

## Lesson 27 – During Spring and Summer of 29 AD The Question of the Authority of the Roman Church

In the last lesson we postponed the critical analysis of the passage in Matthew 16:13-19. For centuries, that passage has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to claim that their Pope was to be given supreme authority over the Body of Christ on earth. For that reason, I think it is important to study that passage and that claim in detail. Below is the passage in the NIV translation:

Matthew 16:13-19 “When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter (Πέτρος {pet'-ros})<sup>1</sup> and on this rock (πέτρα {pet'-ra})<sup>2</sup> I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The Catholic Church not only claims that this verse demonstrated that Christ delegated supreme authority to Peter over the Church on earth, they also then go on to assert that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and after his death he passed on his authority to the succeeding Bishops of Rome to which office all the Popes are the successors.

My first reaction to such a claim is that if this was Christ’s intent here, it should have been communicated in a much clearer way. That such an important doctrine on the future administration of the Church would be taught in such a cryptic fashion is hard to understand or

---

<sup>1</sup> The Greek here is Πέτρος (pronounced pet'-ros). In the King James it is translated as the name “Peter” 161 times and “stone” once. The word means “a rock or a stone.”

The name “Peter” is a Greek translation of the Aramaic name “Cephas” (Κηφᾶς {kā-fä's}) which the Lord gave him at their first meeting (John 1:42). “Cephas” comes from the Hebrew word קָפַץ {kāf} which refers to “broken stones or boulders where one could hide” as in Job 30:6, and Jeremiah 4:29. The Lord usually called him “Simon” (Σίμων {sē-mōn}) which is from an Aramaic name שִׁמְעוֹן {shim-ōn'} which means “heard.” The two occasions recorded that he called him “Peter” were times where he was taking a stand in faith (Matthew 16:18, Luke 22:34). Some suppose that the name Cephus is related to the same root as the name Caiaphas (Καϊάφας {kā-ē-ä'-fäs}).

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word here is πέτρα (pronounced pet'-ra). It is translated variously by the King James Version as “rock” 16 times. It is used to mean (1.) a rock, cliff or ledge, (2.) a projecting rock, crag, rocky ground, (3.) a rock, a large stone, (4.) metaphorically as a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul. We get the English word “petrify” from the same root.

believe. However, let's examine the passage in its context and see what it really says in the original.

In verse 18 Jesus said "on this rock I will build my church." What was the rock on which Jesus would build his church? Jesus said, "**this rock.**" The word "this" indicating it was something that he had mentioned in the context of His conversation. The Roman Church holds to an interpretation of "on this rock I will build my church" that assumes that Jesus was using a play on words here to permanently establish the prime authority His Church at Rome. Since Peter's name (Πέτρος {pet'-ros}) means "stone" and His Hebrew name Cephas means "hiding place in a rock," they assume that Jesus was saying that He would build his Church on Peter who they claim was the First Bishop at Rome. Is that correct? First of all the two words interpreted "Peter" and "rock" are different, Although they are from the same root, they mean different, though related, things. The word translated "rock" is (πέτρα {pet'-ra}) which basically means "bedrock", not a stone.

Was there something else in the context that qualified as "this rock?" Yes! Peter's statement of faith is the point of the whole passage! For the first time the ultimate truth of all time had been stated among the disciples! It was "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That statement of faith was the rock upon which Christ would build His Church! The "rock" was faith that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God! The "rock" was His person and work! The teaching that the Church was built on that fact is confirmed by many other passages:

Matthew 7:24-25 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock (πέτρα). The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock (πέτρα)."

1 Corinthians 10:3-4 "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock (πέτρα) that accompanied them, and **that rock (πέτρα) was Christ.**"

It was faith in Christ on which the Church would be built!

1 Corinthians 15:57 "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 John 5:4b-5 "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

It was faith in His person and work on which the Church would be built!

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 “When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Galatians 6:14 “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Peter, the “small stone,” was not the “rock” which was the foundation of the Church. However, his just expressed faith (“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”) had demonstrated that he was a piece of the larger rock and because of that he had access to the “the keys of the kingdom” just like every other human being who believes in Christ. All who believe in the Christ, the Son of the living God are also a piece of the rock.

John 14:12 “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

John 17:20-26 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

Ephesians 1:4-14 “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him

who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory."

