

I Tell You that Elijah Has Come; Mark 9:14-29

0491-0494

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In the episode before us today, they're coming down the mountain after the most incredible experience. And all of human experience, this experience on the Mount of Transfiguration in which they are eyewitnesses of the deity of Jesus Christ. And now that experience, as all experiences are, oh, it is over.

As all experiences eventually end, this one has ended. And now they are coming back down the mountain, back down to life here on this fallen earth, back down to sinful mankind. In fact, ironically, or maybe not so ironically, they will find, waiting for them at the bottom of the mountain, an argument ensuing between the crowd that's gathered and the remaining nine disciples.

The scribes are there, there's a demon possessed boy there, the disciples can't help him, and there's this big confusion and chaos and argument going on. Literally at the bottom of the hill as they're coming down. Reminds us, of course, of another instance in which someone went up a mountain and met with God.

I'm speaking of Moses, who goes up the mountain to meet with God, receives the law, comes down, and finds at the bottom of the mountain golden calves and all sorts of pagan, idolatry worship. Reminds us of that episode. And so this episode sets the context for us. If we could just maybe Relating your own mind.

I know we've all been there. You can just relate maybe an experience in your mind of maybe the best vacation that you've had this wonderful vacation that you go on to just the perfect getaway spot. And it was just a wonderful week of vacation. But now You're on the plane ride home and the plane ride home is not even all that much fun.

It's bad weather. There's turbulence. You're sort of sick. There's you're crowded into the center seat and then the plane lands to rainy, cold weather. And then just as you get off the airplane, your phone blows up with all these messages from work of all the disasters that are waiting for you the next day.

Messages that you're receiving from friends and family of all the things that have gone wrong, the things that you've got to deal with now that you're home. That sort of sinking, disappointing feeling as you're coming off the heels of just one of the best experiences that you've experienced. All that to return back to not only life as normal, but just life as drudgery, and life as the sinful existence that we know here on Earth.

So that's the context. of the episode before us today, beginning from verse nine with those sort of thoughts in our mind. Let's just begin here from verse nine as, and as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen. So they're coming back down the mountain. Let's just take a moment to just establish in our thoughts who the they in this passage is as they were coming down the mountain.

So we weren't told how far down the mountain. The other nine were left if they were all the way at the bottom or if they've come down and they've rejoined. And so is it the twelve or is it still the three and if you look down to verse 14? we realize that they are still just the three because verse 14 tells us and when they came to the disciples, meaning when the four, Jesus and the three disciples, come to the other nine.

So the episode before us today is still going to be in the context of the three, of the three disciples, Peter, James, and John, along with Jesus. And so as they were coming down the mountain, He charged them to tell no one what they had seen. So we've come across that word previously in the numerous times in which Jesus has commanded.

That no one would tell what they have perceived about him as they have perceived his deity the experience on the water The feedings the cleansings of the lepers the healings all these things As they have perceived deity, we have experienced this command from Jesus previously to tell no one what you have seen.

This command has gone to those like the leper in chapter 1. But it's going to the disciples to not tell of who he is. And as we've looked at this before, this command to silence, it's been a little bit puzzling for us. But as we've thought through why Jesus was commanding them to silence, One of the reasons, I think one of the primary reasons, was just simply crowd control.

As we've experienced all along, the size of the crowds has been an encumbrance to Jesus and they've often prevented Him or at least seemed to prevent Him from what He was here to do. Such as, for example, the episode with Jairus. When He's trying to get to Jairus house and yet the crowd is in His way and then there's the woman with the flow of blood.

And so the, the, the command to silence has been in part a command to help control the crowds so that the crowds don't get so overwhelming that Jesus is unable to go about his mission. But that's not the entirety of the reason. In fact, maybe that's not even the main reason or the central reason. This command to silence here in chapter nine will be the last command to silence that Jesus makes.

And furthermore, not only is it the last time Jesus commands them to silence, it is the only time that he gives the command to silence and also gives a reason or a time delineation for how long this command remains in effect. So he commands them to tell no one until a certain point, a certain time, we'll talk about that.

The time is when the son of man has been raised. So the same word we've seen before, which means not just asks or suggest or strongly implies, but strictly sternly charges them under no circumstances are you to tell anyone. But this time there is a time factor until the son of man is raised from the dead or the resurrection.

So this being the last command to silence, also the one that, on the only one that includes additional information and the context of it, all those things come together to help us to see what is perhaps the central reason. for all of the commands to silence and all of the commands to silence have come to the disciples, at least in part, because their understanding of the Messiah was so complete and so faulty that if they were not silent about this Messiah whom they've just confessed, then the proclamation about him would be a wrong proclamation.

It would be a proclamation that included his power and his glory and his ability to heal diseases and speak to wind and waves and multiply food. But that would be not just a one sided picture of Messiah, that would be a faulty picture of Messiah. So we see that very plainly and very clearly here because this is right on the heels of, of course, Peter's confession.

You are the Christ. The ultimate, so far to this point, the ultimate confession of we recognize who you are. You are the Christ. Followed by this experience of glory and majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. Certainly, if Peter, James, and John had spoken after this, then the words that they would speak would be words of glory and majesty.

And Jesus wants to command them to silence because, as we'll see a little bit later in our passage, This understanding of a Messiah that is all glory, and all power, and all majesty, is not just a one sided understanding, it is a faulty understanding. And so Jesus wants them to remain silent until, as He says, such time as He has been raised from the dead.

