

Living in the Days of Elijah

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I am sure that most of you are acquainted with the very popular and inspiring song called Days of Elijah. Written by Robin Mark and popularized by Paul Wilbur, this song is one of the most requested and celebrated among believers today. It occurred to me one day to question, in spite of its popularity, how many who love this song actually grasp the depth and ramifications of what it means to be living in the “days of Elijah.” Let me say that I do believe these are the “days of Elijah” and that is why I would like to discuss what that actually means. Moreover, I would like to analyze some of the lyrics of the song and compare it to Scripture to see how scripturally sound they may be.

Days of Restoration:

“These are the days of Elijah, declaring the word of the Lord. And these are the days of your servant, Moses, righteousness being restored.” The first concept that we will address is this: the days of Elijah are days of restoration but what, exactly, does that mean?

Beginning in Acts 3, we see that Peter addressed the “men of Israel” and exhorted them to “repent” so that “times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). It is interesting to consider that Peter is addressing men who knew the language of the Bible intimately; they understood the Hebrew culture perfectly (they lived it) and could, to some degree, observe the rituals of the Temple first hand. In other words, these “men of Israel” had at their disposal the vital tools to understand God’s purposes – “tools” that many you and I would love to have firsthand knowledge of – and yet he is compelled to tell them, “Repent.

In Hebrew, to repent is to “to turn” or, even better, to “return.” The word *shuv* (repent) implies that one has strayed from the right path and needs to return to the Lord and walk the one and only path of righteousness and life (Ps. 23:3, Mt. 7:13- 14). In essence, Peter was telling people who should have known better – they had the Word, the heritage and traditions – and yet they needed to “return” so that “times of refreshing” could come. The Greek word that is translated “refreshing” here means “a recovery of breath.” Figuratively, this implies a time of “revival.” Like many of you, I grew up thinking revival meant a week-long meeting with a visiting evangelist who comes spitting and spewing “hell fire and brimstone.”

I have since learned that, hebraically, “revival” means: discovering those things heretofore hidden; finding those things that had been lost; resuscitating that which had been unconscious. Let me put it this way: when we go our own way, we stumble around in the dark trying to find the right path only to discover that our way leads to death and

destruction (Pr. 14:12). When we finally decide to “return” to the only path that leads to life, we come out of the dark and into “His marvelous light” (1 Pe. 2:9).

By coming back into the light, we can begin to see things we didn’t see before; we find things we didn’t even know we had lost – i.e. Sabbaths, feasts of the Lord, dietary laws, etc. All these things must come first if we are ever going to realize God’s ultimate purpose – restoration.

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Y’shua the Messiah, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:19-21)

In essence, Peter told God’s people that we must return to the one and only path so that those things we had lost, as well as those things we had not understood, could be revealed to us. Ultimately, this journey of light and life would lead us into the times of the restoration of all things. I want to emphasize that word – all. Peter tells us that everything will ultimately be restored. To restore something is to put it back the way it was originally. So then Peter tells us that, at the time just before the Messiah returns, a process will have begun whereby everything will begin to be restored back to its original state. Furthermore, he tells us that these things have been spoken “since the world began,” in other words, this is not some kind of new revelation.

So consider that, originally, there was only one body that God formed and breathed life into who, by the way, did NOT ascend into heaven to commune with the Father. Instead, the Father CAME DOWN and communed with man in the Garden of Eden. This implies that, in spite of all the songs to the contrary, God’s people – and there is only one body (Eph. 4:4-6) – are not going to spend eternity in heaven, but “heaven” is coming down to earth (Rev. 21:2-3). The reason this happens is that all things must be restored to their original state and purpose. In the beginning, there was only one language (Gen. 11:1) but there are tens of thousands. Nevertheless, if everything is to be restored then, at the end, there will be one language for God’s people. This, by the way, is exactly what has been prophesied.

