

Special Edition

**A Rebuttal To Daniel Harper's Doubts And Import In His Recent
Open Letter on 25 October 2018 AD**

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While some brethren have done excellent work in rebutting the allegations from the Open Letter of the Church of Judas Iscariot, I will confine myself to the contentious issue of the Second Elijah that is reiterated and emphasised in the Open Letter of Daniel Harper.

Daniel Harper's principal assertion and substantiation on the prophecy concerning the coming of Elias is that it had been fulfilled fully and only in the person of John the Baptist.

- (1) If John the Baptist is the only and ultimate fulfilment of the coming of Elias, how had John the Baptist "*restoreth all things*" (Matthew 17:11)? What were the doctrines that the Bible has recorded that John the Baptist restored to biblical soundness? What has been recorded for us is that - John the Baptist had a brief period of ministry before his martyrdom. His message was recorded in the books of the Gospel to be one of repentance. He served his niche as the "voice in the wilderness" to prepare the people for the first advent of Christ. He was the minister of the Moral Law to point sinners to Christ. Given his short ministry and the brief recording of his ministry, can you explain how John the Baptist has "restore all things"?
- (2) One of the main characteristics of biblical prophecies is that it has different strands of fulfilment. In insisting it has only one strand of fulfilment just reflects one's naivety. I have no problem accepting that John the Baptist is the principal fulfilment to the prophecy of "Elias to come" as our Lord clearly affirmed. Nonetheless, the Lord Himself had implied tacitly there could be other sense of fulfilment (Matthew 17:11-12). But the Lord did not further elaborate on the other fulfilment as the context (in the discourse between Him and His three disciples) did not warrant that. The harbinger in the first advent of the Lord was already a controversy. The Lord's focus in Matthew 17 was to tell the disciples that the coming of John the Baptist was a fulfilment, that even the disciples "*knew it not*" and the Jews at that time had not believed John the Baptist but persecuted him (v12).
- (3) From the prophecy of Malachi 4, "*the Elias to come*" is to "*turn the heart of the fathers to their children and the heart of the children to their fathers*". If this text is to be explicated only in the social and biological sense, it would fall woefully short of its biblical depths and richness. The fullness of it is achieved when one interprets it from the spiritual sense. Hence the 'fathers' has reference to spiritual forebears and 'children' as their spiritual offspring.
If the fulfilment of "Elias to come" is confined to John the Baptist, then the spiritual forebears can only be restricted to the patriarchs, prophets, priests, judges, godly kings and eminent saints in the Old Testament. How about the holy apostles, the faithful martyrs, the conservative Church Fathers, the pre-Reformers, the Protestant Reformers, the quintessential Puritans and the authentic ecclesiological Revivalists in the New Testament? Are they not worthy to be honoured in the hall of fame of our spiritual fathers where many workers of iniquities in our days malign and vilify?
- (4) If a harbinger or forerunner was sent for Christ's First Coming, is it so far-fetched that another be sent for His Second Coming? Why is there a necessity of a harbinger? The harbinger is given the

name “Elias” because it has to do with the ministry of Elijah the Tishbite and the context of apostasy among the covenanted people of God. Elijah was raised of God to fight against the hordes of the prophets of grove and Baal.

In the context of the spiritual adversaries against the visible Church, the Holy Ghost spoke through the mouth of Isaiah the prophet that “*When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him*” (Isaiah 59:11). There is an underlining biblical concept on the connection between heresy and the standard which the Spirit of God lifts up. Whenever there is a fresh torrent of apostasy, the Spirit of God will counter it with His standard. Throughout the course of ecclesiological history, there had been different deluges of apostasy directed against the Church of Christ. But the Spirit of God had time and again raised up His standard to combat these evil inundations. Just to list a few main ones; in the pristine Church during the first century, when Legalism was contaminating the purity of the Gospel of grace, the Holy Ghost raised Paul the final apostle to state and expound the doctrine of Justification By Faith. In the second and third centuries, when the Arian heresy was fiercely assailing the Church, the Spirit of God raised up the early Church Fathers to expose and refute it and salvage the Church. From their battle of faith came the formulation of the Nicene Creed (AD 381) and Athanasian Creed (AD 500). When the Church entered the period of Dark Ages for more than a millennium, the Spirit of God eventually raised up the Reformers to bring about the Protestant Reformation to liberate His people from the yoke of Papacy and the Mother of Harlots. When the evil deluge of Arminian heresy inundated the Church by the close of the 16th Century, the Holy Spirit raised up the Puritans to underscore what Experimental Calvinism is. Consider now our present context and time: Satan is loosed; the evil trinity is confederating and vehemently attacking the visible Church (Revelation 16). Will not the Spirit of God lift up a standard against them? Elijah the Tishbite of old was raised in the time when Israel was at the height of apostasy. The chief purpose for which God raised up Elijah the Tishbite in the darkest period of apostate Israel was to fight against the swarm of false prophets and turn the hearts of His people back to Him. It is not inconceivable that “the Elias to come” is to engage in the battle of the greatest apostasy of all times before the Second Advent of Christ.

