

Malachi Chapter 3

Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

“My messenger” plays on the name of the prophet. It does not refer to a heavenly messenger. Neither does it refer to a spiritual being nor to the Angel of the Lord, but to an earthly messenger of the Lord, the same one called Elijah (in 4:5-6). This clause is quoted a number of times in the New Testament and is uniformly applied to John the Baptist, the only prophet besides Jesus who was the subject of prophecy.

Certainly, we know that John the Baptist was a messenger sent to proclaim the coming of the Lord.

It was a custom of the Near Eastern kings to send messengers before them to remove obstacles to their visit. Employing a wordplay on the name of Malachi, (the Lord’s messenger), the Lord Himself announced He was sending one who would “clear the way before Me.” This is the voice of one “calling” in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3; and Elijah of 4:5), who comes before the Lord.

Luke 7:26-28 "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." "This is [he], of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

To come suddenly does not mean immediately, but instantaneously and unannounced. It usually refers to a calamitous event. When all the preparations are completed, the Lord will come, not to Zerubbabel’s temple, nor in partial fulfillment to Herod’s temple, but finally to that millennial temple which Ezekiel describes (in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48). The unexpected coming of Christ, partially fulfilled at His first advent, will be accomplished in full at His second coming.

Jesus was brought to the temple on the 40th day to dedicate Him. Simeon and Anna, both old in years, recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah, when He was brought to the temple. Jesus was Emmanuel (God with us). He is the Mediator of the New Testament. John is the messenger to proclaim Jesus, and Jesus is the messenger to proclaim God.

“Messenger of the covenant”: Probably not the messenger just mentioned. Rather, because this Messenger “will come to His temple,” it is most likely a reference to the Lord Himself, the One who has the authority to reward or judge His people on the basis of their faithfulness to His covenant with them. The title may reflect earlier Old Testament references to His “angel,” which is literally “messenger”.

“In whom you delight”: This is likely sarcastic. These sinful people were not delighting in God then, nor would they when He came in judgment on their hypocritical worship and cleansed the temple. All the ungodly will be destroyed at His return (Rev. 19:11).

Malachi 3:2 "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he [is] like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:"

The coming of Jesus (Messiah), at His physical birth did not bring peace. Families were separated, because some believed He was Messiah, and others did not believe. This will have a greater fulfillment, when He comes as King and Lord.

The sheep will be separated from the goats at that time. The refiner's fire and the fullers soap both get rid of the dross. The Christians are tried as by fire, to see what they are made of. They are washed and made white as snow, when they receive the righteousness of Christ.

Instead of bringing rewards, His coming is likened to two purifying agents, fire to burn off dross and alkali to whiten, an indication of the true condition of their hearts. The fire will burn off the dross of iniquity; the soap will wash out the stain of sin. His coming will be one in which He removes all impurities. No one will escape this cleansing. Importantly, He will come purifying and cleansing, but not necessarily destroying.

Malachi 3:3 "And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

This is the fire that burns up all the dross, and leaves the pure silver (redeemed).

1 Corinthians 3:13 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

2 Timothy 2:20-21 "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work."

The fire of God takes out all of the evil, so the vessel will be pure.

Since the Levitical priests were instrumental in leading the nation astray and a new group of pure priests was required for the work of the millennial temple, the cleansing of the nation would begin with them. Then they can “present to the Lord” what is righteous as called for in the millennial sacrifices.

“Offering in righteousness:” Given from cleansed hearts in a right condition before God, their offerings will be “in righteousness.” These millennial sacrifices will be a memorial for the redeemed nation of Israel, commemorating Christ's sacrifice at Calvary.

Malachi 3:4 "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

Only after the priesthood is purged and when the people are cleansed, will they be able to offer what pleases the Lord as in the days of Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:8-10); Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30:26); Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:18); and Ezra (Neh. 8:7).

After the sin is purged away, then God will accept their offerings from a pure heart.

Malachi 3:5 "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in [his] wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger [from his right], and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts."

What is a refining process for the remnant of repentant Jews who acknowledge their Messiah, preparing them to enter the kingdom and worship in the millennial temple, will be for others utter destruction. All the iniquitous behavior in the verse are evidence that these are people who "do not fear" God.

They had asked, "where is the judgment?" Now, He tells them, it will extend to all of the people, as well as to the priests. They had asked a question and here is the answer, "I will come near to you to judgment".

