

Matthew 17:10-13. Christ Converses With His Disciples Respecting Elijah.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The sermon explains how the disciples' question about Elijah's return led to a deeper understanding of the relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist, and how the world's treatment of God's servants has remained the same throughout history.

Scripture: Matthew 17:10-22, John 1:26, 1 Corinthians 4:13

Topics: "Elijah Prophecy", "Christ's Suffering"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the disciples' conversation with Jesus about Elijah's coming before the Messiah, revealing that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy. Despite the disciples' surprise, Jesus explains the similarities and differences between Elijah and John the Baptist, emphasizing John's honor in resembling the divine Lord. Jesus foretells His own suffering, which the disciples struggled to accept, highlighting the persecution faced by living prophets like John and the lack of recognition they receive compared to revered figures of the past.

Transcript

As the disciples descended the Mount of Transfiguration, they ventured to enter into conversation with their Lord. They knew so well the condescension of their Master, that they even proposed a difficult question on a subject that perplexed them. It was this--"Why say the Scribes that Elijah must first come?" (that is, before the Messiah.) Their thoughts naturally dwelt upon the wonderful scene they had just beheld. They had seen the prophet Elijah. They remembered having heard their Scribes, or teachers, declare that God would send Elijah before his great and dreadful day. Nor had the Scribes been mistaken in this declaration, for it is contained in the last chapter of the Old Testament, in Malachi 4. Yet the appearance of Elijah on the Mount was not the real fulfillment of that prophecy. Our Lord himself explained this difficult subject, and declared that John the Baptist had been prophesied of under the name of Elijah. It is evident that this explanation surprised the disciples. Perhaps they had never heard that the angel had told Zacharias, (the father of John the Baptist,) that his expected son should come in the spirit and power of Elijah. There was a great resemblance between these two prophets; their characters, their offices, their habits, their afflictions, were similar. But in one point the difference between them was striking--their manner of departing out of this world; Elijah ascended, like a conqueror, in a chariot of fire; John was executed, like a criminal, in a prison. In this one point wherein John the Baptist differed from Elijah, he

enjoyed the far greater honor of resembling his divine Lord.

The Savior, after alluding to the treatment John had received, added, "Likewise also shall the Son of Man suffer of them." The disciples were unwilling indeed to believe that their Master should suffer. Though John, who was a mortal man, might fall a victim to the malice of his enemies, they thought it impossible that the Son of God should thus end his glorious career. But the Jews always persecuted the living prophets. They venerated those who were no longer on earth; but they hated those who lived in their own day. The name of Elijah was much set by; but the name of the Baptist was despised. The Jews little imagined that the preacher in the wilderness, clad in rough garments, and followed by the poor among the people, was the representative of the illustrious, the glorified Elijah. Jesus truly said of John the Baptist, "They knew him not." Even so it is now. The world knows not the servants of God. They speak with reverence of some holy men who are dead, such as the apostles, the martyrs, the reformers; while they often treat with contempt many of the living who most resemble those departed saints.

In their own day, how were the apostles regarded? One of themselves declares that they were counted as "the filth of the earth," and as "the offscouring of all things." (1 Cor. 4:13.) And how were the martyrs esteemed in their day? When that undaunted sufferer, Bennet, was burning at the stake near Exeter, in the reign of our eighth Henry, the men and women who stood around, ran with the alacrity of demons, to gather either a stick, or a bundle of furze; that each might have some share in the death of one whom they esteemed a "vile heretic." * Truly "they knew him not." * See English Martyrology, by Charlotte Elizabeth, vol. 1 p. 86.

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