The keys of the kingdom are ultimately still held by Jesus Christ and we only have access when we walk in Him, but when we do, we have full access to the keys of the Kingdom.

John 15:7 "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."

The keys are mentioned in two other passages. They confirm that it is Christ who holds the keys. The first is a passage in Isaiah, in which two historical characters are respectively types of Satan and Christ.

Isaiah 22:15-25 "This is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: 'Go, say to this steward, to Shebna (*type of Satan*),<sup>3</sup> who is in charge of the palace: What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock? Beware, the LORD is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, O you mighty man. He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there your splendid chariots will remain-- you disgrace to your master's house! I will depose you from your office, and you will be ousted from your position. "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim (*type of Christ*)<sup>4</sup> son of Hilkiyah. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.<sup>5a</sup> I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. All the glory of his family will hang on him: its offspring and offshoots--all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars. 'In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'the peg driven into the firm place will give way; it will be sheared off and will fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut down.' The LORD has spoken."

---

<sup>3</sup> *Type of Satan – ascended to the heights, in charge of the throne room, cast out, ousted, authority given to Eliakim (who God will raise up.)*

<sup>4</sup> *Type of Christ – name means “who God will raise up.”*

<sup>a</sup> *Proves that Eliakim is definitely a Christ type. See Revelation 3:7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” All the honor of David, Jacob, Adam hangs on Christ. Satan is the peg that will be sheared off.*

The second is in Revelation.

Revelation 3:7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”

Furthermore, the power that came with the “keys of the Kingdom” was promised to all the disciples just a little later than the time of our passage.

Matthew 18:1, 18 “At that time the disciples came to Jesus --- I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

There is no reason given in Scripture to make us suppose that Peter was given preeminence among the Apostles. At the time Peter was still alive, James was the head of the Church in Jerusalem, while Paul was an Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter was an Apostle to the Jews. Paul described this in Galatians.

Galatians 2:7-8 “On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.”<sup>6</sup>

There was no assertion here of the superiority of one apostle over the other. There are other verses in scripture in which the Lord singled out Peter. In none of them was it indicated that He was to be the lead apostle. In the passage below, Peter is not told to lead the Lord’s sheep:

John 21:15-19 “When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’ The third time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, ‘Follow me!’

In the passage below, Peter was warned about his pride and its dangers:

---

<sup>6</sup> *Most of the others of the original eleven besides Peter also went to the Gentiles.*

Luke 22:31-34 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.’ But he replied, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.’

In the greeting of his two letters 1 Peter and 2 Peter, Peter never claimed any superior authority to any other apostle, and the Bible also labels others than the eleven as “apostles.” Apostle simply means “one sent out.”

1 Peter 1:1 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 1:1 “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.”

Furthermore, if there was a basis for a claim of passed on authority, it would seem logical that it would have been from the last living among the Twelve Apostles. That was John. He lived at least 30 years longer than Peter and died in Ephesus, not Rome. The problem with John as far as the Catholic Church (the Western Church) was concerned is that he never got to Rome. The claim for Peter basically arose after the Great Schism between the Western and Eastern Churches (1054 AD). At that time, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Church in the West (based in Rome) wanted an argument on which to base their assertion that they should have primacy over the Eastern Church. The Eastern Church was based in Constantinople which was the capital of the still surviving Eastern Roman Empire (also called the Byzantine Empire). The Western Church in Rome made the supposed primacy of Peter the basis for their argument.

Furthermore, the Bible is quite plain in proclaiming that all believers (both men and women) are priests and that it is Christ that is the head of the Church. Therefore, no hierarchy of priests is justified.

1 Peter 2:4-5 “As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be **a holy priesthood**, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Revelation 1:5b-6 “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be **a kingdom and priests** to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”

Finally, if anyone thinks that the Popes in Rome were chosen by God to lead the Church, they should study the human history of those men. Some few were fairly decent. However, at least half of them were guilty of murder, rape, incest, bribery, simony, and robbery. At least one of them was an admitted atheist. Many of the Popes were assassinated by their successors. Most of them were master politicians and manipulators, but totally ignorant of scripture. Many of them gained the office by the assassination of the prior Pope. Quite frankly, I will be surprised if we get to meet as many as half of them in Heaven.