So let's think for just a moment about the difficulty of this command that Jesus gives to the disciples. Because they have just experienced, once again, Something that mankind has never experienced in another context like that. They have experienced visually, audibly, and in even more ways than that. As the cloud overshadowed them, they have experienced the deity.

of the incarnate Christ. And you know what it's like when you are the first one to experience something tremendous, something exciting, something glorious, or something grand, and you are the first one with that news. Do you know how you have this impulse, just like we have this built in impulse? To be the bearers of that news, to be the ones that spread the exciting news, to be the first ones to tell about something.

And so imagine now this command to silence, what you have just seen. You have just seen the most incredible thing that human eyes have ever perceived. Yet, you are to tell no one about this. Think of the difficulty of that command. Think of a little bit later on in Acts chapter 4, when two of these same apostles here, Peter and John, and We read in Acts chapter 4 when they say how can we but speak of the things that we have seen of the things that we have heard, the things that we've experienced.

We can't not speak of those things. And so here these disciples are told not to tell anyone. And I take the command to mean also The other nine, that the prohibition is against speaking even to the other nine. Certainly the other nine would have been, among all people, those who would have understood and believed.

The other nine, which have experienced of course, the miraculous feedings, the cleansing of lepers, the two incidents on the sea. The other nine would have been first in line to say, Wow, we believe everything that you're saying that is so incredible and yet this admonition this Prohibition against speaking into anyone as they were coming down He charged him strictly or he strictly ordered them to tell no one what they had seen Until the Son of Man had been had risen from the dead.

So verse 10 they kept the matter Literally, they kept the word the word there's logos. They kept the word

So we're told here that they obeyed the command, in fact, Luke makes it even more plain for us in his rendering of the same event from Luke chapter 9 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found

alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen. So, they, they are given this command to silence and they're given a length for how long they're to be silent.

Now, as we're going to see as the passage unfolds, their understanding at this point of the resurrection is the resurrection at the end of the age. So, in their mind, the command to silence is a command Until the end of the age. So that's a very long period of time to remain mum about something that is so overwhelming and so exciting.

But yet they obey this command. And so what we see here at this point is a rare glimpse in Mark's Gospel, a rare glimpse to a side of the disciples that's not often shown to us in Mark's Gospel. As we've said repeatedly. Mark is the harshest on the disciples of any of the four Gospels in particular. He is extremely harsh on their lack of perception and he portrays them over and over as just this bunch of followers of Jesus that though they love him and though they are devoted to following him.

Yet again and again, they just don't understand and they just misperceive everything. And so this picture of the disciples is going to continue all the way through the end of the gospel. And that is the dominant picture that Mark shows us of the disciples. However, his portrayal of the disciples is not entirely negative.

He does portray some positive aspects of the, of the disciples. And what Mark displays in a positive manner of the disciples is always the same thing. What Mark shows us in a positive light of the disciples is their obedience. Remember in chapter one, we recognize there in chapter one as Jesus calls them.

He says, leave your nets and follow me. And then what do they do? They do just that. They don't understand. They miss, misunderstand, they misperceive, yet they obey and they follow. Here again, we are shown a picture of disciples that although they are pictured as spiritually dull and spiritually slow to comprehend, Yet they're not belligerent.

They're not disobedient. They do obey their master's voice because they are his sheep and his sheep hear his voice and his sheep obey his voice. And so here they render obedience to Jesus. They, they render this obedience and in Mark's words, it's obedience that is complete and total. That they told no one in those days of anything that they had.

seen until, of course, the time comes in which they are then allowed to speak of it. So the first thing that we want to make note of here is just the obedience of the disciples. And in particular, the obedience of the disciples to a command that, get this part, did not make sense. There is no way that the disciples perceived of Jesus's command to silence.

Because, of course, He hasn't suffered yet. He hasn't been killed yet. And so the other truth or the other aspect of the Messiah that must be part of their understanding before they are ready to proclaim Him, that hasn't occurred yet. Jesus has been talking about this, but they are far from understanding this yet.

And so for them, this had to be a command that just did not really And yet they obeyed, which is so important to make note of the fact that that is true obedience. True obedience is obedience without needing to have it explained to us, or true obedience without needing to understand what God is up to, or the wisdom behind God's commands, or the rationale behind God's commands.

So often, we are so quick to say something such as this, if God would just show me what He's up to, I would be I would be happy to obey. I would be happy to comply. I would be happy to accept the situation that he's put me in if he would just show me what he's doing. And that's just not his way. There's certainly sometimes that he may do something such as that or he may show us some insight into the spiritual works that he's doing.

But typically, God doesn't divulge to us his plans in our life because he asks and he expects obedience without our understanding. Because if God were to show us the wisdom of His plan for our life, then our obedience would be obedience that is not from what? Faith. It would not be from faith. Hebrews 11 verse 6 tells us that the only thing that God is pleased with is that which comes from faith.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And faith, you understand, requires a certain sense of ignorance. Ignorance is required in order for faith to be present. Because if there is no ignorance And I don't mean that in a pejorative way. I just mean that in the sense of a lack of understanding, a lack of knowledge.

If there's no ignorance, then there's no place for faith because faith is trusting and acting upon what you can't see and what you don't understand and what you don't necessarily have the rationale for. And so God repeatedly. He commands and expects and requires his children to be those disciples, those type of followers, who are willing and able to render obedience without needing for God to explain things to us.

Think with me of the Bible's premier example of saving faith. The Bible gives to us a number of human examples for all sorts of attributes and realities of our faith such as David who's given to us as an example of one whose heart is fully devoted to God or Solomon as the example of one who is wise or Moses as one who is humble and so think with me of who is the biblical example of saving faith It is of course Abraham.

Abraham is the Bible's premier example of saving faith. And just think of some instances in the life of Abraham as he was, first of all, called to leave the land of Ur of the Chaldees with no real explanation. God says, I'm going to make a great nation of you, but I'm not going to tell you where you're going.

