



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Elijah the Prophet

“Rapture and Second Coming of Elijah,” mult. passages – TRANSCRIPT

[Our Scripture reading] for today is found in several places. And I’m going to take just a few minutes more in reading, because we do have one or two more verses to read than usual, but the message for this morning makes it necessary that we look at several places in the Bible. And we’ll be turning first of all to 2 Kings chapter 2, and reading the first twelve verses. 2 Kings chapter 2, verses 1 through 12.

Now you’ll remember that this is the last in a series of messages on Elijah, and so we’re going to look at what the Bible has to say about Elijah, not only in the past, but also in the future. 2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 1,

“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, ‘Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel.’ And Elisha said unto him, ‘As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.’ So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, ‘Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day?’ And he said, ‘Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.’ And Elijah said unto him, ‘Elisha, tarry here,

I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, ‘As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.’ So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, ‘Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day?’ And he answered, ‘Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.’ And Elijah said unto him, ‘Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, ‘As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.’ And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.’ And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, ‘Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.’ 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. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, ‘My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.’ And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

Now let’s turn to the last book of the Old Testament, and the last chapter of that book. The Book of Malachi, chapter 4, and we read two verses, verses 5 and 6. Malachi 4 verses 5 and 6. Now this is many hundreds of years later, and the Prophet Malachi writes,

“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.”

Now let’s move over to the New Testament and the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke for just one verse. Luke chapter 1 and verse 17. Luke chapter 1 and verse 17. Now this is in the passage of Luke in which the announcement is made concerning the birth of John the Baptist. In the 17th verse we read,

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (or, Elijah) to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Now will you turn back to the book of Matthew, and let’s read the 17th chapter, beginning with the first verse, through the 13th. Matthew chapter 17, verse 1 through verse 13. While you are finding Matthew, you’ll remember that in the early church, the Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy that he should give himself, or give attention to the reading of the Scriptures. In the early church, there is a great deal of reading of Scripture. And so, we are, this morning, doing just a little bit of that. Now if you have found the first verse of chapter 17 of Matthew, and listen as I read these verses. This is the account of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus,

“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 (Elijah or) 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 (Elijah, or) 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.’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, ‘Arise, and be not afraid.’ And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.’”

Many have been troubled by our Lord’s frequent admonition of the Apostles to be quiet about the things that they had learned. The reason for this is that their understanding of them was so inadequate that it would have been dangerous for them, and misleading for them to publicize things that they did not understand. Now, the tenth verse,

“And his disciples asked him, saying, ‘Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?’”

You see, they knew about that passage in Malachi chapter 4. Now verse 11,

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, (Elijah) truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that (Elijah) 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.”

Now for our last passage, will you turn to the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, chapter 11. Revelation chapter 11, and I will read beginning with the first verse. Revelation chapter 11 verses 1 through 12. Now John has been given a series of trumpet visions, and there has been a little interlude in the tenth chapter. And this is a continuation of that interlude in the vision of the trumpets and their judgments. And so he writes, describing what he saw in verse 1 of Revelation chapter 11,

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days (that’s three and a half years, or half of the tribulation period) clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them (the anti-Christ shall slay the two witnesses). And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified (there is no question that that is Jerusalem). And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the

earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, “Come up hither.” And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.”

That last statement is very interesting in the Greek text. In verse 9, when the statement is made that the bodies of these two men are seen by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the word that is used is a word that frequently in the New Testament refers to a look that is a kind of glance. But this word is the word from which we get theorize in English, *theoreo*. In other words, they took a great deal more interest in these men after they had come back to life, than they did while their bodies were lying on the streets of Jerusalem, and no wonder because of this wonder that happened.

May God bless the reading of his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of opening the Scriptures and listening to Thy voice. We recognize, Lord, that in the passages that we have read today are many hard and difficult things. And we do not presume to understand everything in the Scriptures. We do ask, Lord, that Thou will give us a diligence in the studying of them, and in a meditation upon them, that will enable us to understand things that Thou wouldst have us to understand

We pray that as we consider the future of Elijah the Prophet, that Thou wilt guide us in the exposition and the reception of the Scripture, so that we may not only be curious, but also affected in the inner man by the things that we read and understand.

