



SERMON GUIDE

The God Life

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Justice Is Served

The God Life | Week 17 | 1 Kings 21:1-29

3. We Must Remember Justice Will Be Faced

When Elijah confronted Ahab, the king still had three years to live. Perhaps he thought he would escape judgment. He even wore a disguise into battle, thinking he could outsmart God's decree. But "someone drew his bow at random" (1 Kings 22:34, NIV), and the arrow found its way through a gap in Ahab's armor. Just as Elijah had prophesied, dogs licked up Ahab's blood. Later, Queen Jezebel was thrown from a window, trampled by horses, and eaten by dogs—just as foretold.

Just as in Elijah's day, we see evil and injustice seeming to triumph. It's easy to become discouraged, thinking the days are exceedingly dark and justice is being left behind. But remember, that delay of justice is temporary. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." What practical steps can you take this week to stand for justice in your family, workplace, or community while still demonstrating God's love and grace? Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection, you can have ultimate assurance that justice will be served and God's righteousness will prevail.

Through the cross and empty tomb, you have absolute assurance that God's justice will ultimately prevail. You can face each day with confidence, knowing that God will make all things right in His perfect timing.

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Justice Is Served

The God Life | Week 17 | 1 Kings 21:1-29

Reflection Questions:

1. When have you seen justice delayed but not denied in your own experience or in events around you? How did this strengthen or challenge your faith?

2. Living the God life might require you to speak up when you see injustice. In what situation in your life might God be calling you to speak up about injustice, even when it's uncomfortable?

3. How does knowing that God will ultimately bring perfect justice change how you respond to personal wrongs or injustices in society that you witness?

Introduction

In the aftermath of any tragedy, we face this reality: Evil is real and rampant. There is no place on this planet that is evil-free. As one author wrote, “I will never understand those who can read the headlines every day and then assert that people are basically good ... Evil is woven into the fabric of humanity.” Throughout our study of Elijah, we’ve seen him facing or fleeing evil, but always returning to fight it, because that’s what it means to live the God life. And it’s not to be confused with the good life. While the good life might avoid evil, ignore it, or let others deal with it, those living the God life don’t have that option.

Now, as we near the close of Elijah's story, we find him confronting Ahaziah, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Though Elijah might have hoped for retirement after the deaths of Ahab and Jezebel, evil continued through their son. And one central truth emerges: When you look up to God, you'll stand out from the crowd and often be told to stand down. But when you stand with God, He gives you the power to stand tall and strong in Him.

Key Points

1. We Will Confront the Presence of Evil

Ten years after confronting Ahab, Elijah faces a new challenge. Ahab's son Ahaziah now reigns, and, despite having witnessed the drought, the fire on Mount Carmel, and his parents' deaths exactly as Elijah prophesied, he follows the same evil path. When Ahaziah injures himself, he sends messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the "lord of the flies," instead of turning to God.

The prophet Isaiah warned against turning to false gods, asking: “When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists ... should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?” (Isaiah 8:19, NIV). Maybe you’ve felt pressure to compromise or stay silent. But I want to encourage

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you today: The God life doesn't avoid evil; it confronts it with truth and love. Like Elijah, you can be the one person in your office, classroom, or family who stands for God's truth. When you do, you stand in the power of the One who has already overcome the world.

Evil will always be present in this world, but God has equipped you to face it directly with courage and faith rather than shrinking back in fear.

2. We Must Condemn the Practice of Evil

God instructs Elijah to intercept the king's messengers with this rebuke: "Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub...? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!" (2 Kings 1:16, NIV). This message would likely cost Elijah his life, but he delivers it anyway. Many today, including 40% of Protestant pastors, admit feeling limited in speaking about moral and social issues, fearing that they may offend others.

Let me speak directly to your heart: Speaking truth in today's culture isn't easy. You may worry about being labeled intolerant, losing friends, hurting your career, or facing rejection. I understand those fears; they're real. But remember this: Someone's eternity may depend on your willingness to lovingly speak God's truth. You don't need to be harsh or condemning, but you do need to be clear and courageous. Start by asking God to give you both wisdom and boldness.

Standing for truth will make you unpopular, but your courageous words, spoken in love, could be exactly what someone needs to hear to find their way to God.