I'm not telling you where I'm taking you. I just want you to pack up your stuff and leave. I'll tell you when we get there, that sort of thing. But then all of that culminates at a point in Abraham's life. And you all know where I'm going with this. In Genesis chapter 22, when that command of commands comes to Abraham's mind, take that son, the one miracle son, Isaac, the one that you love so much, take him up the mountain and sacrifice him to me.

Think for just a moment of how that command must have sounded to Abraham. God to Abraham must have sounded in that moment like, maybe at best, a pagan deity that was commanding Abraham to do what the pagans that lived around him did? The horrible practice of sacrificing their own children. Maybe God sounded something like that to Abraham.

Or worse, do you think Abraham maybe thought to himself, Is that God or is that a demon? Is that a demon telling me to go and sacrifice my son? Imagine what God must have sounded like to Abraham and how nonsensical that command must have sounded to him. Yet, he as the example of

saving faith, was a man that could say, this is the God that supernaturally gave us this life in the womb.

And this is the God that giving that life, certainly everything that he commands regarding that life is good. I don't see how, I cannot possibly understand how this could be good, but everything else from this God's hand is good, and so therefore I will trust that this is good as well. That is a premier example.

of just what the type of obedience their disciples are willing to render at this point is. It's an obedience that doesn't require explanation. Think, on the other hand, of the opposite, back from chapter 1. Mark 1, verses 40-45, that was the incident of the leper who comes to Jesus. If you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus says, I'm willing, cleanses the leper, and then He commands the leper to say nothing to nobody. Which made no sense whatsoever. Why would he not want me to tell everybody about that? Surely, I misunderstood him. Surely, he didn't mean to not tell anybody about this. Surely that's not what he was saying.

And so then the leper goes and tells everyone. And so here we see a contrast. A contrast between a follower of Christ and one who is not a follower of Christ. The followers of Christ, they hear a command, and without understanding, they are willing and able to render complete and total obedience without Jesus having to explain it to them.

Why? So we, brothers and sisters, we are blessed. In our Christian walk, when we, too, find ourselves in that position in which we can, from our heart, we can say to God, God, I will render unto you obedience, and you don't need to explain to me what you're doing. It sure would be nice if I knew these things. But, nevertheless, I am prepared to obey you, whether or not I know the wisdom behind what you are doing or not.

So they kept the matter, literally they kept the word to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. And so then verse 11, then they asked him, why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? So here we got a couple of things to wrestle with. First of all, this questioning of them, to themselves, what this rising from the dead might mean.

So the way that Mark words this phrase here, the word here that's translated kept, in our language, in English, Keep or kept. It could mean two things. It could mean to render obedience, such as she kept her word or he kept his promise or he kept the rules, but it also could mean just keeping such as holding on.

And the word that Mark uses here is not the word for rendering obedience. It's the word for Keeping to yourself or, or keeping something secret. So they kept it, meaning that they kept it from others. They kept this, but then the word that Mark uses here that's translated questioning what this right, what this might mean.

It's a word that's really a forceful word that portrays the idea of Fixation of a fixation upon, upon a, a latching onto something, uh, zeroing in a focusing in on something. So the, the, the flow here, the, the idea that Mark is speaking of is this, that they obey, they kept it from other people, but while they were keeping it to themselves, they became fixated.

They become transfixed upon. The time frame. What is this time frame to mean? They become fixated upon this rising from the dead. So just to kind of give it as an illustration or an example, something sort of like this. If I were to say, um, Do not tell your sister what we got her for her birthday until the party.

And you were to say, Party? There's a party? When is this party? Is it here? Is it today? Is it tomorrow? Who's coming to this party? You see, that's the idea, is that you, you keep it to yourself, but in your keeping it to yourself, what you become fixated upon is understanding the time frame of it. That is what Mark is communicating here.

They kept it to themselves, but they become fixated upon This rising from the dead, the question of what this rising from the dead might mean. Now, the disciples are not completely ignorant of what resurrection from the dead means. It's not as though they're saying, what in the world could it mean to rise from the dead?

Who's ever heard of that? That's not what they're saying because they know what rising from the dead means. They've seen it. In fact, these same three apostles have seen it in the home of Jairus. Furthermore, it was a common sort of reality or aspect of not only the Jewish faith, but also of pagan faiths or pagan belief systems as well.

There was a belief in the resurrection from the dead among pagans. You remember back in chapter six, Herod, King Herod, that was his excuse or his reasoning that he put behind Jesus. He said, well, this Jesus character must be who? John the baptizer come back from the dead. Furthermore, there's going to come a conversation in Mark 12 between a group known as the Sadducees.

The Sadducees were a group of Jewish believers who were sort of the theological liberals of the day. They didn't believe in the resurrection and some other things. If the Sadducees were alive today, they would be Sort of the, the left field of those who might call themselves Christian. They, they would be the believers, they would be the Christians who were, were saying that Christians can be Christian and gay or that, uh, that uh, uh, they would be the ones calling homosexual pastors and that sort of thing.

So that would be the Sadducees. They were the theological liberals and they were the group that didn't believe in the resurrection. And so there comes a conversation in chapter 12 about the resurrection and the conversation takes place in a context in which. It's just understood that everybody except the Pharisees believes in this resurrection.

So there was a common belief in the resurrection of the dead, but that resurrection of the dead was exclusively a resurrection that came at the end of the age. Think with me of the words of Martha in John chapter 11. In John chapter 11, of course, Martha is there at the grave of her brother Lazarus. And Jesus says to her, Martha, if you believe you will see your brother again.