We thank Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word. And we thank Thee, most of all, for the blessings that have come to us through these Scriptures, for they speak to us of him who is our Savior, Jesus Christ. And Lord, we pray, that as we look into the

word for this morning, that we may come to see him in a new way, and have a deeper appreciation for him.

Again, we commit to Thee this congregation and the friends, and we pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon each one, spiritually, and physically for those who are ill. In every way we pray that Thy blessing may be upon us that Jesus Christ may be glorified through us.

We thank Thee for the friends who have come to visit with us today. And we pray that they may be helped through the ministry of the Scriptures, and we pray that Thy blessing may be upon them, in their lives and in their homes. And for the problems and perplexities of life, of which there are so many, O Father, we pray that Thou wilt teach us to come to Thee, and then to have patience to wait upon Thee.

We commit our service to Thee, and we pray that Christ may be exalted within it, for his name’s sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today, as we conclude our series of studies on the life of the Prophet Elijah is the Rapture and Second Coming of Elijah. Elijah’s end is in keeping with his life. He came like a whirlwind. He burned like a fire. And in fire and whirlwind, he went home.

He also began where he left. And he left where he began, in the desert. Someone has said that Elijah was a graduate of the university of the desert, with an M.S. degree – a master of solitude. And this was the type of man that he was: a lonely prophet of fire.

It is often said that Elijah spent the last years of his life in helping the schools. And we see some evidence of the fact that he was acquainted with the schools of the prophets in this chapter, which we have just read. And some have gone so far to say that perhaps the greatest work that Elijah ever did was the work that he did in the theological schools. I am not at all persuaded myself that this is true.

I know that the work that Dr. Lewis Barry Chafer did at the Dallas Theological Seminary was no doubt some of the greatest, if not the greatest, work that Dr. Chafer ever did. But I’m not at all persuaded that the Prophet Elijah was the president of a theological seminary. As a matter of fact, I do not think that these sons of the prophets appear to be kinds of seminary students that Elijah would have produced anyway. They seem to be capricious, wavering, chattering magpies. And that isn’t the kind of person that the Prophet Elijah was.

I still remember the story of the man who came up to D.L. Moody, staggering, drunken on the street saying, “Mr. Moody, don’t you remember me?” Mr. Moody said, “I’m sorry, I don’t.” He said, I’m one of your converts. He [Moody] said, “You must be. You’re not one of God’s, that’s sure.” [Laughter] And so it appears to me that these theological students that we come across in this second chapter of 2 Kings are not the types of students that Elijah would have produced. So I am not at all persuaded that the Prophet Elijah spent the last years of his life instructing me in theological schools.

As a matter of fact, I’m not at all persuaded myself that a theological seminary is the best place to instruct a young man in the things of God. As I read the Bible, it seems obvious that the best place to instruct a young man in the things of God is in the local church. For it is there, according to the Scriptures, that we have not only the intellectual, but we also have the practical carrying out of the things we learn in our heads. And I’ve said so often to you, our theological schools turn out men with giant heads and shriveled up bodies, because they know far more than they have ever experienced in their lives.

It was not a mistake when the Lord Jesus selected twelve men, and asked them to follow him. And they lived with him and worked with him, and carried out their ministry under him. And consequently they were fitted for the work by the work for him.

And the prophet who stands out in the prophets who followed Elijah is the Prophet Elisha. And if you read the story of Elisha, you’ll discover that he, too, never graduated from a theological seminary, that when the Prophet Elijah called him to the

ministry, the statement is made that he left what he was doing, his oxen – after all, he was nothing but a farmer – he left that and followed Elijah and ministered to him. And the man who did not go to the theological school is the man who stands out in the period that follows.

