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The Mission Of The Church?...



We now explore how the church fulfils its commission. We will do this by considering the ministry of Elijah, which the Scriptures portray as a picture or motif of the work of the church...

## Preparing The Way

The occasion of the transfiguration [Mt 17], between Jesus's first and second references to "the church" [Mt 16 and Mt 18], is significant. Within just a few days<sup>1</sup> of Peter's revelation and confession that Jesus is the Christ [and Jesus' response that He will build his church], Peter, James and John are taken up the mountain to witness the glory of Christ, alongside the appearances of Moses and Elijah.

These great OT figures represented the Law and the Prophets, the foundations of the religious life of the nation. Jesus's transfiguration demonstrated that Christ was both exalted above all OT predecessors, and was the complete fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets [Lk 24:4, Jn 1:45, Ac 28:23, Ro 3:21].

There is other significance, however, for our study of the church:

- Moses' life and ministry was characterised by the **personal presence** of God<sup>2</sup>. As we've seen, this provides us with a picture of the nature of the church.
- Elijah's life and ministry was a demonstration of the **prophetic power** of God and thus provides us with a picture of the ministry of the church.

Immediately after His transfiguration, Jesus explains that Elijah will come again and "will restore all things" [Mt 17:11].

Elijah's ministry<sup>3</sup> was characterised by his boldness, zeal, confrontation, prophetic declarations, and miracles! And his 'return' was prophesied by Malachi in the final words of the OT:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

**Mal 4:5-6**

<sup>1</sup> Matthew and Mark record it was "after six days" (Mt 17:1, Mk 9:2); Luke has "about eight days after" (Lk 9:28).

<sup>2</sup> Eg: "The Lord would speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend", Ex 33:11. "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us...What else will distinguish me and your people?", Ex 33:15-16.

<sup>3</sup> From 875 BC onwards, during the reigns of King Ahab (and Queen Jezebel) and King Ahaziah of Israel (1Ki 17 - 2Ki 2), and King Jehoram of Judah (2Ch 21:12-20).

It's clear from the language ["before that great and dreadful day of the Lord"] that this is a reference to the second rather than the first coming of Christ. And whilst Jesus makes clear [Mt 11:14] that the prophetic promise was fulfilled [firstly] in John the Baptist [who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children", Lk 1:17], it's also clear from his explanation on the mountain [after John's death] that a second and greater fulfilment was still to come: "Elijah comes and will restore all things" [Mt 17:11-13]. Who is the Elijah that was to come? It is the church!

Just as John came with an Elijah-type ministry to prepare the way for the first coming of Jesus, so now **the church [in the same "spirit and power of Elijah"] is to prepare the way His second coming**, by restoring all things [Mt 17:11] and "making ready a people prepared for the Lord" [Lk 1:17]. Like Elijah and John, the church has a pivotal prophetic ministry, preparing the way for Jesus.

What characteristics of Elijah's ministry help us understand the nature of the church's ministry? **What should we expect of a church that is functioning "in the Spirit and power of Elijah"?** We consider seven key events in Elijah's life from **1Kings chs 17-19**.

# 1 Closing And Opening The Heavens!

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Elijah arose in **1 Kings 17:1**, declaring himself to be a servant of the Living God, and that there would be no rain for years except at his [Elijah's] word!

- Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab

As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

**1 Kings 17:1**

Likewise, the ministry of the church involves ‘opening and closing the heavens’. Jesus described this as ‘binding and loosing’, and it is highly significant that in both his Gospel references to the church he makes it clear that this is a fundamental aspect of our ministry:

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**Mt 16:18-19**

“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**Mt 18:17-18**

The giving of the “keys of the Kingdom” is linked with the power to bind and to loose. On the Day of Pentecost Peter first used these keys to open the Kingdom to 3000 men, as he declared the grounds on which they could enter.<sup>4</sup> He thus loosed them from their sins on the basis of their obedient response to God’s demands. The church sets people free as it sets forth an authentic gospel message.