At this point we can return to our chronological study of the life of Christ. The last thing Jesus had said after the meeting where Peter declared his faith was:

Matthew 16:28 “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” (Also Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27).

The “some” Jesus was describing were Peter, James, and John. What they would see was the Transfiguration of Christ.

### **Mount of Transfiguration Time – 9/29 AD**

**Matthew 17:1** **After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.**

**Mark 9:2a** **After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone.**

**Luke 9:28** **About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.**

In Luke 9:28, the Greek word which is translated “about” is the word ὠσεὶ {hō-sā’}. It is a word of approximation. Evidently Luke did not know the number better than this. It isn’t precisely accurate, but it is accurate in its approximation. Perhaps it was the account given by one of the disciples left behind who only knew the others were gone a total of eight days. This also indicates that Luke did not have access to the Gospels of Matthew or Mark when he wrote his Gospel. This refutes the argument of liberal theologians who like to claim that Matthew and Luke were plagiarized from Mark.

The mountain here was Mt. Hermon which was six miles from Caesarea Philippi (*see map on page 8*) where the disciples had met with Jesus in the previous passage. It is by far the highest mountain in Israel. It rises to an elevation of 9,232 feet. In some years it is capped with snow the year around. It certainly agrees with the description of Matthew and Mark of being a “high” mountain.

It is interesting to note the order of the names given in the three Gospels. Matthew's Gospel was the first written and at the time it was written James was still alive and the preeminent among the original disciples. Peter was the next most preeminent. Both he and James were the ones arrested as being the leaders of the Church in Acts 12:1-3. John was only listed here in Matthew as the "brother of James." When the Gospel of Luke was written (67 AD), James had been dead for over 20 years, so he was listed after John. Mark's account still has James listed first, so we might imply from that that Mark was written before James' death in 44 AD.

**Matthew 17:2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.**

**Mark 9:2b-3 There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.**

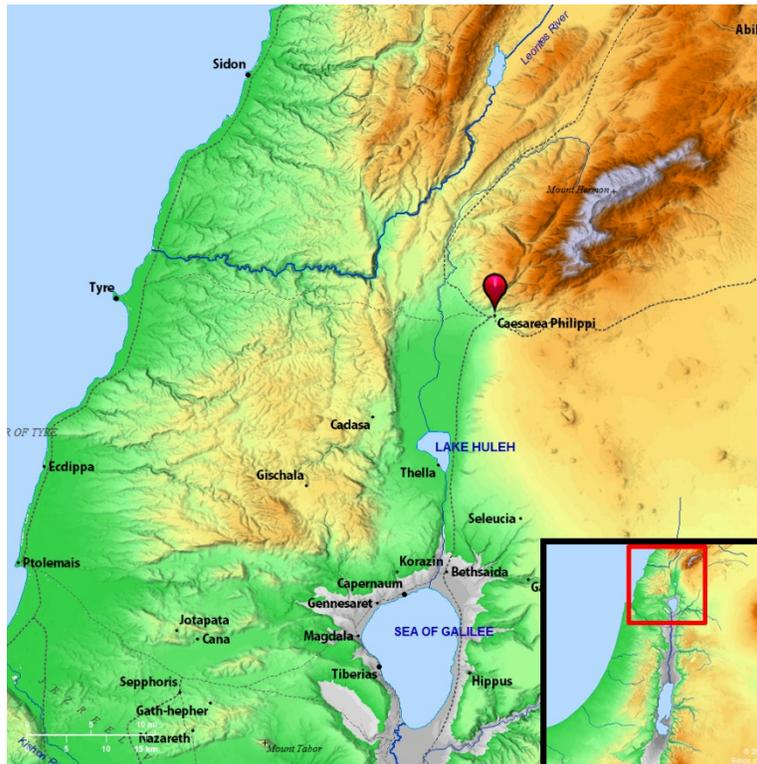
**Luke 9:29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.**

These verses which described Jesus' face are reminiscent of the description of Him in Revelation:

Revelation 1:16. "In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance."

I am also reminded of the blessing the Levitical Priests were to invoke on the people of Israel:

Numbers 6:24-26 "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."



*Caesarea Philippi and Mt. Hermon*

The brightness of His clothes was evidently a white that did not just reflect back the light, but light emanated from it. It should be remembered that this extreme brightness was contrasted against the white snow.