So I’m not at all persuaded that the sons of the prophets were the kinds of men that we would have had at Dallas Theological Seminary. And yet at the same time, I see some of the characteristics of these men in our students in our theological colleges. They are chattering magpies, and they are deficient in faith, and so often that’s true. I think that instead of being concerned about what happened to Elijah here, some of the sons of the prophets no doubt went off and wrote a Ph.D thesis on the doctrine of Elijah. But anyway, that’s getting far from text.

We want to look today in the time that we have to the rapture and the second coming of Elijah. Now Elijah is at Gilgal. And this is not the Gilgal of Israel’s history, but a Gilgal to the north of the city of Bethel in the land. And, I think that Elijah and the others who have been given an intimation of what is to follow, must have been meditating at this last time in his life over the life that he had lived. And if I know Elijah, I think, as the news was come to him that soon God was to take him from the earth, that he must have meditating something like this: what have I done to merit such an ovation to be carried up to heaven in chariots of fire in the midst of a whirlwind? And he was very much, I think, humbled, by what was going to happen. God was going to take him.

Now I don’t know if he knew all the details, but it’s obvious that the sons of the prophets had some indication. And Elisha had some indication. And Elijah, too, had some indication of what is going to happen. So now he’s going to make his last circuit. So he leaves Gilgal, and as he leaves he tells Elisha who is with him and ministering to him, Elisha, I want you stay here for the Lord has sent me to Bethel. Now some commentators have stated that the reason why Elijah wanted Elisha to stay at Gilgal was

because he didn’t want Elisha to see him as he left the earth. He didn’t want to see him die. He wanted to spare him that struggle and suffering.

Now I do not think that was true at all. I think this was within God’s purpose of testing for Elisha. It was just another way of saying to him, do you really want to follow this man, Elijah? And Elisha speaks up and says, “As the LORD liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” And so, Elijah allowed him to accompany him to Bethel.

And when they reached Bethel, some of the seminary students come out, and notice they do not go to Elijah. They go to Elisha, which seems to me to confirm the fact that they were not too well-acquainted with Elijah. He wasn’t one of their favorite professors in the theological seminary which he had founded. But they go to Elisha, and they say, “Elisha, do you know that the Lord’s going to take away thy master from thy head today?” And he said, I know it, shut your mouth! [Laughter] Now that’s Johnson’s translation of verse 3. [More laughter] But I think that that is in accordance with the text: “Yea, though I know it, hold ye your peace.”

Now Elisha is very curt to these seminary students, and they needed it, too. Because all they want is to say something that is curious, vulgar, that will cause men to talk. And so they came—and now Elijah speaks to Elisha and he says, “Now, Elisha, I want you to stay here at Bethel, and I am going down to Jericho.” And Elisha speaks up again and says, “As the LORD liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” And so they came to Jericho.

And the same thing happens. The seminary students come out. And they say, “Do you know that the Lord’s going to take away your master, Elisha?” They don’t come to Elijah. Perhaps they have had the message, it’s not good to come to Elijah; fire is going to come down from heaven with Elijah. “Yea, I know it.” Shut your mouth. And Elijah said unto him, “Tarry, I pray thee, unto here, for the LORD has sent me to Jordan.” And Elisha speaks up again – he’s not going to leave Elijah, because after all, remember, he has been called to the ministry as a prophet by Elijah. And Elijah, some time before this,

had taken his mantle, while he was plowing with the oxen, and he had thrown his mantle around Elisha in token of the fact that Elisha was to succeed in his prophethood. And Elisha valued this so much, that he was not going to leave Elijah. After all, if God has called you to speak as a prophet, every other type of other human activity is inferior to that. As Mr. Spurgeon used to say, if God has called you to be a missionary, don’t stoop to become a king. And so Elisha values very much this privilege of being the mouthpiece of God, as the prophets were. So he insists on following him to Jordan.

