

"In the Spirit and Power of Elias."

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The closing words of Malachi are a prophecy regarding the work that should be done preparatory to the first and the second advent of Christ. This prophecy is introduced with the admonition, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

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 heart 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."

This prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptist; for the Saviour himself declared to his disciples, "Elias is come already." Upon hearing this, the disciples "understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

In every stage of this earth's history God has had His agencies to carry forward His work, which must be done in His appointed way. John the Baptist had a special work, for which he was born and to which he was appointed, —the work of preparing the way of the Lord.

The mission and the work of John the Baptist were specified by the angel of the Lord, as recorded by Luke: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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." The Holy Ghost was to be upon him.

The wilderness-ministry of John the Baptist was a most striking, literal fulfilment of prophecy. Isaiah had foretold his work as "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

John, as a prophet, stood forth as God's representative, to show the connection between the law and the prophets and the Christian dispensation. Like Malachi, he pleaded with the Jews: "Remember ye the law of Moses, . . . with all the statutes and judgments." His work and ministry pointed back to the law and the prophets, while he, at the same time, pointed the people forward to Christ as the Saviour of the world. He called upon them to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

The forerunner of Christ lifted up his voice in the wilderness of Judea, crying, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he which was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. . . . O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! behold, the Lord will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

In the spirit, and with the power, of Elijah, John the Baptist denounced the corruptions of the Jews, and reprov'd their prevailing sins. His discourses were plain, pointed, and convincing. Many were brought to repentance, and, as evidence of their repentance, were baptized by him in Jordan. This was the work necessary in order to prepare the way for the earthly ministry of Christ.

The work of John the Baptist, and the work of those who in the last days go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to arouse the people from their apathy, are in many respects the same. His work is a type of the work that must be done in this age. Christ is to come the second time to judge the world in righteousness. The messengers of God who bear the last message of warning to be given to the world, are to prepare the way for Christ's second advent, as John prepared the way for his first advent. In this preparatory work, "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain;" for history is to be repeated, and once again "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Our message is not to be one of peace and safety. As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear,—"Prepare to meet thy God."

Our message must be as direct as was that of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding the peril his life was in, he never allowed truth to languish on his lips. Our work in this age must be as faithfully done.

Look at the picture that the world presents to-day. Dishonesty and fraud, violence and bloodshed, are seen on every hand. The widows and the fatherless are often robbed of their all. The theater, the race-track, and questionable amusements of every kind engage the attention of multitudes. In many churches sins have become fashionable. They are glossed over and excused. The right hand of fellowship is given to the very men who bring in false theories and sentiments. Right principles are no longer cherished. The conscience has become insensible to the counsel and reproofs that have been given. Messages calling for repentance are unheeded.

In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon his messengers to proclaim his law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for Christ's first advent, called their attention to the ten commandments, so we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent. Resolution, self-denial, and consecrated effort are required of every laborer. Alertness and consecrated zeal must take the place of listless indifference. The prayerful, earnest appeals that come from a heart imbued with the spirit that actuated Elijah, will bring conviction to the honest in heart.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."