

A Snapshot of the Glory (Part 2)

Introduction

This passage's theme could be stated in one sentence: "*Faithless in the little, faithless in much.*" If the leaders of Israel have rejected John the Baptist, they will also reject Jesus Christ as well. There are no surprises.

Which is really sad. There is a huge contrast between the beautiful voice Jesus had just heard from the Father on the mountain — "*This is my beloved Son*" — and the hatred that the leaders of Israel harbored in their hearts toward Christ.

They were created to love him; yet they persecuted him.

Body 1. "Putting a name to a face." Why Elijah must come first?

As they are making their way down the mountain, the disciples ask a milestone-type question: in order for Christ to come, Elijah must come first. They want to know the Rabbi's thoughts on the matter.

We have a similar question in our own day as well. We eagerly expect Jesus' second coming, and we know the birth pangs must happen before Christ's return — we all wonder what that will look like.

The same curiosity and expectation that fill our hearts are the same that filled their hearts as well. Jesus replied, "*To be sure...*" Let us pause here and meditate on

this. When the Master says “*to be sure*,” he wants to affirm the doctrine while expanding upon it.

A- “*To be sure*,” Elijah must come. The doctors of the Law are exactly right. Their doctrine is correct.

B- “*To be sure*,” they failed to recognize him. Elijah has already come, and he was speaking about John the Baptist.

Christ actually points out the very aspect of the doctrine that had been set aside by the religious leaders: **reformation**. Now, to understand what Jesus is explaining here, you need to refer back to the Old Testament: Who was Elijah, and what had been prophesied about him?

Body 2. “Putting a name to a face:” Who was Elijah? What was prophesied about him?

Who was Elijah?

He saw his nation going astray by worshiping foreign gods — Baal and Asherah. He challenged all the false prophets on Mount Carmel. You know the story: the pagan gods couldn’t spark a little fire on the altar, but the true living God of Israel lit the altar with fire from heaven. All the false prophets (450 of them) were put to death once the event was done. As Elijah was celebrating the victory, Queen Jezebel issued a death sentence against him. He was now wanted in Israel; there was a price on his head — whoever reported or handed him over to the queen would receive a reward. The prophet rushed out of Israel and hid himself in a cave.

Little did the religious leaders realize that Elijah had been persecuted by the authorities of Israel back then. Little did they know they were the persecutors in their own time.

What was prophesied about him? (Mal. 4.1-6)

Vv. 1–3: Fire from the Lord — his blessings shining like the sun upon the righteous — but his fire acting like a burning furnace to destroy the wicked.

V. 4: A call to remember Moses, which basically means a call to return to the Scriptures.

Vv. 5–6: The promise that Elijah would be the herald of the Messiah, performing a ministry of spiritual restoration.

Jesus' voice echoes in the disciples' ears — *"To be sure,"* the doctors of the Law failed to understand that the prophecy is a blessing to those who accept it and a condemnation to those who reject it – in this case, the leaders themselves.

- The prophet said, *"You should..."* They replied, *"We shouldn't..."*
- The prophet said, *"You need..."* They replied, *"We don't need..."*
- John drew multitudes to hear the word of God. They didn't recognize his ministry. John preached repentance. They didn't recognize his ministry.
- John offered a baptism of repentance. They didn't recognize his ministry.

After all, Herod the king beheaded the prophet. Jesus adds: they will do the same to him. They will eventually crucify him.

Body 3. “Putting a name to a face.” Examining the own heart first.

What is the great lesson you can learn from this story? Today's application revolves around the word **“recognition.”** They examined the Scriptures, but they forgot to examine their own hearts.

Expecting Elijah to come is easy; accepting/recognizing his ministry is not that easy.

Expecting Christ to come is easy; accepting/recognizing his ministry is not that easy.

1. Illustration: selective memory

When we are in a good mood, we say life is awesome. When we are in a bad mood, we say life is terrible. *“The mood dictates the reality, not the other way around.”*

Had Elijah met their expectations, he would have been accepted. Since he did not fulfill their expectations, he was rejected. In the end, their expectations were their lord — not God's prophecy.

2. Illustration: a heart that can't grasp the parables

A child who had been abused by his father went to school. There he heard his loving teacher talking about the topic of fatherhood. She presented a parable, saying that the protection of a father is like the anchor of a ship — it holds it firmly.

The child couldn't grasp the parable; he understood the story, but he couldn't associate the story with his own father.

Conclusion

They rejected the Father first! Thus, they rejected his prophet. Thus, they rejected his Son.

We are called to love the Lord by accepting his words, accepting the prophets he sends to us, and ultimately, by accepting and loving his Son.

"You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life.

These are the very Scriptures that testify about me."

(John 5:39)

"If you love the Father, you will love the Son."

(John 8:42)