

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Turning the Hearts in the Family

(Jerry Fite)

Many people in their 20's or 30's focus on getting married and starting their own family. In their mid-20's and early 30's, they start having their babies to add to their newly established families. By the time they have reached their mid-40's or early 50's, they have spent close to two decades raising those children to become young adults. Within an approximate twenty-year period, fathers have their precious moments to lead with the help of their wives in molding the character of their children in the Lord.

This teaching and molding process in the family is in God's mind when He directs Malachi to reveal the last prophecy of the Old Testament:

“(v.4) Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. (v.5) Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. (v.6) 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.” (Malachi 4:1-6 ASV).

In Malachi's generation, God exhorts the Jews to

“remember” the Law of Moses,” with its various “statutes and ordinances” which He commanded Moses in mount “Horeb” (Sinai). (Malachi 4:4).

Then, looking unto a future generation, God promises that He would send them “...Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes (Malachi 4:5 ESV). This “Elijah” would be John the Baptist.

When Jesus was transfigured before the eyes of Peter, James, and John, they saw Jesus’ “face shine as the sun, and His garments became white as light” (Matthew 17:2). Accompanying Jesus that day were “Moses,” the law giver and “Elijah,” the prophet. They then witnessed God’s voice out of a bright cloud declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matthew 17:5).

When in fear they raised their faces from the ground, Jesus told them to arise and be not afraid. When they lifted their eyes, Moses and Elijah were gone, they saw “Jesus only” (Matthew 17:8).

Jesus told them to tell no man this vision, till the “Son of man be risen from the dead.” Of course this puzzled his disciples, causing them to ask Jesus, “Why then saith the scribes that Elijah

must first come?” Jesus replies by saying, “Elijah has come already,” guiding them to understand He referred to “John the Baptist.” John had come in “*the spirit of Elijah*” to restore all things” before the coming of Jesus, the Lord (Matthew 11:13; 17:12-13). John the Baptist was involved in “*restoring all things*” by imploring his generation to turn their affections back to God and keep His Law.

This personal restoration was also reflected in the family relationship. This “Elijah to come” was to “*turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.*” Fathers turning their affections to leading their children back to the Law of God would be preparing their families for the coming Messiah to follow Him.

Many of the Jews in John the Baptist's day did not restore the right relationship with God in their families, and God smote the “earth with a curse” with Jerusalem being destroyed in A.D. 70 as warned in Malachi. Fathers, are you mentoring the way of Christ in such a way that your children, in “turning their hearts to their fathers,” will escape the coming wrath of God and enjoy eternal life in Heaven?