

## The Vision that Waits for You

Pastor Matthew Ude

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**2 Kings 2:8-14** <sup>8</sup> Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled *it* up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. <sup>9</sup> And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." <sup>10</sup> So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me *when I am* taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." <sup>11</sup> Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. <sup>13</sup> He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. <sup>14</sup> Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

Across the river from the place where Elijah ascended into heaven was a school for young men who wanted to be prophets. These students saw Elijah and Elisha crossing the river together. Now they see Elisha coming back alone. They knew by prophecy that they wouldn't see Elijah again. They didn't know what had happened to his body. Elisha tried to explain but they either didn't understand or didn't really believe. They insisted his body must be out there somewhere.

We can understand their doubt. After all, they didn't see what Elisha saw. They didn't see the fire and the chariot. They didn't see Elijah ascending. Elijah wasn't thrown up into the sky by a tornado. He ascended to heaven. They didn't see what Elisha saw. This is one of those things that you really had to be there yourself. You really had to see it for yourself.

Just like those students we need to see this vision. We need to see it for ourselves. We need to understand that Elijah is not dead but lives with God. We need to know that his body is not out there somewhere. We need to understand the power of God that is at work in our lives. We need to understand the end that waits for all of us and what it really means to die to this world and live to Christ. We need the vision.

When our loved ones die. We see a dead body. We see an empty chair where they used to sit, a number in our phone book we can't call anymore. We see a mound of earth and a graven stone. But there are more than these things, much more that we need to see and understand. Things that can be seen only through the Word and by faith. The Lamb who sits on the throne. The multitude which cannot be numbered. The river coming from the throne. The trees of life, and the white robes. The robes purchased for us by the blood of Christ.

We need that vision, not just for funerals but for every day of our life. That is what All Saints Sunday is for. We are not here to pray to the saints. We are not here to remember a life that is gone and past. We are here to remember a life that is. We are here to look forward to the victory that is theirs and will be ours. Today is a reminder of what the power of Christ did in their lives and is doing in ours.

Today is a day not for a dream of what was, but a vision of what is and will be.

When Elisha sees Elijah going up into heaven, it isn't just a sign. Gideon seeing the dew is a sign. When Noah sees the rainbow, it is a sign and a reminder. Elisha seeing Elijah ascend is more than a sign. It is a vision which he can carry with him. He knows what waits for him when he has finished his race.

When Elisha asks for a double portion, he is asking to be Elijah's heir. A double portion is the inheritance of the firstborn son. Elisha is asking to be considered Elijah's firstborn, to take over his task of prophet to the nation of Israel.

Elijah responds, "It is a hard thing you have asked."

No one knew better than Elijah how hard that task was. The ministry is always a hard thing. A life of ministry to God is always a hard thing, but a prophet to Northern Israel was brutal. We remember how Elijah himself was in despair and ready to give up. Jonah going to Ninevah had an easier task than Elisha. Jonah preached for three days and the whole city repented. Elijah and Elisha preached their whole lives and only a remnant listened.

"It is a hard thing you ask," Elijah says. "But if the task is given to you, you will also receive the vision. You will see me ascending into heaven."

That vision would be comfort and strength to Elisha through the long years and difficult ministry to come. In all things he could always wait and look for the end. We also need that vision.

There are so many people who attempt in every way to find out about their future. They turn to fortune tellers, spiritualists, dreams, tarot cards, stars and so many more. Even if such methods worked it would still be foolishness. If we knew our future on this earth, how could we continue? If we knew the struggles of marriage, would we ever get married? If we knew the worry, the sleepless nights that come with raising children, would we ever have the courage to have children? The pressures of our job, the decay of our society, pestilence, war etc, if we knew these things beforehand, how would that help us?

Jesus said, "**Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**" Matthew 6:34

We have enough to deal with today, we don't need to know the troubles of tomorrow. God doesn't tell us our earthly future, the sorrows and tribulations that are to come. God gives us the vision that we need, the joy which will be ours in heaven.

Elisha's task would be hard, but God granted to him to see the end. This is the end, the goal, that victory for a prophet of God. This also he has given to us the vision that we need. He has revealed the victory that is ours, not because we earned it, but because Jesus died for our sins.

Now the suffering, now the labor, now the disappointment and heartache. Then the glory. Then the garden. Then the light.

**Habakkuk 2:2-3 2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.**

God tells Habakkuk "Write the vision and make it plain."

Write it high up. Use larger letters. Use a clear font. Use good color contrast. Don't paint green words on a blue background. No one would be able to read that.

Make the vision clear and plain. So that he who sees it may RUN.

The word run here is not about speed. People run races at different paces. Some are fast and some are slow. The most important thing is that you finish. The vision is there to help us finish. It is there so that we keep running, so that we don't give up.

Give them the vision God says, so that:

So that we are not weighed down by our own sins, knowing that we are forgiven through Jesus.

So that we do not give up in our despair, knowing that we have comfort from the Holy Spirit.

So that we do not lose strength in our weakness, knowing that the power of God is active in our lives, because his strength is sufficient for all things.

Give them the vision says the Lord, "**The just shall live by faith.**"

On Easter Sunday morning, the women see Jesus, they go back and tell the disciples. The disciples don't believe them. They had to see it for themselves.

Jesus appears to the disciples, they tell Thomas, Thomas won't believe. He had to see it for himself.

Saul hears but won't believe until Jesus appears to him. He had to see it for himself.

Jesus lives. Jesus is risen from death and "he who lives and believes in [Him] will never die."

This is a vision that we need to see for ourselves, even if we see it only by faith.

These men and women we are about to pray for are not dead. They are clothed in white and live in the everlasting glory and complete forgiveness that God has freely given to all who believe in him through the death of his only Son our savior.

This is the vision which Habakkuk wrote in large letters. This is the vision that Elisha received. This is the vision which we have received and for which we wait and in which we have hope while we struggle here. "It will not lie . . . It will surely come."

Today we remember all the saints, all the people of God, not because of who they were, but because of who they are. Not because of what they did but because of what God has done for them through His only son.

This is the vision we need, we have received, and in which we stand, through faith in Jesus who died so that we may live. Amen.