As the NIV footnotes to both these passages show, a more accurate translation might be: “whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven”. Indeed, the NASB

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<sup>4</sup> Repentance, Water Baptism and being Filled with the Spirit.



uses the phrase “shall have been”. In other words, we can only bind or loose here on earth that which has already been bound or loosed in heaven.

If something is already bound in heaven [e.g. sickness, confusion, debt and poverty, injustice, infertility...] then we can and should bind it here on earth. Likewise, if something is already loosed in heaven [e.g. health, order, abundance, justice, fruitfulness...] then we can and should loose it here on earth. To operate in the power of this principle we must understand what is happening in heaven, revelation of which comes through times of intimacy with God. In this way we continue the works of Jesus [see the implication of **Acts 1:1**], who only ever did what He saw His heavenly Father doing [**Jn 5:19**].

The House of God is a “gateway to heaven” [**Ge 28:17**] where heaven and earth are ‘connected’ and angels move freely between the two. Just as Jacob ‘saw into heaven’ in his dream, so Elisha was only permitted to inherit the double-portion of Elijah’s anointing on the condition that he saw Elijah being taken into heaven [**2Ki 2:9-10**]. When Elijah was taken up [**2Ki 2:11-12**] Elisha saw him, and immediately began to continue in the Elijah ministry. We must ‘see into heaven’!

Binding and loosing is at the heart of our task of seeing the realities of heaven expressed on earth, in fulfilment of the Lord’s Prayer [**Mt 6:10**]. If it exists in heaven, we are to loose it on earth; if it doesn’t exist in heaven, we are to bind it on earth; “we are to be a gateway people for the free flow of heavenly realities into this planet<sup>5</sup>”.

Here and elsewhere, the church is to be on the offensive: proactively bringing heaven to earth rather than being reactive or defensive. Paul instructs the Ephesians to “put on the full armour of God” [**Eph 6:11**] because he envisages the church involved in triumphant assault on the kingdom of darkness. Whenever the church triumphs against spiritual opposition [by leading people to faith in Christ, seeing healing or deliverance, experiencing His Presence...] we are “tasting the powers of the coming age” [**Heb 6:5**], and experiencing heaven on earth.

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<sup>5</sup> Bill Johnson, *The Supernatural Power of a Transformed Mind* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2005,) 62.

## 2 Miraculous Demonstration!

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Elijah experienced God's supernatural provision both for himself, and through him for others:

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." 1Ki 17:2-4

**1Ki 17:2-4**

Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food."....So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

**1Ki 17:9,15-16**

Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank... Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of Go.

**1Ki 19:5-8**

Likewise, the ministry of the church involves **living in abundance and blessing others.**

In heaven there is no need or lack, no poverty or injustice, for "the old order of things has passed away" [Rev 21:4]. The church is to be the visible, earthly expression of God's heavenly Kingdom. Jesus has established us as a community entrusted with living and proclaiming the Kingdom.

The church has been blessed with every blessing [Eph 1:3]; we're blessed so we can be a blessing [Ge 12:2-3]. We're to multiply blessings to the world, becoming a lender to all and a borrower from none [Dt 15:6, 28:12]. The church is to experience God's supernatural, miraculous provision and to live in a way that defies natural laws and economics!

As we live as subjects of God's Kingdom, enjoying provision and peace under His rule, so we fulfil our ministry, demonstrating an ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY.



Unlimited resources are available to enable us to fulfil our ministry and live successfully here on earth; we have access to the abundance of heaven!



## 3 Raising The Dead!

Refusing to accept the death of the widow's son, Elijah cried out to the Lord and brought him back to life:

Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!" The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

**1Ki 17:19-24**

Likewise, the ministry of the church involves **defeating death and restoring life** – confronting death in its many forms and stages, and restoring spiritual, emotional and physical life.

This resurrection is the first ever recorded in the Scriptures. Elijah therefore had no precedent or pattern; but he understood that the boy's death was premature, brought about by an enemy, and designed to bring confusion by causing the widow to misunderstand the nature of both God and his servant [see 1Ki 17:18]. The woman had opened her home and blessed him; she therefore deserved a reward [Mt 10:41]. He also knew that the widow was expecting to die in the drought before she met him [1Ki 17:12], but had been sustained by God's supernatural provision: the son's death would be a travesty!