The brightness of His face spoke of the ultimate truth and revelation which can only be attained by looking intently at Jesus. The whiteness of His garment spoke of His perfect righteousness.

Matthew 17:3 **Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.**

Mark 9:4 **And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.**

Luke 9:30-31 **Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor,<sup>7</sup> talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.**

Obviously, like every account in the scriptures, this is very condensed and only gives us the main facts, not the details. One of the details that is left out is how the disciples knew this was Moses and Elijah. Certainly, they had no idea what they looked like. It could be that they had

---

<sup>7</sup> *In Revelation some try to assert that it was only Elijah and Enoch who could be the two witnesses of Revelation (Revelation 11:1-12) because neither of them had previously died and they still had their human bodies. You will note that here, Moses (who had died) and Elijah (who was taken up in chariot) both evidently have the same kind of body.*

heard enough of Jesus' conversation with the two to conclude who they were, or Jesus could have simply introduced them.

Clearly the “departure” was His departure from this life when He was crucified in Jerusalem. From that time on Jesus turned toward Jerusalem and Judea, although it was nearly seven months before His crucifixion.

**Matthew 17:4** Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

**Mark 9:5-6** Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

**Luke 9:32-33** Peter and his companions were very sleepy,<sup>8</sup> but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)



---

<sup>8</sup> This may indicate the length of the conference of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.

## *Mount Hermon and the Northern Coast of the Sea of Galilee*

Here we have another example of Peter's default mode. When he couldn't think, he spoke, and when he spoke it was often nonsense. Here, he decided to give the Lord advice.

Of course the actual conversation was held in Aramaic. The Greek translations of the title by which Jesus was addressed are three separate words. There is κύριος {kü'-rē-os} (translated in the English as "Lord"). It was used by Matthew. There is ἐπιστάτης {e-pet-stä'-tās} (translated in the English as "Master"). It was used by Luke. There is also ῥαββί {rhāb-bē'} (transliterated in the English as "Rabbi"). It was used in Mark. The last is actually a Grecianized spelling of the Aramaic word which was probably used. All three of the words mean a teacher or an authority worthy of respect.

**Matthew 17:5** While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

**Mark 9:7** Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

**Luke 9:34-35** While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Here the Father was asserting that Jesus was infinitely more than a rabbi or teacher. He was the Son of God. Like John the Baptist, these three were privileged to hear the testimony of the Father on behalf of His Son.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it is worth recalling that the presence of God was identified with a cloud during the Exodus,<sup>10</sup> in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple.<sup>11</sup>

**Matthew 17:6-8** When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

**Mark 9:8** Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

**Luke 9:36a** When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22.*

<sup>10</sup> *Exodus 13:21, 16:10, 19:9, 24:16, 33:9, 34:5, etc.*

<sup>11</sup> *Leviticus 16:2, 1 Kings 8:10-11.*

This sequence exemplified one of the main purposes of Jesus' incarnation. When the LORD had spoken to the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai out of the cloud they had been terrified. So God promised that He would send "the Prophet" who was a man like Moses. Then they could listen to the voice of the LORD without being terrified.<sup>12</sup> Here the three disciples heard the terrifying voice of the Father out of the cloud, but were soon comforted by the gentle hand of Jesus and His soothing voice. Both voices were the voice of the LORD. The LORD sent Jesus so that we could understand His gentleness without being terrified by His power.

**Matthew 17:9** **As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."**

**Mark 9:9-10** **As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.**

**Luke 9:36b** **The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.**

Evidently the three disciples didn't share their experience on the mountain even with the other nine of the twelve at this time. Here again, Jesus gave testimony of His impending death, but the disciples seemed to have thought He was speaking to them in a parable. They didn't really absorb what He had said until after He had been crucified and resurrected.

Below is the account Peter gave of this event thirty five years later:

2 Peter 1:16-17 "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

This remembrance must have fortified Peter through all the trials, and disappointments that he underwent during the next 36 years of his ministry. He was the Apostle to the Jews, yet he had to witness the much greater acceptance of the Gospel by the Gentiles than by the Jews. In the final years of his life he switched his own ministry from Babylon with its millions of heart hardened Jews to Asia Minor and Italy with its much more receptive Gentiles.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Deuteronomy 18:15-18a* "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." The LORD said to me: 'What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.'"

**Matthew 17:10-13** The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.<sup>13</sup> 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.

