

Restoring All Things

John the Baptist was an enigma. The religious and political powers of his time did not know what to make of him. He was the true anti-establishment prophet. His background, all the way from his birth to his life in the desert wilderness, his dress code, his diet and especially his message were all entirely a declaration of a truth-filled counter cultural clash with a hypocritical establishment.

But John the Apostle of Christ (who originally followed the Baptist) along with the other disciples, were also surprised when they asked Jesus about a puzzling theological issue that involved the enigma. It stemmed from the last scriptures in the Old Testament, in the book of Malachi, which says, *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”* Mal 4:5,6

With this in mind, the disciples asked Jesus a question. Peter, James and John had just witnessed His marvelous transfiguration on the mount and His discussion with Moses and Elijah. Jesus charged them, saying, *“Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”* They then asked, *“Why then say the scribes that Elias (Elijah) must first come?”*

And Jesus answered and said to them, *“Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say to you, that Elias has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished.”*

Thus, He clearly spoke of two ‘comings’ (His own) with two ‘precedings’ by Elijah, or as with John the Baptist, by someone with the anointing and power of Elijah.

Now, the Baptist’s message was essentially one of repentance. Luke records, *“And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”* And he pointed to Jesus’ ministry saying, *“I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* Luke 3:3,16

In this manner, he paved the way for Jesus and prepared the hearts of the people to receive Him. So, what was the spiritual quality of this preparation? Jesus made that clear when He explained to His followers, *“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”* Mat 18:3

Thus, you could say that John’s ministry of baptizing for repentance was to prepare childlike hearts – or to say it another way, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. In other words, to show the ‘learned’ and ‘mature’ that they didn’t really know what they needed to, and that their religious standing or life-experience couldn’t substitute for childlike innocence and trust in God. Even Christ submitted to his baptism to demonstrate, as God’s Son, the heart of the Father for His children as well as His own child-like submission to and faith in Father God.

So, it is evident that the first part of Malachi’s prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptist. But, what about the second part? Recall, it says, *“...and the heart of the children to their fathers,...”* I suggest that this may point to what Jesus said, *“Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.”* Note the future tense indicating that this restoration was yet to come. Of course, to restore something implies that at one time it was whole or in good condition. Many commentators agree that this second part is saying

that someone who either is or who operates in the power of Elijah will guide the descendants of Israel back to the faith in God in which the Patriarchs, the fathers, walked. But it may be something more.

You see, 'restore all things' can also be translated 'restore everyone'. If so, who would this 'everyone' be? To answer that, we look to Isaiah who spoke of a restoration – he prophesied of the Messiah, Jesus, and said,

*“And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),”*

*“Indeed He says,
'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Isa 49:5,6*

Here we see that Father God appointed Jesus to restore the preserved ones of Israel who I suggest are the faithful remnant of believers seen in Revelation who are preserved from the worst of the Tribulation times. And if so, this restoration would not only bring these people back to the faith in God the Father but also God the Son. The people who have rejected Christ for so long will be restored to right standing before God by faith in the real Sacrificial Lamb of God.

In his Gospel account, Luke records the words of the Archangel Gabriel speaking of John the Baptist, *“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1:16,17*

Interestingly, in the Greek, the first part could read “turn the hearts of fathers to children”. The ‘the’ is not present. The second part, which reads “disobedient to the wisdom of the just” corresponds to Malachi’s “children to their fathers”. And actually, the better or more literal translation of the Greek word rendered disobedient is unpersuadable. So what Elijah, preceding Christ’s second coming, will do is ‘turn the unpersuadable to the wisdom (understanding) of the just (righteous).

That is to say that the Hebrew people, who have for two thousand years been unpersuaded by the understanding of the righteous – the Gospel – will be turned to accept it by Elijah. Hallelujah!