

## "JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE PROMISED ELIJAH."

– MATT. 3:1-12. – JANUARY 10. –

**Golden Text: – "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."**

IN the first three verses of our lesson are summarized the mission and work of John, our Lord's cousin, respecting whom the Master said, "Verily I say unto you, there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist: and yet I say unto you that the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he." John's mission was to announce that Kingdom, but it was not his privilege to become a member of it. He was the friend of the Bridegroom, as he expressed it. He heard his voice communing with the prospective betrothed, and he rejoiced as his friend, but not as a member of the betrothed class – the bride, the church of this spirit dispensation, the least one of whom enjoys a higher privilege and station than did this noble prophet: because even hereunto were they called and he called not.

John from his birth was specially prepared to be a servant of the Lord in the capacity he filled, and on reaching the age of maturity he, being fully consecrated, at once began the service. He was six months older than our Lord, and hence began his ministry that much sooner. Abstaining from earthly comforts, he subsisted on the plainest of food, and was attired merely with a camel's hair girdle about his loins. His entire time and attention were thus left free for the mission before him.

We do not advocate that all the Lord's people follow the example of John the Baptist in respect to their food and raiment, but we do believe that a good lesson of simplicity, consecration and zeal may be drawn from his course. We do believe that our Lord's faithful followers might copy John's example to the extent of avoiding the [R3292 : page 461] extremes of social custom, not only in their

clothing but also in their food. We advocate "things decent" and "things honest," as the Apostle expresses the matter – a simplicity of diet and wardrobe. Those who have consecrated their time and energy and influence to the Lord, and to the service of the Truth, will do well for their spiritual interests to be on guard against the fashions and follies of this world in these matters; and whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do or wear, that all may be done to the glory of the Lord – with a view to their own greatest usefulness in the divine service and in the service of the household of faith.

John's mission was heaven-directed, and exactly at the right time to introduce the Lord Jesus to the Jewish nation, which had been waiting for him for centuries to fulfil in and through their nation the promise made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Under divine guidance the affairs of Israel were, outwardly at least, more prosperous than they had been for centuries, and they were as a nation hoping that this return of God's favor might culminate in the sending of the promised King for the exaltation of their nation, and through its establishment in power the blessing of Israelitish rule in the name of the Lord should be extended to all the families of the earth. We are told that amongst the Jews "all men were in expectation of the Messiah." – Luke 3:15.

No wonder then that so striking a figure as John the Baptist made an impression when he announced that God's Kingdom was soon to be established, and that he had been sent as an advance minister to proclaim it and to sanctify the hosts of Israel, that they might be prepared to be the hosts of the Messiah in the fulfillment of the long-expected promise to Abraham. By a new method those who accepted John's teaching were required to mark their reformation of life, namely, by an immersion of water, which symbolized their putting away of sin, their return to full covenant relationship with God, already established through Moses, the mediator of the Law Covenant. All who did this with true sincerity of heart, and not merely an outward form, undoubtedly were Israelites indeed, of the very kind

that the Lord would be pleased to accept and own and bless under the spirit dispensation soon to be inaugurated.

And thus we find that not only many of the disciples of Jesus were previously disciples of John, but also that many of those who received Jesus had previously received John. Nevertheless the majority of those baptized by John evidently had not been touched to the heart by his preaching, but merely nominally repented and instituted some slight reform.

The movement became a popular one, and drew to it many who loved publicity and notoriety, and who are always foremost in the promise of godliness but are without its power, therefore without the sincerity, without the heart interest. John recognized the hypocrisy of many of the leading Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, and by some prophetic power was enabled to read their hearts in a manner which would be improper for us to do. This prophetic insight not only permitted John to call these false ones a brood of vipers, but permitted him also to intimate to them the great day of wrath that was soon to come upon that nation; "wrath to the uttermost," as the Apostle Paul speaks of it (1 Thess. 2:16) – the wrath of God which entirely swallowed up the nation and left the land almost desolate, scattering the people amongst all the nations. John would not baptize these until they showed by outward conduct a change of life, a change of heart and not merely a changed profession. He realized that this class in particular was stumbling over the promise made to Abraham, because they were his natural children without having Abraham's faith. John inspiredly warned them to the contrary, that God was quite able to establish his Kingdom in due time and to ignore them entirely.