And finally, in the seventh verse, our author states that they, too, stood by the Jordan. Fifty sons of the prophets are standing afar off, probably on a little knoll or hill overlooking the Jordan River to see what’s going to happen. They don’t want to get too near the action – the happening – because, after all, they’re seminary students. And so, as the two men stand by the Jordan, what do you think they were thinking?

Well, this soil about the Jordan was redolent with all kinds of types of nostalgic remembrances for these two men. For you see, it was around the Jordan that so many of the great things happened to Israel. As Elijah stood at the Jordan River, and looked off toward the east – for he was going toward the east – over to his left were the hills of Gilead, and that was his own family playground. That was where he had grown up. And like so many people when they get older, they want to go back to their home. Now this, of course, was God leading Elijah, but I’m sure that Elijah must have thought it was wonderful to get back to the old country. That’s why, you see, I want to get back to the Southeast, because I’m getting old, and I remember those days that I spent back there.

Now he thought of that, and as he looked off to the right, in the distance he saw a hill, and on that hill, Mt. Nebo, Moses had gone to meet the Lord. And Moses had been the great lawgiver, and Elijah was the great law-restorer. It was Elijah who brought the people, to some extent, back to God, so that they acknowledged that Jehovah was the God – he’s the God – and not Baal.

And then also, at the Jordan River, that had been the place where Israel had come into the Promised Land as Joshua had arrived with the ark of God. You remember the ark, God gave instruction, should go through the Jordan River, and then the children of Israel should follow. And when the ark went down into the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan went hither and thither, just as the text here said, and the children of Israel had gone over the Jordan River dry shod. Here was a place that was redolent with tremendous significance for Elijah and Elisha.

Often, we look back at the past of our Christian church, and think of the wonderful things that have happened at certain places. I know when I was in Europe, one place I was certain to go was Wittenburg, Deutschland, because at Wittenburg, that Augustinian monk had nailed his 95 Theses to the Castle Church, and the Reformation had begun. If you go to Wittenburg today, you won’t see anything like the Wittenburg of Luther’s day. Things have changed considerably.

Or if you went to Oxford, you would want to go to Balliol College, for it was there that Wycliffe had been headmaster. And it was Wycliffe who had been responsible for giving the English people the Bible in their own tongue. And furthermore – and this was the worst thing that he did as far as the enemies of Wycliffe were concerned – they distributed it to the people, read the Bible in their own language. But if you went to Oxford today, it’s very difficult to find a true believer in the surroundings of that great university.

Or, if you went to Epworth, the place where Samuel and Susannah Wesley raised their big family, and you saw the place from where John Wesley came – the man who, really, kept Britain from falling prey to the atheism of the French Revolution, and was responsible for a tremendous revival in that land – if you went there today you would find very few people who would sing with Wesley, “O for a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer’s praise / the glories of my God and king, the triumphs of his grace.”

These were two men of God, and as they stood by the Jordan, no doubt, these memories came back to them with tremendous significance.

Now, at this point, Elijah does something that only a prophet can do. He takes his mantle off, which was the outward sign of his office or function as prophet, and he takes it, and he wraps it up together. The Hebrew text implies that he wrapped it up so that it formed something like a rod. And he smote the waters, and they were divided so that they went hither and thither so that they, too, went over on dry ground. And the sons of the prophets made note of this, and they began to talk about the doctrine of the wrapped mantle.

But it happened, and those waters went back. And Elijah, in performing this miracle demonstrated the fact that the unexhausted power of the God was still with him. The God of yesterday was the God of today. For you see, this was the same thing that had happened previously when the ark of God had gone down into the Jordan. The God who had worked in the Mosaic days is the God who is still working in the days of Elijah. And the prophets took note of that. And Elisha took note of it. And I want to say that the same God who worked in the days of Moses and worked in the days of Elijah and worked in the days of our Lord works today with the same power – not in the same form – but in the same power. And in the tremendous transformations that take place in the hearts of men are miracles that are easily as great – I think greater – than these signs that were materialistic and performed by the prophets.

