

THE DAY COMETH

Elijas was one of Israel's greatest prophets. He preached against the wicked people of Israel, especially against the rulers and the false prophets. He prophesied to the wicked Ahab, king of Israel, that there would be famine in the land. He raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath. He humiliated the prophets of Baal, and gave the order for their execution. He denounced judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel. He called down upon the soldiers of Ahaziah, king of Israel, fire from heaven. Finally, he was taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Although some refused to repent at Elijah's preaching, some did. When he called fire down from heaven to consume the burnt sacrifice at Mount Carmel, the people fell on their faces in humility and confessed that the Lord is God.

Elijah, through his preaching and great miracles, turned back to God the hearts of many a sinner. Nevertheless, the nation continued in wickedness. So, God in His anger, sent he Assyrian army to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel and carried the people away into exile, and afterward He sent the Babylonian army to conquer the southern kingdom of Judah and carry those people away into exile.

After Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, he issued a decree that the Jews should return to their homeland and rebuild their temple and the city of Jerusalem. The Jews did return to their land, and they did rebuild the temple and the city, but they did not change their ways. They continued to rebel against God. In violation of God's express commands, they put away their Hebrew wives, and married heathen ones. (Malachi 2:11, 14) They robbed God by withholding the tithes. (Malachi 3:8) They offered sacrifices to God for their sins, but God had no regard for them, because the hearts of the people were insincere. (Malachi 1:8, 13) So, God sent the prophet Malachi to call the people to repentance, and warn them not to follow in the footsteps of their rebellious forefathers. (Malachi 3:7)

Some heeded the prophet's call to repentance, and they did repent of their sins. There is a book of remembrance in which God keeps a record, as it were, of men's actions. God commanded the people to be faithful to Him, and to keep the law which he had given them. There will be a day of judgment, a day in which God will condemn the unrighteous, and acquit the righteous, according to the record. Through Malachi the prophet, God said that before He came to judge, He would send them Elijah the prophet to prepare the way for Him, to prepare the hearts of the people. He said, "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." (Malachi 4:5, 6) This is the last word the people heard from the Lord for five-hundred years.

Before John the Baptist was born, an angel appeared to his father, and said to him:

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:15-17)

Saint Mark records in his gospel that John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John did not call people to believe in himself, but to believe in another. He preached, saying, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (Mark 1:7, 8) When John baptized

Jesus, a dove descended upon Jesus and a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) He bore witness that this one is Jesus of Nazareth.

On one occasion, when Jesus was with His disciples, He told them that they would see the beginning of the kingdom of God. He said to them, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1) Six days later, Jesus took Peter, Jame, and John to a high mountain, and there He was transfigured before them. Like the voice of God at Mount Sinai, a voice came out of a cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." (Mark 9:7)

The disciples, considering that Elijah had not yet come, did not understand how Jesus could be the Christ. They asked Jesus, "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" Jesus answered them:

Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him. (Mark 9:12, 13)

Elijah, in a manner of speaking, did come, and he prepared the way for Christ by calling the people to repentance. Christ came after Him, and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) Now, they that follow Jesus proclaim Him king, and call on all men to repent and to serve Him, because He will one day judge the world.

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.