

## ELIAS SHALL FIRST COME

The history of Elijah the prophet, called in the New Testament Elias, is one full of interest to us, not only because it is a history of a courageous and faithful servant of God, but because we believe that he was also a type, and that, through the medium of his life, God has given us illustrations of some of the deep things of His word.

Before touching upon Elijah as a type we wish to call attention to the peculiar prophecy with which his name stands connected—the last words of the Old Testament:

„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 hearts 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.*” (Mal. 4:5,6.)

This was a prominent prophecy in the mind of the Jews, and they therefore expected that before Messiah should come, Elijah would first appear and prepare them. This matter was thrust at the early disciples who believed in Jesus, and truly Jesus' answers gave them but little light on the real significance of the prophecy; probably because it was among the many things he had to tell them which they could not yet bear.

Let us look at Jesus' statements: He *seems* to apply this prophecy in some measure to John the Baptist.

„His disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias [Elijah:: must *first* come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, *Elias truly SHALL FIRST COME and restore all things.* But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.” (Matt. 17:10-14.)

But when in another place Jesus says of John: „IF ye *will* RECEIVE IT, this is Elias which was for to come,” (Matt. 11:14,) it causes us to consider: What had *their receiving* or rejecting of John's work to do with the matter? Would not John the Baptist (great as he was) and his ministry of six to twelve short months, confined in influence to a very small part of little Judea, be a rather *small fulfillment* of the great work, etc., prophecied of Elijah? It surely would. Then, again, was it to be

Elijah *resurrected* that the prophet meant? No; but we think the prophecy referred to the coming of another faithful reprovener of sin, such as Elijah was in his day, one ready to denounce popular and respected sin and sinners, as Elijah did the priests of Baal in his day. With this thought, we see how John, indeed, exercised the same godly boldness in reprovener sin in his day. Thus he rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees, the great religionists of his day, saying, „O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?“ (Matt. 3:7.) And as part of Elijah’s work was to point out the true and acceptable sacrifice of Jehovah, so it was a part of John’s work to point out the antitype of those sacrifices, saying, „Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.“ (John 1:29.)

This begins to look more reasonable, but is it in harmony with the Scriptures? We answer, yes; thus it was foretold in the announcement of John’s birth: „He (John) shall go before him (Jesus) in the *spirit and power of Elias* ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.“ (Luke 1:17.) This, evidently, is the significance of this prophecy—that before the coming of the

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great and dreadful day of the Lord some power or agency would be raised up, which would act as a bold teacher to arouse those in a proper condition.

But still the question arises, Was John’s ministry sufficient to fulfill all the predictions concerning the Elias? Do not Jesus’ words: „Elias truly shall first come and *restore all things*,“ seem to indicate a greater work than John accomplished? What if John the Baptist stood for or represented a *multitudinous Elias*, as Jesus stood for and represented a *multitudinous Christ*, of which he was the head and his church glorified the body?

This, we believe, is the proper solution of the matter. We have seen heretofore that *the Christ* of power and glory, foretold in Scripture, is not only *Jesus Christ*, but all those, also, who being justified by his sacrifice have become joint-heirs with him, and fellow members of the same body, over which Jesus is the *head*, God blessed forever. (Eph. 1:22; Rom. 9:5.) So it does not surprise us that as John, in the bold and noble spirit of Elijah, introduced and made ready the way of Jesus at the first advent, so a greater than John—a company whom he represented—in the same bold Elijah spirit, will prepare the way for the reception of the glorious and complete Christ.

Then, the Elias (John) and the Christ (Jesus) *failed* of a full accomplishment of the restoring and reigning foretold of the Elias and the Christ; but the Elias and the Christ *complete* shall fulfill all the prophetic predictions.

To be brief, we understand that Elijah and John represented the true and faithful witnesses of this

Gospel age, whose testimony and labors, under the blessing of God, shall *prepare the way* for the reign of the glorified church and its glorious head, by making ready a people prepared (the „little flock”) for the Lord. (See Luke 1:17.) As John, in the spirit of Elias, in the end of the Jewish age called attention to Jesus, and thus prepared those who heard to receive Jesus and be exalted at Pentecost to the higher spiritual plane, so here, the Elijah class will in the end of this age call attention to the *present* Christ, that those prepared of the Lord to be exalted to glory may be made ready.

