

Sunday January 19th 2014
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Twelve

1). Mal 2:17 *You have wearied the LORD with your words; Yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil Is good in the sight of the LORD, And He delights in them," Or, "Where is the God of justice?"* 3:1 ¶ *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.* 2 *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years.*

a). We had seen last week how Israel’s contempt for the Lord had reached a new height through their accusation that He is not just – ‘Where is the God of justice?’

b). Through this accusation they find legitimacy for their own acts of injustice toward one another. In effect their thinking is, ‘If God is dealing unjustly with us then what difference does it make if we deal treacherously with each other, because in the end how we treat one another doesn’t matter because, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord”.’

c). And an attitude on their part such as this must be seen within the context of that which we saw in Chapter 2 - Mal 2:7 *"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Says the LORD of hosts.*

d). And it is an attitude that finds its origins in Chapter 1 – Mal 1:2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'*

e). There are 4 NT scriptures that we will look at this morning that speak to this situation and speak most especially to our own experience in the light of what we see here with Israel. The first, which really would provide the

foundation for the other 3 is found in – Heb 2:1 ¶ *Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.*

The second we find in - Ro 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

The third draws from the Book of Proverbs - Heb 12:5 *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; And the fourth which would be the capstone is found in - Ro 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

f). Israel had clearly not given the more earnest heed to the things they had heard – choosing rather to ignore that which is written in Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets.

g). They had ignored the scriptures proclaiming the Justice of the Lord – Ps 89:14 *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.*

h). They had chosen to ignore their experiences of the justice of God within their own history - De 10:17 *"For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. 18 "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. 19 "Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. 21 "He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. 22 "Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.*

i). And had chosen to ignore the commands given to them - Isa 1:17 *Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.*

j). In so doing they had become the very embodiment of that seen in – Isa 5:18 ¶ *Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, And sin as if with a cart rope; 19 That say, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, That we may see it; And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, That we may know it." 20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!*

k). But as we know, God is faithful, God is just and God loves His people
Mal 3:6 *"For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

l). De 7:9 *"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;*

2). And so Malachi Chapter 2 ends with the question, 'Where is the God of justice?' To which God responds, *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.*

a). God's actions toward Israel in their past and in the days of Malachi were governed by the fact that we have previously seen - Mal 1:2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD.*

b). And here at the beginning of Chapter 3 the Lord's love, His faithfulness, and His justice are demonstrated through the promise of how He will deal with Israel yet future, and His dealing with the nation after this fashion will be preceded by the sending of His messenger who will prepare the way before Him.

c). 'Where is the God of justice?' – He is coming and when He comes He will execute justice amongst His people and the sign of His coming will be the messenger who will prepare the way before Him.

d). The coming of the messenger is brought to the forefront again at the conclusion of the Book and is the last thing God speaks to His people before the coming of Messiah –Mal 4:5 *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

e). Now the importance of these verses we will deal with when we get to Chapter 4, but suffice it to say for the present that when Israel saw and heard John the Baptist - Mr 1:1 ¶ *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." 3 "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" 4 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went*

out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

They should have remembered Malachi.

f). They should have remembered Isaiah - Isa 40:1 ¶ *"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. 2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD'S hand Double for all her sins." 3 ¶ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; 5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

g). But what we will remember in the midst of this is that the promised messenger and the promised Messiah was partially fulfilled through John the Baptist and Christ's first advent, but was always looking to Messiah's second coming to His people Israel and the ministry of Elijah that will precede it - Mt 11:13 *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

h). And also speaking of John - Lu 1:16 *"And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, '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."*

i). All this we will deal with in detail in upcoming weeks.

3). But for now let's return to His promise - 2 *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderer's soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years.*

a). Because of His faithfulness, because of His love for Jacob, because of His covenants with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Levi He is not going to abandon His people, but purify and refine them so that they will again bring an offering in righteousness, as in the days of old - Ho 6:1 ¶ *Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us*

up. 2 After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight.

b). *Es 5:1 ¶ Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.*

c). *Joh 2:1 ¶ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.*

d). But as we know 'the day of His coming' that leads to regality is the time of Jacob's trouble, the time marked by the Great Tribulation when Israel, through an intensity of suffering foreshadowed by their persecution by the Assyrian pharaoh in Egypt, will be brought to repentance and the Gentile nations will come under Judgment as they are overthrown –*Re 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

e). Out of this though Israel will be delivered and they will once again return to the God of their fathers - *Isa 4:4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, 5 then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. 6 And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.*

f). Their sins will be purged and their filth washed away and those who have dealt treacherously one with another and have profaned the name of the Lord as a result of being judged by the 'spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning' [a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap] will be cut off from the tents of Jacob with respect to the coming Kingdom of Christ.

