

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel

– Part 11

Matthew 15:1-2 [New King James] *“Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’”*

The Pharisees and teachers of the law had come all the way from Jerusalem, many miles away, to scrutinise Jesus Christ’s activities.

Over the centuries since the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, hundreds of religious traditions had been added to God’s laws. The Pharisees and teachers of the law considered all these additions as equally important.

God’s principles never change and His law does **not** need additions.

Matthew 15:3-6 [New King James] *“He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God,’ then he need not honour his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.’”*

Dedicating money to the temple they considered released them from supporting the needs of their elderly parents.

Matthew 15:7-9 [New King James] *“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”*

This incident was a collision of two views of religion, two views of the demands of God that had no possibility of a compromise or even a working agreement.

Jesus Christ quoted the prophecy of **Isaiah 29:13** which fitted this situation perfectly.

In this passage we meet with the whole concept of clean and unclean. This has nothing to do with hygiene, it was entirely a ceremonial matter.

To worship God, a person had to be ceremonially clean otherwise such an approach was impossible.

This uncleanness was contracted by touching certain people or eating certain things. Every Gentile was unclean, a dead body was unclean, and this was transferrable to anyone who touched them.

In this passage of scripture there is a clash of two kinds of religion, two kinds of worship.

To the scribes and Pharisees religion and worship was the observance of certain outward rules, regulations and rituals, such as a correct way to wash your hands before eating, it was the strict observance of a legalistic outlook on all life.

To Jesus Christ religion and worship was something that had its seat in our heart and mind which was expressed in love, compassion and kindness, which are above any ritual law.

Many religions in this world, even some so-called “Christian” religions, are based on rituals and man-made laws that express themselves in the hatred of all humans who are not part of their group, following their style of rituals.

For example, there are many who would say that Christian worship is not true worship unless it is carried out by a priest ordained in a certain succession, in a building consecrated in a certain way, and from a liturgy laid down by a certain church, yet all these things are externals.

God’s Word, the Christian Bible, gives us guidelines to true worship of the True Eternal God.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

The word translated “bodies” is “soma” meaning our whole life, physical body, mind and “human” spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

Such a living sacrifice allows the Holy Spirit to produce in us the very character of the Eternal God, [**Galatians 5:22-25**] and resist the pull of this Satan-influenced world, [**1 John 5:19**].

James 1:27 [NIV] *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

True religious worship is showing love, care and compassion to other human beings who are in need; such action can only come from the heart.

Matthew 15:10-12 [New King James] *“When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.’ Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’”*

If true religion consisted of external regulations and observances it would be far too easy, but to love the unlovable person and help the needy at the cost of our own time, money, comfort and pleasure is a very different lifestyle.

A religion of external observances is quite misleading, for a person who shows the world a faultless life of externals could have the bitterest and most evil thoughts in their heart and mind.

Matthew 5:8 [New King James] *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

It is the person with a pure heart who will know God and understand His will.

This really offended the religious leaders for it destroyed what their style of religion was built on and with it their authority over the common people, [**Matthew 15:12**].

Matthew 15:13-14 [New King James] *“But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’”*

Jesus Christ likened the religious leaders with blind people leading the blind as far as God’s truth was concerned, and both would need rescuing in the end, when the Truth [Jesus Christ – **John 14:6] was revealed to them.**

Matthew 15:15-20 [New King James] *“Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Explain this parable to us.’ So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil*

thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.’”

Later Peter would be faced with the issue of clean and unclean, learning that nothing should be a barrier to proclaiming the gospel message to the Gentiles, [non-Jews].

What is important to our Saviour and Creator God is what is in our hearts and minds. The way we are deep down where other human people cannot see.

We work hard to keep our outward appearance attractive but what is far more important is what God sees in our hearts and minds that other humans cannot, [Psalms 139:1-4].

Matthew 15:21-28 [New King James] *“Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.’ And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.”*

There are tremendous implications in this passage, apart from it being the only occasion recorded that Jesus Christ was outside of Palestine.

