

Session 6: A Voice for the Lord

I. Above All a Voice

- a. Now that we have laid the foundation for the forerunner call in Sessions 1-5, we will shift our emphasis beginning with this session to examine the functional role of the forerunner. In future sessions, we will discuss the different assignments of forerunners, emphasizing forerunners as end-time messengers, wise master builders, intercessors and spiritual warriors, and friends of the Bridegroom. In this session, we will focus on the primary function of forerunners, that being to be a voice of truth. Let's begin by looking at Elijah and John the Baptist as voices for the Lord in their generations.

1. Elijah was above all other things a voice

- a. Elijah moved in miraculous signs and Elisha even more so. However, it was not Elijah's healing ministry that brought transformation. It was his voice. It was not the laying on of hands for healing or a deliverance ministry that made the ministry of Elijah crucial in the national life of Israel, it was his voice that characterized his ministry and brought real and lasting impact.
- b. We see the power and authority in Elijah's voice even as he is first introduced onto the scene of the northern kingdom of Israel, "Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, *except by my word*'" (1 Kings 17:1).
- c. In another instance, with his voice he called all the people to abandon completely the worship of Baal and to follow the Lord (1 Kings 18:21). It was his voice spoken in prayer that caused God to send fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). It was his voice that prophesied to Ahab and Jezebel their ultimate destruction (1 Kings 21:17-26).
- d. Elijah led a miraculous life and performed miracles that we all would love to happen in our lives and ministry. He was fed supernaturally by ravens; he was used to provide an unending supply of oil and flour for a widow until the drought ended; and he raised a child from the dead. As exciting as these things were, it was his voice that brought transformation in the land and ultimately through his spiritual son ushered in King Jehu who destroyed the house of Ahab and Jezebel.

2. Above all, John the Baptist also was a voice.

- a. Matthew's gospel records the following about John the Baptist,

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE *VOICE* OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (Mt. 3:1-3).

- b. The above passage in Matthew is drawn from Isaiah's prophecy about John the Baptist. Isaiah's expanded description of what is summarized in Matthew is a little long but worth presenting here to illustrate how John was a voice. Note the italicized phrases that emphasize John as a voice,

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A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" Behold, the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes (Isa. 40:3-11).

- c. Like the above passage prophesies and John's life proves, John's voice impacted the nation of Israel in mighty ways and prepared the way for Christ's earthly ministry. Above all John was a voice.

3. Above all, end-time forerunners are to be a voice into their generation.

- a. Maybe not as dramatically as either John or Elijah, God will use end-time forerunners to prepare the way for the church to stand strong in the end times and to be made ready for the second coming of the Lord. At times, the voice of the forerunner will be gentle, mild, and inviting. At other times, it will confront, thundering much like what is described in Psalm 29. End-time forerunners may have magnificent signs and wonders accompany their ministries or they may not move in any miraculous signs of power. However, the voices of forerunners anointed with the spirit and power of Elijah will accomplish much for the Lord in these end times. The Holy Spirit will use the voice of forerunners as they preach, teach, pray, and proclaim to bring transformation to those who are open and receptive to God's purposes and plans and are willing to lay down the old in order to take up what God is speaking to His people.
- b. The voice of the Lord through forerunners will also many times break through hardened hearts of those who have refused to listen to what God has been speaking. There is an anointing on forerunners to break through both natural and spiritual opposition to bring transformation even to the most hardened of hearts.
- c. The voice of the forerunner will give an invitation to all who hear. Although, many will never receive the message spoken through forerunners, God still desires for all to hear the truth of the gospel—both believers and non-believers. Just like the Father sent out his servants to invite all to the wedding feast, the Lord wants all to hear and be given opportunity to respond.
- d. Let's next highlight eight aspects of the voice of a forerunner.

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II. Eight Aspects of the Voice of the Forerunner

1. First, forerunners are to be a voice on behalf of the Man Christ Jesus.

- a. Looking at the ministry of John the Baptist, he was a voice on behalf of the Man Christ Jesus. Matthew records this about John's ministry, "As for me [*John the Baptist*], I baptize you with water for repentance, but He [*Christ*] who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire...Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John" (Mt. 3:11-13).
- b. As the above passage conveys, John was a voice on behalf of Jesus to prepare the way for Him. The gospel of the apostle John records another passage emphasizing how John the Baptist was a voice on behalf of Jesus,

The next day he [*John the Baptist*] saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God" (Jn. 1:29-34).

- c. As you readily see, John's entire ministry was on behalf of Christ preparing the way for people to receive Him. Even though Elijah ministered before Christ emerged on the scene of Israel, Elijah also was a voice for the Lord. Interspersed through 1 Kings 18, three verses stand out showing that Elijah's mission was to be a voice on behalf of the Lord,

Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again" (1 Kings 18:36-37).

