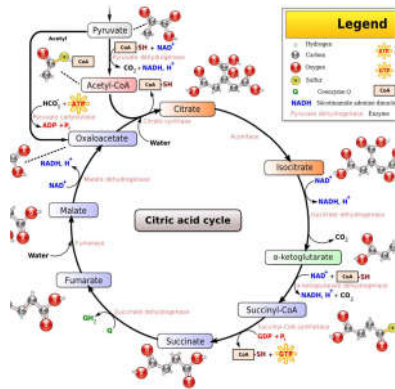


# PROCESSING THE TRANSFIGURATION

Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; Luke 9:36  
Yeshua §89

As a biology major I spent many long nights in front of the lab blackboard memorizing such things as the Krebs's cycle. The Krebs's cycle is a series of chemical reactions that eventually produces ATP, the molecule that powers our cells. As you can imagine, it was a challenge to memorize the various



compounds and the sequence of the reaction.

Many of us feel that same challenge when it comes to end time events. It's hard to keep track of all the things that are going to happen and in what sequence.

The disciples were challenged as well. The sequence of end time events taught them by their rabbis wasn't squaring with the sequence Jesus was teaching them.

As we see in this episode of *Yeshua Messiah King*, the disciples were trying to figure it out.

We pick up the story in Matthew 17:9

*MATTHEW 17:9-13 (ESV)*

*9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 11 He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.*

On the way down the mountain Jesus cautioned the disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man was raised from the dead.

*MATTHEW 9:9-10 (ESV)*

- Part 1. The Coming of the King
- Part 2. The Authentication of the King
- Part 3. The Controversy over the King
- Part 4. The Training of the Twelve by the King
  - **Processing the Transfiguration**
- Part 5. The Opposition to the King:
- Part 6. The Preparation of the Disciples by the King
- Part 7. The Official Presentation of the King
- Part 8. The Preparation for the Death of the King
- Part 9. The Trial of the King:
- Part 10. The Death of the King
- Part 11. The Resurrection and the Ascension of the King
- Part 12. The Sequels

*9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead."*

Mark tells us that the disciples were not sure of what He meant by "raised from the dead," even though prior to the Transfiguration He had predicted His death (16:21), and Peter had protested the death (16:22).

*MARK 9:9-10 (ESV)*

*And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.*

Why did Jesus caution the disciples not to talk about the Transfiguration until after His resurrection?

Jesus may have been concerned that news of the Transfiguration would be misunderstood as the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom (as did Peter) His followers might then attempt to enthrone Him before He went up to Jerusalem to die for their sins. Not until after His death, burial and resurrection were the disciples to reveal their experience on the mountain. The resurrection would reinforce what the Transfiguration declared; that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah.

The disciples were struggling to square what they had been taught about end times with what Jesus was teaching them about end times. The disciples were taught that at the end of this age there would come a day of judgment called the Day of the Lord or the Day of Jehovah, when God would enter into judgment with all the nations of the earth. With the nations of the earth purged and subdued, the Messianic Kingdom would be established. According to Malachi 4:5-6, *before the Day of the Lord, Elijah the Prophet will come to Israel and bring spiritual revival.*

*MALACHI 4:5-6 (ESV)*

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

The sequence of end time events in the minds of the disciples was:

Elijah > Messiah > Day of the Lord > Messianic Kingdom

What had they just experienced on the mountain that might have reinforced their timeline?

Elijah > Jesus/Messiah

What they had experienced seemed to track with what they had been taught. But now Jesus has begun talking about going to Jerusalem to die and rise again; that wasn't in their sequence of end-time events. That's why they asked Jesus the question about Elijah.

*MATTHEW 17:10 (ESV)*

*And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?"*

I believe Peter, James and John were working hard to understand these things, but there might have been a bit of a challenge in their question based on Jesus' response. First, Jesus affirmed that in the future, Elijah will come before the Day of the Lord and the Messianic Kingdom.

*MATTHEW 17:11 (ESV)*

*He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.*

Second, Jesus reminds His disciples of the Old Testament prophecies revealing the sufferings of the Messiah, something they are not accounting for in their sequence of end-time events. Mark records this part of our Lord's response:

*MARK 9:12 (ESV)*

*And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?"*

If the prophecy concerning Elijah will be fulfilled then certainly the prophecies concerning Messiah's sufferings will be fulfilled. And more than that, Jesus' point is that the sufferings of the Messiah will be fulfilled *before the coming of Elijah*. Jesus must suffer the cross before He wears the crown.

