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Elijah Has Already Come, And They Did Not Recognize Him
Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; Luke 9:36b

Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him DIG: Why does Christ silence the apostles? When would news of the Transfiguration be made known to the nation of Isra'el? Who does Jesus invite as witnesses? Why only three? Why these three? Why do the Jews of today still believe in two Messiah's? What do the talmidim learn about John the Baptist? About Jesus?

REFLECT: How does the picture of a suffering Messiah shape your view of what the life of a believer is all about? When it comes to listening to Yeshua, how hard of hearing are you right now? Do people in your life, your family, your work environment, your neighborhood know that you are a believer? Or do you keep the matter to yourself and do not tell anyone? Why or why not?

It was the early dawn of another summer's day when **the Master** and **His apostles** turned **their** steps once more towards the plain. **They** had seen **His** glory, something that other Jews could not have seen; **they** had gained new insight into the TaNaKh. **They** had new insight like **they** never had before, which was to **their** souls like the morning air that **they** breathed on that mountain. Everything pointed to **Christ** spoke of **His** death. Perhaps on that morning, better than the night before, **they** saw a little better what was before **them**.

It would only be natural that **their** thoughts should also wander to **their** fellow **talmidim** whom **they** had left in the valley below. How much **they** had to tell **them**, how glad **they** would be to hear the wonderful news! That one night had answered so many questions, especially about **His** rejection and violent death in Yerushalayim. It should have flooded heavenly light into the terrible gloom for three specific **apostles**: Philip, who needed to learn to set aside his materialistic, pragmatic, common-sense concerns and learn to lay hold of the supernatural potential of faith; Thomas, who wanted evidence for believing; and Judas, whose

burning desire for a Jewish **Messiah** would overthrow the Romans and put him in a position of power and influence in the Messianic Kingdom, had already begun to consume his own soul. Philip's every question, Thomas' every doubt, and Judas' every nationalistic desire would be answered by what **Peter**, **James** and **John** had to say.

But, it was not to be so. It was not to be made known. Apparently, it was not even to be made known to the other **apostles**. It seems **Jesus** thought if **they** were not qualified to witness it, **they** were not prepared to hear it! This was not a matter of favoritism. It wasn't because **Peter**, **James** and **John** were better loved, but because **they** were better prepared – more fully receptive, more readily accepting, more entirely self-surrendering.

In keeping with **Christ's** new policy of silence to the nation after **His** rejection (**to see link click En – Four Drastic Changes in Christ's Ministry**), **Jesus** cautions them not to **tell anyone** about what **they** had seen on Mount Hermon. **As they were coming down the mountain** after the transfiguration, **Jesus instructed them: Don't tell anyone what you have seen.** Yes, **Yeshua** was **the One**, but it would be a matter of **ADONAI's** timing concerning the coming Kingdom. The truth of the Transfiguration would have its proper time to be made known to the general public, and that time would be after **the Son of Man has been raised from the dead (Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:9).**

It was **Christ's** first step into the valley of humiliation and it was a test. Had **they** understood the spiritual teaching of the vision on Mount Hermon? Well, **their** obedience would be the proof of it. But, more than that, **their** submission was so far reaching that **they** dared not even question **their Master** about a new and seemingly greater mystery than any **they** had previously heard: the meaning of **the Son of Man** rising **from the dead**. But, even being better prepared than the other **apostles**, **they** were still ignorant. Too often we make a mistake when we think of these **men** only as **apostles**, not as **disciples**; as our **teachers**, not as **His learners**, with all **their** human failings and sin nature.[881]

Not only that, after the feeding of the 5,000, **Jesus** was painfully aware that the people wanted to make **Him** into a king of their own kind only to fulfill their immediate selfish and worldly expectations (see **Fo – Jesus Rejects the Idea of a Political Messiah**). But, when they would hear that **the Son of Man** had **been raised from the dead**, the entire picture of the two missions of **the Messiah** would be clearly understood. First, **the Meshiach ben Joseph** must suffer for the

redemption (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz – Redemption**) of the whole world, and secondly, only then will **the Meshiach ben David** come with **ADONAI's** Messianic Kingdom (see **Mv – The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's**). Orthodox Jews still believe in this concept of two **Messiah's** to this day.