God judges His own family first. Then, He judges the sinful of this world. The sins, listed above, are those He really hates.

Notice, He starts with sorcerers. These were pertaining to magic and witchcraft. Many of these sins, they had learned from their heathen neighbors. The sins, listed here, are sins against God and their neighbors.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind," "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

There is no need to explain each sin. It is enough to know, that these sins will keep us out of heaven.

Verses 6-12: These verses form a parenthesis between two messages concerning God's justice and judgment. What the Jews have labeled as God's injustice is not God's being unrighteous or unfair, but His being mercifully patient. A genuine call of repentance is then issued (verse 7), and the fruit of it described (verse 10).

Malachi 3:6 "For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Contrary to God's having become unjust and thus not acting on behalf of Israel, in light of their history of rebellion, Israel's existence was due only to the Lord's unchanging character and unswerving commitment to His covenant promise with the patriarchs.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never changes. The things that were a sin in the sight of God 2000 years ago are a sin now. The sons of Jacob are not consumed, because of God's covenant.

God not only is the same in judgment, He stays the same in the calling we have on our lives. When God calls you, He never changes His mind about wanting you for that purpose.

Malachi 3:7 "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept [them]. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

If you study the wilderness wanderings, you will discover how unfaithful they really have been. God has forgiven them over and over. The Ten Commandments that God spoke from the mountain to the people before Moses went to the mountain to get them engraved on stone, was spoken aloud to them all.

They broke the very first commandment, when they built the golden calf. God forgave them, and started them out again. It was their lack of faith that caused them to wander 40 years. They were disobedient, and God let the faithless die off, before He allowed their descendants to go into the Promised Land.

They may experience God's goodness again, and be blessed, if they repent. In view of the Lord's coming to refine and purify, Malachi presents a powerful challenge to repent.

Yet, apparently unwilling to admit the sins on their part needing repentance, the invitation to return is met with another cynical query, asking how they can return when, from their perspective, they haven't left, God has. The truth was God hasn't changed and neither have they; He was as righteous as ever and they as unrighteous.

I could give many more examples. Even in this lesson, God wants them to repent, and turn to Him. They are so calloused with sin, they are not even aware they have sinned.

Verses 8-12: In answer to their query about how they have deviated from God's way and need to return, the prophet picked an illustration of their spiritual defection that is very visible and undeniable. The Lord pointed out that they had not brought the required tithes and offerings, those used to fund the theocracy by sustaining the Levites, the national religious festivals, and the poor.

But in not paying their taxes and so robbing God, they had robbed themselves, for God had withheld His blessing.

Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

The tithes (one tenth), belongs to God. We have not given anything really, until we have paid our tithes. Offerings are over and above tithes. We see from this, that they had failed to pay their tithes. That is like robbing God.

Here was a glaring, widespread sin; they had stolen from God what was rightfully His by divine law.

Malachi 3:9 "Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation."

You cannot multiply something, until there is something to start with. It seems the whole nation had stopped giving to God.

Verses 10-12: God says prove or test me. Contrary to the normal biblical pattern, the people were invited to put God to the test. If they would honor Him by reversing their robbery and in a show of true repentance bring what He required, He would shower them with excessive abundance, protect them from locusts, and they would be the delight of the nations.

Malachi 3:10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that [there shall] not [be room] enough [to receive it]."

When tithes were unpaid, the priests were deprived and had to give up their ministry and to begin farming. The nation's religious life was hindered and the poor and strangers suffered. But, the real iniquity was that such disobedience was robbing God, who was the true King of Israel.

A "storehouse" was a room in the temple to store the tithes of crops and animals brought by the people. This was the temple treasury. One of Nehemiah's tasks was to ensure that the supplies needed for support of the temple ministry did not fall as it had during his absence.

God has challenged them. God will multiply all that they give Him so abundantly, that they will not have enough containers to hold it all. I have seen this work in my own life.

It is not just money that we should tithe. If we give God His tithe of our time, we will find we get much more done in the time left, than we could have with all the time. Christians believe in firstfruits giving. We give in anticipation, not one tenth of what we have already made.

Malachi 3:11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."

The devourer is the locusts God will protect them from to keep their land from becoming desolate.

Isaiah 62:4-5 "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." "For [as] a young man marrieth a virgin, [so] shall thy sons marry thee: and [as] the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, [so] shall thy God rejoice over thee."