Elijah was therefore motivated by deep compassion, by a sense of injustice and unfairness, and by a zeal for the Lord's name and reputation. Stirred by these things he stretched himself out over the boy and cried out to the Lord for an unprecedented miracle!

Likewise, the church must be "stretching ourselves" and "crying out" to the Lord with compassion to see the dead and dying restored to abundant life. As we do so, our motive will include a strong sense of injustice and a deep desire to see God glorified and His name revered. Defeating death [in all its expressions] and restoring life is "binding and loosing" – recognising what already exists in heaven and crying out to God to see it manifest here on earth!

Faith and power are frequently released through our compassion; before Jesus raised the widow's son "his heart went out to her" [Lk 7:13]; when he approached



Lazarus's tomb he was "once more deeply moved" [Jn 11:38]. The same pattern accompanied many of his healings. We bring resurrection life and power when we are moved with compassion, and recognise God's love and affection for others.

When Jesus stated his intention to build His church, He also declared that "the Gates of Hades will not overcome it" [Mt 16:18]. Hades is the place of departed spirits [sometimes referred to as "the grave"]<sup>6</sup>. As Jesus builds His church, the gates of the place of the [spiritually, emotionally and physically] dead will be unable to withstand its advance; they will be forced to release their captives! Again, it's the church that's on the advance and the offensive. The Gateway of Heaven will prevail against the Gates of Hell!

Snyder observes that the church fulfils its prophetic function [only] "when it recognises and identifies the true enemy"<sup>7</sup>, which is Satan and the powers under his control. He says that "the church must see the enemy behind the enemy in order to avoid false alternatives and a false definition of the problem". True liberty therefore means first breaking the bondage of sin in peoples' lives, and "the church is on target only if its warfare and struggle lead to victory over death". He concludes "if [the church] is tricked into fighting false enemies, it will lose its redemptive power and be impotent at the gates of death".

Jesus came to "destroy the devil's work" [1Jn 3:8] and thus make possible the reconciliation and restoration of all things. Throughout His ministry He defeated death in all its various expressions: healing the sick, setting captives free and raising the physically dead where necessary. The early church continued His works with the same power and impact, and now the modern church must complete the task. The ministry of the church is to attack 'death': pain, sickness, addiction, disease, disability, and death itself. The church's message and ministry of reconciliation brings people "from death to life" [Jn 5:24, Ro 6:13]. The presence of the Anointed One terrified the powers of hell; and the presence of an anointed church does the same.

Elijah spoke down fire to consume Ahaziah's soldiers [2Ki 1:9-14] and the King himself died "according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken" [2Ki 1:16-17]. Proverbs 18:21 assures us that our very words can create either life or death; the ministry of the church includes speaking powerful and creative words that destroy everything incompatible with heaven's advance and release God's kingdom here on earth.

Finally, we should note that the ministry of the church "in the spirit and power of Elijah" will involve doing things that have never been done [on earth] before! This

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<sup>6</sup> Hades is the NT equivalent of the OT "Sheol" (e.g. Nu 16:30, Ps 6:5, 9:17, 16:10, 30:3, 49:14, 86:13, Isa 14:15, Hos 13:14). Note that four divisions of "Hell" are described in the Scriptures: Hades (the place of the dead); Tartarus (a place for fallen angels, 2Pe 2:4); the Abyss (a bottomless pit, Rev 20:1-3) and Gehenna (the final and eternal hell, the "lake of fire" into which Death and Hades will be thrown, Rev 20:14).

<sup>7</sup> Howard Snyder, *Community of the King* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 1977), 108-110.



is entirely possible, if we are attuned to heaven and committed to doing all that we see the Father doing [Jn 5:19].

When Elijah raised the widow's son, she was assured of the validity of his ministry; in the same way, a church moving in compassion to overthrow injustices, defeat death and bring liberty and life will establish a powerful testimony of authenticity in its community.