This passage foreshadows the gospel going out to the whole world, it shows the beginning of the end of all barriers.

The reaction of the disciples was not really compassionate at all, to them this woman was a nuisance and they wanted to be rid of her as quickly as possible.

For Jesus Christ there was a problem, we cannot doubt that He was moved with compassion for this woman, but she was a Gentile, also of Canaanite stock who were the ancestral enemies of the Jews.

We have already seen that if Jesus Christ was to have any effect, He had to limit His objectives like a wise general. He had to begin with the Jews and even limit it those Jews who would be most responsive, and here He was faced with a Gentile crying for mercy.

There was only one thing that Jesus Christ could do, He must awaken the faith of this woman to Him.

We can be quite sure that the smile on Jesus Christ’s face and the compassion in His eyes robbed the words He used of all insult and bitterness, also the word He used [*“kunaria”*] was that applied to little household pet dog.

The woman was a Greek, she was quick to see, and she had all a Greek’s ready wit.

Jesus Christ’s eyes must have lit up with joy at such indomitable faith and He granted her the blessing and healing which she so much desired.

There are certain things we must note about this woman –

She had love in her heart for her child, so strong that she approached a stranger, accept His silence and yet still appealed as her love could see the compassion of Jesus Christ beyond His words.

She had faith that grew in contact with Jesus Christ.

She began by calling Jesus Christ “Son of David” a popular political title, and ends by calling Him “Lord.” Prayer for her was no ritual but an outpouring passionate desire of the heart.

This is a faith that cannot but find an answer to its prayers.

Matthew 15:29-39 [New King James] *“Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marvelled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.’ Then His disciples said to Him, ‘Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?’ Jesus said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven, and a few little fish.’ So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.”*

The feeding of the 5,000 [**Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31:44**] we read that the people sat down on the “green grass” so the time must have been in the spring, the only time of green grass in this region.

This time they sat on the “ground” so the time must have been high summer when the grass is scorched leaving the bare earth. That is to say, this northern journey took Jesus Christ and His disciples almost six months.

All we know about what happened besides the healings must have been very important to the disciples, for in this time Jesus Christ must have deliberately taught and instructed them, opening their minds to the truth and what the near future had for Him and them when they returned to Jerusalem and His crucifixion.

Matthew 16:1-4 [New King James] *“Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, ‘When it is evening you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red”; and in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’ And He left them and departed.”*

Hostility, like necessity, make strange “bed-fellows,” this combination of Pharisees and Sadducees, they stood for beliefs and policies which were diametrically opposed.

The Pharisees lived according to the details of the oral and scribal laws.

The Sadducees rejected the oral and scribal law completely, accepting only the written words of the Old Testament.

The Pharisees believed in angels and in the resurrection of the body.

The Sadducees did not.

The Pharisees were not a political party, they were prepared to live under any government that allowed them to observe their religious principles.

The Sadducees were a small, wealthy aristocracy, who were the collaborationist party, and who were quite prepared to serve and co-operate with the Roman government, in order to retain their wealth and their privileges.

Also the Pharisees looked for and longed for the Messiah; the Sadducees did not.

Very different groups of people, yet they came together in their desire to eliminate Jesus Christ.

All error to the Truth has this in common a hostility to Jesus Christ, [1 John 4:1-6].

Both groups asked for a sign to authenticate His message.

The only sign Jesus Christ would give is that of what would happen to Him, was God's sign, beyond Jesus Christ the revelation of God and the authority of the message He brings from God the Father cannot go.

Jesus Christ is God, plain for all to see, [John 1:1-4, 14].

Jesus Christ's was God's message plain for all to hear.

Jesus Christ is God's sign to all humanity.

If Jesus Christ cannot appeal to you then nothing else can reveal the Truth.

When we are confronted with Jesus Christ, we are confronted with God the Father's final word, His ultimate appeal.

