

# Are These the “Days of Elijah?”

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Revised: 2009 Sep 13

(*These Are the Days of Elijah*, written by Robin Mark, is a catchy tune that continues to gain popularity. It’s guaranteed to get a congregation singing. However, the lyrics are not consistent with Scripture. (Robin Mark will be referred to herein as *Mr. Mark* to avoid confusion with Mark, the gospel writer.)

The song is a rather complex, eclectic piece of poetry. Of course, poetry is art, and a certain amount of license is normally allowed. However, when it comes to expounding Scripture, we should probably not allow very much. Regardless of our individual views on poetic license, these are definitely *not* the “days of Elijah” as the theme is presented in these lyrics:

## Verse One

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.<sup>1</sup>

Probably, very few Christians who sing along with *Days of Elijah* could explain much of this. The highlighted words above are loosely based on prophecies from the books of Malachi and Isaiah. However, Mr. Mark has presented them as a “tossed salad” that ends up virtually meaningless.

Isaiah and Malachi foresaw a special preacher coming onto the scene ahead of the Messiah. Isaiah wrote first:

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isa. 40:3, KJV)

About 300 years later, Malachi mentioned him again:

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 3:1); <sup>5</sup>“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” (Mal. 4:5-6, NASB unless otherwise noted.)

This time, the “messenger” was identified as Elijah. During the more than four centuries between the time Malachi’s prophecy was recorded (c. 460 B.C.) and the first coming of Jesus, there was probably considerable debate over how this reference to Elijah would be fulfilled.

Suddenly, near the end of the first century B.C., the archangel Gabriel appeared in the temple before a priest named Zechariah to give him this message:

<sup>13</sup>“...your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.” (Luke 1:13); <sup>16</sup>“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>“It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (vv. 16-17)

Gabriel referred to Mal. 4:5-6 and made it perfectly clear there was no longer any need to wonder who the second Elijah would be: he would be John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel said, “TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous” (Luke 1:17). This differs considerably from the wording in Mal. 4:6: “restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” (Most modern versions of the Old Testament are based on the Hebrew Masoretic text, c. A.D. 500-1000.) The translation in common use in the first century was the Greek Septuagint (LXX), c. third century B.C. However, it renders Mal. 4:6 as “turn again the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his neighbour” (Mal. 4:5, LXX, Brenton). So we have three versions of the same prophecy. Presumably, Gabriel spoke in Hebrew, the language of the temple. Obviously, he was quoting the verse in Malachi, but at least two questions arise: 1. Why does Gabriel’s version differ

<sup>1</sup> Copyright © 1997 Daybreak Music Ltd. Complete lyrics at <http://www.robinmark.com/Lyrics/daysofelijah.htm>.

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The gospel of Mark confirms the identity of the prophesied Elijah. Mark quotes Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1:

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; <sup>3</sup>THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’” <sup>4</sup>*John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness* preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:2-4)<sup>3</sup>

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

<sup>13</sup>“For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until *John*. <sup>14</sup>“And if you are willing to accept it, *John himself is Elijah who was to come*. (Matt. 11:13-14); <sup>11</sup>And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; <sup>12</sup>but I say to you that *Elijah already came*, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” <sup>13</sup>*Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist*. (ch. 17:11-13)

Mr. Mark’s lyrics are clearly linked 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 terrible day of the Lord” — the destruction of Judea, including Jerusalem and the temple — took place soon after in A.D. 70. Mr. Mark’s lyrics declare, “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

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from both the Septuagint and the Masoretic text? 2. Why do the Septuagint and the Masoretic text differ?

<sup>3</sup>The first section “BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY” is from Mal. 3:1. So the words “written in *Isaiah* the prophet” present an embarrassing implication for the belief that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Apparently, an attempt was made to eliminate the problem. Later manuscripts, generally considered less reliable, render it as “written in the prophets” (Mark 1:2, KJV). It is widely believed that Matthew and Luke used Mark as the source for their gospels. They omit the reference to Malachi creating the distinct impression they regarded it as an error not to be propagated. (See Matt. 3:3 and Luke 3:4.)

