

Matthew 17:9-13 The Coming Age of Restoration

Matthew 17:9-13. In verses 1-8 we saw The Prophecy of the Transfiguration of Christ Fulfilled, here in 9-13 we see The Prophecy Concerning Elijah. A lot packed away in these verses, not only for understanding, but by way of message.

Remember in Matthew chapter 16, Matthew presented about suffering; that Jesus told the disciples that He must go into Jerusalem and to suffer and to die. And, of course, Peter rebuked Him, and said, "This shall not happen to You," because suffering just doesn't make sense to us. Death doesn't make sense to us. And today we will see why the disciples had a hard time with it and why they were confused with suffering and death.

In verses 1-8, Jesus took Peter and John and James up on the mountain and there He was changed and transformed and speaking with Moses and Elijah. It was a revelation of the vision of the glory of the Lord, what it's going to look like and what it's going to be like. After telling them about suffering, He shows the end result now in verses 1-8. The end result being with Him in glory and what it is going to be like in glory. So, Elijah and Moses were seen speaking with Jesus.

Verse 9 is The Command Concerning the Vision. **And while they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus gave commandment to them, saying, "You should tell the vision to no one until which time the Son of Man should rise from out of the dead."** Kind of a strange command and yet, this is the fifth time now that Jesus is going to tell them to be silent about something that they've seen that is miraculous. And on many occasions He has told the people, "Don't take it beyond where we are at here. Don't spread it publicly." Jesus did not seek to sensationalize His miracles and the things of God. I emphasize that because we do. We take His birth, we take His resurrection, we take miracles, we take healings, and we sensationalize them and make them public, even though other people have never seen them. I've been in meetings before where people get up and give testimonies of how God healed them, but nobody ever saw them sick. Nobody really knew that they were healed but the testimony was sensationalized and people got excited about it. Well, that's one thing about Jesus, especially about death and resurrection and about the vision that the disciples saw, is that He proved Himself to be the Messiah through His work, not just through His words.

In John 10:18 Jesus said, **"Nobody takes My life from Me, but I lay it down Myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to raise it again. This commandment have I received from My Father."** Jesus has that authority. He wasn't trying to get or share His authority by way of testimony, but by way of action. And just like He told the disciples here, "Tell no one the vision until after the Son of Man is risen from out of the dead." Why? Because the words of the vision and the teachings of Jesus would now match up with the action of Jesus being raised from the dead. It wasn't the testimony or the words that made Jesus authoritative, but the actions. So, death sort of seems out of place here as He is talking to the disciples about, "Don't tell anybody, don't go public with it."

In verses 10-13 we have The Clarification Concerning Elijah. When Jesus said, "Don't tell anybody," as are on their way down [the mountain] the disciples are having a conversation in which they approached Jesus. **And His disciples questioned Him, (that is, Jesus) saying, "Why therefore do the scribes say that Elijah is necessary to come first?"** They are bringing up a theological question and a theological debate that has caused confusion amongst them for years. The scribes say that Elijah must come before the Lord because Elijah was prophesied as introducing the Messiah to Israel. I gave you the prophecy last week, but I'll read it to you again this week. Malachi 4:5-6 gives us the prophecy concerning Elijah:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Elijah was a prophet of old and it was promised that he would come back personally and introduce the Messiah to Israel. So, you can see the confusion. The disciples just saw Moses and Elijah up on the mountain and they're saying, "Wasn't Elijah supposed to come first?" And not just Elijah come, but for the Jewish person, and I want this to be stuck in our minds today, for the Jewish person Elijah coming means *restoration*, healing, and that's not happening. It is still not happening today; because when Elijah comes hearts are supposed to be united, healings are supposed to take place, relationships are supposed to be mended. But now Messiah has come and there is no Elijah except up on the mountain, and now he's gone. So, let's bring up the debate. Let's hope Jesus can clarify the confusion. "Why do the scribes say that Elijah is necessary to come first?" You can see why because Malachi 4:5-6 said Elijah will come before the day of the Lord.

First of all, Jesus agrees with this prevailing view. Verse 11 he says, **When Jesus answered He said to them, Elijah indeed is coming first and will restore all things.** He is agreeing with the prophecy and their understanding of it, at least the first half of the understanding of it.