And she says, Lord, I know that I will see him again at the resurrection, at the end of the age. And then Jesus goes on to redefine resurrection for her by saying to her, I am the resurrection and the life. So there was this common belief in a resurrection from the dead at the end of the age. And that was the extent of the Jewish belief in the resurrection at that point.

This resurrection that's coming at the end of the age that we too believe in. So why was it so puzzling for these three disciples that Jesus mentions the resurrection at the end of the age? that don't tell anyone until, notice what he says, until the Son of Man is risen again at the resurrection. So just common sense tells us, this is real simple.

You don't need anybody to point this out to you. But in order to part to, in order to partake in a resurrection, you have to first be dead, right? You can't be raised unless you are dead. Therein lies the con. Therein lies the problem for the disciples as Jesus says keep this to yourself until I Rise from the dead.

Wait a minute to rise from the dead. He has to be dead Now, he's already told them that, but clearly the disciples are yet to really grasp that. Clearly, they are still wrestling with that. Look at John chapter 16. Some of his disciples said to one another, what is this that he says to us a little while and you will not see me and again a little while and you will see me because I'm going to the father.

You see there. They're wrestling with what is this man talking about that he's here and then he won't be here and then he's coming back. They're clearly wrestling with this idea of the Son of Man of the Messiah. Entering into death and such a conundrum is easy for us to see, is it not? He is the Messiah.

We just confessed him to be Messiah. How can God's Messiah die? How can that happen? And so you can see how they're wrestling with this idea. In my mind, I've got this picture of Jesus. They're walking down from the mountain, and Jesus is maybe leading the way, and maybe two, three, four steps behind Jesus are these three, and they're whispering to each other, What?

What did he say? What? What does he mean? Rise from the dead? Is, is he going to die? What is he talking about? So they, so they are questioning what this rising from the dead means, verse 11. And so they asked him. Now if I was, if I was writing this. That's not the question I would have written. If you were writing this, that's not the question you would have written either, is it?

Because if we were writing this, the question we would have put in their mouths is the question that they asked themselves. We would have said, Jesus, explain this rising from the dead to us. That's what we would have said. But that's not their question. They say the question is, why do the scribes say that Elijah must come?

So now we need to kind of wrestle a little bit with this question of, well, first of all, why are they asking about Elijah? Secondly, why are they not asking about the question that we were just told that they were wrestling with? Well, I think that the reason that they ask about Elijah, maybe first of all, is because Elijah was just brought to their mind, because they just, Transcript.

So the first one is just saw him, right? They just saw Elijah. And so fresh in their mind is this seeing of Elijah. And now maybe that just begins to ring some theological bells in their mind and they say, wait a minute. Haven't the scribes always taught us that Elijah comes first. So now another conundrum lands in their lap and this conundrum is Hang on, things are out of order because the Messiah is here and he's been here now three decades.

And we've been following him now two years or more and we just saw Elijah. And so could it be that God has gotten some things out of order? In his prophetic utterances, could it be that things

are not happening as he said they would happen? Could it be that God has failed? To do something that he said he would do, which is to send Elijah before the Messiah.

And so I think that's the reason for their question. Instead of saying, what about this rising from the dead sort of thing? They're still wrestling with that. But instead of asking that now, their problem is, wait a minute, if Elijah, if we just saw Elijah and Elijah has now come, but Messiah is already here and we've professed you to be he.

So, help us to understand, why did the scribes say that Elijah must first come? So, now, let's just turn our thoughts to the Elijah question itself. Why this thing, why this prophecy about Elijah must come first? And in wrestling with that, we'll sort of work through some of these other questions that we're being faced with.

So they say, why did the scribes, Jesus, why did the scribes teach that Elijah must come first? So, why did the scribes teach that Elijah must come first? First, the reason the scribes taught that Elijah must come first is because that's what the Bible had said, is that Elijah must come first. If we were to turn to the book of Malachi, this is in your notes, so you don't necessarily have to turn here, but you can look in your notes, but if you want to turn, the book of Malachi is the last book of your Old Testament, and the last book of your Old Testament.

is the book that begins from, uh, really chapter 3 of Malachi. It begins talking about this prophecy that is to come, this coming of, of the Lord, the day of the Lord. Really at the end of chapter 4, which is the last 2 or 3 verses of the Old Testament in our English Bible, those are the 3 verses that are key for us, okay?

So those verses come in Malachi 4, verses 5 and 6, and here are those verses. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with the decree of utter destruction.

So, pretty plain there. Malachi says, quite straightforwardly, I will send Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And I will send him in an act of restoration, this act to restore the children's hearts to the fathers, and the father's hearts to the children. In other words, to restore the family, to restore harmony, to restore obedience to the law, to restore something back to the land that it was intended to be.

So this is the disciples question. Why do the scribes say this? Which before we go any further, let's just make note of the fact of what the disciples did in the midst of their non understanding in the midst of their perplexity in the midst of their not understanding why things now seem out of order, why they've been commanded to silence, why he's talking about being raised from the dead in the midst of their perplexity, the disciples do what they take their perplexity to Jesus, they go to Jesus and they ask him, Explain this to us, show this to us, help us to see, help us to understand.

They have done precisely the right thing, which is to take their questions to Messiah and say, help us to understand. We can do one of two things with our doubts and with our questions. We can allow our doubts and questions to drive us from the scriptures or to drive us to the scriptures. God in his wisdom and in his providence.

Not only allows, but he desires for there to be questions in our hearts. God does not want us to have all the answers. He wants us to wrestle with questions, in part, because He wants those questions to continually drive us to Him, instead of pushing us away from Him. This is precisely what the disciples do in this instance.