It’s my privilege, and it’s your privilege, too, as a Christian, to see these miracles take place constantly. To see a young man transformed from a person who does not care one thing about heaven, or about the life that is to come, or about the life today. And to see that man through the gospel of the grace of God become a different person because he has new life is a miracle that only God can perform. And it is great. The God of yesterday is the God of today.

And Elijah and Elisha went through the water. And as they traveled east, Elijah stopped, and he said to Elisha, “Elisha, I want you to ask what you want me to do for you, before I be taken away from you.” By the way, he said, before. There’s no time to pray, and no possibility of praying to Elijah after he is gone, so you’d better make your request now, while I’m with you.

I wonder what he was thinking. Perhaps he was thinking, I think that Elisha will say, give me your mantle. But Elisha asks something that reveals the heart of this man – one of these days, we’re going to study the life of the Prophet Elisha, a great man of God. But he surprised the prophet. I take it he was surprised because he said, thou hast asked a hard thing. Elisha said, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”

Now, he did not mean by that, yes, let me be twice the prophet that you were. That wouldn’t be a very nice thing to ask, would it? Elisha, you’ve done a fair job, but I would be one twice as good. [Laughter] Listen, if Elijah was able to give him that kind of a request, he could be that kind of man. No, he was a Hebrew, you see, and he was asking within the Hebrew context, and you see the eldest son in the Hebrew family had a double inheritance. If there were three sons and lots of daughters, those sons, of course, inherited, and the first son, the eldest son, received a double portion. If there were three sons in a family, the inheritance was divided up four ways. And the first son received two shares and the next two one.

Now I wish it were like that today, because I am a first born son. But it’s not. But in that day it was. So what Elisha is asking of Elijah, is not that he should be twice the prophet that he is, but he wants the first born son’s right. He wants to have a double portion of the inheritance prophet. In other words, he wants to be a real prophet; he wants to have a real contact with God.

Now that of course reveals that this person Elisha is not a very worldly kind of man. He didn’t ask him for his property. He didn’t say, I’d like to have your team of horses back in Gilead. He didn’t ask for his bank account. He asked for a double portion

of his spirit. So the old helmsman who is about to resign is now asked to give a double portion of his spirit.

I think it's very striking that Elijah was interested in having Elisha ask for something. It reveals at least that he's interested in who is to steer this listing vessel through the surging seas that face Israel. And so he asks for the first born's right.

Sometimes, today, you have men who it seems to me ask the same type of question but in a carnal way. You know, there is one thing that a teacher cannot give to anyone else, and that's a double portion of his spirit. Elijah really could not do this. And he knew it. He said, you've asked a hard thing. Now, it just so happens that if you see me when I go, you will have it. But I cannot give it to you. Only God can do that.

The reason I'm kind of touchy about this is because I see this so often in theological seminary. And I see it also in the congregations. Young men coming along, and they're interested in being like the man who stands before the people of God in their time. And so they want to be like him. And they become little carbon copies, but they are almost always pygmies. You see a man can tell another man about his ideas. He can tell him his systems. He can tell him his methods. But he cannot give him a double portion of his spirit. It's impossible.

And I've looked at theological schools for a long time, having taught in one 20 years. And I've watched the young men go out of theological seminary. And some of them go out little—and I can name the teacher who was the greatest influence on them. Some go out little, and so on. But it's very rare that you find the man who has the double portion of his spirit. For you see, that's something that only God can give. And it's very important that we learn that. It's important to learn that if we are to be effective for God, it does not come by sitting under someone. We can learn methods, learn ideas, learn principles, but if we're going to be effective for God, we must get off with God, and learn about him in his presence. We can never be effective otherwise.