If we reject the teaching for Jesus Christ, we throw away the last chance to know the true Eternal God.

Matthew 16:5-12 [New King James] *“Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

To the Jewish mind leaven was always symbolic of evil pride that can permeate any part of our lives.

The teaching of the Pharisees centred around rules and rituals mostly added to the law by men in the past. Outward ritual and outward purity that generated “*puffed up*” pride in their lives.

The Sadducees were deeply involved in human politics and political action.

We are being warned not to place material things too high a place in our scheme of values and not to think that society can be changed for the better by political action.

The only way to bring about change for the good is to change the hearts and minds of people through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, bringing to our lives His “*fruits*” that are the very character of God, [Galatians 5:22-25].

Matthew 16:13-16 [New King James] *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”*

Here we have the account of another withdrawal of Jesus Christ and His disciples. The end of Jesus Christ's life and ministry were near and He needed to teach them many things.

It is interesting to see where Jesus Christ chose to ask this question of who the disciples consider He was.

Caesarea Philippi lies about 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Outside of the domain of Herod Antipas and within the area of Philip the Tetrarch. The population was mainly non-Jewish and there Jesus Christ would have peace and time to teach the twelve.

Jesus Christ's problem was, did anyone really understand who He was and the message He had brought from God the Father?

This was essential if His work was to be continued after His return to the throne of His Father.

The area where Jesus Christ asked this question was scattered with temples of ancient Syrian Baal worship, also the legends of the pagan gods of Greece centred around Caesarea Philippi.

There was also a temple of white marble built by Herod the Great and dedicated to the godhead of the Roman Caesar.

At that question there may well have been a moment's silence before the disciples first gave the ideas of other people, before Peter is given by the Holy Spirit his great confession.

Jesus Christ now knows that the future of His work is now safe because at least one person understands.

It is interesting to note that each of the gospels has their own version of the words of Peter.

Matthew – *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Mark 8:29 – *“You are the Christ.”*

Luke 9:20 – *“You are the Christ of God.”*

Jesus then knew that there was at least one who recognised Him for the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, the Son of the living God.

This passage of scripture teaches us that our discovery of Jesus Christ must be a personal discovery, our knowledge of Jesus Christ can never be at secondhand.

True Christianity never consists of *“knowing about”* Jesus Christ, it always must consist of *“knowing Jesus Christ.”*

Matthew 16:17-19 [Amplified Bible] *“The Jesus answered him, blessed, happy and fortunate and to be envied are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. For flesh and blood [men] have not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven, and I tell you, you are Peter [Greek “petros” a piece of rock or stone] and on this rock [Greek “petra” a huge rock – like Gibraltar] I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades, [the grave, place of those who have died] shall not overpower it, or hold out against it, I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind, that is, declare to be improper and unlawful on earth must be already bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth, declare lawful, must be loosed already in heaven.” [Isaiah 22:22]*

1 Peter 2:4-8 [New King James] *“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who*

believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.”

Peter reminds Christians that the true Christian Church is built on the foundation and cornerstone that was Jesus Christ, the cornerstone that holds it all together, [Ephesians 2:19-22].

Matthew 16:20-23 [New King James] *“Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”*

Although the disciples had grasped the fact that Jesus was God’s Messiah, they still had **not** grasped what that great fact meant. They were still thinking in terms of a conquering Messiah, a warrior king who would sweep the Romans out of Palestine and lead Israel to power.

So Jesus Christ began to seek to open their eyes to the fact for Him there was no way but the way of the cross. He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer at the hands of the religious leaders.

Peter’s violent reaction was based on the idea of a Messiah of power and glory and conquest.

The idea of a suffering Messiah and the connection of the shame of the cross were incredible to him.

Peter’s desire was to protect Jesus Christ he loved, from this suicidal course.

Jesus Christ’s reply makes us catch our breath. Why should Jesus Christ react in this way?

Jesus Christ reacted in this way because in that moment there came back to Him with cruel force of the temptations He had already faced in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry.