Now, it is interesting because I want to point out to you verb tenses because English translations do not know what to do with these verb tenses, because it sounds very strange. Jesus answered to them, "Elijah indeed is coming first." King James says, "Shall come first." They make it a future tense, because how can he be *is coming* and restore all things when he hasn't come? There is a problem. Except we should translate it the way the text reads because the theological truth is found within the text. He is coming first and he will restore all things. Jesus said, "I agree with the prevailing view of the scribes and the scholars that Elijah must come first. In fact, he is coming first and he will restore all things." Now, the emphasis here is on restoration, not just on Elijah. There are some things to understand about him theologically and this series of events, but *restoration*. You see, they were questioning because there was no restoration. They saw Elijah on the mountain. He was supposed to come first and restore all things; we saw him, he didn't come first because Jesus came first, and then Elijah went away with Moses and all things have not been restored. So, what gives?

When Jesus came the first time - and I'll introduce two times to you, so you can understand Biblically what the Bible teaches. The Messiah was to come one time, it's called His First Coming and the Messiah is to come His second time, His Second Coming. The Jews did not understand that. In fact, John the Baptist sent disciples to ask Jesus, "Are You the one who's coming, or do we look for another one?" Because it is nothing but healings and miracles, but you're not restoring all things. So, what gives? Are we looking for somebody else to come along too?

The First Coming of Christ is the coming of the Messiah as the Suffering Servant. We are still in that age of the Suffering Servant. When He comes the second time, it will be The Second Coming of Christ. He will come at a time in the near future and He will bring the saints with Him, and He will touch down on Jerusalem and He will set up His kingdom for a thousand years here on the Earth. This will be after the tribulation period. He will set up His kingdom and we will rule with Him for a thousand years and He will restore all things. He will heal all sicknesses and all diseases. He will heal all relationships. That is at His second coming.

The first and second comings were not proclaimed in the Old Testament prophecies, it was all put in one event. That is why the Jews were so confused as to the coming of Messiah. They were expecting Him to come and set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and free them from Roman bondage and from being imprisoned to Rome and restore all things. That's what they were looking for, but He didn't do it. As a matter of fact, things things got worse.

You know the old saying? Rejoice, because things could get worse. Sure enough I rejoiced, and things got worse.

We are still in the age where there is no restoration. I don't know if you realize it or not, this is behind all of our struggles with understanding about life as we know it today. I have Jesus Christ, but the time of restoration is not yet; therefore my relationships with nonbelievers, in fact my relationship with some believers, will not be restored. It will not be healed.

You remember what Jesus said back in Matthew 10:34-39. He says, "**Do not think that I came to bring peace upon earth: I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I am come to establish a man at enmity (or division) against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's enemies shall be those of his own household.**" It doesn't sound like restoration; it sounds like division. "**He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not up his cross, and follows not after me, is not worthy of me. He that preserves his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.**"

"If you love mother and father, brother and sister, houses and lands, more than Me," He says, "you are going to find trouble because I bring a sword and I bring division and there's going to be broken relationships not mended relationships."

In II Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul brought out the fact that we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. It is not restoration, it is separation. **For what fellowship does righteousness with unrighteousness? See, it is fellowship. And what communion has light**

with darkness? And what communion has Christ with Belial? (which is the god of the devil) **Or what part has he that believes with an infidel?** (or somebody who does not believe) **And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, "I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them,"** it says, **"and be separate,"** says the Lord, **"and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters,"** says the Lord God Almighty. Division. Separation.

It is interesting that we think humanistically rather than spiritually. We think the love of God will not cause people to be hurt or offended over our decisions to be obedient to Christ and that is not true. In fact, Jesus in Matthew 15:13-14, you remember, He spoke the truth to the religious leaders and the disciples came to Him and said, "Don't you know you offended them? I mean they are really ticked off," from the Greek word **τικεω** (tickeo). **But He answered them and said, "Every plant, which my Father has not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind and the blind shall lead the blind and both shall fall in the ditch."** If it is not planted by God, if it is not of God, it has to be rooted up. So, I told them the truth. I walked in the truth.

Following Christ is going to mean that people will be offended. In fact, people are going to be hurt, because I don't do things their way, I don't do things to please them. I do want to share the love of Christ with people but the greatest act of the love of Christ is being obedient to Christ. That is the greatest act of love that I can show them. In fact, when people are hurt and offended over my obedience to Christ, notice there's a clarification there, they are offended over my obedience to Christ, not just offended. I offend people without being obedient to Christ, that doesn't count, that is just my own obnoxiousness. But obedience to Christ, if they get offended and get hurt, that's my testimony. That's what a testimony is. If someone is rejecting Christ and I be obedient to Christ they have to be upset. Then I know my testimony is bringing conviction.