(Mark 1:3). 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 all might sound quite biblical, but in reality, these unrelated references pasted together into a collage with passages from Isaiah and Malachi produce nothing more than an incoherent hodgepodge.

Mr. Mark’s Old Testament references are then combined with his chorus: “Behold He comes riding on the clouds.” Obviously, Mr. Mark believes that *we* are living in the “Days of Elijah” today, and that our generation is the one preparing the way for a future second coming of Christ. There are at least two problems with this scenario:

1. John was preparing the way for the *first* coming of Christ, not the second;
2. The second coming was fulfilled on schedule in the first century, and “we” are not preparing the way for anything.

There is nothing in Scripture to support the claim that we are living in the “Days of Elijah.”

### *Objections*

**Objection:** Isn’t there supposed to be a dual fulfillment, i.e., 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 type; John the Baptist was the antitype.

**Objection:** Malachi said, “I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.” Shouldn’t that tell us he was writing about the “day of the Lord” in our future, i.e., the second coming?

**Answer:** No, it tells us the “day of the Lord” he referred to occurred in the first century because that’s when the “Elijah who 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. The “day of the Lord” occurred many times in Israel’s history. The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was called “the day of the Lord” (Ezek. 13:5), as was the destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. (Isa. 13:6, 9). Malachi’s final

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“day of the Lord” ended with the devastation of Judea and the destruction of the temple with its system of animal sacrifices. We are not living in an era that could rightly be called the *Days of Elijah*, and there is no biblical support for any future Elijah or “day of the Lord.”

**Objection:** John himself said he was *not* Elijah. (John 1:21)

**Answer:** However, Jesus plainly stated that John *was* Elijah. Evidently, John’s understanding was not complete even at the end of his ministry. In John 1:21, he was asked whether he was a prophet. “He answered, ‘No.’” But again, Jesus said he *was* a prophet (Matt. 11:9). When John was finally imprisoned, he wasn’t even sure whether Jesus was the Christ (Luke 7:19). Obviously, there were gaps in his understanding. Moreover, if there is any discrepancy between the words of John and those of Jesus, it is Jesus who must take precedence.

**Objection:** MacArthur agrees that Isa. 40:3 refers to John the Baptist, but says, “It likewise sees the future forerunner who is to be like Elijah preparing for Christ’s second coming.”<sup>4</sup> MacDonald and Farstad say, “John the Baptist filled the role of forerunner at Christ’s first advent (Matt. 3:3), and Elijah will fill it at the second advent (Mal. 4:5, 6).”<sup>5</sup>

**Answer:** There is absolutely no scriptural basis for these futuristic applications. Neither Isaiah nor Malachi gave any indication whatsoever that there would be multiple fulfillments of their prophecies. Jesus said plainly that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come, but said nothing about any further fulfillment. It is only those denying the first-century second coming of Christ who feel compelled to project these Old Testament prophecies far beyond the generation for which they were intended.

**Objection:** MacArthur says, “John the Baptist was a type of Elijah.”<sup>6</sup> So should we not expect the arrival of an antitype in the future?

**Answer:** MacArthur has mistakenly referred to John as a type when he was actually the *antitype* of

Elijah. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines *antitype* as follows: “One that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type, such as a figure in the New Testament who has a counterpart in the Old Testament.”<sup>7</sup> Elijah was the Old Testament type; John the Baptist was the New Testament antitype. There is no support for the claim that John was a type of some greater antitype in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* NASB ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), Isa. 40:3.

<sup>5</sup> William MacDonald & Arthur Farstad, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, (NKJV) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995), Isa. 40:3.

<sup>6</sup> MacArthur, Mal.4:5.

<sup>7</sup> *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.