“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. (Zeph. 3:9)

The point of these examples is this: Peter shows us that repentance leads to revival which, in turn, ultimately leads to the restoration of all things. That is God’s purpose and has

been since the very beginning. This “process,” if you will, is confirmed for us in Hosea’s prophecies, for he writes:

“Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.” (Hos. 6:1-2)

The Hebrew word translated here as “return” is the same word translated as “repent.” After “returning,” these people are “revived.” Finally, on the third day, they are raised up to live in His sight. Ask yourself: when was the last time mankind literally lived in His sight? I suggest to you that was in the Garden of Eden. So then, Hosea confirms for us that repentance leads to revival and will eventually bring us into the time of restoration! Yet, Hosea’s prophecy reveals one other item the Peter didn’t necessarily tell us. Hosea tells us when this will happen – after two days or on the third day. Surely Hosea was speaking prophetically because it has been much more than two days since he was inspired to write these words. Scripture says that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day (2 Pe. 3:8). It has been approximately two thousand years since the time of the Messiah’s death and resurrection or, shall we say, about two days. In other words, we are living at the appropriate time to see the revival and restoration that Hosea prophesied. That is very important for us to understand because the Messiah made it very clear that Elijah would come at the end of days and restore all things.

“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Y’shua answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.’” (Mt. 17:10-11)

I suggest to the reader that the “all things” Elijah restores cannot be a different “all things” spoken of by Peter in Acts 3:21. Therefore, “Elijah” comes just before the return of the Messiah to initiate the process whereby “all things” are restored to their original condition by calling the people of God to return to the Lord and be revived. In reality, this is exactly what he was sent to do in days of old. Scripture says that when he gathered Israel at Mount Carmel:

“Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ So all the people came near to him and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the

LORD had come, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name.’ Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD.” (1 Ki. 18:30-32)

To say he “repaired” the altar is to say that he “restored” the altar and he did it with twelve stones representing the whole house Israel. The very reason Elijah was sent to them was to call them to repentance because, in Elijah’s day, God’s own people had gone their own way, racing headlong to destruction. The way Elijah motivated them to repent, to be revived and restored was, just as the song states, by declaring the “word of the Lord.”

Declaring the Word of the Lord:

What was the word that Elijah declared to Israel? Scripture tells us that:

“Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ (1 Ki. 18:21)

Basically, Elijah was addressing the fact that Israel was mixing the worship of the one and only God with the idolatrous worship of Ba’al. Thus he says, in a manner of speaking, “Make up your mind you will serve.” Moreover, he tells them if you’re going to follow God, then do it without mingling with idolatrous practices. If you’re not going to worship Him wholeheartedly and exclusively, you might as well commit yourself completely to Ba’al. In short, God is a jealous God and will not tolerate the mingling of things holy with things that are profane. This is a truth that has been revealed from the beginning when he forbade Adam to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Messiah addressed the same issue when He addressed the congregation at Laodicea:

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” (Revelation 3:15-16)

In plain language, Y’shua said to His people, “You have mixed hot with cold, and I will not accept it.” Inferred in this statement is a call to be either totally righteous or totally wicked but mixing the two will be rejected. Throughout the Scriptures, God calls His people to be holy or “set apart” because “I am holy” (Lev. 11:44-45). Holiness, then, is a lifestyle that refuses to mix the holy with the unholy, the clean with the unclean

(Lev.10:10). Furthermore holiness is defined, not by outward appearance or the will and opinions of men but, by the Word of God. When the opinions and traditions of God's people have been considered more important than God's Word – when we have gone our own way – God has always sent His prophets to exhort the people to repentance, to revival and to restoration.

Therefore, in the end of days, Elijah is sent to God's people to call them to forsake their mixed worship, their idolatry, their traditions and opinions and return to the Word of God all of it.

In the song, Elijah comes “declaring the word of the Lord” and Moses, the Lawgiver, is synonymous with “righteousness being restored.” The reason for this link is because the Torah (the five books of Moses) provides us with the definition of holiness and tells us the way God wants His people to live. In short, the Torah – God's instructions to His people – is the path that leads to life. To walk in the other direction is to follow your own way and, as we have already stated, the way that seems right to us is the way that leads to death. Paul confirms this when he said:

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” (Rom. 8:7)

“Not subject to the law of God” – could it be any clearer? To walk away from God's instructions is to be led by the flesh and ultimate death. So then, if righteousness is to be restored, there must be a return to God's ways – His Torah. This is what Elijah declared to those gathered on Mount Carmel so long ago and the message to the last day generation of believers is no different – repent, return! In case there are those who might think that, by saying these things, I am ignoring the importance of the Messiah, His death, burial and resurrection. I assure you, I am not. In fact, that is the point. Most Christians don't understand that Y'shua was not anti-Torah but, to the contrary, is the Torah personified. He is the Word made flesh and went about teaching the Word as written down by Moses. He made it very clear that He came into the world, not to negate or do away with the Torah but, to make it full of meaning (Mt. 5:17). He also said that the person who doesn't believe Moses and his writings doesn't really believe what He said because Moses was really writing about Him (Jn. 5:46-47).