Verse 10 is a further part of his prophecy, declaring that fruitage was necessary on their part, and that any who did not bear the fruitage required would be cut off from divine favor and cast into the fiery trouble with which the Jewish age ended.

Prophetically John realized that his mission was merely a preparatory one, and that somehow – how he could not understand – the coming one would have the power to immerse the faithful in the holy Spirit, in holy power, and the unfaithful with a baptism of fire, of trouble. Again he likened the ministry of Christ to that nation as that of a reaper who, with a winnowing fan, would separate the true wheat from the chaff, gathering the wheat to the garner of the Gospel age at Pentecost and in due time thereafter permit the fires – confusion, anarchy and the Roman legions – to entirely consume the chaff of that people in an unquenchable fire, a trouble that would not be extinguished, that the Lord would not help them out of, but that would utterly destroy their national polity.

### **ELIJAH THE ARCHETYPE.**

Elijah the Tishbite, who in the days of King Ahab was used of the Lord to produce a reformation in Israel by which the priests of Baal and their power over the people were overthrown, was declared to be a type or likeness of a greater reformer who would precede Messiah to announce him and to make ready for his reign. Our lesson (verse 3) declares that John the Baptist was an antitype to Elijah. We see that he did do a work of reformation amongst the Lord's people at the first advent, the work of introducing the Messiah. Moreover, we remember that the disciples asked Jesus respecting this very prophecy saying, If you are the Messiah what answer should we give to the Jews who say that Elias (Greek for Elijah) must first come? Our Lord's answer was that Elias had already come (John the Baptist, the antitype of Elijah), and that the Jews knew him not, recognized him not, but had done to him whatsoever they pleased – imprisoning him and ultimately beheading him in prison. Our Lord further added "likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." "Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist." – Matt. 17:10-13.

As it was a surprise to the disciples that John, the Lord's forerunner and the antitypical Elijah, should be put to death, so likewise it was a surprise to them that the Master himself, instead of reigning, should be crucified. It took them some little time to understand that the Lord's coming as Messiah had two phases – one in humiliation, a suffering ending in death and apparent defeat, the other to follow later in power and great glory, to reign, to uplift, to bless Israel and all nations, thus fulfilling on the richest possible scale all the precious promises through all the holy prophets since the world began. It was appropriate [R3293 : page 462] also that the Lord should explain that there should be a second coming of Elijah – an antitypical Elijah on a still higher plane, of as much larger proportions than John the Baptist as the second coming of Messiah will be grander and more glorious than his first coming.

John the Baptist himself understood that he was not fulfilling all the features of the antitypical Elijah – he evidently understood that there would be still a larger fulfilment by an archetype. This is evidenced from his own words when asked, Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. (John 1:21.) Our Lord's words explained the matter, showing that he was the antitypical Elijah in a certain measure, to a certain extent, to that the nation of Israel. Jesus said "This is Elias *if ye will receive it.*" That is to say, to those who recognized his message and who obeyed it and who became the Lord's disciples, to these John fulfilled the work of Elijah (Matt. 11:14)\* Likewise Jesus is already the Christ, the Messiah, the King, to those few who have ears to hear and hearts to receive the message – the household of faith, the Church; but as John was not the Elijah promised to the world in general, so Jesus was not yet come as the Messiah. This coming of Jesus to the world as the world's King, to take unto himself his great power and reign, is the grand event toward which all prophecy points, and before that event takes place the antitypical Elijah of still larger proportions than John the Baptist must bear a witness and message to the world.