But if we look backward and compare the life of Elijah with the history of the *true* church of overcomers, we shall see such a marvelous coincidence as will convince us of the correctness of our supposition that he was the type, and the church the real Elijah. That the comparison may be the more readily made, we place some of the leading points of similarity in the history of Elijah and the church in parallel columns.

### **ELIJAH.**

I.

Elijah persecuted for righteousness' sake.

II.

His principal persecutor was Jezebel, the wicked Queen of Israel, who is mentioned by name as the type of the enemy of the saints. (Rev. 2:20.)

III.

Jezebel's persecuting power was exercised through her husband, Ahab, the king.

IV.

Elijah fled from Jezebel and Ahab, into the wilderness, to a place prepared of God, where he was nourished. Fed by the ravens and by the widow. (See 1 Kings 17:5,9.)

V.

Elijah was „three years and six months” in the wilderness, and during that time there was no rain, and a great famine was in the land. (James 5:17; 1 Kings 17:7, and 18:2.)

VI.

When Elijah returned from the wilderness, the errors of Jezebel's priests were manifested and the true God honored, followed by copious rains. (1 Kings 18:41-45.)

### **THE CHURCH.**

I.

The Saints suffer for the truth.

II.

Their principal persecutor was the apostate Church of Rome, which claims to be a „queen” and ruler over spiritual Israel. (Rev. 18:7.)

III.

Papacy's persecuting power was the Roman Empire, to which she was married.

IV.

The true Church fled into the symbolic wilderness—or condition of isolation—to her place, prepared of God, where she was miraculously sustained. „The earth helped the woman.” (See Rev. 12:6,16.)

V.

The church was three and a half symbolic years (a day for a year—1260 literal years) in the wilderness condition, during which there was a spiritual famine because of the lack of truth—the living water. (Comp. Rev. 12:6; 11:3; Amos 8:11.)

VI.

At the end of the 1260 years the power of the truth and its witnesses was manifested (1798 A.D.), and since then the truth has flowed out and is deluging the world at the rate of millions of Bibles every year.

VII.  
The king and the people at first rejoice and Elijah and his God are honored, but the spirit of Jezebel is unchanged and she still sought Elijah's life, and he was again compelled to flee to the wilderness. (1 Kings 18:40,45,46; 19:1-4.)

VIII.  
Elijah's career ended by his being taken from the earth.

VII.  
The teachings of the Bible have brought such blessings that the empires of earth recognize the Lord's hand, yet they have almost gone back to the *principles* of Papacy (Jezebel), with so-called „Protestant“ sects, and the saints are again compelled to *flee* for the preservation of their spiritual life, and are again in the wilderness condition.

VIII.  
The saints will be changed from earthly to heavenly beings.

These are striking coincidences, and we believe are not accidental, but with Jesus, we believe that to those who *could* „receive“ John's testimony, he to such filled the office or work of Elias, which the church more fully accomplishes.

The expression, „turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,“ is a peculiar one, and the sense of the Hebrew is even less clear; but we have it repeated by the angel as recorded by Luke 1:16, in a manner which makes it plain—“to turn the hearts of fathers to children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous.” In a word, to restore harmony between Israel and „the fathers,“ (the patriarchs, etc.) and, in the fuller sense, the world whom Israel typified or represented, shall come into a condition of harmony and peace with God, similar to that of the „fathers.”

When in the foregoing prophecy it is said: „He shall turn the hearts ... lest I come and smite the earth with a curse,“ (Mal. 4:5,6,) it *apparently* teaches that the mission of Elijah would be successful—that he would turn the hearts. But looking at the ministry of John the Baptist, and also at the ministry of the church, we find that *neither* SUCCEEDED in turning any considerable proportion of men to the Lord. This seeming discrepancy causes us to look again at the word of the Prophet, and looking *more closely*, we find that it is a CONDITIONAL statement. If Elias succeeds, the earth will not be smitten with a curse, but if he succeeds not, the curse will come.