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God" (1 Kings 18:39)

- d. There are many topics for which John and Elijah could have been a voice, but their voices were solely devoted to and on behalf of the Lord, and putting it into the New Testament context—on behalf of the Man Christ Jesus. Their only reason for speaking and ministering was for the Lord and to prepare the way for people to receive Him.
- e. End-time forerunners have the same mission, that is, to be a voice on behalf of the Man Christ Jesus. There are other topics for which forerunners may speak. Subjects like being a voice into America, Israel or any other nation; a voice into governmental systems; or a voice into the corrupt and

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immoral culture. In whatever way the forerunner might use his or her voice, the ultimate goal is to be a voice on behalf of the Man Christ Jesus and to prepare a people for Him.

2. Second, forerunners are to be a voice from the throne.

- a. Christ is forever leading His people unto fullness in Him. He wants every non-believer to accept Him as Savior and Lord and then to follow Him fully. He wants to draw believers to Him in union and intimacy and to conform them fully into His image.
- b. To accomplish these objectives, God is forever speaking from His throne to lead people on this exciting, lifelong journey. Forerunners are not to be their own voice but are to be vessels or conduits for the voice from the throne. They are to be God's mouthpiece to hear the voice from the throne, obey it, preach it, teach it, prophesy it, and pray it so that His voice is clearly offered to the church and world.
- c. We see clearly in the life of Elijah that he was the instrument God had chosen to be His mouthpiece to the northern kingdom of Israel. He heard God and acted on it. Notice the phrase *the word of the Lord* in these passages related to Elijah's ministry,

The word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan (1 Kings 17:2-3).

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you" (1 Kings 17:8-9).

The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to *the word of the Lord* which He spoke through Elijah (1 Kings 17:16).

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that *the word of the Lord* in your mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24).

Now it happened after many days that *the word of the Lord* came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth" (1 Kings 18:1).

Then *the word of the Lord* came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. *You shall speak to him*, saying, '*Thus says the Lord*, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And *you shall speak to him*, saying, '*Thus says the Lord*, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.'"" (1 Kings 21:17-18).

Then *the word of the Lord* came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days" (1 Kings 21:28-29).

- d. As we can see, Elijah heard the voice of the Lord—the voice from the throne—and responded. When it related to his own life, he obeyed the voice from the throne and when it required him to speak it, he did so boldly and without compromise.

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- e. We see John the Baptist also speaking as a voice from the throne. Note this passage we quoted earlier from the gospel of John,

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" This is He on behalf of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me." I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water. John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. *I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'* I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God" (Jn. 1:29-34).

- f. As the italicized phrase in the above passage demonstrates, John heard the Lord telling him that the person upon whom the dove fell was the Messiah. John heard from the throne and then he spoke this boldly to the nation.
- g. We could use other examples, but I think we get the point. Forerunners are not to be their own voice but must be a voice from the throne. They must learn to hear the testimony of Jesus from the throne and respond fully, boldly, and without compromise.

3. Third, forerunners must be a voice, not an echo.

- a. In a way of caution, forerunners must be a voice from the throne, not an echo of others who have impacted their life or ministry—even other forerunners. We all have people who we respect and have learned much from. Even so, we cannot be an echo of their voice, we must be a voice based on what the Lord has said or is saying to us.
- b. To explain, I will share a personal illustration. Over the twenty-five years I have been pursuing the forerunner call, I have had two men—Noel Mann and Terry Bennett—who I consider as spiritual mentors to me in the forerunner call. Both men have impacted me and my voice in deep and profound ways. I shudder to think where my ministry would be right now had God not sent Noel first for a twenty-year period to minister to me and our church. His message was crucial to prepare me as a voice. I can say the same thing for Terry Bennett. His ministry has also greatly impacted my forerunner call.
- c. Even though both men have been absolutely crucial to mentor me in the forerunner message, the Lord has continually cautioned me to be my own man and to speak what He says, not what Noel or Terry said. It doesn't mean I didn't glean much from them because I have. It doesn't mean I don't honor and appreciate them because I do. It doesn't mean I won't receive essential truths in the future because I will. After receiving teaching from them, I always went back to the Lord over a period of time and tried to separate those things that the Lord was speaking to me through them from other things that were not for me. Over the decades these men have ministered at our church, there were many things I took from them, but there were other things I did not.
- d. In a similar way, if we are part of a denominational system or under the authority of a bishop, we will not be able to just follow everything that group does or says. Again, to be a forerunner, we must go into our secret place, hear God, act on it, and speak it. Regardless of what others might say or do.

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- e. The same is true from this class and the Forerunner School. Our desire is to help you become a voice, but not a voice of Ken or Bryan Kessler. Rather, a voice from the throne. Thus, our caution is to not be an echo of a spiritual mentor, a denominational system, or a bishop or overseer; rather, it is to learn from them but become your own voice.