Now listen, this applies to you who are not teachers. You can never be the kind of Christian that you want to be if you’re not willing to get off alone with God. But if you will get off alone with God and with his word, then he will transform your inner man. And you’ll probably gather some disciples about you that when you go, they’ll probably want a double portion of your spirit. But at least you will learn that in reality, for spiritual things, it does not come through preaching or through sitting under the ministry of someone. That may give us a few guidelines, but it comes, basically, from first hand contact with God. Have you heard it? Do you desire it? Have you sought it? Now, the miracle takes place. The two men are traveling, and they’re talking. What are they talking about? Are they talking about themselves? I think they were probably talking about Israel, and I think that Elijah was talking about some of the things that were upon his heart about Israel. And the reason I think they were talking about Israel is because of the remark that Elisha makes when the miracle takes place. He says, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel!”—not Elijah or of God—“but the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.

But the two men are traveling down the road now, and suddenly there appears off in the distance something that startles Elisha, and no doubt startles Elijah, too. For they looked and saw some fire coming from heaven. Elijah may have said, there comes that fire again, because this prophet, you see, he was the prophet of fire, and more than once he had called down fire from heaven (we skipped one of the stories from Elijah’s life, in which he called down fire several times from heaven). And Elisha must have wondered, what in the world is he doing now? And as he watched the fire come closer and closer, he discovered that it was a chariot of fire and horses of fire.

And I think that when it drew near, the text says it parted them asunder. So I imagine that Elisha dove for the ditches, just a like a man would when an airplane comes with the machine guns firing. And so he dove. And they were parted. And the chariot came, and suddenly, Elijah was in that chariot, and off he went to heaven in a tempest,

the Hebrew test says. And as Elijah looks up, there escapes from him the words, “My father, father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!” And O what an insight into human history that is. For you see, he has come to understand here that the best earthly defense that Israel has is the Prophet Elijah.

Now Jehoam was King, and he had thousands of men who were at his beck and call, but the safety of Israel rests with the prophets and with the word of God. And the safety of the United States of America, likewise, rests with God, and with God’s true representatives who are here upon this earth in this land. And that’s why it’s so important for us to realize that it is our spiritual relationship to God which is our security. Not our atomic arsenal. Not our politicians. Not our tremendous weaponry. But it is our God in heaven who is our resource. And it is those who are truly related to him who determine the future of the United States of America. Now I grant you, this is a minority viewpoint, but it’s true, nevertheless.

Now, very quickly, it’s obvious from this that Elijah’s ministry has been attested by God, just as Enoch, and just as our Lord who went to heaven. It is obvious that God has attested life after death, and that he has taken Elijah away to be with him. Enoch gave the Patriarchal Age a blessed hope. Elijah gave the Mosaic Age a blessed hope, just as our Lord has given us a blessed hope of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth.

And it is also of this, I think, that this is an illustration of our translation which we shall experience if we are alive when Jesus Christ comes. You’ll notice Elijah did not ascend. He was carried up. It was God who did it. And so shall we.

You know, we’ve lost the hope of the second advent of Jesus Christ. I teach in a theological seminary in which there is a great deal of stress on the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus – great deal of stress. I am sad to say, however, that in my opinion, the hope of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is largely a doctrine in the theological seminary in which I teach. Now I do not mean to say anything against anyone. I condemn myself with my students, and with my colleagues.

But we have reached the place where the doctrine of the Second Coming is something that we study in theological school, but when we leave the classroom is not very much of a hope with us anymore. We do not think about the fact that Jesus Christ may come this afternoon before that East-West game begins. We do not think about that. We do not think about the fact that tomorrow may never come for us who have believed in the Lord Jesus. We do not seriously consider that, for if we did, it would make a serious change in us.

Believer’s Chapel would be a dynamic church organization – I think it’s relatively dynamic now – but it would be so dynamic that it would be a tremendous force in this community and to the uttermost parts of the earth if we really ever got hold again of the significance of the any moment return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I was reading a book this past week in which the writer commented upon a testimony of an old Cowlitz Indian squaw. She always terminated her testimony with these words: “Someday, maybe now, soon, Papa Jesus come, take all his children home. No more sick chest. No more sore foot.”

