

26. Defining the Spirit and Power of Elijah (1 Kings 17–19)

Just as the high priesthood after the Holy Order of God came to be known as the Melchizedek Priesthood, so the spirit and power of God manifested in the ministry of translated beings came to be known as “the spirit and power of Elijah.” Melchizedek and Elijah, in other words, exemplified certain divine attributes with which their names became synonymous. Power over the elements, power to seal on earth and in heaven, to bring fire down from heaven, to heal the sick, raise the dead, and so forth—although also possessed by others—came to be identified with the spirit and power of Elijah.

Says the prophet Joseph Smith, “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God” (*TPJS*, 337). Note that the spirit and power of Elijah is here equated with “the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood.” Meaning that persons may be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood yet still be far from possessing its fulness—the spirit and power of Elijah attained by translated beings.

We saw an instance of this in our previous podcast in the case of King David, concerning whom Joseph Smith stated, “Although David was a king, he never did obtain the spirit and power of Elijah and the fullness of the Priesthood; and the Priesthood that he received, and the throne and kingdom of David is to be taken from him and given to another by the name of David in the last days, raised up out of his lineage” (*TPJS*, 339).

How close ancient David himself was to actually attaining these blessings, however, appears from the following revelation: “David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord” (Doctrine & Covenants 132:39). These things infer not only that the end-time David inherits ancient David’s posterity but also that he will, in fact, attain the spirit and power of Elijah and the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood. It also implies that in the matter of Uriah and his wife ancient David failed the final test through which he could have ascended to the seraph or translated state.

Isaiah’s depicting the end-time David’s roles under the personas of many ancient scriptural heroes—including translated ones—accords with the end-time David’s diverse tasks as he restores God’s people Israel before the coming of the Lord to reign on the earth. Once again, Joseph Smith enlightens us: “The spirit of Elias is first, Elijah second, and Messiah last. Elias is a forerunner to prepare the way, and the spirit and power of Elijah is to come after, holding the keys of power, building the Temple to the capstone, placing the seals of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the house of Israel, and making all things ready; then Messiah comes to His Temple, which is last of all” (*TPJS*, 340). We could here easily identify these successive messianic roles with the prophet Joseph Smith, the end-time David, and our Savior Jesus Christ.

What we learn from the life and ministry of Elijah, therefore, is key to what follows in any end-time sequel of the events of his day. What were the backstories of Elijah and other scriptural heroes that qualified them for the divine powers they attained? As with Elijah, “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away” (1 Kings 19:10–14). Elijah was completely committed to serving God and was willing to suffer all things the Lord saw fit to inflict upon him by means of which the Lord could empower him.

Compare this with Nephi the son of Helaman, to whom God similarly gave the sealing power and power over the elements: “Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments” (Helaman 10:4).

Like Isaiah, Elijah wandered as a stranger in his own land. False prophets far outnumbered him as they will in the end-time. And yet, the Lord comforted him with his presence as he did Moses on Mount Sinai. Also with the fact that Elijah must have had an impact for good at a critical time in the history of Israel, for the Lord assured him, saying, “I have yet left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:18).