4. Fourth, forerunners must be a voice of truth.

- a. Forerunners are to be a voice of truth. When a forerunner gets the word of truth from the throne, they must be bold and courageous to speak the truth regardless of what others say or think. Elijah spoke truth into the people of the northern kingdom to turn them back to the Lord and to Ahab and Jezebel to confront their false leadership in Israel. Likewise, John the Baptist was a voice of truth who prepared the way for Christ's ministry confronting the religious spirit over the Pharisees and Sadducees and even confronting Herod over his sin—for the purpose of preparing the people to be ready to receive Jesus in truth.
- b. Both Elijah and John the Baptist called people away from a myriad of other pursuits to the Man Christ Jesus who is the Truth. Truth is not just a set of facts about Christ although that is part of it. Moreover, truth is the Person of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. John called people to turn from religion, compromise, and outright rebellion to the truth of the Person of Christ.
- c. In a similar fashion to John the Baptist and Elijah, forerunners must be a voice—faithful witnesses--of truth. This is illustrated clearly in Jesus' message to the church at Pergamum. In this message, the Lord called the church to be a faithful witness of truth. Note this verse, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" (Rev. 2:13). Pergamum was a major city in ancient Asia Minor. One of its attributes was that it was the center for at least four of the most important pagan cults of the day as well as a center for the imperial cult of Caesar. For the most part, the church at Pergamum was faithful to the Lord in the midst of compromise and persecution, yet they were overly tolerant of the pagan and immoral cultural customs that had seeped into the church and threatened their purity. There were teachers there who advocated licentious behavior in the name of Christian liberty and grace. Others there tolerated allowing false teaching to go uncorrected. There were also those influenced by biblical truths mingled with error, which gave unrepentant believers entangled in compromise false assurance that God accepted their lawless behavior.
- d. In the midst of the opposition the church at Pergamum faced, the Lord called the church to be a faithful witness of truth. This included being a voice of truth. It is interesting that in the message to this church, Jesus is described as the "One who has the sharp two-edged sword". Earlier in the book, Jesus is described as having a sharp two-edged sword *coming from His mouth* (Rev. 1:16). Of course, this speaks of His voice. His voice is like a two-edged sword. In the message to Pergamum, the Lord is calling His church to be a voice who stands firm as a faithful witness of truth.
- e. There are many other examples which could be used to further support our premise; nonetheless, the point is clear. Forerunners must be a voice of truth, that is, faithful witnesses of the truth of Christ. Even if the forerunner's voice seems to be a lone voice coming from the wilderness, it is nevertheless needed to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

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5. Fifth, forerunners are to be a voice of transformation in the church.

- a. Jesus spoke these words about the spirit and power of Elijah that will be on the end-time church, “And He answered and said, ‘Elijah is coming and will restore all things’” (Mt. 17:11). Among other things, the spirit and power of Elijah is an anointing to bring restoration, or said differently, an anointing for transformation.
- b. Before Elijah’s famous confrontation with the prophets of Baal and Asherah, he first rebuilt the altar to Yahweh which had been torn down by the influence of Ahab and Jezebel and the neglect of the people (1 Kings 18:30-35). We will say more about this in Session 8 when we speak of forerunners as wise master builders, but we list it here to highlight a major work of the forerunner ministry—that is, to help the church become what the messenger calls it to be.
- c. It is one thing to call people to the Lord and to the truth of Christ. Even though calling on people to change is very much needed, there is also a need to help them build a different spiritual environment in their lives, families, and churches—a spiritual environment that exalts and honors the Man Christ Jesus and explains how to be ready for the end times and the Lord’s coming. Because of this great need, God is raising up end-time forerunners who will help restore the true altar of the Lord and to create a spiritual environment in which Christ is honored and glorified.

6. Sixth, forerunners are to be a voice calling for believers to embrace the cross.

- a. As mentioned in the previous section, Elijah restored the altar before confronting the prophets of Baal and Asherah. He began with stones as a foundation representing the call to all of Israel to turn to the Lord. But there was more. As the scripture states, “Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood” (1 Kings 18:33). The wood with the sacrifice on it represents in type and shadow form the cross of Christ. Prophetically speaking, Elijah restored the cross in God’s house and to God’s people.
- b. In a similar manner, forerunners are to restore the true altar of the Lord back into the church, and this includes re-introducing the cross to many in the church who have abandoned it. Most of the church has accepted the work of the cross that Jesus did when He died on the cross. Although there are some exceptions, most of the church believes that Christ died for our sins and is the only way for salvation. Much of the church also believes that Jesus is our healer, deliverer, and protector.
- c. However, with the coming of the seeker movement, the hyper-grace movement, and the prosperity gospel, many have lost the biblical truth that believers must take up their cross daily dying to self so as to be conformed into the image of Christ. Remembering that the purpose of the church age is to prepare a bride for Christ and a family of mature sons for the Father, this objective will only be accomplished as believers are conformed fully into the image of Christ. This will not happen unless the church not only believes in the work of Christ on the cross but also embraces the way of the cross, allowing the Holy Spirit to take those places where flesh reigns to the cross killing the self-life so that the life of Christ remains.
- d. This is a major assignment of forerunners in our day, that is, to be messengers of the cross. Forerunners must be a voice calling people to the cross life so as to be conformed and transformed into what God so desires in His people—a family who looks and acts like the Father and the Son.