In verse 12 he says in our text, **"But I say to you** - so, "I agree with you that Elijah must come first, but now I say to you about your misunderstanding" - **that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did in him** (that is, in his situation) **as much as they desired. This way also the Son of Man is about to suffer by them."** So, the disciples were confused. They just saw Elijah. He will come. He is coming. And he did come. Good grief. What's the answer here?

In John 1:21, it is interesting that John the Baptist was out baptizing - he had not yet introduced Jesus to Israel - but John the Baptist was out baptizing and a delegation from the religious leaders in Jerusalem were sent out to him to find out who he was. In John 1:19-23 they come out and they said, "Who are you?" And John says, "I am not the Christ."

"Well, are you Elijah?"

And he flat out just said, "No." He is not Elijah.

"Well, are you the prophet then?"

"No, I am not the prophet that Moses spoke about."

"Well then, who are you?"

He says, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as said the prophet Isaiah. I am just a voice in the wilderness, fulfilling the prophecy that Isaiah gave." So, he is not Elijah.

In Matthew chapter 11, later on in John's ministry, in Matthew 11:14 Jesus was talking to the people out by the river and said, "When you came out to see John the Baptist, who did you come out to see? A prophet? I tell you yes, and more than a prophet, and if you will receive it, this is Elijah who was to come." John says he's not Elijah. Jesus says he is Elijah. What is the problem? You can see why the confusion here, trying to piece prophecies and things together.

Well, the answer is found in Luke 1:17, where Gabriel came to Zacharias and says, "Your wife Elizabeth is going to give birth to a son and you're going to call his name John." This would be John the Baptist. This is before he was even born. And so, "He will come before Him," that is, before Jesus, "he is going to come in the spirit and power of Elijah." Oh, I see. "He is going to come in that spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." So, the answer to this whole thing is, in fact, verse 13 finishes it up for us about the disciples, "Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them concerning John the Baptizer."

So, there are two comings of Christ. The First Coming - He has already come the first time, as a suffering Messiah; and John the Baptist came and announced His first coming, but when John came, he came in the spirit and authority (or power) of Elijah. He had Elijah's spirit and his ministry. At Christ's Second Coming, He will come as the ruling or reigning Messiah and Elijah himself will announce His second coming. So, John coming in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was not Elijah, and yet he was. He fulfilled the prophecy and God's Spirit upon him fulfilled the ministry of Elijah upon John the Baptist. But Elijah himself is going to come to usher in the second coming of Christ when he comes.

Now, what are we to take away from this other than understanding a little bit better about John the Baptist and the Elijah problem and confusion? We need to understand that we are still in our era, we still think that because Jesus came He came to heal and restore all relationships, He came to heal and restore all people, and that there would be no divisions amongst people; but we are still in the same era as when Jesus came, when Jesus said He came to bring division, and He came to bring a sword. You hear the man centered gospel preaching today that God wants to heal relationships. So, therefore a God of love will never make you obey the Lord to the point that other people around you would get upset or get hurt because of your decisions and because of your relationship and because of your obedience, and that is not true. If a non-believer gets offended at your obedience to Christ, you are fulfilling your testimony. They should be upset, because they have rejected Christ and basically what you're saying is, "I've received Christ and I am following Him. I'm being obedient to Him."

So, we still are not in the age of restoration. It is still the age of division. You don't know for how many years I've banged my head against the brick wall trying to run here and there and try to help to heal relationships and all brokenness among people. It is not going to happen, folks. The Lord might do it in various instances, but it is not a promise. There is going to be a separation because people are making spiritual choices, not religious choices or human choices.

It is not a matter of all of humanity joining together becoming one like we hear today. It won't happen spiritually. You either belong to Christ or you don't belong to Christ. You are either following Jesus Christ or you are not following Jesus Christ. And if you are following Jesus Christ and other people want you to do things with them or do things their way, they are going to find out that you don't do things that way and they are going to be upset, maybe angry.

I want to bring this out about the confusion amongst the disciples because Elijah seemingly came, the Messiah is here, but things are not restored. We are not free from the Roman government and Jesus said the father is going to be against his son and the daughter against the mother and a person's enemies are going to be those of his own household. How do you explain that? Where is restoration? Well, there isn't, there is division. People are making choices. People are either submitting to Christ or they are not. People are either obedient to Christ or they are not.

Let's close in prayer.