

Are These the “Days of Elijah?”

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(These Are the) Days of Elijah, written by Robin Mark, is a catchy tune that’s quickly gaining popularity. It’s guaranteed to get a congregation singing. However, the lyrics are somewhat misleading and add more clutter to the confusion surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus. (Robin Mark will be referred to herein as Mr. Mark to avoid confusion with Mark the gospel writer). Mr. Mark explains the background to the lyrics on his website.¹ The song is a rather complex, eclectic piece of poetry as Mr. Mark freely admits. His support for the lyrics will seem a little confusing and perhaps questionable to some, but of course, poetry is art and a certain amount of license is normally allowed. When it comes to expounding Scripture though, we should probably not allow very much. Mr. Mark’s explanation notwithstanding, these are definitely *not* the “days of Elijah” as the theme is presented in the lyrics:

Verse 1

These are the days of Elijah,
Declaring the word of the Lord:
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,
Righteousness being restored.
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!’

Chorus

Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;
Lift your voice, it’s the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion’s hill salvation comes.²

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Probably, the majority of Christians who find themselves singing along with *Days of Elijah* have only a vague understanding of the subject matter. Actually, one would have difficulty understanding this song the way Mr. Mark intended without knowing the background he eventually felt the need to provide on his website. The highlighted lyrics in the verse are based on prophecies in the books of Isaiah and Malachi:

See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse. (Mal. 4:5-6, NIV throughout)

When this prophecy was recorded (c. 460 BC), Elijah had been dead for about four centuries. So the reference to Elijah in this passage was pointing to someone else. During the four centuries before the first coming of Jesus, there was probably much speculation over the identity of this second Elijah. Suddenly, near the end of the first century BC, the archangel Gabriel appeared in the Temple before a priest named Zechariah and gave him a message:

...Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John...he will be great in the sight of the Lord...And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:13-17)

¹ http://www.robinmark.com/DaysOfElijah_Story.htm

² Complete lyrics at <http://www.robinmark.com/Lyrics/daysofelijah.htm>.

Gabriel was speaking of John the Baptist. He quoted Malachi and made it perfectly clear that no longer was there any need to wonder who the Elijah to come would be; it would be John the Baptist. The gospel of Mark confirms the identity of the prophesied Elijah. Mark quotes Isa. 40:3:

It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way — *a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’*” And so *John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.* (Mark 1:2-4)

Finally, the matter was settled beyond all doubt by Jesus:

For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until *John*. And *if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.* (Matt. 11:13-14)

“But I tell you, *Elijah has already come*, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” *Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.* (Matt. 17:12-13)

Mr. Mark’s lyrics clearly link his “days of Elijah” theme to the prophecies of “the Elijah who was to come,” John the Baptist.

So, are we living in the “days of Elijah” today? Impossible; John’s ministry ended and he was murdered early in the first century. The “great and dreadful day of the LORD” — the destruction of Judea, including Jerusalem and the Temple — took place soon after. Mr. Mark’s lyrics declare that “we are a voice in the desert crying ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord!’” But the gospel writer said this reference to Isa. 40:3 should be applied to John the Baptist. Robin Mark is almost 2,000 years out of sync with Scripture. He also says, “These are the days of Your servant Moses...These are the days of Ezekiel...These are the days of Your servant David.” This may sound poetic, but these references are misleading as well. Mr. Mark has his reasons for saying such things; however, it all gives the impression that Old Testament prophecies are still being fulfilled today, which they are not. All Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70: “For this is the time of punishment *in fulfillment of all that has been written*” (Luke 21:22). Mr. Mark’s Old Testament references are then combined with his chorus which is clearly futurist: “Behold He comes riding on the clouds.” In his explanation he says, “The chorus is the ultimate declaration of hope — Christ’s return.” So even though it’s unlikely anyone would interpret the lyrics as Mr. Mark explains on his website, those making the attempt would surely get the false impression that Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled today and that our generation is the one preparing the way of the Lord, which according to this song appears to be a future Second Coming of Christ. Two problems: 1. John was preparing the way for the *first* coming of Christ, not the second; 2. The Second Coming is over and “we” are not preparing the way for *any* coming of Christ.³

Objection: Isn’t there supposed to be a dual fulfillment; a second fulfillment in the future?

Answer: There have already been two Elijahs. John the Baptist was the second. Any future fulfillment would give us a third. Elijah was the Old Testament type; John the Baptist was the New Testament anti-type.

Objection: The Elijah to come was supposed to “turn the hearts of the fathers to their children,

³ Also, in Mr. Mark’s explanation, he indicates that he leans toward the view that the existence of modern Zionism is an indication that Christ will return soon. However, the first-century fulfillment of the Second Coming makes Zionism irrelevant.

and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Isn’t that talking about restoring right family relationships?

Answer: No. Consider which “fathers” the first Elijah mentioned in connection with “turning their hearts back again”:

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of *Abraham, Isaac and Israel [Jacob]*, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. *Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.*” (1Kgs. 18:36-37)

In the New Testament, we find John teaching that one’s proper relationship with Abraham involves repentance:

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’* For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.” (Luke 3:7-8)

Gabriel told Zechariah, “he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous” (Luke 1:17). This is referring to a reconciliation between those of the first-century “wicked generation” (Matt. 12:45; Luke 11:29) and their faithful, obedient ancestors; their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The word “fathers” appears seven times in the gospels (NIV), but only once does it clearly refer to a direct father/son relationship (Luke 11:11). More often than not, it refers to ancient ancestors. Abraham is referred to as the “father” of people who were not his immediate offspring numerous times in the New Testament (Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:73; 3:8; 16:24,30; John 8:39,53,56; Acts 7:2; Rom. 4:12,16,18).

From John’s words above (Luke 3:7-8), we see that some who depended on their lineage for security were actually in need of a reconciliation with Abraham through repentance. John declared that a claim to direct lineage would not help them because their hearts were not right. Ultimately, most did not see the need for reconciliation (Rom. 9:27; 11:5) and in the spring of AD 67, the LORD finally did come through his agent the Roman army (Matt. 22:7) to “strike the land with a curse” [utter destruction, Heb. *cherem*, Strong’s: 2764]; a 3½-year period of intense tribulation that culminated in the devastation of Judea. It is inconsistent to suggest that John the Baptist came to restore families when Jesus clearly came to *divide* families:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. *For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’* (Matt. 10:34-36)

Objection: Malachi said, “I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.” Shouldn’t that tell us he’s writing about the “day of the LORD” in our future?

Answer: No, it tells us that the “day of the LORD” he was referring to occurred in the first century. Why? Because that’s when “the Elijah that was to come” — John the Baptist — walked the earth. If ever there was an era that could be referred to as the “days of Elijah,” it was during the life of John the Baptist in the first century. Malachi’s “day of the LORD” ended with the devastation of Judea and the destruction of the Temple with its system of animal sacrifices. There is no biblical support for any third Elijah or future “day of the LORD.”

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