The resolution to the sequence of end-time events is the two comings of Jesus which the disciples did not understand. The sufferings of the cross will be accomplished in Jesus' first coming. The coming of Elijah, the Day of the Lord and the crown of the Messianic Kingdom will be accomplished in Jesus' second coming.

The reality of two comings is the key to understanding Jesus' third response to the disciples' question about Elijah. According to Jesus, Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist.

*MATTHEW 17:12-13 (ESV)*

*But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.*

What this shows is that Jesus' offer of the Messianic Kingdom *to that generation* was genuine. If that generation of Israel had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, John the Baptist would have fulfilled the ministry of Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6.

But the Day of Rejection happened (Matthew 12-13).

The spiritual leaders of Israel lead the nation to reject both Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus withdrew the offer of the Kingdom and pronounced judgment on that generation. On the Day of Rejection, Jesus began to speak in parables and began to reveal the mystery form the Kingdom will take between His first and second comings.

The promises and prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom were not canceled because of the Day of Rejection. Jesus confirmed the coming of the Messianic Kingdom by declaring that Elijah must come first (followed by the Day of the Lord and the Messianic Kingdom). But these things will occur in conjunction with Jesus' second coming. That is the resolution to the disciples' confusion. At this point in their training, they did not understand that Jesus would come a second time to establish the Messianic Kingdom.

If that generation of Israel to whom Jesus offered the Kingdom had accepted Him, John the Baptist would have fulfilled the ministry of Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. The timeline would have been:

John the Baptist <sup>(spirit and power of Elijah)</sup> > Messiah <sup>(killed, resurrected)</sup> > Day of the Lord > Messianic Kingdom

But with the rejection and the delay of the Kingdom, the timeline became:

**First Coming:** John the Baptist (forerunner) > Messiah (killed, resurrected, ascended) > Church Age (mystery form of Kingdom).

**Second Coming:** Elijah > Day of the Lord (7-yr. Tribulation) > Messiah > Messianic Kingdom

Jesus was in the training phase with His disciples; it was a steep learning curve requiring them to unlearn some things they were taught and to relearn things revealed by Jesus. In this case, Jesus was working with His men to unlearn the sequence of end time events taught them by their rabbis and to relearn the sequence in light of the Day of Rejection and the delay of the Kingdom.

I want to stop a moment and ponder the significance of Jesus' statement about Elijah.

*MATTHEW 17:11 (ESV)*

*He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things."*

Notice Jesus spoke in the future tense, *and he will restore all things*. This is a clear statement by our Lord that Malachi 4:5-6 will be fulfilled in the future. This is an ironclad proof from our Lord that the Day of the Lord is coming followed by the Messianic Kingdom. Consider all of Malachi 4:

*MALACHI 4 (ESV)*

*1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts."*

*4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel."*

*5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

The Day of the Lord followed by the Messianic Kingdom. This is exactly what the book of Revelation reveals: the seven-year Tribulation followed by the Millennial Kingdom!

To deny the Tribulation and Messianic/Millennial Kingdom, as do all the mainline Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church, is to reject Jesus' clear, literal

declaration that Elijah will come first and fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 4 which includes the Day of the Lord and the Messianic Kingdom.

This episode also engages us in the profound mystery and reality of divine omniscience and human accountability. Jesus clearly indicated that if that generation of Israel to whom Jesus offered the Kingdom had received Him, John the Baptist would have fulfilled the ministry of Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. That was a very real possibility. And, because of their rejection, that generation brought upon itself divine judgment in the form of the Roman conquest of 70 A.D. In other words, that generation was held accountable for its rejection of Jesus. They had the very real option of accepting Jesus and were held accountable for their rejection even though God knew what they would do. In God's omniscience and foreknowledge, He knew that that generation of Israel would reject the Messiah; that's the theme of Isaiah 53 written 7 centuries prior. Yet they were held accountable for their decision.

There is mystery here that we must accept.

Many people reason that God knows all things because He decrees all things. This is what is called *hard determinism*. Good people hold to *hard determinism*. My difficulty with hard determinism is that it denies the reality of the human will.

Other people reason that if God knows all things, He is unjust to hold human beings accountable for their deeds. This objection assumes hard determinism. But as we see in this episode, God knew Israel would reject (Isaiah 53) and He held Israel to account (Matt. 12:31-42).

God foreknows all things; He knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning. But He knows in such a way that He does not violate human free will. Therefore, He is just in holding us accountable to His moral standards.

We would be wise then, to both worship God and be awed by His omniscience and live as those who are going to give account for our service to the Lord Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).