In spite of the fact that He said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15), most of his followers do not. Most believers feel that Torah is not for them but for Jews only. We have been led to believe that Messiah came to start a new religion with a set of new and improved rules. This conclusion, however, does not stand up under the scrutiny of Scripture. The Bible reminds us that the Lord does not change (Mal. 3:6); He is the same, “yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). That means that His directions and instructions remain the same for His people and so, the fact that His people have gone their own way and have strayed from His paths means that, He will send Elijah the prophet before the great day of the Lord to compel them to return.

Turning the Hearts of the Children:

“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded 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 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.” (Mal. 4:4-6)

Considering that God is prepared to strike the earth with a curse, I would say that is pretty important that Elijah comes to fulfill his mission and that is, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children’s hearts to their fathers. I used to hear people say that, when Elijah comes, many fathers and their estranged sons are going to be reconciled with one another and have meaningful relationships. While this may be truthful, the intent of this prophecy is this: the “children” (meaning us) will be turned (the Hebrew word *shuv* or “repent”) to the fathers, meaning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

According to Scripture, Abraham is our spiritual father and we are “his seed” (Gal. 3:29). The promise given to Abraham was passed onto us through Isaac and Jacob who later was born again as Israel (Gen. 32:28). Consequently, when you and I were born again in Messiah Y’shua, we too became part of this family God calls Israel. In his writings, Paul makes it clear that this is a fact (Eph. 2:11-22, Rom. 11:13- 27). In spite of evidence to the contrary, most believers do not consider themselves part of Israel and they do not believe that Torah is applicable to them. In a manner of speaking, they have turned away from the fathers and, more importantly, what was important to the fathers. Thus, Elijah must come and repair this disconnect between sons and the fathers. In short, we have forgotten them and gone our own way.

How does Elijah accomplish this mission? It’s simple – by declaring the word of the Lord. According to the prophecy, he admonishes the children to “remember the Law (Torah) of Moses . . . which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.” It seems logical to me that, since he tells them to “remember,” it is obvious they have forgotten it. I believe that is an accurate assessment of this generation of believers. We love the Messiah but have forgotten His commandments, due primarily to the fact that our spiritual leaders have told us that we are not responsible to observe the Law of Moses. How can this situation be reconciled? Elijah must come and deliver his message; righteousness, as defined in the Torah of Moses, must be restored.

Most eschatologists consider that the prophecy in Malachi 4 is just that – a prophecy of a future event. It is obviously in the future because, at the time I am writing this, the great and dreadful day of the Lord has not yet arrived. Therefore, at some future date, Elijah will return to fulfill his mission. Yet, allow to me to ask this question of those who don’t see themselves as “the children” Elijah comes to. If this is a future event (and it is), why does God, through Elijah, require the “children” to remember and return to the Torah (in the future) if the Law has already been rendered obsolete by the death and resurrection of Y’shua? Or could it be that God never did away with it – we did. I submit to you that the

latter is more accurate. We decided that we didn't need "every" word that proceeded from God's mouth, just the ones that conformed to our theology.

Days of Famine

"And though these are days of great trial, of famine and darkness and sword. Still we are the voice in the desert, crying, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord!' "

Again, the lyrics to this song ring true, for the days of Elijah are days of famine, darkness and sword. According to Malachi's prophecy, Elijah comes just before the "great and dreadful day of the Lord," a time the prophet Joel describes as one of "darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Joel 2:2). It is the "day of the Lord's vengeance" when His sword recompenses for the "controversy of Zion" (Isa. 34:6, 8) and, according to the book of Revelation it is a day of famine that threatens the entire globe with starvation (Rev. 6:5-6).

When Elijah was first sent by God to confront Israel with their idolatry, His intention was to bring restoration. As we have already noted, Elijah restored the altar that had been broken down. We cannot forget, though, that for the 3 ½ years prior to the confrontation on Mount Carmel, Israel had suffered an intense drought and severe famine. Though they were days of restoration, the days of Elijah were also days of famine. Obviously, the drought and subsequent famine was the impetus for Israel to repent. One wonders if Israel would have responded to Elijah's summons to meet him at Carmel if their bellies had been full. But they weren't and so they came. Here is the point: God allows famine in order to bring restoration.