Now I read some other passages this morning, and I want to very briefly give the significance of them. The Transfiguration account which I read from Matthew chapter 17 is one of the most significant in the New Testament. It’s one of the most astonishing. Elijah, supposedly, was in the presence of God. And yet when Jesus Christ was transfigured, there appeared on the mount with him Moses and Elijah. Some of my friends have said, I do not understand the transfiguration account because it does not seem so vital, not like the temptation, not like the death.

Well, of course, I do not think it is so vital as the death of Christ myself. But it so happens that it’s one of the vital accounts in our Lord’s life. Some have said, it’s too mysterious, and I grant you, it’s mysterious, because I’ve never seen anyone come from the life beyond, in vision or otherwise. And here were Moses and Elijah on the mount speaking with the Lord Jesus. Peter’s confession had signaled the end of the ministry to

the crowds, and Jesus had gone up to pray in the light of the passion. And, now in his prayer, in the light of the passion, he had been transfigured, and some tremendous things were happening.

Now the ones who appeared with him were Moses and Elijah. Moses was the great law-giver, Elijah the great law-restorer, and they both were now with the law-maker, Jesus Christ. Did you notice what their concern was? Now, I didn't read this passage, but in Luke chapter 9, the statement is made that Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they spoke about his exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Now isn't that surprising?

Well they weren't talking about the baseball game between the Jericho Juleps and the Jerusalem Jumbos [laughter]. They weren't talking about the football game between the Dan Donkeys and the Beersheba Cowboys. They weren't talking about politics, whether Herod's going to run again, or when Pilate's going to get the axe. For these two men who have appeared on the mount with Jesus, the representative of the law and the great representative of the prophets, they speak about the decease which Jesus shall accomplish at Jerusalem.

In other words, the greatest theme of heaven and of hell, is not what is happening on the earth now, but the greatest theme of heaven and hell is what has happened in the past at Golgotha, where Jesus Christ died for the sins of the human race. And they anticipate the fulfillment when he is to come again, and we shall see the results of the saving work that was accomplished so many hundreds of years ago. So the law and the prophets testify of Jesus still, and they still do.

Well, that's interesting. You know, Elijah prayed that God might take his life. Isn't it wonderful God doesn't answer our prayer as we pray them? Isn't it wonderful? Why, he would have missed his own translation. He might even have missed the Mount of Transfiguration, for, after all, he is there as a typical man. He might even have missed the

opportunity to witness upon the earth at a later day, to come before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Have you ever prayed a prayer, and God didn't answer it, and you went around with a black face for days because God doesn't answer your prayers? What you ought to do is raise a few hallelujahs that he didn't answer that particular prayer. I've known lots of prayers that I've prayed, I'm certainly glad now that God didn't answer them. I want to tell you a little secret. Sometimes I get very discouraged. Mr. Pryor knows it. Some of the elders know it. I tell them. I get very discouraged. I want to tell you, a prayer or two has occasionally escaped my lips. What in the world am I here, for, Lord? I'm through. I know what he's talking about. And I'm glad sometimes; in fact, I'm glad always that he didn't answer my prayers.

Now the last little chapter in our story is the chapter in Revelation chapter 11. Now I don't want to be dogmatic, and when we come to the Book of Revelation, you'll remember we come to the Grand Central Depot of Prophecy. And if it's difficult to understand the prophetic word, it surely is difficult to understand the Book of Revelation. I think I understand its major messages.

But the 11th chapter it just so happens, is one of the difficult chapters of the book. It says that two witnesses are going to come from God, and they're going to prophesy on the face of the earth in sackcloth during the time of the tribulation period that precedes the second advent of the Lord Jesus. Apparently, they are commissioned to announce the advent and the kingdom of Jesus. Who are these two men?

Now their names are not given. I suppose that some would say it's presumptuous to even guess. But I shall be presumptuous. I notice about these two men that there are some things about them that are rather striking. One of these men apparently has the power to take a rod and strike the waters and turn them into blood. And there was a fella back in the Old Testament who used to do that. His name was Moses. And there's another fella who has the power to shut heaven, and it rain not. There was a fella back

in the Old Testament, and I seem to remember him. He was able to do that, and his name was Elijah.

