

以利亚又如何呢? ——马可福音 9:9-13

What About Elijah?——Mark 9:9-13

Introduction & Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 9:9-13
9 As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. 10 They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant. 11 They asked Him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” 12 And He said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”
- The booklet "Found: God's Will" summarizes God's will for Christians in the Bible into five points: salvation, being filled with the Holy Spirit, sanctification, obedience, and suffering. Of these five points, which one do you think is the most difficult for people to accept, that most people simply want to avoid it?

Philippians 1:29 - "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

2 Timothy 3:12 - "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

1 Peter 5:10 - "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

Earlier, Peter rejected God's plan that the Son of Man must suffer and die (8:32-33). Jesus then declared that all disciples must suffer and die (8:34), and He gave them a glorious view of His transfiguration to strengthen their faith (9:2-8). Now, following all that...

- Outline:
 - Title: What About Elijah?
 - 1. The Prohibition (v.9)
 - 2. The Confusion (v.10)
 - 3. The Question (v.11)
 - 4. The Correction (v.12)
 - 5. The Expectation (v.13)

The Prohibition (v.9)

- "Not to relate to anyone what they had seen": because they do not yet understand the significance of what just happened. They only saw glory, but the significance of the transfiguration goes far beyond glory—Jesus is about to perfectly fulfill everything represented by Moses and Elijah, that is, the entire Old Testament. The most important revelation of the Old Testament is that the God of holiness cannot tolerate any sin. The most important prophecy of the Old Testament is that the Messiah, the Savior, will atone for the sins of God's people. The way of atonement is as prefigured by the Old Testament sacrificial rituals: being killed, shedding blood, and offering life, thus redeeming the lives of sinners.

- "Rose from the dead": these words undoubtedly hit the disciples pretty hard. Their theology has absolutely no room for the Messiah to undergo death. The messianic figure they were taught from childhood was a powerful political leader who would come to save them from Rome. They did not know that the Messiah first had to save them from their own sins. They wanted a king to govern their external living conditions, but the king God gave them was to govern their hearts from within!

The Confusion (v.10)

- "They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another": The statement about rising from the dead left the disciples immensely perplexed. Overwhelmed by such confusion, they couldn't help discussing it on the way down the mountain. After much discussion, three heads are no better than one, and they still had no answer, so they had to come to Jesus again for clarification.

The Question (v.11)

- "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?": A very good question. That Elijah must come first is a prophecy from the Old Testament.

Malachi 4:5-6: "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

But, what does this have to do with Jesus rising from the dead? What were the disciples thinking? They even put the question in the mouth of the "scribes," so if they got it wrong, it's the scribes' fault. This is a carefully designed question, with the intention of trying to avoid the fact that Jesus must die. They just saw Elijah on the mountaintop (verse 4), so if Elijah has already come, shouldn't the kingdom of God arrive soon? Why does the Son of Man still have to die?

【Analysis】 The disciples are still unwilling to accept Jesus' revelation, unwilling to submit to the fact that Jesus is going to suffer and die. They have been misled by the scribes since childhood, and though the scribes often quote from the Scriptures, their emphasis is completely wrong. The scribes do not understand the seriousness of sin, nor that the key to salvation is the atonement, nor that the Messiah is to sacrifice himself to atone for the people, nor that God's will for His people is to follow Jesus and deny themselves, even when it costs their lives.

The Correction (v.12)

- "Elijah does first come and restore all things": A wise response, first affirming the validity of the question. Restoration will indeed occur, but the restoration brought by Elijah is to "turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers," an example which illustrates true repentance. This is spiritual restoration and the most important restoration!

Looking back at Elijah in the Old Testament, he often preached fearlessly with faithful courage to turn people's hearts back to God. He once caused many double-minded people to confess Yahweh as God (1 Kings 18:21, 39), and he even caused the wicked king Ahab to repent genuinely for a time (1 Kings 21:27-29).

【Key Point】 Elijah is the prophet who turns people's hearts back. He once turned the hearts of the people to God on Mount Carmel, and he once turned the heart of a sinful king back to God; ultimately, before the last day, he will come again to preach a message that will turn people's hearts back to God.

- "And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?": A sudden change of topic? The topic shifts abruptly from Elijah to the suffering of the Son of Man. Why? Because Jesus is well aware of the issue in the disciples' hearts. Their question was not really about Elijah; it was about the statement that the Son of Man will rise from the dead. So Jesus cuts to the chase, directly answering their real question. Their real issue is that they don't know their Bible well enough. They only know one part but not the other.

Since you know what the Bible says about Elijah, shouldn't you also know what it says about the Son of Man? You want to use the Bible to prove your point, but why don't you read the entire Bible carefully? The Bible not only foretells the coming of Elijah but is filled with prophecies about the suffering of the Son of Man. Why don't you ask about that?

Jesus is not referring to a specific verse but the entire Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, there are prophecies about Christ's suffering. For example:

Genesis 3:15: "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

Psalms 22:1, 16, 18: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?... For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet..... They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

Zechariah 12:10: "They will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."

Isaiah 53:4-5: "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed."

【Analysis】 The disciples' understanding of Christ does not come from the Bible but from their scribes. The scribes knew what people liked to hear. People liked to hear about glory and restoration but not about confession of sin and repentance, so the scribes emphasized the pleasant part and ignored the severity of sin, the cost of redemption, and the prophecies of the suffering Messiah. Under their teaching, the Israelites learned to read the Bible through a glory filter, seeing only the glorious restoration and not the necessary suffering.

The Expectation (v.13)

- "Elijah has indeed come": John the Baptist is not Elijah himself, but his role is in the same vein with Elijah. John, like Elijah, boldly preached God's word and called sinners to repentance for salvation.

Luke 1:17: "It is he [John the Baptist] who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

- "They did to him whatever they wished": See the account of John's martyrdom (Mark 6:17-29). In the parallel passage in Matthew, Jesus adds, "So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Matthew 17:12).
- "Just as it is written of him": Referring to Elijah's own experience of being persecuted by evildoers (1 Kings 19).

【Insight】 The theme of suffering prophets is consistent. Just as Elijah and John were persecuted, the Son of Man will also be persecuted in this evil generation. In such an environment, it is God's will for the righteous to suffer, and God wills to use these trials to fulfill His kingdom.

【Key Point】 The kingdom of God has not yet come, and we must have the right expectations.

【Hope】 In the future, Elijah will come again, possibly Elijah himself or at least another person in the spirit and power of Elijah. When Elijah comes, he will once again turn the hearts of God's people back to God with powerful preaching. At that time, the kingdom of the Messiah will be realized, and Jesus will lead us into the glorious kingdom. Now is not yet the time.

Concluding Applications:

1. Trust in the Gospel. The central point of the Gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus, as it is the only way for sinners to receive God's forgiveness.
2. Know the whole Bible. The reason the disciples repeatedly make mistakes is because they only know part of the Bible. You must know the whole Bible for yourself and not to rely on the teaching of the experts! Don't just wait for our gatherings to learn just a little bit every week.
3. Embrace the will to suffer. Suffering is inevitable on the path of serving the Lord. Do not try to avoid the hardships that come with it. If all you want is to escape suffering, you won't be able to faithfully serve God because we live in a sinful world (1 Peter 4:1-2).