4). This Day of the coming of the Lord when these events will transpire is certain; that He will exercise judgment against His people is certain and He

does not cease to make this clear to them - Mal 3:5 *And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien-Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts. 6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. 7 ¶ Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'*

a). And here in v5 we find a catalogue of the nation's treacherous dealings with each other with the promise that He will be 'a swift witness' against those who have practiced sorcery, those who have dealt treacherously with the wife of their youth, becoming adulterers - and we would include in this the spiritual adultery against the Lord which we have seen in past weeks; against those who perjure themselves by swearing one thing and yet doing another; against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans - Le 19:10 *'And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God. 11 ¶ 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 12 'And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. 13 'You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.*

b). De 24:19 *"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*

c). Jer 22:13 *"Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work,*

5). And we have seen in past weeks how Israel's dealings with God and their consequent treachery with each other has readily transferred into our own situation - And it is equally true for us that the day of His coming is approaching and in that Day we shall be judged, just as Israel shall be judged.

a). So with the image of the refiner's fire and the spirit of burning firmly before us, let's remember this from - 1Co 3:11 ¶ *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds*

on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

b). And let's remember that our works, in no small part, have to do with the way we have treated one another as a consequence of the way we have related to our Lord – And just as those in Israel who dealt treacherously with each other are to be cut off from the tents of Jacob, so will those Christians who have done likewise find themselves 'outside' of the New Jerusalem, cut off from a position of rulership with Christ in His Kingdom - Re 22:12 *"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." 14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

c). And what has been one of the greatest heresies of this dispensation? 2Pe 3:3 ¶ *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this they willfully forget:*

d). And even amongst those who acknowledge Christ's return the seriousness of this event has been hidden through the promulgation of the doctrine of Balaam.

e). Heb 10:37 *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.*

f). Hab 2:1 ¶ *I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected. 2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. 4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*

g). Christ is coming and this has been prophesied and promised from the verses concerning the Seed of the woman onwards and we will ignore our

preparedness for this event at our peril – there is nothing worth losing the Kingdom for.

6). So, to return to Malachi, it is within the context of the certainty of ‘the day of His coming’ and the judgment that will subsequently take place that the Lord God of Israel calls the nation to return to Him with the promise that if they do so He will return to them - 7 ¶ *Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'*

a). And our verse here parallels 2 verses from - Zec 1:2 *"The LORD has been very angry with your fathers. 3 "Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts.*

b). Here then is a call to repentance and restoration – the heart cry of the Lord into their present, prophetically looking to the certainty of their future - Ne 1:7 *"We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 'but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'*

c). Jer 24:7 *'Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.*

d). And in the midst of this we might remember the Lord’s words at His first advent - Lu 13:34 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!*

d). They were not willing, which is exactly where we find them within our present context – here in the days of Malachi God’s call to return is met with yet another question, ‘In what way shall we return?’ And this is not a question seeking after an answer, but rather a question that seeks to challenge God’s assertion that they need to return to Him because they have already decided - Mal 3:14 *You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that*

we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts?

e). This imagined dialogue between God and Israel continues as the Lord makes clear to them what He expects of them if they are to return to Him with the promise of abundant blessing if they should do so - Mal 3:8 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.*

f). Now there is a great deal to be said about the tithe as it pertained to Israel in the past and as it currently pertains to us in the present, but to begin I want us to consider Israel's failure in tithes and offerings as treachery on their part against the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

g). You see the land is not just the stage where God's plans are enacted, but an active participant in the outworking of God's purpose.

7). De 6:10 *"So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, 11 "houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-when you have eaten and are full- 12 "then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*

a). The land of their inheritance is described as a land of milk and honey and is every bit as good as the Lord had promised them, but in the abundance of the land is the seduction to sin – that being partakers of the abundance of the land they forget that it is the Lord who has given them the land and it is the Lord who causes the land to produce abundantly for them.

b). In one respect we could view this as Israel being the tenants and God as the Landlord of a fully furnished dwelling place - Le 25:23 ¶ *'The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.*

c). The nation could be seduced into thinking that all that the land produces is the work of their own hands, apart from God. The very thing that the Lord warns them of in - De 8:11 *"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes*

which I command you today, 12 "lest-when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;.....17 "then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' 18 "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

d). The failure of the tithe and the failure of the giving of offerings is another demonstration of the nation's treacherous dealings with God as it shows that they neither accepted or acknowledged Him as the One who provided all they had. And this in turn led to the land being dealt with treacherously by Israel resulting in God's blessing upon the land being removed and its produce being given into the hands of Gentiles.

e). Am 4:7 *"I also withheld rain from you, When there were still three months to the harvest.....9 "I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees, The locust devoured them; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD.*

f). Jer 5:17 *And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread, Which your sons and daughters should eat. They shall eat up your flocks and your herds; They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees; They shall destroy your fortified cities, In which you trust, with the sword.*

g). We will continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.