This harmonizes exactly. If John had been heeded in the Jewish church and had succeeded in turning that institution to the Lord, so that they had recognized the *present* Saviour, then that Jewish church would have received Him and He would have exalted it; but, on the contrary, they (as a church) rejected the teaching of Elias, rejected the greater one whom he announced, and, as a consequence, they as a people received THE CURSE mentioned by the prophet. Their polity was overturned in utter destruction. Now let us look at the larger fulfillment. Representatives of the *Elijah class*—the saints—have rebuked sin and censured sinners, and professing Scribes and Pharisees, and sought to turn the people, and finally announced the *presence of Christ*; but now

as then, there are few turned so that they recognize the *presence* which they had expected so differently. And here, as in the Jewish prototype, the rejection of the Elijah message brings the *curse* mentioned by the prophet—the overthrow both of the church (nominal) and also of the civil powers to which she is wedded. This curse or wrath of the „Day of the Lord” has already been shown as commencing A.D., 1878, lasting 37 years, to 1914, A.D.—as the curse upon the nominal Jewish church was of 37 years’ duration, from A.D. 33, where Jesus gave them up and left their house desolate, till the utter destruction of their city and nation, A.D. 70.

However, the work of Elias—the church glorified—*will be successful*. „He shall *restore* all things”; hence, while the curse comes and overturns much, it shall not be „utterly” cursed and forever destroyed, because the exalted Elijah—Christ—shall put down all opposition and *then* restore and bless.

The two characters, Elijah and John, are both needed to fully illustrate the closing work of the saints. The circumstances of the close of John’s career, combined with those of Elijah’s, seem to fill out the picture completely. According to John’s experience, we should expect that as his reproof of Herod for having an unlawful wife (Luke 3:19), led to his imprisonment, so here, the reproof of the church and world for their unlawful union, provokes the displeasure of both and leads to the ostracizing (beheading) of the faithful reprovers.

Then, too, John died, but Elijah was taken to heaven, and thus they two represent the last class of the saints. The moment of the death of the flesh, will be the moment of translation to the new nature.

### **ELIJAH’S SUCCESSOR—ELISHA**

Before translating Elijah, the Lord arranged that he should prepare and instruct his successor, and sent him to Elisha as such. (1 Kings 19:16). So, if we have found Elijah to represent the overcomers, the „Bride” or „Body” of Christ, we might reasonably infer that Elisha is the representative of those who shall succeed the overcomers, as the Lord’s mouth-piece on earth; hence our interest in his career.

From the time of his call to be the successor, Elisha followed Elijah. The latter expected to be translated, and the former did not, but knew that Elijah was to be. On the route, Elijah went to various villages apparently expecting to be taken at each, and seemingly an effort was made to test the interest of Elisha by inviting him to tarry behind;

but he evidently represents a persevering and faithful company, for he would not be discouraged nor leave Elijah.

There are some things which seem to indicate that these various stopping-places to which they went, but at none of which the desired translation occurred, represented or foreshadowed various points in the time-proofs where, with the then imperfect views of the plan, order, etc., it was thought the translation of the saints might be due. As these various stoppings were, doubtless, a test of the faith of Elijah and Elisha, so, doubtless, these *time-points* have served to test, and separate, and leave behind, all not properly belonging to the Elijah and Elisha classes.

The translation took place when all those stopping-places were in the past, and at no definite or fixed point. „It came to pass, as they *still WENT ON and talked*, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (2 Kings 2:11). So, also, it is now: all those time-points are in the past; none of them were times of translation, and we are going on without any *definite points* of expectancy, and the two classes are now communing together of the work, and now it is that we believe the change is taking place; that is, some are from time to time being „caught up”—“changed” from human to spiritual beings—with the Lord; as men dying, like John, as new creatures, translated the same instant to the heavenly or spiritual condition. (Psa. 82:6,7; Rev. 14:13).