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Stand Tall, Stand Strong

The God Life | Week 18 | 2 Kings 1:1-18

Reflection Questions:

1. Think about a time when you stayed silent when you should have spoken up against something wrong. What held you back, and how might you respond differently in the future?

2. Elijah didn't water down God's message, even though it was unpopular and dangerous. In what areas of your life might God be calling you to speak truth that others don't want to hear?

3. Of the 7,000 who hadn't bowed to Baal, only Elijah took a public stand. What practical step could you take this week to move from being a silent believer to a vocal advocate for God's truth?

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Introduction

One of the greatest aspects of the Bible is that it tells the stories of real faith of real people—both their successes and failures. Throughout “The God Life” series, we’ve studied Elijah, a man just like us, showing not just how to live but how to exit this life God’s way. Now, Elijah knew exactly when his final day would come. And he’s not the only one who had this intel. His successor, Elisha, also knew. And Elijah sowed into the next generation until his final moment on earth.

For most of us, we don’t know which day will be our last, but we all will eventually exit this life for the next one. As Dr. Adrian Rogers once told me after I completed my term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, pointing to the exit door, “James, do you see the sign over that door? It says, ‘Exit.’ Well, that is exactly what you are right now—an ‘Ex-It.’” One day, we’ll all be an “ex-it,” and we need to make sure we exit right. The greatest legacy you will leave is a life well lived.

Key Points

1. Follow God’s Plan

The story begins with a simple statement: “When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal” (2 Kings 2:1). God takes Elijah on a trip down memory lane, all the while showing Elisha the places of significance for both Israel and Elijah’s own personal life:

- Gilgal was where Israel first camped before entering the Promised Land—where their God life truly began.
- Bethel, meaning “House of God,” symbolized God’s presence, the atmosphere in which Elijah had lived his entire life.



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- Jericho represented the battles Elijah had fought and the victories God had won.
- The Jordan River symbolized crossing over from one life to another.

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God had a plan for Elijah's life that wasn't complete until his very last day. You might not know your final day, but you, too, can live each day with purpose. What ministry has God placed on your heart? What person needs your encouragement? What step of faith is He asking you to take? Don't put it off. Live today as if it were your last day—not in fear but in purposeful obedience.

**Your life's purpose doesn't end until your final breath.
Start living today as if it matters eternally, because it does.**

2. Go to God's Presence

After crossing the Jordan, Elijah and Elisha walk together, engaged in conversation, when suddenly "a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind" (2 Kings 2:11, NIV). This was a "deathless departure" or "eternal exit"—only the second such instance recorded in Scripture. The only other people who will experience this are believers who are alive when Christ returns.

Maybe you worry about how you'll die or you fear leaving loved ones behind. Perhaps you wonder what's on the other side. These are natural concerns, but for those who live the God life, death isn't a dead end; it's a doorway. When you've placed your faith in Christ, death loses its sting. You don't have to fear it or obsess over it. Instead, you can live each day fully present, knowing your eternal destination is secure. The moment you breathe your last breath here, you'll take your first breath in the presence of Jesus.



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When you live the God life, you can face death with peace and confidence, knowing exactly where you're going—straight into the loving arms of your Savior.

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3. Live in God's Power

Before Elijah's departure, he and Elisha stood at the Jordan River, which was too high to cross. With the young prophets watching, "Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground" (2 Kings 2:8, NIV). After Elijah's ascension, young Elisha took the cloak and struck the water with it, and the water parted. God's power isn't limited to a person, place, or period; the God life is empowered by God Himself.

Leaders come and go, but God remains. As Elijah exited, Elisha entered. One person's exit led to another's entrance. God can do His work without us, but we can't do our work without God. The Holy Spirit enables you to live the God life until you exit this world and enter God's presence forever.

The same God who parted the waters for Elijah is ready to work through you today. Trust His power, not your own strength, to accomplish what seems impossible.



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Reflection Questions:

1. Elijah's final journey took him through places of spiritual significance. What locations, experiences, or relationships in your life represent important milestones in your walk with God?

2. How are you investing in the next generation, as Elijah did with Elisha? Whom might God be calling you to mentor, encourage, or pour into before your "exit"?

3. Elisha wanted a double portion of Elijah's spirit. What spiritual legacy do you hope to leave behind? What characteristics of your faith would you want others to remember and emulate?
