

The Silence
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Good morning, Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

In the book of Malachi, Israel had pretty well forsaken the Lord.

Oh, they were religious to whatever point it was profitable to them, but like many today, God's Word just didn't mean much to them.

If claiming to be a Christian, or a Jew in their case, would make you feel good or look good, great; but otherwise, their relationship was just not real.

They forsook real worship, they were robbing God of His tithes, they were speaking against the Lord and they were suffering the consequences of it.

The Lord told them in

Malachi 3:13-15

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

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?

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.

Like the world today, there is religion everywhere; but you may look long and hard to find those who genuinely fear and love the Lord.

Yet, praise God, there are a few!

Now, like then, those few that love Him tend to stick together.

The Lord goes on in verse 16 to say:

Malachi 3:16-18

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.

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.

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

To these, the Lord left a great promise and then the world heard no more from the Lord for the next 700 years.

Malachi 4:1-6

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Oh, I know that it is said that God was silent for the next 700 years, but I can assure you that God was not silent in the circles of those who loved and feared the Lord; just as He speaks every week to us as a people and daily to us individually.

700 years is a long time. 17 or 18 generations have gone by and most are now saying, "You all are nuts, He's not coming".

Then, sure as promised, Elijah shows up 6 months ahead of Jesus to prepare the way.

Luke 1:5-20

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

When verse 17 says that John shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, that is a lot more literal than you might think.

Elias, which is another spelling of Elijah, IS John the Baptist.

Matthew 17:10-13

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.**

12 **But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.**

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Elisabeth is now 6 months pregnant with John, and now a virgin, Elizabeth's cousin named Mary, gets a visit from this same angel, Gabriel.

Luke 1:26-37

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women.

29 And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Sometimes you've got to wonder about some of the things the Bible doesn't tell us; like maybe a conversation between Jesus and the Angel Gabriel, that might have taken place after Gabriel visited Zacharias.

"Ok, Gabriel, Mary is not going to understand how all this is possible when you tell her, either, but she is going to become my mother so I want you to be nice to her and don't go striking her dumb when she asks you about it!"

Just as surely as Jesus came 700 years after God told them He would come; we are told He is coming again.

It's been a long time since Jesus was here, over 2,000 years. But does that matter? 700 years or 2700 years; Jesus is coming, and it could be today!

When Jesus came the first time, it was an extraordinary day.

We read about it in Luke, Chapter 2:

Luke 2:1-18

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2 (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And **all they that heard *it* wondered** at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

It seems that news of the Messiah causes different reactions in different people:

I. Some wondered.

A. This great news about the Savior caused some to be curious.

1. Remember back before you were saved when you first began to be curious; do you remember wondering what all this was really about; whether it was real or not?

2. Maybe that is why you are one of our welcome guests here today; you really are curious.

3. Those shepherds went through the country round about praising God and telling everybody about what they had seen and experienced!

4. You would have thought that at this news, there would have been people lined up at the stable like a Black Friday Sale.

5. But as far as we know, the only other one who came was the little drummer boy.

6. I'm sure that must be in the Bible somewhere; they even wrote a song about it; I just haven't found it yet.

7. They wondered, but that's all that most of them ever did.

B. But you, you are more than just curious, at least you have come to hear more.

1. That kind of puts you in a special class.

2. You are not out there speaking against the Lord, but you are not yet one of those who love and fear Him, either.

3. That means that now you have to make a choice.

4. You can choose to seek Jesus and learn even more, or you can choose to remain just like the rest of the world.

As the story of Jesus' first coming unfolds before us, many wondered, but:

II. Some were troubled.

Matthew 2:1-5

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When **Herod the king** had heard *these things*, **he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

A. Herod - and all Jerusalem - was troubled over the coming of Jesus.

1. One morning a caravan pulls into Jerusalem that has been journeying for about 600 miles over mountains, crossing rivers, deserts and every kind of difficult terrain plus finding water, food and probably dealing with outlaws and bandits.

2. This is a royal caravan and would have been complete with camels, horses, armed soldiers and everything necessary for many months of travel.

3. This was not something you would see every day pulling up to the city gates.

B. When these wise men; likely kings in their own right, were received by Herod, they told him of their quest.

1. Why was he (and most of the population with him) so troubled?

2. Were they going to be invaded?

3. Was there a regime change about to occur?

4. Even though the Jews were in virtual slavery to Rome, they had become comfortable in their condition.

5. They were afraid of the unknown; maybe a little like America with Corona virus, election fraud and Lord only knows what is coming next.

C. Are you troubled at the thought of Jesus being your King? He is THE LORD after all.

1. Maybe you love your sin and you are afraid to give it up?
2. Before we are saved, we worry about giving up our sin, and then after we are saved, we would give almost anything it we could.
3. Maybe you just don't want somebody telling you how to live your life?
4. Maybe you are ok being religious but you are scared of allowing Jesus to save you and then change you into an entirely new creation.
5. What are you really afraid of?

Then there was that much smaller number:

III. Some that just had to come see it for themselves.

A. Who do we have so far that are more than just curious and are not afraid?

1. Just a handful.
2. Ok, we have a few shepherds.
3. We have the wise men.
4. And, of course, the little drummer boy.
5. Yes, it is sad that so few people that Jesus died for even want to know...and that even fewer are willing to seek Him.
6. Jesus has been drawing you to Himself or you would not be here.
7. It is He that has arranged for you to hear the gospel.
8. He even has arranged the appointment with your messenger for the day you trusted...or will trust...Jesus to save you.

B. There is one thing that cannot be taken away from all of this.

1. Yes, we owe all the glory to Jesus for the fact that we are saved.

2. Yet, every one of us who have come to Jesus and have trusted Him to save us belong to an elite and very special club called the Family of God.
3. Poor like the shepherds or rich like the wise kings...beautiful or not so much, smart or not so much; maybe ordinary in every other way; you, brothers and sisters, are the best there is on this side of heaven!
4. Only you are given the opportunity for rewards that are eternal that will never fade away.
5. Only you will be used of God to provide for and serve His kingdom.
6. Only you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us.
7. Only you can bring Him the glory He deserves.

Conclusion:

Lighthouse, there has always been a small group of believers that, in spite of the rest of the world; have remained, faithfully, the people of God.

Malachi 3:16-17

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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.

Lighthouse, we are God's jewels.

We fear the Lord and we love the Lord and yes, we speak often one to another; yes, and we will be doing so no matter how long it takes before He comes again...He will come!

To our guests today, you are invited to become a part; first of God's family by placing your trust in Jesus to save you.

And then to become a member of the most exclusive group of very ordinary people you will ever find; saved, blood-bought believers who both love and fear the Lord.

Merry Christmas, Lighthouse!