They are driven to the Lord. So think with me. There's so many examples that I could point to, but I just want to point out Habakkuk. Remember the story of Habakkuk? How Habakkuk has shown these This awful, this horrid visions of what the judgment, the wrath of God that is coming to God's people and just what an awful thing that's going to be.

And he's filled with questions, namely. Lord, how can you do that? Why would you do that to your people? But those questions drive Habakkuk to his knees to say, God, help me to see, help me to understand. God doesn't then reveal everything to Habakkuk, but nevertheless, it has served the purpose by taking Habakkuk.

Placing him on his knees before the Lord and saying, God, I've got questions. God, I've got non understandings. I've got misperceptions. Help me to see and help me to see rightly. So their perplexity, instead of getting all sideways with Jesus, instead of saying, You know what? We are just sick of not understanding anything this guy says.

Everything, everything always seems to have two sides to it, and one side we don't understand. I'm just tired of this. I'm done. Once we get down to the bottom of the mountain, I'm done. Instead of that, their question drives them to Jesus, to ask Jesus. Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come in their mind?

They're thinking of the teachings of the scribes Which is this teaching that Elijah must come before the great and terrible day of the Lord So now verse 12 and he said to them Elijah does come first to restore all things So the first thing that Jesus does is he affirms the scribal understanding of that prophecy Elijah does come first And then furthermore, Jesus goes further, Elijah does come first to do his restoration work, to restore all things as the prophecy said.

The prophecy said to turn the hearts of the children back to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers back to the children. So Elijah does come first, so Jesus acknowledges. Which is a little bit out of the ordinary, right? Jesus is normally castigating the scribes. He's normally refuting the religious leaders and their understandings of the scriptures, but here he's not.

Here he affirms their understanding because Jesus doesn't want to just be

So in this instance, their perception is right, their understanding is right, and so Jesus says so. He says, Elijah does come first, but how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? So Jesus says, He turns it back on a dime, reverses it back to the topic of his suffering.

We'll come back to that. But I tell you that Elijah has come. So now he goes a little bit further. So he says, not only are they right in their teaching that Elijah must come first. But He has already come. So here's a couple things to see here. First, as Jesus recognizes the correctness of their perception, they perceive the scriptures correctly, but nevertheless, they, they interpret them wrongly or apply them wrongly.

Or to say it another way, the scriptures that pointed them to the Messiah, they understood rightly, but then failed to see the Messiah that they pointed to. Or in this instance, failed to see the forerunner of the Messiah that they pointed to. So do you see that in the text? You see how they understood it rightly, but the effect of the text, which was to point them to the forerunner, which was pointing them to the Messiah, that part didn't play out.

That part they didn't get. And this isn't the first time. There's other instances as well. The one that comes to my mind is Matthew 2. We looked at this text back at Christmas. The Magi, the wise men coming and they come here to Bethlehem and they say where is he who has been born king of the Jews? Oh, uh, yeah, that prophecy says he's in Bethlehem.

So you'll want to go down there to Bethlehem. Meanwhile, we'll get back to whatever we were doing. You see, they understood rightly the texts and the prophecies that pointed to Messiah. Yet they still failed to see Messiah that the text pointed to that they properly understood. You see? So this has happened before that understanding what the passages are saying and what the prophecies are saying Didn't necessarily mean that they connected in their hearts the Messiah or the forerunner to the Messiah that they were pointing to in other words the scribes had a fixation upon a devotion to a traditional literal wooden understanding of that passage that though they understood what the passage was saying, nevertheless, their traditional way of viewing that failed to let them see the actual Messiah that it was pointing to.

They had a Uh, an attachment, an attachment to a certain way of seeing the text, a certain way of understanding the prophecy that in itself prevented them from seeing what the prophecy pointed them to. That will become more apparent as we work a little bit further, but hopefully you can see what I'm saying already.

As they knew the text, as they knew the prophecies. In their mind, they were stuck on a certain way of understanding those prophecies that prevented them from seeing the one that the prophecies pointed to. In order to see that, let's just keep working through a little bit further. And so Jesus then turns it around.

How then is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? So Jesus answers now with a question. Maybe. I know there's a question mark in the Our edition of the scriptures, the ESV, but of course, we recognize that the, uh, the punctuation marks weren't present in the original manuscripts.

Why, why did the original manuscripts have no punctuation? Because punctuation hadn't been invented yet when the scriptures were written. In fact, punctuation was an invention of later Christians about the 5th century. as punctuation began to develop about five centuries later. Here we have no punctuation, so we're kind of guessing when we say that Jesus phrases this as a question.

Maybe He didn't phrase it as a question. Maybe He's phrasing it as a statement. But either way, He's getting at the same point. He's taking the conversation away from Elijah and He doesn't want the conversation to go too far from His coming suffering from His coming being treated with contempt. So He says, how is it written that the Son of Man will be treated with contempt?

Recognizing, of course, that Jesus is referring to places like Isaiah 53 or places like Psalm 22. Psalm 22, which is entirely about the crucifixion. Recognizing that Jesus is saying, how is it written about

the Son of Man? that he will be treat, be treated so badly with such contempt and be treated with such violence.

But verse 13, but I tell you that Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased as it is written of him. So we've got a couple of things to work through in that passage. And the most obvious thing is how Jesus just said, Elijah has come. And apparently, he wasn't recognized. So as Jesus says, Elijah has come, let's now take our thoughts back to Elijah, and we'll start there, and we'll sort of build from there, and go from there.

So everyone in the room, well not everyone, but most everyone in the room, you've got now the advantage of, what was it, maybe two years ago, that we studied In depth, the gospel of Elijah. Remember that? And we, we had a, uh, what was it? Maybe eight months that we spent studying Elijah, maybe a little bit, a little bit more.