## 4 Confronting Evil!

Elijah confronted, defeated, humiliated and killed the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel:

Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.

**1Ki 18:19**

Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

**1Ki 18:40**

Likewise, the ministry of the church involves spiritual confrontation and warfare, as we confront and defeat evil in every guise and call people back to true faith.

Jesus was engaged in a spiritual conflict during His earthly ministry; and despite His triumph over Satan at the cross [Col 2:15], the fact that we now live 'between the ages' means we are also engaged in warfare, which requires prophetic confrontation. In the same way that God intentionally left foreign nations in Canaan in order "to teach warfare to the descendents of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience" [Jdg 3:1-2], the continuing warfare between the church and the powers of darkness is the means by which God is equipping and preparing His people for their future role in ruling the universe with Christ.

Jesus confronted hypocrisy [Mt 23:28, Mk 12:15, Lk 12:1], religious traditions [Mk 7:5-8] and legalism [eg: Mt 12:11-12] head-on, intentionally provoking a response from the religious hierarchy of His day. His church must do the same: refusing to "tolerate the intolerable, support the unsupportable, and negotiate the non-negotiable".<sup>8</sup>

Jesus confronted God's enemies because of His "zeal for God's house" [Jn 2:17]; Elijah's confrontation was because he was "very zealous for the Lord God Almighty" [1Ki 19:10,14]. The church, likewise, must be known for its zeal!

Prophetic confrontation - declaring God's will and speaking out against all that seeks to undermine or overthrow His Kingdom - will precede social transformation. The preaching of the gospel of reconciliation must go hand-in-hand with active involvement in the social issues of our day - God's purpose is to the total restoration of men and women: spirit, soul and body, so that both the inward and outward conditions are transformed.

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<sup>8</sup> Bryn Jones, *The Radical Church: Restoring the Apostolic Edge* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1999), 42.



We must therefore confront hypocrisy, legalism, religious traditions,<sup>9</sup> injustices, religious spirits, strongholds, addictions, and the principalities and powers behind them. Such things enslave people, keeping them captive and diverting them from God. As we confront every kind of evil, and exercise the power to bind and to loose, we set captives free!

We must here emphasise that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” [Eph 6:12]. It is NOT against people – but against the invisible powers at work. Therefore, we must be ruthless in our hatred of all such things and in our opposition to everything that opposes the rule of God and the supremacy of Christ. Elijah did not hesitate to slaughter God’s enemies, and neither should we. We cannot accept the unacceptable – like Jesus, we must expose and destroy the works of the devil [1Jn 3:8].

Just as Elijah’s ‘methods’ were supernatural [calling down fire on a water-soaked altar] so also the weapons we fight with are not of this world [2Co 10:4-6, Eph 6:11-18]. This is a supernatural ministry, fulfilled only with supernatural weapons! Bryn Jones writes: “Our pastoral charge on God’s behalf is to love our fellow man, whereas our prophetic calling demands that we confront injustice wherever we find it...it is not enough to stay in the comfort zone of good works; we must be prepared to continue our good works in the uncomfortable zone of prophetic confrontation”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Those traditions which have no benefit to our faith.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *The Radical Church*, 76.

## 5 Reconciliation!

Elijah successfully called the nation to turn back to God, challenging their indifference and double-mindedness:

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

**1Ki 18:21**

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD - he is God! The LORD - he is God!"

**1Ki 18:36-39**

The ministry of the church involves **evangelism** and **turning hearts back to God**. The church is a living, dynamic organism, and growth and reproduction should be its natural activities. Evangelism and witness are central to the fulfilment of God's cosmic plan because they lead to the reconciliation of men with God. Evangelism is a proclamation of life; the message of the early church was simply that Jesus had been raised to life and had all power to transform lives!

Evangelism is not merely the task of individual believers; it is the ministry of the church community which bears witness to the resurrection life of Christ. By its words and actions [the message and ministry of reconciliation", **2Co 5:18-19**] the evangelistic church proclaims the gospel of life in Christ and wholeness with God!

