

**Message #6****Malachi 2:17-3:7**

When the people in Malachi's day went to the Temple, I am totally convinced they had some religious experience. They left feeling good about themselves. They did not leave being right with God. They did not leave with hearts that had really changed. In fact, the same worship that made them feel good about themselves was worthless in God's sight and should be shut down.

So far in Malachi, God has named 19 things that these people were doing that angered Him. These people were blind to their own sin and they thought that God should be fully blessing them. They had been back in the land with the Temple up for 70-80 years but that kingdom had not yet been established and they delusionally thought they deserved it.

Here they were calling evil good and good evil (2:17). Isaiah describes it in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness." That is what these people were doing and then were saying, "How have we wearied God?"

Then they were complaining about God's justice. They were asking "Where is the God of justice?" (Mal. 2:17). As one commentator said, it was "outlandish." Here they were pathetically living life in rebellion against God and then because they are not experiencing millennial bliss, they are blaming God and saying where is the God of justice.

These people were living lives of sin and then saying, "Where are you God? Why aren't you blessing us? How come things aren't good? Why aren't you just and letting the evil powers still control us? Why don't we have our Kingdom? Why hasn't God given us all our land and turned this into a land flowing with milk and honey?"

Their thinking is here we are and the Temple is up and we are going to worship services regularly so why hasn't a God of justice blessed us with all those blessings.

There are many today who go to church and have exactly the same attitude. Their hearts are really not right with God and behind the scenes they are living loose and sinful lives and then they look at things and say, "Where are you God? Why are you letting the godless people get away with it? Where is your justice?" God says you take a look at yourself.

So God says here okay, you want Me, you will get Me. I will eventually come and do everything I said I would do but when I do come for many of you, it will not be a happy moment.

**IN VIEW OF THE PATHETIC, PRESENT FOOLISH CONDITION OF HIS OWN PEOPLE, GOD REVEALS THAT HE WILL COME AND HE WILL JUDGE.**

Most people don't have a clue as to how intimidating it will be to face Jesus Christ. They only think about Him as a loving Savior. They loosely say we want Him to come get us, but do you really want that? When He comes there will be a judgment. Are you ready for that?

**For one not right with God, the coming of Jesus Christ is a major threat if one is thinking right.**

In this section there are five main prophetic predictions that have to do with the first and second coming of Jesus Christ:

**PREDICTION #1** – God will send His messenger. **3:1a**

This verse is a very famous verse. It is quoted in the New Testament in several passages: Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27. **All of those references specifically say that the messenger to whom this refers is John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ.**

Now the thing that established John as this forerunner was 1) His preaching of repentance; 2) What was called “John’s baptism” (Luke 7:29).

John had the responsibility to go into Israel and preach repentance to Israel and baptize Jewish people in the Jordan river as a specific statement that the Justice of God and the Messiah of God had finally come to Jerusalem (Luke 7:29). **According to Matthew 11:10-12, this clearly had to do with Israel’s kingdom.**

By the way, John was not a Baptist, as some allege. His specific prophetic assignment was to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ to the nation Israel. His baptizing work was a Jewish ceremonial statement in which a Jew admitted he was a sinner and did not have the righteousness necessary to get into the Kingdom.

Now carefully notice the pronouns in Malachi 3:1: “My” messenger, clear the way before “Me.” So his responsibility and ministry will be to be God’s messenger and to clear the way before God comes. So when Jesus Christ shows up as the One John announces, it proves Jesus Christ is God.

Notice a member of the Godhead is predicted to come and John the Baptist will clear the way for Him. Jesus Himself quotes this very verse and specifically connects John to Him (Matt. 11:10); Mark specifically connects this verse to Jesus and John (Mark 1:2). Luke also does the very same thing (Luke 1:76).

**Fact #1** - God is the One who will be sending the messenger.

God would literally send His messenger, but not immediately. In a time chronology, God would not send His messenger for the next 450 years. But He did send him literally just as He predicted here.

**Fact #2** - The messenger will clear the way before God.

The verb “clear the way” is the idea of making the path clear and free from the debris and obstacles that would prevent obstacles from being removed. He would clear the way by preaching and giving knowledge to Israel about the way of salvation and the way of the forgiveness of sins (Luke 1:76-77).

According to Isaiah 40, he would come out of the wilderness and clear the way by his voice (Is. 40:3). He would come preaching a message that said, “Repent, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:1-3).

This, of course, would all be preparatory to the actual presence of Jesus Christ coming and dying on a cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

So whomever this messenger is and whenever this messenger shows up, he will be a prelude to God being there in Person. He will clearly identify Him as being the Messiah and Lord. He will declare the way of salvation and the way of forgiveness. He will pave the way.

**PREDICTION #2** – The Lord will come suddenly to His Temple. **3:1b-2**

The adverb “suddenly” is one that means He will come unexpectedly. The Jews won’t be expecting it. We think this has a double prophetic application not just to Christ’s first coming, which was a surprise, but by the things listed to His second coming.

Don’t overlook the fact that the noun “Lord” is Adonai and not LORD Jehovah. This is a clear prediction pertaining to Jesus Christ. Now there is an article “the” before the noun “Lord.” This construction always refers to God (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Is. 1:24; 3:1).

In Acts 2:36 we read, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ-this Jesus whom you crucified.” In I Corinthians 12:3 we read, “no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” In Philippians 2:11 we read, “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

So clearly when this text says the Lord will come to His Temple, it is a specific prediction that Jesus Christ, who is God, will come to His Temple. He is God the Son and He is sent there by God the Father. The natural assumption is the Temple will be standing and in existence.