And so in your mind right now, you're reloading all those thoughts, that context that's, that's in your mind about Elijah and how this man Elijah was. A somewhat of a wild man. He was a wilderness person. He came from the wilderness. He was closely associated with the desert. He was a fierce type of man. He was a very, very serious type of person.

And so you remember, we're sort of getting back into our thoughts. of what this man Elijah was about and what his mission was. And so Jesus says, I tell you that Elijah has come, but we didn't see him, we didn't recognize him. So now, let's look back once again just quickly, the Malachi prophecy. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

So, I will send you Elijah the prophet. The scribes were looking at that and they were understanding that literally to mean the fella known as Elijah the Tishbite is going to appear. And we're all going to see him. He's going to be wearing that same hairy coat, that same leathery belt. He's going to be coming out of the desert and he's going to be the same person.

That's how they looked at that and they understood that. Now, let's take that and let's think for just a moment about Elijah. And to help us do this, let's go to 2 Kings 2, verses 9-14. Send your notes. This is the end of the Elijah story. This is just before Elijah will be taken. without experiencing death into heaven by either what's typically thought of as the chariot of fire but we at the time we said this is probably a better translation to to translate it as the angels took him.

But either way he's about to be taken and they're going and they cross this river and he has with them this fellow named Elisha. Elisha is the one that Elijah called to come and follow him after the Lord commanded him to do that. Way back on the mountain when Elijah was feeling sorry for himself. So now, we pick up verse 9.

When they, meaning Elisha and Elijah, had crossed the river, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you. And Elisha said, please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me. Lowercase s. And he said, you have asked a hard thing. Yet, if you see me as I'm being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.

So here's a condition. Here's an indicator. If you see how I'll be taken, then what you're asking, this double portion of my spirit will be so. If not, it won't. Verse 11, And as they still went on and talked, behold, Chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and Elisha saw it.

So condition fulfilled. He saw the taking of Elijah. Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen. And he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes. And he took up the cloak and the KJV, the mantle, which just means like a, a, uh, an equipping, an anointing, a job, a task, the office of prophet as Elijah was, was the premier prophet, the first prophet, he took up.

The cloak or the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan and he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water saying, Where's the Lord, the God of Elijah? And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to one side and to the other.

And Elisha went over. So Elisha asks, Can I be given a double spirit of the spirit that is upon you? Elijah says, That's a pretty tough thing that you ask. But if you see me when I'm taken, then it'll be granted. If not, then it won't be granted. Elijah, Elijah sees him taken, and so now apparently this double portion of the what, the spirit that was on Elijah or Elijah comes onto Elisha, and then ironically or not, so ironically, we should say, we find if we were to continue tracing through the life of Elijah, Elijah performs exactly twice the miracles that Elijah performed.

So this double portion thing, there's once again, the perfection of scripture. Elisha is given a double portion and he then performs twice the miracles that Elijah performs. And all that takes place because the spirit of Elijah has come to rest on Elisha. So apparently now there's this It's transferable spirit.

And by spirit, I don't mean soul or person. What I just mean is anointing. And I say spirit because that's the word the text use. This anointing or this equipping, this spirit that's given to Elijah is now transferred to Elisha. Now fast forward to Luke chapter one, Luke chapter one. The one speaking here is the angel Gabriel.

And he's speaking inside the temple while Zachariah, the father of John the Baptizer, is serving in the temple. Here's the words of the angel. He, meaning this miracle baby, this miracle son that's in Elizabeth's womb, he will go before him, him meaning Messiah, in the, what, spirit and power of Elijah. And not just that, but furthermore, the angel goes on to Clearly dictate that the spirit of Elijah, which will come upon John, the baptizer is the spirit to do the same thing that Elijah was anointed to do, which is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the Children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord, a people prepared.

Now we studied John the Baptizer and we studied that that was what he was raised to do. That's what his calling was to do, was to make straight the path of the Lord. But in addition here, the angel also signifies that this role of the John the Baptizer This role, the spirit of Elijah that comes upon him will equip him, will prepare him, will enable him to do the reconciliation role that guess who?

Malachi said that when Elijah returns, he will do. So Malachi said, Elijah is coming before the great and terrible day of the Lord. And what he's going to do is this work of reconciliation. This work of restoration. Now the angel Gabriel says, the spirit of Elijah will come upon him, and he will do what Malachi prophesied the spirit of Elijah will do when he comes.

So, they were looking for a real-life Elijah to come. And that's never what God meant. God never meant that a fake Physical Elijah the Tishbite would be reincarnated or not reincarnated because he never died or he would never be returned bodily back to earth in order to bodily go about this work of reconciliation.

That's never what God meant. He always meant this. This spirit that's called the spirit of Elijah because Elijah was the premier prophet. He was the first prophet as a office holder, holding the office of prophet. This spirit that was placed upon him is the same spirit that was transferred to Elisha and is now transferred in a way of speaking to John the baptizer.

This is why. John the Baptizer will be asked in John chapter 1 directly and clearly, Are you Elijah? And he will say, he will say, No, I'm not Elijah. Why? Because he wasn't Elijah. He was John. There is no physical Elijah coming back. And so John is right to say, No, I'm not Elijah. I was born John, and that's who I am.

Nevertheless, Jesus will be asked, and Jesus will say, He's Elijah. Matthew 11. You recall Matthew 11? That's where John, the baptizer, is in prison. He sends word to Jesus, Are you really the one? Jesus sends word back and says, Well, tell him the things that you've seen. And then Jesus turns to the crowd, and He says some things about John.