- (5) Picking up from Point 4, the ‘standard’ that the Spirit of God lifts up is a direct response towards the spiritual adversaries and their damnable heresies. I like to add on an inference. The ‘standard’ is always the special servants of Christ called, separated, equipped, illumined and anointed by the Spirit of God at different epochs of ecclesiological history. Is it incredulous to claim that the chosen servants of Christ that came later received more light and illumination than the earlier ones? Will one dispute that the Protestant Reformers like John Calvin received more illumination of the truth than the early Church Fathers? Will one doubt that the Puritans who came after the Protestant Reformers are endowed with more light than their predecessors? The Spirit of God had raised the Puritans to build on the works of the eminent Protestants so that there were further doctrinal restoration and reformation in the visible Church. The formulation of The Westminster Confession of Faith (AD 1646) is a classic proof of it. We felt indebted to their valuable contributions especially in the field of Experimental Calvinism and Pastoral Theology.

Two factors to consider:

- (a) The authentic servants of Christ that came later have the benefit of spiritual hindsight.
- (b) Every epoch has its different ecclesiological contexts, problems, snares and heresies. The proof is Christ's Addresses to the 7 Churches (Revelation 2-3). Christ Yeshua has to equip His servants through the illumination of the Holy Ghost from the Holy Scriptures in different epochs of time to counter doctrinal and pastoral problems and damnable heresies. In our time and age, can we turn to the works of the Protestant Reformers and Puritans to deal with the heresies of Pentecostalism, Dispensationalism, Reformed Pentecostalism, and other contemporary heresies? The Puritans had written voluminously on the positive aspect of Experimental Religion especially in the field of Pneumatology. But what about the negative aspect of Experimental Religion brought about by the workings of the evil trinity? Can we glean sufficiently from the writings of the Puritans to deal with it? Where is the standard the Spirit of God has lifted up in our days? Who do you look to after the demise of the likes of Jonathan Edwards? The renowned Benjamin Warfield? Or Gresham Machen who did not believe the Reformers' fundamental assertion that "Papacy is the Antichrist" and were firm supporters of the revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith in AD 1903? Or the late Martyn Lloyd-Jones who endorsed the Pentecostal Movement? Or the Scottish or American Presbyterians who are more keen to preserve their institutionalism and promote their Presbyterian polity and Post-Millennial Eschatology? Or do you look to the leading proponents of New Calvinism in the likes of John Piper, a staunch Continuationist who believes supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit still exist or Timothy Keller who does not believe in the six literal days of Creation or Paul Washer who does not practise the Regulative Principle of Public Worship? Do we turn to these New Calvinists, most of whom are against the puritanical doctrine of Preparatory Work?

To conclude, I have shown that firstly, John the Baptist does not fulfil fully the biblical characteristics of "the Elias to come". To allege and maintain John the Baptist is the only and complete sense of fulfilment is fallacious. Secondly, it is not improbable to believe that the Spirit of God will lift up a standard against the final assail of the spiritual foes of the visible Church. The contents in our Bible Reading Calendar have cast sufficient light on what are the chief doctrines and practices that have been restored under the ministry of Mr. Elijah Thomas Chacko. Nonetheless, determining who is the standard lifted up by the Spirit of God in our days is ultimately a matter of spiritual illumination by the Spirit of God and should be left to everyone's conscience.

I like to acknowledge that most of the things I have penned are what I have been taught and enlightened under the tutelage of Mr. Elijah Thomas Chacko all these years. They are also matters that I am convicted of.

Zephaniah Soh

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