A great example of this is the story of Joseph. Jacob's favored son had been separated from his father and brethren for a number of years. Notice, though, it wasn't during the years of plenty but during the seven lean years that God brought them back together. In other words, God used famine to bring about His purpose and that purpose was to restore the twelve tribes of Israel as one people. The famine during Elijah's day was no different – the intent was to bring restoration to the house of Israel (remember Elijah restored the altar with twelve stones). Yet, as we have seen, the restoration process always begins with repentance. So from the perspective of God's purpose and intention, the lack of physical food is most often intended to demonstrate that we lack spiritual food; that we need to return to the Source of Life and be fed. Moreover, the lack of physical bread is to teach us that we are in desperate need of the bread from heaven, the Word of God. Here is what Moses told the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land:

"So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." (Deut. 8:3)

He allowed them to “hunger.” The Hebrew root translated as “hunger” is also the word rendered as “famine.” In a manner of speaking, He allowed them to experience famine, turned around and gave them bread to satisfy their physical hunger but only to teach them that what they really needed was every word that God spoke. Wouldn’t the same be true for us today? I mean, if famine were to come, wouldn’t be to teach us that we are in need of every word God speaks? So let me ask you – do most believers in Messiah live according to “every” word that proceeds from the mouth of God? Without trying hard, I can think of some passages in Scripture that many Christians ignore without even blinking an eye. I believe it would be more accurate to say that we live by “every word” we consider applicable to us and reject everything else.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are committing the same mistakes as that of ancient Israel. Speaking generally, our ears are closed to what God is saying; our eyes are blind to what He is doing. What might He do to get our attention? In times past, He has sent His prophets with words intended to provoke repentance and, when that didn’t produce the desired result, He permitted famine to afflict them. If these are the days of Elijah – and I believe they are – then the stage is set for famine. Believe it or not there is a silver lining to this ominous situation because, if these are days of famine, darkness and sword, then we truly are living in the times of the “restoration of all things” and that means our Messiah and King is soon to appear!

Prepare the Way:

“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ ” (Mt. 17:10)

In response to their question, Y’shua told His disciples that Elijah was indeed coming first and would “restore all things.” However, He also made it clear that Elijah had come already but no one recognized him. They eventually understood that He was speaking of John the Baptist (Mt. 17:13). Earlier, Y’shua had said plainly of John, “he is Elijah who is to come” (Mt. 11:14). How is this possible? According to Scripture, God imbued John with a special purpose and, thus, the angel announced to his father that:wi

““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.” (Lk. 1:16-17)

Put simply, John came in the spirit and power of Elijah to get the people ready for the coming of the Messiah. John declared himself to be the “voice of one crying in the wilderness” whose role was to “make straight the way of the Lord” (Jn. 1:23). In a word, his message to that wayward generation – people who considered themselves children of the one and only God – was “repent” or even better, “return” (Mt. 3:2). Here is the point:

the Messiah made it very clear that, when Elijah comes, he might not look like, nor act in the way that most are expecting.

Those Jews who were looking for the signs of Messiah's Coming missed the biggest one – the one Scripture predicted would prepare the way, Elijah. Is it possible that our generation is making the same mistake? Could it be that, as we look for what theologians have advised us to look for, God is already performing His Word right under our noses? Let me put it this way – if these are the days of Elijah, then Elijah (the spirit of Elijah) is already here. What "his" message? Return, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! Keep in mind, "he" might not look like what everyone is expecting – he might look a lot like you and me.

So there it is, friends – "Elijah" is already here declaring the word of the Lord; calling for righteousness to be restored. Just as it was then, today will be characterized by famine, trial and, of course, restoration. Before restoration can be realized, though, repentance and a willingness to return to the "ancient paths" (Jer. 18:15) must be present in the hearts of His people. I believe that with every passing day, more and more will realize why that NOW is that time – we have come into the kingdom for such a time as this! So, I will leave you hanging with one last thought: if the "spirit of Elijah" is present, then the spirit of his nemesis is as well. That would be Jezebel and, according to Scripture, Jezebel lived in a "white house" (I Ki. 22:39)

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