And He says, If you're willing to receive this, He is Elijah. So how can Jesus say he is Elijah and John himself say he's not Elijah? Because both are true. He's not Elijah, but Jesus says he is Elijah. Now notice what Jesus did not say. Jesus did not say that some form of an anointing that was an anointing that was on Elijah is now on John the Baptizer.

That's not what he said. Jesus said he is Elijah. Jesus feels perfectly free to use such metaphorical descriptions. He feels perfectly free to say this symbolic or this spirit that was upon Elijah and Elisha is now upon him. And Jesus doesn't have to explain himself further. He just simply says, He is Elijah.

And the scribes tripped all up on that. Because they were looking for something that was never to come. They were looking for a literal, wooden interpretation of Elijah must come. This, this reincarnated, revisitiation from this man, Elijah the Tishbite. Instead, he came, did his work, and now he's off the scene completely and they never knew it.

Because they were looking for the wrong thing. Why? Because they were invested in a traditional way of viewing that prophecy that disallowed them from seeing what the prophecy itself pointed to. Instead of being open to letting the scripture speak for itself. How would the scripture speak for itself?

Well, think of all the connections between Elijah and John the Baptizer. The connections between John the Baptizer and Elijah are spectacular. They were both men of the desert. They were both men who were said to wear a coat of hair. There are, in fact, two places in all your Bibles, two places, exactly two places, do you find the word for leather belt.

Go home and check me on this. Read your Bible this week and come back and tell me how many times you found the word for leather belt. It's in there two times. Once for Elijah and once for John the baptizer. They were both men who were bold in their proclamation of sin against the king of

the land. They were both men who were opposed not just by the wicked king of the land, but by the conniving queen of the land.

And they were both men who were exceptionally plain and exceptionally clear in their proclamation of the sin, not just of the land, but of the leaders of the land. The connections between the two are remarkable. And so anyone who knew the scriptures and was not handcuffed or chained to a specific way that we must understand that, should have been able to see This man, John the baptizer, who is drawing enormous crowds, who is in the desert, Who is eating locusts and wild honey?

Who is wearing a leather belt? Who is wearing a hairy coat? Who is saying to the, telling the king to his face that he's a sinner? Who is opposed by the queen of the land? Who is proclaiming Messiah is to come? Wait a minute. This is the Elijah that was sent to proclaim the coming of Messiah. Had they not been so invested in a particular Blocked in way of understanding that they would have seen it, as Jesus says, Elijah has come, and they didn't see him.

They missed him altogether. So the scribes rightly understand the Scriptures, but their blind devotion to a, of this traditional interpretation causes them to miss, miss the Christ. And so Jesus says, How is it written? Son of man, he must suffer many things, be treated with contempt. But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.

So one last thing we've got to wrestle with. And that is the Jesus statement that they did to Him, meaning John the Baptizer, as they wished, as it is written. Now, so the last really thing to wrestle with is, why does Jesus say, why does He reference, as it is written, of John the Baptizer? Where in the Scriptures did it say that John the Baptizer was going to be maltreated by the people?

Do you know? Doesn't. So why does Jesus say, as it is written of him? To see this, this is something I think everybody kind of has to wrestle with because this is rather perplexing of why Jesus says as it is written. But I think to see this, we really just need to remind ourselves of the two types of prophecy.

Your Bibles are full of prophecy. You might say, well, duh, we knew that, there's a whole, this whole section of Bible, of our Bible that's called the prophecy books. Well, there are two kinds of prophecies in your Bible. One is what we would call the written or the verbal prophecy, and that would be, you know, when Isaiah says, thus says the Lord, the Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son.

Those types of prophecies, either spoken or written or both. But there is another kind of prophecy that once you recognize this, if you don't already, you'll begin to realize that your Bibles are far more full of prophecy than you thought. Because there's another kind of prophecy that's not spoken or verbal, but acted out.

And this is a major type of prophecy. In the scriptures, the type of prophecy that is not so much speaking words or maybe not even speaking words at all, but instead prophesying by way of acting out the prophecy. So let me just explain what I mean, and once you'll, once you see this, you'll start to realize, wait a minute, that is all over the Bible.

So there are famous instances of prophets prophesying by acting things out. Think about Elijah with the, or not Elijah, but Isaiah with the frying pan. In front of his face or Jeremiah that had to lie

on one side for so many nights and then the other side for so many nights or Elijah or Elijah again, Jeremiah, who had to take his soiled undergarments and bury them and then go back and dig them back up.

Really weird things. Isaiah walking around naked, really weird, weird behavior. Well, that is. This is a way of prophesying, but not so much by words, but by acting it out. We find that all over the Old Testament. We find that, in fact, in the New Testament as well. Remember Agabus, who ties his hands together with the belt?

He takes Paul's belt and ties his hands together and says the person who owns this belt, this is what's going to happen to them when they get to Jerusalem. So we see that sort of thing all over the place, this acting out. And once you see that, you'll start to see it all over the place, not just on the part of the prophets, but you'll see it all over the place, a way of acting out something that God is saying about what is to come.

In fact, all of the sacrifices. are prophecies. All of them. All of the sacrifices are acting out prophecies, particularly the blood sacrifices, the, the animal sacrifices. Every time an animal sacrifice was offered, What were they saying? They were saying this is pointing to something that's coming. It's pointing to a lamb, the lamb of God that is coming.

And by offering this animal as a sacrifice, I'm pointing to what's coming in the future. Okay? So all of those things, and once you begin to sort of marinate on that a little bit, you'll begin to realize God did that all the time. Now, back to Elijah. Elijah's life. Remember, he was the first prophet, the first prophet as the office of prophet.

