

Sunday February 2nd 2014
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Fourteen

1). Mal 3:10 *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. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; 12 "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts. 13 ¶ "Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' 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?*

a). The nation of Israel during the days of Malachi had been robbing God by withholding the tithes and the offering, and they had done this because they had concluded that, ‘it is useless to serve God’ and that there was no profit to ‘have kept His ordinances’.

b). They had come to this conclusion as they saw God as the One who failed to provide adequately for them - Mal 1:12 *"But you profane it, In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.'*

c). The One who had cursed their blessings - Mal 2:2 *If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart.*

c). And as the One who no longer took notice of their supplications - Mal 2:13 *And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.*

d). They no longer saw the love of God in their past or in their present and therefore they did not look to the love of God with respect to their future; their focus therefore became introspective seeing only their own efforts and no longer God’s goodness on their behalf - De 8:11 *"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God.....16 "who fed you in the wilderness with*

manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end- 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.

e). In consequence they now dealt unjustly with the poor, the fatherless and the widow, by firstly not leaving in their fields that which could be gleaned by those who had no means to support themselves and secondly by withholding the tithe which was in part to serve the same function –
De 26:12 ¶ *"When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year-the year of tithing-and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, 13 "then you shall say before the LORD your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.*

f). And all of this must be seen of course with respect to rulership within the Theocracy as God's firstborn son, as the wife of Jehovah – and as we had seen last week it is not possible to separate the tithe from God's purpose, just as we saw with respect to the first mention of the tithe with regards to Abraham and Melchizedek recorded in - Ge 14:18 *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.*

g). Abraham's giving of the tithe is by faith in response to God's promise concerning future rulership - Ro 4:13 *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

h). The tithe then should be seen as an act of righteousness and as much a part of Abraham's faith as any other – to tithe is to act in accordance with the nature and character of God - 1Ti 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy..*

i). In consequence then those who are Abraham's seed by faith should view the tithe after the same fashion.

j). There is a tension here that exists between faith and fear, between this world and that which is to come, between the flesh and the spirit and the nature of this tension we can see from the verses that continue in Genesis Chapter 14 - Ge 14:21 ¶ *Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself."* 22 *But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' -*

k). Abraham recognized this tension and would therefore take nothing from the hand of the king of Sodom, who is a type of the god of this world, having raised his hand, having submitted himself, to the Lord, God Most High.

l). What we have seen then in past weeks with respect to Israel in the days of Malachi is that their rebellious relationship with God had led them to deal rebelliously with each other on a social level and to deal rebelliously with the land on an economic level; all of which will keep those who have done so from receiving their inheritance in that future Day - and what we might conclude from this is that relating to God after a correct scriptural fashion must result in our dealing with each other correctly, according to the scriptures and dealing with the heavenly land correctly on an economic level, according to the scripture, which must result in receiving our inheritance in that future Day.

m). How we treat each other and how we treat our finances with regards to the scriptures will be a very good indicator as to the condition and genuineness of our relationship with the Lord and the likelihood of our success at the Judgment Seat through our faithful obedience.

2). Now, when we come to the 'Church' at the close of this dispensation we find this in - Re 3:17 *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*

a). Now the first half of this verse sounds very similar to that which we read in Deuteronomy Chapter 8 - , *'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'* - What is common to both is a reliance on self rather than an acknowledgment of God's provision having forgotten that it God alone who is the provider of all.

b). The Laodicean church is undoubtedly rich and has become wealthy, but from their perspective this has happened by the might of their own hand

so that not even God can do anything for them and as we consider this we might remember the words of the Lord recorded in - Lu 16:10 *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. 11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? 13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*

Now, we cannot serve God and mammon, but we can serve God through our faithfulness in unrighteous mammon and our faithfulness, our acting 'by faith' with respect to money, is demonstrated through tithes and offerings after the same fashion as we saw with Abraham, all with a view to the heavenly realm of the Kingdom.

c). According to Luke 16:11 the way we deal with money now will impact what we will receive yet future. The 'true riches' can only be a reference to that which will await the faithful at the Judgment Seat, and acting by faith with our finances, just as acting by faith in any other area, will result in gold, silver and precious stones in that Day.

d). Then, still within the context of money, we see that we are to be faithful in what is another man's now, so that we may be given what is our own in the future. Well that which belongs to 'another man', in our present context, is the tithe – Le 27:30 *'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S. It is holy to the LORD.* The tithe is the Lord's, it is not ours it belongs to Him – and if we are faithful in that which belongs to the Lord, the tithe, then in that future Day He will give us what is our own – an inheritance as a joint heir with Christ - Mt 6:19 ¶ *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

e). Now all of this has become distorted and perverted over the course of this dispensation because of the leaven placed in the 3 measures of meal, to the extent that we find it described in Revelation 3:17. So, within our own context it would be good to get this right, according to the scriptures.