**Mark 9:11-13** And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

This conversation took place as they were coming off the top of the mountain. They understood that they had just seen Elijah and that raised a question in their minds. Elijah was a famous personality in the Old Testament prophecies about the future of Israel. All kinds of speculations had arisen out of the following statement at the end of Micah, the last book of prophecy in the Old Testament:

Micah 4:5-6 “See, I (*the LORD*) 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.”

Unfortunately, the Jews didn’t understand about the two Advents of the Messiah. The first encompassed His Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection. The second included His Reign which would be preceded by the Great Tribulation which would end with the great final battle often called “Armageddon.” The Jewish teachers had taken the verse in Micah and decided that it meant that Elijah would come before the Messiah. Unfortunately, they decided it meant that he was the unnamed prophet spoken of in the Malachi prophecy below:

Malachi 3:1 “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,”<sup>14</sup> says the LORD Almighty.

Yet Jesus had earlier made it clear that the unnamed prophet in Malachi was John the Baptist:

---

<sup>13</sup> *The question is what exactly does Elijah restore? Elijah is one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3. He comes after the rapture of the Church and restores the Testimony of the Word!*

<sup>14</sup> *Quoted in Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27.*

Matthew 11:7a, 10 “As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: -- This is the one about whom it is written: ‘I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’”<sup>15</sup>

The Jewish teachers had also taken the verse in Isaiah about the Messiah and taught that the unnamed prophet there was Elijah:

Isaiah 40:3-5 The voice of him that cries in the wilderness,<sup>16</sup> Prepare <sup>17</sup> the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway <sup>18</sup> for our God. <sup>19</sup> Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.<sup>20</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,<sup>21</sup> and all mankind together will see it.”

John himself had taught that he was that prophet:

John 1:21-23 “They asked him (*John the Baptist*), ‘Then who are you? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’<sup>22</sup> He answered, ‘No.’ Finally they said, ‘Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

This explains the unwarranted confusion in minds of the three disciples. They had been taught one way for most of their lives and hadn’t really registered the correction of that teaching by both Jesus and John. So, what does Micah really say about the Latter Days ministry of Elijah? Let’s look at the passage again:

---

<sup>15</sup> Also see Luke 7:27.

<sup>16</sup> This is clearly talking about John the Baptist, not Elijah. Elijah will preach in Jerusalem as one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3. John the Baptist indeed always preached in the desert which was the Jordan River valley below the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 3:1, 11:7, Mark 1:4, John 3:3).

<sup>17</sup> Remember, there are no punctuation marks in the Hebrew. I have substituted the preferred translation from the KJV for verse 3 which recognizes this fact and which I prefer.

<sup>18</sup> John the Baptist baptized the Lord at the place that the main highway from the east crossed the Jordan River in the wilderness (desert) that is the south Jordan River valley.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, John 1:23. There, the Gospels make it clear that this is speaking of John the Baptist.

<sup>20</sup> This poetically describes the ministry of John the Baptist. He was to remove the obstacles that religion and the world had built between the minds of the people and the truth of God’s plan for His Messiah.

<sup>21</sup> That is, in the person of Jesus Christ, not because of the power of God, but because of His love.

<sup>22</sup> Refers to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:17-19

Micah 4:5-6 “See, I (*the LORD*) 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.”

The “great and dreadful day of the LORD” is the end of the Great Tribulation. Before that day would come, Elijah would come to testify and be a witness to the people of Israel. He will be one of the two witnesses raised up at the beginning of the seven-year Great Tribulation:

Revelation 11:3-12 “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees <sup>23</sup> and the two lampstands <sup>24</sup> that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss <sup>25</sup> will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.”

The other of the two prophets will be Moses, but that is the subject for a different time in the study of Revelation.

---

<sup>23</sup> See Zechariah 4:3, 4:11. Also, the designation of Moses and Elijah as olive trees might indicate that their testimony will be given on the Mt. of Olives and that is where they will ascend from after their resurrection, just as the Lord did.

<sup>24</sup> Although they are only mentioned as Olive trees in Zechariah, their mention as lampstands speaks of their function as witnesses during the time of the Tribulation when the seven lamps of the Church’s witness have been removed by the Rapture.

<sup>25</sup> The fallen angel of the abyss, Abaddon/Apollyon (destruction). See Revelation 9:1.