I also remember that Moses died in a very peculiar way. In fact, Deuteronomy tells us that he went up into the mountain to die, and people looked for his body, and they couldn’t find it. He never had a burial service. The funeral parlors lost out with Mr. Moses. They never got any fees. And furthermore, I read in a very obscure text in the Book of Jude that Michael the Archangel had a dispute with the devil over the body of Moses. Why should they be disputing over the body of Moses? It’s in the Bible. Some of you are looking at me as if I’m making up all of this. I’m not making it up. It’s all right here in the Scriptures. Yet, Michael the Archangel, when he contented with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses. Why was he interested in the body of Moses? They weren’t going to lay it out like Lenin’s is in Russia.

You see, it so happened that God had something else for the body of Moses. And Elijah is taken up into heaven so that he does not die. So here are two men whose deaths are certainly strange. And they do the same types of works that Moses and Elijah did. And they have an interesting ministry. They have power to prophesy. They have power over men. By the way, that was no “cold war,” as I said when I was expounding the Book of Revelation here; when men disagree with them, fire comes out of their mouth and devours them. They have power over men and power over nature.

But of course, they have conflict. And finally, when they finish their testimony – in other words, when God is through; not until then, not until they’ve said every word God intends for them to say, for they are immortal until that happens – but when they finish, and God says, Moses and Elijah, you have finished your ministry upon the earth, they’re slain. And the devil has his Christmas. The bodies are allowed to remain in the streets of Jerusalem, and everyone sends gifts, one to another. That’s the devil’s Christmas. They’re very happy over the deaths of Moses and Elijah.

But a strange thing happens. And you'll notice it says the whole world sees it. Can you just imagine, that night, when Chet Bruntley and David Hinkley are giving the news, and they say, now about those two prophets, who looked so much like Moses and Elijah, we're going to give a report from Jerusalem. And so everybody looks. And the reporter says, now we'll take a look at the bodies lying out on the street. And as Bruntley and Hinkley are agast, the breath from God comes into the bodies, and they rise up, and about that time there's no picture anymore and a little sign flashes on and says we've momentarily lost our picture. The cameraman has fainted. [Laughter] Now this is not Scripture.

It's much more solemn than this. And there's a great surprised populace all over the world when God reaches down and they come back to life. And when they get to heaven, it says that everybody was gazing intently upon them. They were afraid to death, because these men had prophesied and God had attested their prophecy.

Well, I need not tell you what is the obvious lesson from this. It's obvious that when God speaks in his word, he fully intends that everything in his word shall come to pass. It may be the most startling thing that human mind can ever imagine, but if it's in God's word, it is surely to come to pass. And therefore, the judgment that these men prophesied is sure to come to pass. God has authenticated their testimony over and over again.

Now there is a mantle which you and I have, which if by using, we shall smite the waters of death, we shall pass into God, as Moses and Elijah did. Our mantle is the finished work of the Lord Jesus. He death for us upon the cross which covers all of our sins. And the moment when we say to him, thank you, Lord, for dying for me, it's just as if we smite death with Elijah's mantle, and the waters go hither and thither, for the way of the waters is opened by the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Have you believed? Have you put your trust in him? If you want to become a Christian and have the hope of life, all you have to do is say, I thank you, O God, for the

gift of Jesus Christ. And when you do, you're born again, you're given new life, you're made a child of God. May God speak to your heart. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful story of the life of Elijah, for the greatness of the man who walked with Thee. We thank Thee, too, that he was a man of like passions with us and an encouragement.

But most of all, Lord, as we consider the future before us, we pray that if there should be one person in this audience who has not yet believed in him, our Lord Jesus, give them no rest nor peace until they do.

Help us to remember that as the workers of God go, the work of God goes on. And that the God of yesterday is the God of this moment. May hearts turn to Thee, in this congregation.

For Christ's sake. Amen.