

Sunday March 2nd 2014
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Fifteen

1). 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? 15 So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.'" 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 our past weeks of study in the Book of Malachi we had come to see yet another example of the depths of the spiritual depravity to which God’s chosen people had sunk.

b). We had seen how, under the leadership of the Levites, the people had refused to see the love that God throughout their generations had demonstrated to them - Mal 1:2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'*

c). We had seen how they honored earthly fathers and earthly masters, but failed to do the same for the One who had adopted them as a firstborn son with the rights to rulership, the heavenly Master they claimed to serve – Mal 1:6 ¶ *"A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name.*

d). We had also seen contempt for the offerings and sacrifices the Lord required of them, a departure from teaching the truth of scripture and treacherous dealings with each other, particularly with the wives of their youth and the most vulnerable in their society, the poor, the fatherless and the widow which had subsequently followed.

e). And in addition we saw how they stole from God by withholding the tithe and saw the curse that had come upon them as a result of their actions - 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.*

Mal 3:9 *You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.*

f). Because of this they considered that God's treatment of them was 'harsh', failing to realize that the Lord's actions were as a direct result of their unfaithfulness and disobedience; having forgotten that which is recorded in – 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.*

g). All of which brings us to the place we started in the scriptures this morning, where we see the nation declaring that it is 'useless to serve God', there being no 'profit' in keeping His ordinance; even seeing the proud as blessed and the wicked as being raised up.

h). This as we have said presents to us a deplorable spiritual condition, one which is only surpassed by the crucifixion of their Messiah approximately 433 years later.

i). And through all of this we had noted how the deplorable spiritual condition of Israel prior to the Lord's first advent shockingly parallels the spiritual condition of the greater majority of the Lord's 'Church' immediately prior to His second advent, just as was prophesied by the Lord in the Matthew 13 parables and seen in the Laodicean church in the Revelation as well as the epistles.

j). Now within those parables we have seen this - Mt 13:23 *"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word [the 'Word of the Kingdom from v19] and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*

k). There are always those, even though surrounded by disobedience, unfaithfulness and unbelief, who do hear that which God has said and organize their lives accordingly.

l). However, it is a natural tendency of the human condition to see ourselves as isolated and alone, but this is not true at all – We might remember that which the Lord tells Elijah in the midst of his self-imposed isolation - 1Ki 19:18 *"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

m). And we might remember Noah and Abraham and Joseph and Caleb and Joshua and David and Daniel and Simeon and Anna, all within the same context.

n). And not surprisingly this is exactly what we find in our verses from the Book of Malachi.

2). 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). Within the midst of the catalogue of Israel' rebellion against the Lord of hosts we find those 'who feared the Lord' gathering themselves together, and having gathered together they 'spoke to one another'.

b). And what they spoke to one another would really be no mystery as we would compare scripture with scripture - Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*
24 *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*
25 *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

c). Our verses here from Hebrews would most appropriately describe the nature and content of the interaction between those 'who feared the Lord' within the context of the fulfillment of God's promises to His people Israel and also provides both warning and encouragement for us within the context of our pursuit of Christ's coming Kingdom.

d). And then, as we had seen in our last study, the Lord listened and heard that which they said to one another - Ps 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

e). And both the names of those who spoke one to another and the words which they have spoken are written before Him in a book of remembrance.

f). Now clearly the omniscient God is not short on memory and therefore we can conclude that this book, as with any of the other books He keeps, is not there as an 'aide memoir' for Him, but must rather be seen for our own benefit – so exactly how should we understand the nature of this book of remembrance?

3). Well firstly, we can place the keeping of the book within the overall scope of the imagery the Lord uses to depict His own great sovereign rule. In Malachi Chapter 1 the Lord describes Himself thus - Mal 1:14b *For I am a*

great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations.

a). Malachi is 'God's Messenger', the Levitical priests were God's messengers who had 'departed from the way' – the phrase 'My messenger' reappears in Chapter 3 along with 'the Messenger of the covenant' and the prophesied return of Elijah as a messenger is seen in Chapter 4. The King sending forth His messengers with His commands and edicts draws directly from the practice of earthly kings in the ancient world who administered their kingdoms after the same fashion – sending messengers to the various provinces in their kingdom to convey the king's desire – just as we can see here recorded in - *Es 8:9 So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.*

b). Now, not only were the messengers sent with copies of the king's decree but a copy was also made, recorded in a book or books to preserve that which the king had decreed as a reference for him and a record for those who would come after him.

c). In the Book of Ezra we see the king, Artaxerxes, searching for proof of Israel's rebellion prior to their exile as a justification for stopping the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem - *Ezr 4:15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.*

d). And ironically, 2 Chapters later in Ezra, we see a similar search made that results in the Temple construction being continued and completed – *Ezr 6:1 ¶ Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. 2 And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: 3 In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: "Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices;*

e). That recorded in books was not just that of an administrative nature on a grand scale, but also that which would pertain to individuals as we see here once again from the Book of Esther - *Es 2:21 ¶ In those days, while*

Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. 23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

f). Despite his pivotal role in the saving of the king's life nothing had been done to reward Mordecai's faithfulness, until - Es 6:1 ¶ *That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. 2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 3 Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."*

g). And as we know, Mordecai is rewarded for his faithfulness to the king.

h). And it is within the same scope as that which we see concerning Mordecai that we can understand the book of remembrance in Malachi.

