

29.06.2019 TURNING HEARTS IN THE END TIME

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” Malachi 4:5, 6

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:1, 2

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Isaiah 40:3

“...You shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘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 1:13-17

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Luke 1:76-79

This week’s study text has a message that is crucial for God’s people in the end-time. There is to be a prophetic message to prepare God’s people for the first and second comings of Christ. Elijah himself is not going to re-appear; it is his prophetic message that will prepare a people for the coming of God.

John the Baptist was the prophet sent in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare people for the first coming of Christ. Before the second coming of Christ, God will raise a people who will prepare the world for the second coming of Christ.

Let us look at the messengers and their message to understand what God requires of us today; we who call ourselves the ‘Elijah generation’.

The Messengers:

Both Elijah and John were anointed by the Lord specifically for their task. We cannot claim any glory that God has chosen us; instead we should be humble and fear God.

1. The proclamation of the message in power was due to the filling of the Holy Spirit in both men; not because they were talented and charismatic. *He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit...*
2. They were temperate men; they understood that nothing should dilute or obscure the word of the Lord that was to be proclaimed. Hence they kept their minds clear to receive and proclaim the word of God... *and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.*
3. Their message was to the professed people of God.

The Message:

Elijah put it well: *“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” 1 Kings 18:21*

Throughout the history of this world, since the Fall, every human being is faced with this choice: ‘Will I serve God or Baal?’ Baal stands for any god we worship other than Jehovah – idols, self, power, wealth etc.

The true messenger of God always puts this choice to the people. Because we are all sinners, we love to worship false gods; but anything we do that does not arise from saving faith in Christ is sin and will be condemned in the judgement (Romans 14:23).

Therefore the message is two-fold: repentance and the results of repentance.

1. Repent of your sins - your worship of false gods, your worship of worldliness.
2. Repentance brings with it remission and forgiveness of sin, by the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:22)
3. Repentance and conversion will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will purify our hearts that we may offer ourselves in holiness to the Lord.

He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Malachi 3:3

But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. Malachi 4:2

The destiny of every man and woman is dependent on the choice they make in life: will they serve God or self?

If they listen to the prophetic message, and choose to serve God, they will have salvation and eternal life when Jesus comes. If they refuse the salvation prepared for them before Time began, they have nothing to look forward to but the curse (Malachi 4:6)

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' Matthew 25:34

'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matthew 25:41

John the Baptist preached repentance. He preached that he was the forerunner of Messiah who would baptize His followers with the Holy Spirit and with fire:

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Matthew 3:1, 2

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Matthew 3:11

For Reflection:

The Bible story tells us that Elijah and John were faithful to their task. One was translated, the other was martyred. But of John the Baptist, Jesus Himself testified:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist. Matthew 11:7-11

What will Jesus testify of us who are given the task of preparing people for His second coming? Are we standing firm on Christ, the foundation of our faith? Or are we shaken by every wind of doctrine that blows? Are we a people who are so used to an expensive lifestyle that we are not willing to deny self? It is only those who deny self that God can use mightily.

What was the peoples' testimony of John the Baptist?

Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no miracle, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." And many believed in Him there. John 10:41, 42

How is it with us? Do people hear us and are drawn to Jesus and believe in Him, because everything we say about Jesus is true? Or are they confused, because we all say different and conflicting things about Jesus?

Our message today must be the message of John. We must tell the people of God's great salvation; the cost of our forgiveness, the blood of the Son of God. That all this is because of the tender mercy of God who is not willing that any should perish but that all should be saved. We need to tell men and women that they all need God salvation, for *'there is none righteous, no, not one...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'* Romans 3:10, 23.

For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:76-79

The Messenger's Reward

On earth, he will have the great joy of seeing the *'turning of the hearts of the people'* and the turning of *'the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (righteous), to make ready a people prepared for the Lord'*.

In heaven, His Lord will say to him, *'Well done, thou good and faithful servant...'*

Conclusion:

Both Elijah and John had no pleasant message for their people: upon their being faithful in proclaiming the need for repentance lay the destiny of their people. How is it with us today? Do we preach that before men and women can experience the holiness that the gospel brings, they must repent and cast aside the *'pleasures of sin'*. Do we urge them to be like Moses; to *'choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.'* Hebrews 11:25, 26

Today there is need of the voice of stern rebuke; for grievous sins have separated the people from God. Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable. "We will not have this man to reign over us," is the language of thousands. Luke 19:14. The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression; the trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God's word.

There are many professed Christians who, if they should express their real feelings, would say, *'What need is there of speaking so plainly?'* They might as well ask, *'Why need John the Baptist have said to the Pharisees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* Luke 3:7. Why need he have provoked the anger of Herodias by telling Herod that it was unlawful for him to live with his brother's wife? The forerunner of Christ lost his life by his plain speaking. Why could he not have moved along without incurring the displeasure of those who were living in sin?

So men who should be standing as faithful guardians of God's law have argued, till policy has taken the place of faithfulness, and sin is allowed to go un-reproved. When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church? Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. True love seeks first the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Those who have this love will not evade the truth to save themselves from the unpleasant results of plain speaking. When souls are in peril, God's ministers will not [142] consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil...

They are to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering." 2 Timothy 4:2. In Christ's stead they are to labor as stewards of the mysteries of heaven, encouraging the obedient and warning the disobedient. With them worldly policy is to have no weight. Never are they to swerve from the path in which Jesus has bidden them walk. They are to go forward in faith, remembering that they are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. They are not to speak their own words, but words which One greater than the potentates of earth has bidden them speak. Their message is to be, "Thus saith the Lord." God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have.

God cannot use men who, in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. It is to such as these that He will speak the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matthew 25:23. *Prophets and Kings: p.140-142*