Evangelism is to be church-based: that is, we are called to make disciples (not just converts) which necessarily involves the integration of converts into the life and community of the church. Evangelism should both spring from the life and witness of the church community, and also result in the continuing growth of that community. Snyder writes that: "the goal of evangelism...is the formation of the Christian community, the koinonia of the Holy Spirit"...<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Snyder, *Community of the King*, 104.



A specific aspect of the church's ministry in this area is the **restoring whole families**. The Pentecost promise is “for you and your children” [Ac 2:39] and the church's Elijah ministry is specifically concerned with turning “the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” [Mal 4:6].

The ministry of the church involves reaching out to all generations, seeing whole families reconciled, saved and added to the church, and restoring strong and stable family life in the church and hence into society. Never has this task been more urgent; the tragic breakdown of society and communities is a direct result of the breakdown of family life. God's longing is for families and marriages to be restored, and for single mothers and fatherless children to be brought into the 'extended family' of the church where they can benefit from relationships with strong male supporters and role-models.

The presence of multiple generations in the church also enables the church to fulfil its ministry of **raising spiritual sons and daughters**. Elijah was careful to ensure his mantle was taken on by Elisha [see 1Ki 19:19-21 and 2Ki 2]. Likewise, the church is to disciple spiritual sons and daughters – another generation who will run faster and go further than their fathers and mothers.



## 6 Prophetic Prayer!

After three and a half years of drought and famine, Elijah prayed for rains to come:

Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked. “There is nothing there,” he said. Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.” The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”

**1Ki 18:42-44**

Likewise, the ministry of the church involves fervent, powerful, prophetic prayer. Indeed, the ministry of prayer is essential to the life and ministry of the church. Put simply, the church is to be devoted to prayer.

Prayer matters so much because of God’s self-imposed restriction to act in the affairs of men in response to our crying-out to Him. As Bill Johnson puts it: “We are his delegated authority on planet earth, and prayer is the vehicle that gives occasion for His invasion.”<sup>12</sup>

Jesus’s teaching on prayer [Mt 6:6-14] tells us that it should be intimate [“go into your room, close the door”] and relational [“pray to your Father”]. Prayer develops our intimacy with the Father, draws us close to His heart and gives us access to the secrets of heaven. It is not based on formulae; it is much simpler than that. It is also one of the greatest honours and privileges that we have.

The heart of the Lord’s Prayer is the cry: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” [Mt 6:10]; we are to pray that the realities of heaven will be seen and expressed here on earth.<sup>13</sup>

Several specific prayers of Elijah are recorded in these three chapters:

- He cried out to the Lord for life to return to the widow’s son [1Ki 17:20-21].
- He prayed that the nation gathered at Carmel would know that the Lord is God [1Ki 18:36-37].
- He prayed that the rains would come [1Ki 18:42-44, cf Jas 5:18], ending the drought and famine.
- He prayed under the broom tree that God would take his life [1Ki 19:4], rather than be killed by Jezebel.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, When Heaven Invades Earth, 64.

<sup>13</sup> The rest of the Lord’s Prayer is a development of this: there is no debt or famine in heaven; there is no unforgiveness in heaven; there is no temptation in heaven; the evil one has no power in heaven...

<sup>14</sup> It seems incongruous that Elijah should pray that he might die whilst running to save his life; the heart of his prayer may be that God would take his life, rather than die at the hands of Jezebel.





- In addition, **Jas 5:17** tells us that “he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years”. Whilst no such prayer is specifically recorded in **1 Kings** [he simply declares to Ahab that there will be no rain], we can assume that he prayed in secret before he met Ahab, and maybe even sustained the drought by means of his continuing prayers over the three and half years.

Elijah prayed in response to the will and word of the Lord: he knew it was not the Lord’s will for the boy to die [see **1Ki 17:12-14**]; God said He would send rain [**1Ki 18:1**]. His prayers were ‘kingdom’ prayers; the longing for God’s will to be done on earth. They were prayers from the heart; prayers to a God he knew as Father; prayers for justice; prayers for the honour of God’s name; prayers that God’s people would follow Him wholeheartedly.