4). 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.*

a). Considering one another to stir up love and good works and exhorting one another daily aptly describes the actions of those 'who feared the Lord' seen in Malachi and would also have to be seen as an integral part of our own labor of love and ministry to the saints – Now here is the thing, it is beyond doubt that we are not going to remember every word we have ever spoken to one another concerning our continuance and steadfastness in the race of the faith, but God is not unjust to forget them.

b). Here then is our confidence and assurance of God's faithfulness in this – our words are recorded in a book of remembrance.

c). Did God need to swear an oath to Abraham concerning His promise to make sure He would be held to it? Of course not, but He did do it for the very reason recorded in the scriptures - Heb 6:13 *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation*

is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

d). And we can see the book of remembrance after this same fashion in also showing the ‘immutability of His counsel’, that we ‘might have strong consolation’ with regards to ‘the hope set before us’.

e). As our hope is an anchor of our soul so one of the cords that holds that anchor in place is the certainty of God’s faithfulness in compiling books to document our words and our actions. Within the finite capabilities of our mind here is God’s surety to us that He remembers, that nothing is overlooked, that nothing is insignificant.

5). *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.*

a). Here in Daniel we find a picture of judgment yet future with respect to the nation of Israel and within the context of this judgment we see that ‘the books were opened’ – one of these books could only be the book of remembrance that we have seen initiated in Malachi.

b). The important thing for us to note here is that the opening of the books is part of the process of judgment and will apply both to the eternally saved and the unsaved – to events at the Judgment Seat of Christ for the eternally saved and the Great White Throne for the unsaved.

c). With respect to Judgment at the Great White Throne this is what we find recorded in - *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. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

d). Again here we see that 'books were opened' and one book in particular is specifically named, 'the Book of Life' – these books, including the Book of Life, contain a record of the 'works' of the unsaved, which is the basis upon which all judgment takes place, and in v15 we see that those whose names are not found in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire.

e). And then with respect to the Judgment Seat of Christ and the eternally saved who appear there we see this in - Re 3:5 *"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

f). Here we have the words spoken to the 'church in Sardis' and we see the Book of Life, the same Book as in Revelation 20 – and here in relation to the eternally saved we see that those who are overcome, rather than being an overcomer will have their name blotted out of the Book.

g). So, let's establish clearly here that the Book of Life is in view, whether we are dealing with the eternally saved or the unsaved, in relation to works and nothing else – it has nothing whatsoever to do with eternal verities, and nor could it as judgment concerning our eternal destiny is past based on the finished work of Christ and as a result can never be the subject of anyone's appearance before the Lord in judgment – Joh 3:18 *"He who believes in Him is not condemned [judged]; but he who does not believe is condemned [has been judged] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

h). The Book of Life then seems to be God's primary record of the lives of every human being – it is the record of everything we have done, are doing and will yet do and our own particular entry may have started at the instant of our conception - Ps 139:13 *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*

i). So then the Book of Life is the record of our life lived and along with other related books, such as the book of remembrance, is used to show our works – now keeping this in mind let's add in a familiar scripture from 1 Corinthians - 1Co 3:12 *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.

j). As we appear at Christ's Judgment Seat our work will become clear, for the Day will declare it through the opening of the books, the primary source being the Book of Life. Our work will be revealed and tested by fire, picturing judgment, to show what sort of work it is – if our work endures, being work of faithful obedience and patient endurance then we are seen as an overcomer, we receive a reward, a position of rulership as a coheir with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom, and our name is retained in the Book of Life with respect to that. If on the other hand our work is burned up, work which is not done in faithful obedience therefore we have been overcome, we suffer loss, we are rejected from a position of rulership with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom and consequently our name with respect to that position of rulership is blotted out of the Book of Life.

k). The exact same truth can be applied to the companion verses to those in 1 Corinthians such as the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the faithful and unfaithful servant, the wedding guest without a garment to name but a few and unequivocally presented in Revelation 3:5 as we have seen.

l). In this context then the blotting out of a name from the Book of Life relates to the unfaithful, overcome, eternally saved person, exclusively with respect to the Millennial Kingdom – nothing else.

m). For the unfaithful Christian, even though they are overcome, their eternal security is just that, eternally secure, but as for the purpose for their eternal salvation, rulership with Christ in the Age to Come as part of His Bride, their work revealed in the books shows them to have been overcome rather than being an overcomer and their name with respect to that purpose is blotted out of the Book of Life.

n). So then, just as the unfaithful Christian has his name blotted out of the Book of Life because of rejecting the purpose for his eternal salvation so, in like manner the eternally lost will not find their name written in the Book of Life having rejected the reason for their creation and rejected God's offer of eternal salvation – because this is the result of a past judgment with regards to Christ's finished work at Calvary that one's name will not be found in the Book of Life and he will be cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

o). We also find a warning with regards to the Book of Life and the eternally saved, the Christian, at the very end of the Revelation –

Re 22:18 *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

p). The scriptures must be taught as God has seen fit to give them, we must not add to them that which we would like to see nor take from them that which is uncomfortable – anyone who teaches the Bible should take careful note to make sure that scripture is compared with scripture, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; the responsibility to rightly divide the Word of truth is great, the warning for not doing so is dire, but the reward for getting it right is glorious beyond our imagination.

6). And finally for this morning, what of those who feared the Lord and meditate on His name, whose words are written in the book of remembrance, whose names are retained in the Book of Life? Well, what does the scripture say?

a). Mal 3:17 *"They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him." 18 Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.*

b). But this will have to wait until next time – if the Lord is willing.