His life was a prophecy of John. His entire life was a prophecy of the one who was to come, who would be the forerunner of the Christ. That's why this is named the Spirit of Elijah, because Elijah's life was the life that God used. As a prophecy. Of the one who was to come. So think about this again. The connections between the coat, the leather belt, the coming from the desert, the wild sort of personality, you know.

Think about how much alike they were. You have a picture in your mind of this guy, Elijah. Do you think Elijah would have been good lunch company? I think he would have been terrible lunch company. Can you imagine sharing a ride from here to Raleigh and back with Elijah? Can you imagine the awkwardness? I would just think you get in the car and then the whole ride is like, you know, What have you been up to lately, Elijah?

You must repent! You know what, you need to just, the whole conversation will be about your repentance. Because he was this fierce, direct, no nonsense sort of prophet, John the Baptizer. Don't you get sort of the feeling that he was the same sort of way? I just don't think John the Baptizer was much into small talk.

I think John the Baptist was all about business. He was all about saying, listen, you have sinned before the Lord. What must we do? You must not take any more money that's owed to you. What must we do, John? You must do this. So that's what the same type of man, the same type of, of background, the same, same type of scenario.

Now let's think about how their lives played out. So both of them were well known for what? They were well known for opposing the king of the land, the king who was a quasi-Jew, Ahab, Herod.

Both of them quasi Jews. Both of them wicked people. Both of them, the Scripture portrays, as inept rulers. Easily duped by one person in particular.

They're mischievous, conniving, fully pagan wife. So there's Ahab and Jezebel over here. Ahab was a quasi sort of Jew. He was technically Jewish, but he was not a believing Jew. But he married the pagan Jezebel, who was an open veil worshiper. And the picture of that arrangement was a picture of a wicked king that was easily manipulated by his much more wicked wife.

And furthermore, the wicked queen hated the prophet and wanted nothing more than to kill the prophet. Now, in the case of Elijah, how that played out was Elijah, there was that Mount Carmel experience and they killed all the prophets of the Baal and everything. And Jezebel says, I swear this. You will be dead.

I will have your head. Now God, in that instance, delivered Elijah. And Jezebel did not take Elijah's life. But instead, Jezebel was killed. So in that way, God deviated from the prophecy. But nevertheless it was still the wicked king, quasi Jew king, who was a puppet in the hand of his pagan queen, and the pagan queen hated the prophet and wanted to kill the prophet.

Same thing with John the Baptizer. Herod, who was a quasi Jew, wicked, but was also portrayed in Scripture as a man that was easily manipulated by his much more wicked wife, Herodias, or second wife in this case, who also hated the prophet, hated John the Baptizer, and swore she would kill him. Only in this instance, she didn't.

And that's how it's written. That's what Jesus means, as it was written of John. It was written of John, not because somebody spoke it, but because Elijah lived it, and the Spirit wrote it down. And so now Jesus says, as it is written, just like it was written of John. It was written of John that they would do with him whatever they pleased.

What did they do with John? Whatever they pleased. Do you remember the story? Ask of me anything, up to half my kingdom. What shall I ask for, Ma? The head of John the Baptist. That would please me. Bring me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. And then so it happens. Just as they pleased. And Jesus says, just as it is written.

So now two final things, and then we're done. One, let us just recognize Jesus's view of the scriptures. Twice in the passage, he says, as it is written. And don't you get the strong sense that in Jesus's way of thinking, if it was written, it's as good as done. That there is, no matter how difficult, no matter how impossible, no matter how unlikely it may seem, if it is written, it will come to pass.

It's as though Jesus, and we recognize the fact Jesus is the Trinitarian God who wrote these scriptures. But nevertheless, if we are to be as our Lord, we too must have the same view of the scriptures as His view, which is to say, if it's written, it will come to pass. There is no question about that.

That's the first thing. But then the last thing to see. And this, I think, is probably the overarching point of the whole passage. Just recognize with me Jesus's view, if you will, of the main point. How the disciples want to take this back to Elijah. What do they say about Elijah? Jesus brings it back to his own suffering.

In other words, Jesus has a laser beam focus on what? You will see me suffer, and you will see me die. And you'll see me rise. And it's not until then will you be able to proclaim me. Because in order to have a correct picture of me, your picture of me, your understanding of me, must be both a picture of humiliation and glory.

You've just seen glory. And you've seen a lot of glory. But if that's all you know of me, then you know a false Christ. Your picture must be the picture of suffering and honor, of humiliation and glory, of death and resurrection. Without both of those understandings, then your understanding of the Christ is not lacking, it's false.

J. I. Packer, the famous theologian who passed away not too long ago, wrote this, A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is a complete untruth. He has a point there. A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is a complete untruth. A Christ masquerading as a glorious, victorious Christ only. This is a false Christ.

Thus Jesus sternly charges them, Do not speak a word of what you have seen until I have risen from the dead. By implication, for me to rise from the dead, I have to first suffer and be executed and put into the grave. Only then will you have a picture of me that's sufficient to take to this world?

So by connection, any picture of Christ that we have that's a picture of all victory, all glory, all triumph, that's a false Messiah.

Likewise, any picture that we have of the Christian life that is also all victory, all triumph, all glory. Is a false Christian life because the complete picture of the Messiah is the only one, not only that is true, but it is the Messiah that we will worship in that way for eternity. Think of what the revelation tells us of what our song will be.

Worthy is the lamb who was slain. For eternity, we will have the full picture of the Messiah, which is a picture that is just as full of suffering as it is of glory, because that is the Christ who came for us, the Christ who came not just to be worshipped, but He came to suffer and die and then be worshipped.