate us for Your purposes? Lord we need this to turn people's hearts toward You. So, I ask You. ... Will You let the spirit of Elijah be given to me?”*

Men, as we celebrate our King's birthday, why not give Him a Christmas gift of your life? Ask Him to fill you with the *spirit of Elijah*, so that you can courageously proclaim that our Savior has been born, and that He is returning soon to receive His Bride. As Influencers, what we do is based on what we are. We influence people toward Christ because He influences us. Be His influencer this Christmas to your world around you and remind them that He is coming again, as He came on Christmas day. Merry Christmas!