We have heretofore shown the Scriptural teaching that the overcomers, or Elijah class, will be a „little flock,” and that there is also developed another class—“a great company”—and this last seems to be represented in part by Elisha. While Elijah remained, Elisha was merely a *disciple* and not a teacher, but in view of his work, as Elijah’s successor, a double portion of Elijah’s spirit—energy, force, power to teach, etc.”—was to be upon him, upon certain conditions, *viz.:* „If thou shalt see me taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but, if not, it shall not be so.” (2 Kings 2:10.) And we are informed that, *to see this*, will be a „hard thing.” The significance which we attach to this is, that it will be a very difficult matter, even for those expecting the event, to see [Recognize] the *change* of the Elijah class. Since „ye (the saints, the Elijah class), shall *all die LIKE men*,” it will be only by close affiliation and an opening of the *eyes of the understanding*, and the exercise of implicit faith in the promises, that these will be able to know of the glorious, spiritual rapture which occurs in the instant of death. In view of this fact, how transparently pure and faithful must be the life of each member of that Elijah class. Absolute perfection need not be expected while we have this treasure in imperfect earthen vessels, but perfection of purpose, aim and effort, should be manifest to those about us, that when we are taken they may *know it*. „He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” (1 John 3:3.)

Only such as do recognize the change of the Elijah class, can fill the teaching position. The „sons

of the prophets" (theologians) will disbelieve; but upon this class who *shall see*, a double portion of the Elijah spirit comes. No wonder if this class becomes awake to the grandeur and importance of their work, when they realize the establishment of the kingdom—the glorifying of the Elijah class. And this is shown in type. Elisha received the double portion of Elijah's spirit, and if he be, as we judge, a type of the second company, its career will be a grand and glorious one.

Filled with the Spirit while mourning his loss, he returned, smiting the waters with Elijah's mantle in the name of „the Lord God of Elijah, so that even the sons of the prophets [nominal teachers] recognized his power, saying: „The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha"—yet they believed not that Elijah was taken; thus illustrating how the *world* (including the nominal church) will be as ignorant of the glorification of the true church, the body, as it was of the glorification of our head at the commencement of this age.

Thus far we have been merely fitting the testimony of God's word with the records of the lives of these men; and the harmony is so great as to forbid our regarding them as anything less than designed types. But, should we look into the future and attempt to read the *progress* of the Elisha class, from his acts we would be upon less firm ground; hence, we *merely suggest* that possibly Elisha's healing of the waters with salt in a new cruise cast into the spring, *may mean* that the channel (river) of truth will be cleansed and purified at its very fountain by *new* dispensational truth being cast into it, by the Elisha class. (2 Kings 2:19-21.) The increase of the widow's pot of oil until every available vessel was filled by which her sons were saved from bondage (chap. 4:1-7), *may represent* the increase of the spirit so that every ready and emptied vessel shall be filled—the pouring out of the spirit upon *all flesh*. (Joel 2:28.) The healing of the mess of pottage for the sons of the prophets, so that they ate of it unpoisoned, *may represent* a healing of the food of theologians and the putting of an antidote into their poisonous mess. (2 Kings 4:38-41.) The increase of food for *the people* (verses 42-44) *may represent* a feast of truth for the people. The healing of Naaman's leprosy may represent the healing and restitution from the blight of sin of which leprosy is a symbol. To be made clean, will require not ordinary washing, but a seven-fold or perfect washing in the God-appointed place, and will require faith, as also saith the Scriptures.

If our application be correct, we should understand the Elisha class to belong to the spiritually begotten family and not to the human, hence at their death the *change* from human to spiritual conditions would also take place. There seems to be an intimation of this in the record of Elisha's death. (2 Kings 2:12; 13:14.) Of him the same words were uttered which he had used concerning Elijah's taking, *viz.:* „O, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.”

In view of the statement:—“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man” (John 3:13), some have wondered in what sense Elijah „went up

into heaven." In reply, we suggest that the atmosphere, the air, is sometimes called heaven: thus the expression—"fowls of the heavens." Into the air heavens Elijah certainly went: where, we are not told, and it would be useless to surmise—of his death we are not told; indeed, since we see him to be a type of the *changed saints*, it would have *spoiled that type* had his return to earth or his death, been recorded; and yet we are sure that „*death passed upon all men*,“ and hence had dominion over him, and he could not have been *free* entirely from its grasp anywhere, until Jesus had given the *ransom price*.