3). As the word 'tithe' does not appear beyond the gospels the practicalities of what this looks like for us within this dispensation may appear confusing, but

in reality they shouldn't be – a foundation has been set in Genesis through Abraham, the father of faith, by which we have seen that the tithe is an act of faith with a view to an inheritance in the coming Kingdom of Christ. This we can then add to through Leviticus where we are told that the tithe is the Lord's. Putting these 2 together is the foundation upon which all tithing rests. And each individual should approach the tithe with this foundation having renewed their mind – this is not just the writing of a check, but rather a profound interaction, 'by faith', with God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth in which we declare our intention, just as Jacob did - Ge 28:20 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 "so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. 22 "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."*

a). Although the tithe is the Lord's it has to be dealt with in the temporal realm even though its effect is felt in the spiritual realm and so it is brought into the 'church', after the same fashion that Israel brought it into the Tabernacle or the Temple. With Israel we saw that the tithe, although the Lord's, was for the support of the Levitical priesthood and the support of the poor and we would find the equivalent to this given to the 'church' within the epistles - 1Co 9:9 *For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? 10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? 12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? 14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.*

b). Php 4:15 *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*

c). Ga 2:9 *and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the*

right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

d). Tithes and offerings then are for the support of those who preach the gospel and the furtherance of that ministry both near and far and for taking care of those who are unable to take care of themselves within the community of faith – and it would be good to note here that the tithes and offerings, which are the Lord's, are given to the Lord within the context of the preaching of the gospel – the gospel of the glory of Christ which is the focus of the NT epistles.

e). Why would we take that which belongs to the Lord and put it anywhere other than where His whole counsel is being proclaimed towards the salvation of the soul?

4). So, let's move on to the next verses in Malachi - Mal 3:13 ¶ *"Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' 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? 15 So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.'"*

a). These verses take us back to the end of Chapter 2 - 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?"*

b). Simply put Israel sees no value in serving the Lord, just as we have observed in relation to the tithes and offerings, because the Lord is dealing harshly with them while others it seems can do as they like and God takes no notice – in fact from their perspective God does worse than take no notice, He delights in those who do wickedly and raises them up at the expense of 'the righteous'.

c). The folly of such thinking is obvious and clearly they had forgotten - Job 5:17 ¶ *"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.*

Pr 3:11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; 12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

d). And had forgotten the testimony of their own history – De 11:2 *"Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His*

greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm- 3 "His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; 4 "what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; 5 "what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; 6 "and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel- 7 "but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did. 8 ¶ "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, 9 "and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'

e). As we have said before the reason God was dealing with the nation 'harshly' was because of their actions He acted this way with a view to their repentance, blessing, and future rulership as a Father deals with His son.

f). But rather than accept this and repent they accuse God of partiality, something that would be totally contrary to His nature and character.

g). And even within our own context it would be easy to misunderstand the apparent prosperity of the wicked and even within the 'church' at large to see in an incorrect way those who actively stand in the way of the Kingdom as the Pharisees did –Mt 23:13 ¶ *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.* And yet are 'successful', while those in pursuit of the Kingdom struggle.

h). But if we are fully conversant with the scriptures and convinced of the goodness of God this will not be the case - 1Pe 1:17 *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*

i). All things are moving to the conclusion of God's purpose and we have no business having anything to say about what that might look like in our own eyes, we are simply to patiently endure keeping our eyes focused on the prize out ahead, realizing that 'success' in human terms now is of no consequence, but only success in the eyes of the Lord in that future Day as we continue in faithful obedience, remembering - Mt 7:21 ¶ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not*

prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

j). Remember God is faithful - Ps 31:19 ¶ *Oh, how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!*

k). Heb 11:32 ¶ *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

5). Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.*

a). In the midst of all we have looked at with respect to rebellious Israel we might wonder if there was anyone in Israel who had remained faithful to the Lord and here in v16 our question is answered – ‘those who feared the Lord spoke to one another’ and what is really exciting in this is that the Lord listened to them speaking to one another and heard them.

b). As we consider this we might remember the admonishment we are given in - Heb 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

c). How these verses most aptly describe the situation for those who remained faithful to the Lord in the days of Malachi – and what else could they do but exhort one another daily, speak to one another to encourage and

admonish and exhort in the midst of a corrupt and rebellious generation that would seek to sweep them away after their own unfaithfulness.

d). And what else might we do except do the same as the faithful of Malachi's day in accordance with these verses from Hebrews as we find ourselves in the midst of the Laodicean church, bombarded daily with the opportunity to turn away from the things of God to the things of this world, to become compromised and complacent like everybody else –

Eph 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Ro 15:14 ¶ Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

e). And here is the most remarkable and encouraging thing to come out of this - *So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.*

There is a book that is written 'before Him' containing the names of those who fear the Lord, who speak to one another, who meditate on His name. And not only would this book record their names, but also what they have said concerning the Lord in the presence of the sons of men - *Pr 15:2 ¶ The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. 3 ¶ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good. 4 ¶ A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

f). And this would not be surprising as we learn from the scriptures as recorded in - *Mt 12:36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*

g). If an account is to be given for every idle word, God is not unjust to forget that which is said in accordance with His word, 'a wholesome tongue is a tree of life', to encourage others to the salvation of their soul, by those who fear Him and meditate upon His name - *Heb 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

h). *Da 7:10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.*

There are a number of different books that will be opened before the Lord at the time of Judgment, one of which will be this same Book of Remembrance that we have found in Malachi Chapter 3.

i). In the Revelation we find - Re 20:12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

And in - Re 21:27 *But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

j). And there is an intriguing Book found in - Ps 56:8 ¶ *You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?*

k). Well, the exact nature of the Book of Remembrance in Malachi and perhaps some explanation of these other Books will have to wait until next time – If the Lord is willing.