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7. Seventh, forerunners are to be a voice into the church and in relation to the culture and governmental systems.

- a. Delving into the ministry of Elijah, we observe him speaking in a variety of ways. Taking some of these in the order they are recorded in the scriptures, we note at least five different dimensions to Elijah's voice. One dimension was to be a voice into the nation of the Israel. First Kings 17 opens with this declaration by Elijah over the northern kingdom of Israel, "Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word'" (1 Kings 17:1). In this prophetic declaration, Elijah prophesied judgment over the land due to the leadership of the government, the degradation of the culture, and the apathy of the people.
- b. Another area was to speak to the people of God to call them back to the true worship of the Lord, "Elijah came near to all the people and said, 'How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him'" (1 Kings 18:21). Here Elijah was calling the people (a type and shadow of the church) back to the true, sincere worship of the Lord.
- c. Elijah was also a voice into the false religion and immoral culture fostered by Jezebel's adherence to the worship of the Asherah and into the persecution and anti-God government structures (1 Kings 18). In this instance, Elijah confronted in spiritual warfare the anti-God government and culture.
- d. Elijah also was a voice to pray for God's will to be done in the land (1 Kings 18:41-46). In this verse, Elijah prayed for God's judgment in the land to end.
- e. Elijah used his voice of authority from the Lord to raise up spiritual sons (1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 2:3). Elijah was also a teacher called to raise up the next generation of forerunners.
- f. The primary mission of the forerunner ministry is to turn people back to the Lord and all that it entails. To accomplish this task, forerunners are also to use their voice in intercession and spiritual warfare to pray into a variety of topics that affect this primary goal. Forerunners are to pray for the coming forth of the bride made ready and to stand in prayer against those governmental, cultural, and religious forces that would oppose the arising of the church made ready. As they do these things, forerunners are to train others in the forerunner message so as to raise up spiritual sons and daughters who will carry on the call until the Lord returns.

8. Eighth, forerunners are a voice calling out from the wilderness.

- a. "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (Mt. 3:1-3).
- b. John was a voice crying out from the wilderness. Likewise, Elijah came from outside the camp of normal religious activity to be a voice into Israel. Both were voices speaking into the mainstream of religious activity of their day from a place outside of the mainstream of religious expression.

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- c. Both men spoke boldly with a fiery passion of the Lord into areas of compromise and opposition to the truth of God's heart for His people. Although those who desired to walk humbly with the Lord received their message, many did not. Ahab called Elijah a troubler of Israel (1 Kings 18:17). When John called the Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers, they did not like his message.
- d. Although not about Elijah, there is a story in 1 Kings 22 that characterizes the many voices in today's church. In the story, Ahab and Jehoshaphat were teaming up to go to battle against the king of Aram. They asked for the prophets to advise if they should go to war or not. Hundreds of prophetic voices said they should go because they would be triumphant. In contrast, Micaiah prophesied that Ahab would die if he went to war saying, "Now therefore, behold, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you" (1 Kings 22:23). Ahab ignored his word and died in battle.
- e. This illustrates what it is at times like to speak as a forerunner. The majority of the voices in the church are saying one thing and the forerunner speaks the opposite. This dynamic makes the forerunner feel very alone at times like he is crying out as a lone voice from the wilderness. As hard as this is, it is part of the call on the forerunner. They must speak truth boldly even if they are the only one who is speaking. Of course, it is incumbent upon forerunners to make sure that what they are speaking is from the Lord and not their own opinion. But they must speak the word of the Lord even if they are a lone voice.
- f. As we close this session, let's look quickly at Isaiah 6. In this famous passage, a Seraphim from around the throne came to Isaiah with a burning coal and cleansed Isaiah's lips. In so doing, God changed Isaiah's message so that he could become a voice from the throne. In a sense, he was touched by God so that he could become God's forerunner—his messenger—to the southern kingdom of Judah as it was spiraling into the same destructive state that its northern neighbor, Israel, was on. In a similar fashion, I ask for myself and everyone who reads this that the Spirit of the Lord would touch our lips so that we become a bold voice of truth for the Lord that is so greatly needed in our day.