Next we are going to finalize everything that we have learned about the correlation between **John the Baptizer** and **Elijah** the prophet. Up to this point we have learned three things. First, when **John** was asked if **he** was **Elijah** the prophet, **he** said, "**No I am not" (John 1:21)**. However, secondly, **John** did come in the spirit and power of **Elijah (Luke 1:17)**. And thirdly, had the people of **Isra'el** and the Sanhedrin accepted the offer of the Messianic Kingdom, **John** would have fulfilled **Elijah's** function to **restore all things**. However, since both **the Messiah** and **His** offer were rejected, **John** did not fulfill **Elijah's** function. As a result, **Elijah** must return **himself** to fulfill prophecy (see my commentary on **Revelation Bw – The Return of Elijah**).

Having just seen **Elijah** on Mount Hermon **their** confusion led to another question. **The apostles asked Him, "Why then do the Torah-teachers say that Elijah must come first" (Matthew 17:10; Mark 9:11)? Their** teaching was not simply based on rabbinical tradition but on scriptural teaching. The promise of **Malachi 4:5-6** was that **Elijah** would come before the First Coming. And **Malachi** told of an unnamed forerunner to come before the First Coming. **"Look! I am sending My messenger to clear the way before Me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple. Yes, the messenger of the covenant, in whom you take such delight – look! Here he comes," says ADONAI of heaven's** angelic **armies (Malachi 3:1). They** did not understand the program of two comings.

Jesus affirmed the teaching of **the Torah-teachers** because **He** authored the Scriptures **(John 1:1-14)**. **Jesus replied: To be sure, Elijah does come first, and will restore all things (Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12b).** This was another clear indication of the fact the **Jesus** never had any problems with the Torah. **He** only objected to the Oral Law (see **Ei – The Oral Law**) because it was merely **the traditions of men (Mark 7:8)**. Therefore, **He** would have nothing to do with it.

The point of **His** question was, however, if **Elijah** came before the First Coming and did **his** work of restoration, would that mean that the prophecies of **Messiah's** sufferings would not be fulfilled? Then, being a good rabbi, **Jesus** asked

the all-important question. **Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected (Mark 9:12b)?** This was the order. **Christ** would suffer much at the First Coming, then **Elijah** would come to **restore all things**, then **He** would set up **His** messianic Kingdom after the Second Coming.



But I tell you, there is a sense in which **Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him (Matthew 17:12a; Mark 9:13a). Malachi** promised two forerunners – not merely one: an unnamed one before the First Coming, or **John the Baptist**, and a named one before the Second Coming, or **Elijah**. So **John** was a type of **Elijah** in that **he** was a forerunner of the First Coming. In that sense, **Elijah** had already come because **John** was a type, or foreshadowing of **him**. Furthermore, **John** came in the spirit and power of **Elijah**.

Nevertheless **they** killed **John**, and **in the same way the Son of Man** was **going to suffer at their hands (Matthew 17:12b; Mark 9:13b). Jesus** was overturning all the preconceived notions and ideas of **His talmidim**. **They** looked for the emergence of **Elijah**, the coming of **the Messiah**, the eruption of **ADONAI** into time and the shattering victory of heaven, which they identified with the triumph of Isra'el. **Yeshua** was trying to compel them to see that in fact **the herald** had been cruelly executed and **the Messiah** must end on the cross. But, **they** still did not understand, and **their** failure to understand was due to the cause that always makes men fail to understand – **they** clung to **their** way and refused to see **God's** way. **They** wished things as **they** desired **them** and not as **God** had ordained **them**. **Remember, what happens to the herald will happen to the King.**[882]

Even today, many Jews question how **Yeshua** can be the true **Messiah** if **He** clearly has not set up the Messianic Kingdom. But, the fulfillment of the mission of **Meshiach ben David** will only be realized when the leadership of Isra'el invites

Him back to rule over them (see my commentary on **Revelation Ev – The Basis of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**).

There is a penetrating story in the Talmud that reiterates this belief as Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is said to be searching for the Messiah. Not surprisingly, he runs into Elijah who directs the rabbi to the Meshiach who is ministering among some lepers. As they greet each other, Rabbi Joshua asks the all-important question: "When will you come, Master?" he asked. "Today," was Messiah's answer. On his returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, "What did He say to you?" "He spoke falsely to me," he rejoined, "stating that He would come today, but He has not." Elijah answered Rabbi Joshua, "This is what He said to you: Today, if you will hear His voice, He will come (Psalm 95:7 in Tractate Sanhedrin 98a).

In the meantime, **Yeshua** will actually fulfill all the promises concerning the suffering **Messiah** as described **(Isaiah 53)**. It was **then the apostles understood that He was talking to them about John the Baptist. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant, and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen (Matthew 17:13; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:36b). Christ's** ministry was coming more and more into focus for **the talmidim** as they made their way slowly up to Jerusalem.[883]