Note also that Elijah prayed three times for the resurrection of the widow’s son [**1Ki 17:19-24**, see above] and seven times for the rains to come. On neither occasion did he give up because the visible answer wasn’t immediate. How many miracles have we missed because we stopped praying too quickly?!

The church must pray for revival rains; house-shaking **Acts 4** prayers that call on God to move in mighty miracle-working power! Like Elijah, we must lay hold of God with a boldness that won’t take no for an answer. The prayers of the Elijah-church should take us into deeper intimacy with God and should make way for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven!...

Writing more than a century ago, RA Torrey said: “Prayer can do today as much as it ever could. Prayer can do anything God can do; for the arm of God responds to the touch of prayer. All the infinite resources of God are at the command of prayer. Prayer is the key that opens wide the inexhaustible storehouses of divine grace and power. ‘Ask and it shall be given you,’ cries our Heavenly Father, as He swings wide open the doors of the divine treasure-house. There is only one limit to what prayer can do; that is what God can do. But all things are possible to God; therefore prayer is omnipotent.” And again “The one who will not take time for prayer may as well resign all hope of obtaining the fullness of power that God has for him.”<sup>15</sup>

We should be encouraged that “Elijah was a man just like us” [**Jas 5:17**]; it means we can know exactly the same power in our prayers as he did! More than that, we can know the same power that Jesus knew; since the same Holy Spirit has baptised both He and us.

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<sup>15</sup> RA Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power in Christian Life and Service*, 83, 95.

## 7 Waiting And Listening In God's Presence!

Lastly, we see that Elijah took time to wait alone in the Presence of the Lord.

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

**1Ki 19:11-13**

Likewise, ministry of the church involves worship and waiting in God's Presence. This is in fact our first priority; worship of God is "the first and greatest commandment" [Mt 22:38]; we have been 'called out' of darkness to "declare His praises" [1Pe 2:9]. The first ministry of the church is our ministry unto Him - to seek His face and wait upon Him.

As we saw in session 1, knowing the Presence of God is the distinguishing characteristic of God's people, and the ultimate human experience: we were created to know Him; we were designed to be with Him; we were born for His Presence. As the Psalmist discovered, a single moment in God's Presence is worth a lifetime of anything else [Ps 84:10]. We are to long for more experience of His Presence - his abiding presence and His powerful manifest presence.

In His Presence we find all we need: joy [Ps 16:11], safety [Ps 31:20], light (Ps 89:15, 90:8), glory (Isa 3:8), peace and rest (1Jn 3:19), blessing (Ps 84:4)...

The church must discover what it is to look upon Him, to wait for Him, to gaze upon His beauty (Ps 27:4). Can we truly cry out as the Psalmist did?:

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The church must discover what it is to look upon Him, to wait for Him, to gaze upon His beauty (Ps 27:4). Can we truly cry out as the Psalmist did?:

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns [Amp: "pines and is homesick"], even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God"

**Ps 84:1-2**



For the church moving “in the Spirit and power of Elijah”, being in God’s Presence will be the longing of our hearts; individually and corporately we will be crying out for the Living God.

Like prayer, waiting and worshipping takes us into deeper intimacy with God, enabling us to hear His voice. As he waited, Elijah distinguished the voice of the Lord – not in the wind, earthquake or fire, but in the gentle whisper. Moving “in the spirit and power of Elijah” involves the church hearing and discerning the will and word of the Lord, which will provide the foundation and faith for whatever else we do.



## | The Mission Of The Church?...

What is the mission and ministry of the church? It is nothing less than being the people through whom God reconciles all things in heaven and on earth back to Himself; the people through whom God's wisdom is revealed to the entire cosmos. It is proclaiming good news and doing good works. It is preparing the way for the return of Jesus at the end of the age. It is a ministry to be carried out in the spirit and power of Elijah – a ministry that opens and closes the heavens, lives in abundance, performs miracles, defeats death and brings life, confronts evil, turns the nations back to God, restores families, raises another generation, prays heaven down to earth, and worships in His Presence. Anything less falls short of our high calling! May God enable us to fulfil our commission in these tremendous and urgent days.