Now it is stated that the people actually seek this One. Now what they are seeking and looking for is Kingdom Justice. They are not seeking God to have their sins forgiven; they are seeking Him because they want a just God to establish their kingdom.

The truth is, if God went specifically by justice, Israel would never have a Kingdom. You talk about fickle. These people are not right with God and yet they want Him to come as a God of Justice. They are involved in corrupt lives and sin and yet they want Him to come.

So here you have a bunch of God's people who aren't right with God, wanting Him to come so He says, okay I'll show up and come and who of you will be able to endure it? (v. 2).

What is stated at the end of **verse 2** is that when He does come, He will come with fiery judgment and He will come to clean things up like a bar of soap. Judging, cleansing and cleaning will be His initial meeting. So which of these people going to their worship services was ready for that? The answer was none of them.

This initial phase of judgment will not be one of rewarding and blessing. It will be a ministry of fire and soap.

Who will be able to stand before Him? They needed two things. They needed to be cleaned up by soap and they needed to be purified like a refiner.

We know from Zechariah 13:8-9, this refining business of refining Israel as gold and silver occurs in the second half of the Great Tribulation. God will bring 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Israel through it as a refined remnant. Now we know from Revelation that the only ones who can endure judgment are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

**PREDICTION #3** – The Lord will sit as a purifier of His priests. **3:3-4**

Stephen Miller, in his commentary, said, “Unfaithful priests will be removed” (*Malachi*, p. 356).

I don't think most ministers have a clue as to how serious it will be when they get before God. This will be a very intimidating judgment. God demands that His ministers be clean and pure. He is looking for fine-tuned quality. He wants righteousness in the lives of His ministers. Those ministers have made a living by taking the offerings of the people of God, but they were not leading the people in the true ways of God. Their lives were a disgrace.

Keep in mind these priests had become so loose and lax that they were offering to God offerings that did not please God and were not acceptable to God. These were priests talking about God's justice.

God's people didn't realize that when the Lord would come, He would come to refine them and purify them. He called them to repentance but they didn't even see the need to repent of anything. It is very clear from this text that a priest cannot possibly offer acceptable offerings to God if he is not clean. After Israel is cleansed she will again worship God and please God in an acceptable way.

**PREDICTION #4** – The Lord will sit as a judge. **3:5**

Judgment will come against Israel and it will come against the world. We get a glimpse of the kinds of things that God will judge when His final judgment comes.

There is some discussion over whether there are six sins mentioned or seven. Actually we see eight specific areas of judgment that are mentioned:

**(Area of Judgment #1) - He will judge sorcerers. 3:5a**

The word sorcerer (ksp) refers to witchcraft kinds of things and demonic kinds of things that include rituals and incantations. This will be a major feature of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 9:21).

Witches and sorcerers were supposed to be executed (Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:9-11). When Jesus Christ returns, He will forever execute them.

**(Area of Judgment #2) - He will judge adulterers. 3:5b**

Sexual immorality will be a key feature of the world just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It will be a major, dominant sin in the Great Tribulation (Rev. 9:21; 16:15; 18:9).

**(Area of Judgment #3) - He will judge those who are false witnesses. 3:5c**

Just before the Lord returns, in the Great Tribulation these sins will dominate. False testimony and false liars and deceivers will exist worldwide and when Christ comes back, He will burn them all.

**(Area of Judgment #4) - He will judge those who oppress employees. 3:5d**

The word “oppress” goes with the next three nouns. The word ashaq is one that means to oppress someone by defrauding them in an unjust way (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 660).

There were people being defrauded out of their wages. There were employers who were not taking care of their employees and were not dealing with them justly in the wages they owed them.

It is interesting that this judgment issue is put in the same context with witchcraft, adultery and liars.

**(Area of Judgment #5) - He will judge those who oppress the widow. 3:5e**

It is clear that widows were not being treated justly, but they were being defrauded. We suspect that the priests were taking more and more for themselves rather than helping to care for the widow.

**(Area of Judgment #6) - He will judge those who oppress the orphan. 3:5f**

The same was true of the orphan. They were being treated unjustly and being defrauded.

**(Area of Judgment #7)** - He will judge those who refuse to minister to the alien. **3:5g**

Aliens were not being dealt with justly. They are turned away from what is right and true.

**(Area of Judgment #8)** - He will judge those who do not fear God. **3:5h**

The truth is, when Jesus Christ did show up, Israel did not fear and reverence Him; they killed Him. This really becomes the key motive for turning away from evil.

**PREDICTION #5** – The Lord will return to His people and not consume His people. **3:6-7**

Notice that God refers to His people as “sons of Jacob.” Jacob was the liar, the trickster, the deceiver who was a crooked schemer. God purposely calls Israel by this title to show how corrupt she really is and to show she does not deserve what He will do for her.

**The reason for the survival of His own people is not due to their faithfulness, but due to His immutability.** God does not change. He has entered into a covenant agreement with Israel and He will fulfill what He has promised to give her. He will not change in that.

The reason why God will give Israel a Kingdom one day is not because she deserves it; but because He promised it.

Even though she deserves to be wiped off the face of the earth, she will not be because God does not change.

**Verse 7** says from the days of your fathers you have turned away from God and His word. You have not kept His word. You have not been serious about His word. God says but return to Me and I will return to you.