Moreover, we may know that Elijah did not go to the heaven promised the saints, because not being *begotten* of the Spirit—not being a *new* creature—he was still a human being. [Jesus was the *first* begotten to the spiritual—new nature and the Leader and FORE-RUNNER of all who enter the heavenly or spiritual condition.] And as a *human* being, we cannot but suppose that Elijah would have been as uncomfortable out of, or away from this or some world, as a fish would be out of its element.

And in harmony with this reasoning, from known Scriptural teaching, is the above statement: „No *man* hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven.“ In harmony with this thought also, are those other Scriptures: „No *man* hath seen God at any time,“ and „Whom no *man* hath seen nor can see.“ (1 Tim. 6:16.) Only those who, during this Gospel age, change their nature from human to spiritual, shall see him as he *is*, because they shall be like him who is the *express* image of the Father's *person*. *Men* can only see God as manifested through his works and revelation.

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## MOSES AND ELIAS

The transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of three of his disciples is a point of interest to many, not because they see its lesson and significance, but because they *do not see them*. We read that there „*appeared*“ to the disciples, Moses and Elias talking with Jesus. (Matt. 17:1-9.) Jesus was transfigured [changed in appearance]—his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light. A bright cloud overshadowed and surrounded them, and a voice out of the cloud said: „This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.“ „And when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only.“

We might wonder and speculate about how Moses and Elijah came to be on that mountain, how the disciples, who never saw either of them, could know them, etc., etc., but all such speculation is set at rest by Jesus telling the disciples that they had seen a *vision*. „As they came down from the



mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: „Tell *the vision* to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” (Matt. 17:9.) To the disciples the vision seemed a reality, just as to John at

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Patmos, the various visions recorded in Revelation were clear and distinct, but Jesus certainly knew all about it, and we will rest on his testimony that it was a *vision*.

To think otherwise would involve the contradiction of sundry plain Bible statements; for instance, Jesus was not yet crucified, hence had not risen from the dead, and we know that he is the „*first-born* from the dead.” But if Moses had been resurrected, then Jesus was not the *first*. The case of Lazarus and others brought back to a measure of life, we have heretofore shown is not called *resurrection*, because they were not entirely delivered from the power of death—but died again.

But let us see, if we can, what lesson was taught or what important truth was illustrated by this transfiguration scene or vision. Doubtless in that way we shall see a reason for the presenting of Moses and Elijah in the vision.

Peter, who was one of those present on the occasion, mentions it in his letter long afterward. He says: „We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the *power and coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his MAJESTY. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory: „This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And this voice we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” (2 Pet. 1:16-18.)

We understand Peter to tell us then, that the transfiguration vision was an illustration or presentation in vision of the „*majesty*” and „*power*” of his (*parousia*) *presence*, [here translated coming]. It is, then, to be understood as representing the establishment of The Kingdom at Jesus' second *presence*. Therefore, from our standpoint, it is an illustration of the present time, in which Jesus is present and the kingdom being established. Moses, we have seen, represents the *human* element of the kingdom: („Moses, verily, was faithful in all his house as a servant.” Heb. 3:5.) while Elijah, as we have just been seeing, has stood for, or represented the entire Gospel Church—the spiritual—the house of sons. Elsewhere we have seen that there will be these two classes in the kingdom—an earthly and a heavenly—over all which and the orderer of both phases, will be Jesus; and this fits perfectly with the vision—Moses and Elias, with Jesus in the midst, transfigured and shining.

So now, in his presence, we not only see the evidences of the spiritual kingdom in the harvesting and sifting of the wheat, but also preparation being made for the establishment of the earthly or

perfect human phase of the kingdom. This is no cunningly devised fable, and was not only shown to Peter and others in vision, but „we have also a more sure word of prophecy,” which bears the same testimony, „whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a *light that shineth* in a dark place.” (2 Pet. 1:19.)

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