The blessings God bestows on the one who gives abundantly to God's work are not just money. God blesses everything they put their hand to. God sends the rain at the proper time and the sun. Their crops grow abundantly.

Malachi 3:12 "And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

All nations will realize that they are blessed of God. They will be the delight of the nations.

Malachi 3:13 "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken [so much] against thee?"

Again, they have committed so much sin, that they are not aware they have sinned against God.

Romans 9:20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed [it], Why hast thou made me thus?"

Jude 1:15 "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard [speeches] which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

These sinful priests and people had not just questioned God (2:17), violated God's covenant (2:11), disobeyed His laws (2:9), defiled His altar (1:7, 12), and despised His name (1:6), but had openly spoken against Him. In spite of what was promised (verses 10-12), the people complained that obedience to God's law brought no rewards (verse 14). Only the proud and wicked prospered, they said (verse 15).

Malachi 3:14 "Ye have said, It [is] vain to serve God: and what profit [is it] that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"

Now we see the statement they have made against God. They are looking for a reward for the things they have done for God. This in itself is a bad attitude. They were doing good to get something in return, not to please God.

The people pretended to grieve for their sins, walking around in sackcloth or even with blackened faces to convey apparent sorrow, then complained that all that religious activity was useless. (see Isaiah 58:5; Joel 2:13; Matthew 6:16-18).

Malachi 3:15 "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, [they that] tempt God are even delivered."

God had spoken over and over about His dislike for those who murmured. This is almost as if, they are jealous of the sinners. This reminds me of Jonah, who thought God should not save Nineveh.

“Tempt God”: The proud and wicked, with apparent impurity, put God to the test by seeing how far they could go in doing evil. (In verse 10), God invited His people to see how far He would go in blessing.

Malachi 3:16 "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard [it], and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."

Malachi ended with an encouraging word for the faithful remnant.

There was a group who feared and revered God. This did not go unnoticed. Those who remembered God will be remembered on judgment day, when they stand before the Lord. When He opens the books, He will say, "Well done, thy good and faithful servant".

In the hearts of the true and righteous worshipers who loved and served God in Israel, all the talk of judgment produced fear that they too, might be swept away when God’s wrath came. To encourage the godly remnant, Malachi noted how the Lord had not forgotten those “who fear the Lord and who esteem His name.”

The book may be a reference to the “book of life” in which the names of God’s children are recorded. The Persians had a custom of recording in a book all acts of a person that should be rewarded in the future. The psalmist knew of such a book as well (Psalm 56:8).

Malachi 3:17 "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

“Mine” is emphatic in the Hebrew. The godly remnant will belong to Him and will be His special treasure, or “possession”. In the midst of judgment, He will spare them.

We Christians, have been bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus. We belong to Jesus. We have taken on the name of Christ (Christian).

Matthew 25:34 " Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"

John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:" "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand." "My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand."

Malachi 3:18 "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

The distinction between the godly and ungodly will be evident for all when the righteous Lord is present, ruling from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Romans 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

The following Scripture tells what happens to the righteous (wheat), and what happens to the chaff (wicked).

Matthew 3:12 "Whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Malachi Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who was the messenger in verse 1?
2. Jesus was brought to the temple on the _____ day to dedicate.
3. Who were the two, in the temple, that recognized Jesus as Messiah?
4. What does "Emmanuel" mean?
5. He is the _____ of the New Testament.
6. Why were families separated over Jesus?
7. The Christians are tried as of by _____.
8. What are the vessels of honor in the house?
9. When shall Jerusalem's and Judah's offerings be pleasant unto the LORD?
10. What evil people are mentioned, in verse 5, that God will judge swiftly?
11. What question had they asked God?
12. Who does God judge first?

13. Where did they learn this evil?
14. God is the same yesterday, _____, and _____.
15. Why are the sons of Jacob not consumed?
16. What do you find about the sons of Jacob, if you study the wilderness wanderings?
17. What caused them to have to wander 40 years?
18. Who did God allow to go into the Promised Land?
19. Why do they not realize they have sinned?
20. How can you rob God?
21. Why are they cursed with a curse?
22. How does the Christian's giving differ from tithing?
23. What blessings do they receive, other than multiplying their gift from God?
24. All nations shall call you _____.
25. They had said it was _____ to serve God.
26. How did God feel about murmuring?
27. What will God say to those who work for Him?
28. What happens to the righteous at judgment?
29. What happens to the chaff?