[\\*Millennial Dawn, chap. 8, Vol. II.](#)

As we have already pointed out, Christ, the Messiah of the divine plan, includes not only Jesus glorified, the Captain of our salvation, the High Priest of our profession, Head over the Royal Priesthood, the glorious Church, but it includes also the Church which is his body, the under priests, the faithful which shall sit with him in his throne, be like him and share his glory and his divine nature. And as the anointed Christ of glory is a composite one of many members under one glorious Head (Eph. 1:18), so the antitypical Elijah is a multitudinous one. Jesus in the flesh was the Head of this great Elijah, bearing witness to and preparing the way for the coming of the great Messiah and Deliverer in due time. The Church, the body of the Christ in the flesh all down through this Gospel age, has been the body of the antitypical Elijah bearing witness all down through these centuries to all the families of the earth that God is to set up a Kingdom, and urging preparation therefor, urging a repentance from sin and reformation toward God, and being used of God as the instrumentality for the anointing of the most holy ones. Soon this work of the Church, of announcing the Kingdom and calling upon men everywhere to repent and reform, will be at an end, and the Kingdom will be introduced with power and great glory. Soon the work of baptizing the anointed ones and witnessing to their relationship to God will be at an end. Soon this antitypical Elijah, like John, will be restrained from further proclamation – and ultimately be cut off. Soon thereafter the Kingdom will be revealed. The faithful overcomers, as the wheat gathered from the sowing of this Gospel message of the Kingdom, will be gathered into the Kingdom, glorified with their Lord and Head, and soon thereafter the Kingdom itself will be manifested – "revealed in flaming fire" – in judgments, in troubles, distress of nations, etc. Soon the Messiah, Head and body, in glory, will so overrule in the affairs of men, that the nations of earth shall be broken to shivers as potters' vessels; and soon thereafter, on the ruins of the present reign of sin and selfishness under Satan, who shall be fully brought to naught and bound for a thousand years, all the blessed

influences of righteousness, justice, truth and love will be set at liberty amongst the people, that the whole world may be blessed according to the divine promise. – Gal. 3:16,29.

That the Church is the true antitype of Elijah is beyond question to those who have an understanding of the divine plan. As the Christ is composed of many members, and as the man of sin is a system of many members, so the antitypical Elijah is composed of many members. The three years and a half of no rain under the prophesying of Elijah the Tishbite are shown in Revelation to have their larger fulfillment in connection with the great Elijah archetype, the Church in the flesh. Those three and one-half years, a time, times and a half-time, or forty-two months or 1260 days, represent just that many years in the archetype, namely, the 1260 years that the true Church was persecuted and in a wilderness condition because of the power of papacy, which, in Revelation, is likened to the woman Jezebel who persecuted Elijah. – Rev. 12:14.

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**[R3293 : page 462]**

### **"IN THE WINEPRESS ALONE."**

In the dusk of the sorrowful hours,  
The time of our trouble and tears,  
With frost at the heart of the flowers,  
And blight on the bloom of the years, –  
Like the mother voice, tenderly hushing  
The sound of the sob and the moan,  
We hear, when the anguish is crushing,  
"He trod the winepress alone."

And, therefore, he knows to the uttermost  
The pangs that the mortal can bear:  
No mortal has pain that the Master  
Refuses to heal or to share.

And the cries that ascend to the Loving,  
Who bruised Him for us to atone,  
Are hushed at the gentle reproving, –  
"He trod the winepress alone."

How sudden so e'er the disaster,  
Or heavy the hand that may smite,  
We are yet in the grace of the Master,  
We are never out of his sight.  
Though the winnowing winds of temptation  
May forth from all quarters be blown,  
We are sure of the coming salvation –  
The Lord will remember his own!

From him, in the night of his trial,  
Both heaven and earth fled away;  
His boldest had only denial,  
His dearest had only dismay.  
With a cloud o'er the face of the Father,  
He entered the anguish unknown;  
But we, though our sorrows may gather,  
Shall never endure them alone.

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