Jesus Christ was telling Peter that his place was to follow Him, not to seek to lead Him in the path he wanted Jesus Christ to go.

Matthew 16:24-26 [New King James] *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’”*

We have in these verses one of the dominant and ever-recurring themes of Jesus Christ’s teaching. [Matthew 10:37-39; Mark 8:34-37; Luke 9:23-27; Luke 14:25-27; Luke 17:33; John 12:25].

Paul expands on the “*taking up our cross*” in his letter to the church in Rome.

Romans 6:1-13 [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, **knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.** For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your*

mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

It is our old way of life that we crucify on the cross.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

A total surrender to Jesus Christ to show our gratitude for what He has done for all humanity on the cross, [**1 Corinthians 15:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13**].

This allows the Holy Spirit to re-educate us, [**Romans 12:2**].

Matthew was writing his gospel between AD80 and AD90 that were days of bitter persecution for the true Church. He was saying that a person who is faithful may die for their faith but they die to receive eternal life.

In contrast those who are unfaithful to their calling may preserve their physical lives, but they only live now to die in the end, eternally.

In our generation it still remains that martyrdom may be the path we have to tread to remain faithful to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We need to face this in our lives and make the right decision before we have to make the choice, [**Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:4**].

Matthew 16:27-28 [New King James] *“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”*

Because all of the disciples have died long ago and Jesus Christ’s return to rule and judge humanity is yet to happen. Matthew is referring to what we are about to study, [**Matthew 17:1-5**].

Matthew 17:1-9 [New King James] *“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’”*

This transfiguration must have happened at night, [**Luke 9:32**]. Why did Jesus Christ go there? Again Luke tells us that Jesus Christ was praying, [**Luke 9:28**]. This was something He was constantly doing.

Jesus Christ had to make sure that He was doing exactly what His Father wanted Him to do, sure beyond all doubt.

It is interesting to see in how many respects these two great leaders of the people and servants of God match the experience of Jesus Christ.

Both Moses and Elijah had their most intimate experiences with God on a mountain top.

Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, [Exodus 21:18] and Elijah found God while on Mount Horeb, [1 Kings 19:9-18].

There is also a strange thing about the physical deaths of both Moses and Elijah.

The lonely death of Moses on Mount Nebo is recorded in a way that indicates that God Himself buried the great leader of the people, [Deuteronomy 34:5-6].

As for Elijah, his departure from the astonished Elisha in a chariot and horses of fire, [2 Kings 2:8-15].

It was consistent Jewish belief that Elijah was the forerunner and herald of the Messiah, and some Jewish teachers believed Moses would be a companion of the Messiah when He came.

It is easy to see how appropriate and fitting this vision of Moses and Elijah was.

Luke gives us the main reason why these two men were with Jesus Christ in this vision.

Luke 9:30-31 [New King James] *“And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”*

The word translated “decease” is “*exodos*,” the two great men were talking to Jesus Christ about His soon-coming “*exodos*,” death.

“Exodus” is the word which describes what we might well call the most adventurous journey every human being will take in utter trust in God for where it will end.

In utter trust in God the Father, Jesus Christ was about to set out on the journey to Jerusalem and His “*exodos*” that would include the cross.

Also in Jewish thought Moses stood for the law that he brought from God. Elijah was the greatest of all prophets, in him the voice of God spoke to human beings with unique directness.

Not only did these two great men of Israel assure Jesus Christ He was doing the right thing, but the very voice of God the Father told Him He was doing the right thing.

The cloud was part of Israel’s history, the “*shechinah*,” which is nothing less than the glory of Almighty God, [Exodus 13:21-22; Exodus 40:34; Exodus 34:5; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 2 Chronicles 7:2].

Matthew 17:10-13 [New King James] *“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.”*

This injunction to secrecy was much needed, because the people’s conception of the forerunner and the Messiah had to be radically and fundamentally changed. The idea of a conquering Messiah had to be unlearned.