

Sunday November 17th 2013
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Five

1). Mal 1:11 *For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts. 12 "But you profane it, In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' 13 You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. 14 "But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished-For I am a great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations.*

a). We have seen in our past weeks of study how the Lord, even from the days when Jacob was still in the loins of his father Abraham, has loved Jacob and is a Father to the nation that has come from him with all the blessings and privileges that come with the status of a firstborn son - Mal 1:2 *"I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved;*

b). And yet despite the loving hand of a Father towards the nation demonstrated in the exercise of His power on their behalf against their enemies and the corrective discipline needed to keep them in a place of blessing we have seen that Israel had profaned the Name of the Lord, giving Him neither honor nor respect pictured through the unacceptable sacrifices they brought to Him and their focus on the things of this world.

c). However, although this was the situation in Israel at the time of Malachi’s prophecy, a situation that continued throughout the time that led up to and included Christ’s first advent and still exists even today, we see in v11 from our opening scripture that the Lord speaks of the coming of the Millennial Kingdom when from one end of the earth to the other His name ‘shall be great among the Gentiles’ and ‘great among the nations’. In that Day ‘in every place’, throughout the world, ‘incense will be offered’ to His name and that which is offered will be ‘a pure offering’.

d). There is of course a multifaceted purpose in the Lord drawing attention to the Kingdom which is yet to come – we would see in this firstly a provocation to jealousy - Ro 10:19 *But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." 20 But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." 21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."*

Ro 11:11 *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.*

e). And here we would see the most poignant contrast between the disobedient and irreverent nation that comprises His chosen people, who have been adopted as a firstborn son, who bring Him the blind, the lame and the sick and those who Israel would despise as ‘dogs’ who, in that Day, bring a pure offering, who regard the Lord’s name as great and to be feared. Such a contrast as this would not be lost on those to whom it had been given.

f). But then, contained within this reference to the 7th Day, and contained within the honoring of the Lord amongst the nations, is the certainty of rebellious Israel’s repentance and restoration as they will be the ones, in the antitype of Jonah, who will take the message of the living Christ to the nations during the Kingdom age; they will be the ones through whom the nations will be blessed just as God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Ge 26:4 *"And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;*

And in this sense they would be the ones responsible for the name of God being revered and great amongst the nations in fulfillment of God’s purpose for them.

g). Here then, in this reference to the Millennial Kingdom, is Israel’s hope; here then is the faithfulness of God with respect to His plans and purposes in the midst of the unfaithfulness of His people – a theme that is returned to and runs throughout Malachi’s prophecy - Mal 3:3 *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. 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.

And herein, in this last Book of the OT, is the present hope for the Jewish people – as that which God prophesied through Malachi has come to pass and will yet come to pass and we might rejoice in this as we witness the faithfulness and constancy of the One who is our Father also.

h). As we see from these verses in Malachi the time of the Lord's chastening of Israel, the chastening of His son, is not over as His purpose for them is not yet complete – there must be refining and purification because of Israel's continued disobedience, which we know from comparing scripture with scripture is a time of chastening unlike anything they have experienced in their history thus far - Jer 30:7 *Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.*

Mt 24:21 *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

i). 'But he [Israel] shall be saved out of it' – as a result of the Lord's faithfulness Jacob is not consumed, but restored and forgiven, and once again the sons of Levi will bring an offering in righteousness which will be pleasant to the Lord. This future time is night and day to what we see with the priests of old as Malachi records it.

j). And herein is our hope also as we see the 7th Day approaching and see the faithfulness of God towards Israel even in their disobedience, realizing that this is the same Day to which we have been called with a heavenly calling to be a joint heir with Christ and that in the midst of our unfaithfulness God remains faithful to His Word and to His promises and to His purpose – 1Co 1:4 *I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 10 ¶ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same*

thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

k). And if we will be wise we will receive the refining and chastening of the Lord in order that we may be prepared for that Day when it comes – this is the direction to which we have learned to pray in our study of ‘the Lord’s prayer’ as we come to Him as ‘Our Father who is in heaven’, remembering the admonition we are given in - 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; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

l). Our time of chastening in order that we be properly prepared is not in the future, but the continual experience of our present, but whether for Israel in the future or for us in the present the end result is the same – being found righteous in the presence of the Lord at His coming.

m). And as we see from our verses from Hebrews the child training of the Lord, if we will submit to it, will in that future Day yield, ‘the peaceable fruit of righteousness’ – and we are left in no doubt as to what this fruit is – Pr 11:30 ¶ *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.*

n). This is the salvation of our soul and a position of rulership with Christ in the coming Kingdom.

o). For Israel God will refine and purify them for the purpose of rulership in the 7th Day and for the ‘Church’ God is presently refining and purifying us for the purpose of rulership in the 7th Day – all of which is in fulfillment of God’s stated purpose from the beginning - Ge 1:26 ¶ *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion....."*

p). Here again is the faithfulness of God in adherence to His Word –

Isa 55:10 *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it 12 "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."*

q). Knowing this how could we not be faithful? How could we not be diligent to enter that rest? How could we not submit ourselves to the child training of the Lord? And constantly give thanks to His name?

2). Well the answer to our questions would be that we would not do these things for exactly the same reason as Israel didn't do 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.' 13 You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. 14 "But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished-For I am a great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations.*

a). We would, through refusing to align our lives with His Word, regard the Word of the Lord as contemptible, we would sneer at it and consider it a weariness. As a result we would give to God only that which is left after we have given ourselves to the world and expect Him to be happy with that. It would be good to remember that He is 'a great King', in fact the King of kings and the Lord of lords and must not be treated lightly or taken for granted.

b). V14 takes us directly to a verse we had looked at previously in - Le 22:23 *'Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. 24 'You shall not offer to the LORD what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land.*

c). The context here is for those who make a vow to the Lord and then bring an offering in confirmation of that vow - what they were to bring for this was to be perfect, without defect. And we see from our Malachi verse that the person who made a vow and had the opportunity to bring the best and yet

didn't, is, from God's perspective, a 'deceiver' – one who deliberately says one thing but then does another. And such a one is 'cursed', a word which literally means 'bitterly cursed'.

d). We might see a NT parallel to this in the account of Ananias and Sapphira - Ac 5:1 ¶ *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.*

e). I think the lesson here would be an obvious one for us – do not pretend to be doing something for the Lord when really we are doing it to be seen in the eyes of men – don't make God promises if you are not prepared to keep them. This could be summed up for us by having the integrity of character that we see in - Mt 5:37 *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

Jas 5:12 ¶ *But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*

f). This is presumably the reason why we find those Christians who have a lifestyle characterized by deception excluded from the Kingdom Reign of our Lord - Re 21:8 *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

3). Mal 2:1 ¶ *"And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. 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. 3 "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants And spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it.*

a). The Lord's condemnation of the priests continues into Chapter 2 in relation to the commandment, 'To give glory to My name'. This is the only place in the OT where this particular phrase appears and clearly we would understand that the priests did not literally have glory that they could give

and so we would conclude that this has to do once again with the honor and reverence that is due to Him with respect to that Day when the earth will be filled with His glory, to the revelation of His coming glory in that Day to the Children of Israel through the teaching of the law of Moses, to the declaration of His glory amongst the nations which has been Israel's purpose, the very thing contained in the writings they were to teach - Isa 66:19 *"I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.*

b). But this is something the priests did not hear and did not take to heart from the days of Malachi onwards and as a consequence their blessings were already cursed – 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.*

c). And contained in the curse upon their blessings is the promise that 'I will rebuke your descendants' – now this is neither arbitrary nor vindictive, but as we have just seen in v8 the priests had departed from the teaching of the truth and as a result many of the people had been caused to stumble at the law. We will deal with this in detail at a later point, but suffice it to say for the moment that those taught by the priests have grown up receiving and accepting the perversion of the truth they have been given, hence they are rebuked for the doctrine they have followed – and those of the lineage of Levi who held the priesthood in subsequent generations were just as corrupt as their fathers in this.

d). Jesus dealt with this situation at His first advent this way in – Mr 9:42 *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.*

And like this in - Mt 23:29 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' 31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.*

And this in - Lu 6:39 *And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?"*

e). And then along with the promise to rebuke their descendants is the promise to *spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it.*

f). This is particularly graphic and unpleasant demonstrating the disgust the Lord had for them. The word translated 'refuse' here is translated 'dung' in the KJV and should be understood as the offal, the inward parts of the sacrificed animal, that would either be discarded or burnt which He has promised to spread on their faces, even that which has come from their most solemn feasts and that at some point both they and the refuse would be taken away together – something that had in effect happened to Israel throughout her history, that would happen again in 70AD with the Temple's destruction and the dispersion of the nation and something that will be repeated once more at the mid-point of the tribulation when the Temple and the priesthood, with its sacrifices is destroyed once again - Da 11:31 *"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.*

g). In the graphic nature of this description, demonstrating God's disgust with the priests, we find a parallel graphic description in the Book of the Revelation with respect to His 'Church', those who are called to be kings and priests - Re 3:15 *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

h). And as we know the solution to this deplorable condition of the 'Church', which exactly parallels the priests in Malachi, is exactly that which He has promised to the descendants of the House of Levi - Re 3:18 *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

4). Mal 2:3b.....*And one will take you away with it. 4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue," Says the LORD of hosts. 5 "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away*

from iniquity. 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.

a). The dispersion of the nation and the taking away of the sacrifices was and is to be a sign to the nation that He had indeed sent the commandment that they should give glory to His name. And the nation being taken away was and is for the purpose we have already seen - Mal 3:3 *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.* And this is so that, 'My covenant with Levi may continue'.

b). The covenant that God made with Levi was 'one of life and peace' and He had given life and peace to Levi so 'that he might fear Me' - and this is exactly what Levi did - *So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity.*

c). And the reason for Levi's fear and reverence is in no small part due to the circumstances by which the priesthood was given to his lineage - Ge 35:22 *And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:*

d). Reuben we will remember was Jacob's firstborn and as such was the one to inherit the rights of the firstborn, but because Reuben committed sexual immorality with Bilhah his father's concubine he forfeited those rights in much the same way as we saw with Esau and as a consequence the right to rulership was taken from Reuben given to Judah; the right to the priesthood was given to Levi and the double portion of the inheritance came to Joseph through his 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, whom Jacob adopted as his own sons shortly before his death.

e). The significance of this will have to wait until next time though - if the Lord is willing.