

Sunday November 24th 2013
Malachi – God’s Messenger
Part Six

1). 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. 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.*

a). We will no doubt remember from last week the graphic picture presented in v3 of the Lord spreading the refuse of Israel’s solemn feasts on the faces of the priests because of their failure to hear and to take to heart the Lord’s commandment, ‘To give glory to My name’.

b). And as we had seen last week the priests failing to give glory to His name had to do with their failure to give the Lord honor and respect because they failed to relate to Him as their Father who loved them – and this we will remember is no small thing because of what this relationship means – Ex 4:22 *"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.*

c). The Father / firstborn son relationship relates specifically to rulership and rulership relates specifically to the time when the glory of God shall fill the whole earth - Ps 72:19 *And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.*

The time when the present ruler of this age, Satan, and his fallen angels and Gentile world power are overthrown and order is brought out of chaos.

d). Israel’s very existence cannot be separated from this purpose and this outcome as it is for this purpose that the nation has been created –

Isa 43:1 ¶ *But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. 4 Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life. 5 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west; 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth- 7 Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."*

e). It is with a view to the fulfillment of this purpose that God sent the Prophets to the nation to call them to repentance, just as we see with Malachi, and it was within the remit given to the priesthood, those who were the keepers of the law, to teach the people the Word of the Lord to keep them focused on this coming Day of rulership and to prepare them to be ready for it when it arrived.

f). The very fact that Israel, the priesthood and the sacrifices were taken away quite literally in 70AD, based on that recorded in Malachi, should have been proof positive that God had indeed sent the commandment to give glory to His name with all that we now know this would entail – from our own perspective this historical event in fulfillment of scriptural prophecy provides us with great encouragement to continue our own race of the faith as we also look for and long for that great Day of the Lord's glory.

2). The graphic image in Malachi of the refuse spread on the faces of the priests finds its parallel in the Words of the Lord to His 'church' in – 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.*

a). And the extent of the parallel we see here is not limited to just the graphic nature of the imagery.

b). Those who comprise the 'Church' have also been created for a specific purpose as we know, but let's just put the scriptures together once

again –Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

2Co 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

c). The purpose for the new creation in Christ is to become the recipients of the 'Kingdom of God' [specifically the Kingdom of the heavens thereby replacing the present rulers] taken from an unrepentant, disobedient Israel – the focus for all Christians should be the coming Day when the Lord's Kingdom will be established in the heavens and on the earth and the Word of the Lord is to be taught to the eternally saved in order to keep them focused on this coming Day of rulership and prepare them to be ready for it when it arrives.

d). The lukewarm condition of the 'Church' that we see in Revelation is with respect to one thing only, lukewarm towards that which concerns Christ's coming Kingdom and the preparations necessary for its arrival, because just as we see with the priests in Malachi, the message concerning this Kingdom is not taught or is taught in a perverted form so as to render it worthless – 2Pe 2:1 ¶ *But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

Mt 13:33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."*

e). No Biblical doctrine is more resisted and refuted than that which teaches the salvation of the soul and the coming Kingdom of Christ.

f). For those with ears to hear and eyes to see however, there is the opportunity for repentance and submission to the child training of the Lord with the promise of rulership for those who do so – 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. 20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on*

His throne. 22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.""

g). The reason for the Lord's rebuke and chastening is for the purpose of bringing those who receive it to repentance in order that His purpose for them will be accomplished.

h). And the promise in Malachi is that the Lord will rebuke and chasten the House of Israel for exactly the same purpose - 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.*

i). And according to our opening verses from Malachi Chapter 2 the result of this refining and purifying to bring them to repentance will be that the Lord's covenant with Levi will continue.

3). 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.*

a). Now when we see the Lord's covenant with Levi here we should not think of it in terms of the individual son of Jacob by that name, but rather those who are of the lineage of Levi, his descendants. In the same way that the Lord uses the individual name Jacob or Israel when speaking of the whole nation that has come from this one man, so we should understand the use of the name Levi here. It does not preclude the individual but does go far beyond just one man to all those who have come from him.

b). Now with regards to the covenant the Lord makes with 'Levi' we find reference to it in - Nu 25:6 ¶ *And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. 10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. 12 "Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; 13 'and it shall be to*

him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel."

c). And what we will at once notice here is that Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron of the lineage of Levi is 'zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel'.

d). And this is not the first time we find this particular characteristic within the house of Levi - Ex 32:26 *then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD'S side-come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. 27 And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

e). What is most striking in these accounts is the unswerving devotion of the sons of Levi to maintaining the holiness of the Lord. And it is to Levi's descendants of course that the priesthood is given - De 10:8 *At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.*

f). And as we have seen from our scriptures this morning, after being purified, the sons of Levi will again bring an offering in righteousness, being zealous again for the God of their fathers - Eze 44:10 ¶ *"And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. 11 "Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. 12 "Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them," says the Lord GOD, "that they shall bear their iniquity. 13 "And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. 14 "Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it. 15 "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood," says the Lord GOD. 16 "They shall enter My*

sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.

g). What we see in these verses is that although the priesthood is given to Levi there is a distinction made between those of his descendants who are faithful and those who are not. Those who have been idolatrous will 'bear their iniquity' whereas those who have been faithful will stand before Him to offer Him 'the fat and the blood'. The determining factor is standing for the holiness of the Lord in the midst of those who do not.

4). Now here is something we might consider – the priesthood did not come to Levi by birthright – the rights of the firstborn, which included the rights of the priesthood were Jacob's firstborn son Reuben's by birthright, but because of his sexual immorality the rights of the firstborn were taken from him and divided amongst 3 of Jacob's other sons – rulership to Judah, the double portion of the inheritance to Joseph through Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh and the priesthood to Levi. Once these were taken from Reuben they could never be returned, just as we saw with Esau, and having now been given to the other sons, these rights would remain in their possession – they would be retained by no other lineage, but only by those of that lineage who were faithfully obedient to the Lord.

a). Now the rule from the heavenly realm of the Kingdom over the earth belonged to Israel as God's firstborn son – it was to the Jews that John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, came with the message - Mt 3:1 ¶ *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

b). And to the Jews that Jesus spoke the same message - Mt 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Mt 15:24 *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

c). The Kingdom of the Heavens was theirs, because of their firstborn status, but conditional upon their repentance from their sexual immorality with the nations of the world throughout their history.

d). No national repentance was forthcoming though and the nation's harlotry was brought to its zenith on the day of the Lord's crucifixion – Joh 19:15 *But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"*

Mt 27:25 *And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."*

e). Consequently, the heavenly realm of the Kingdom was taken from Israel, God's adopted firstborn son, and is presently being offered to the one new man in Christ.

f). This heavenly realm of the Kingdom can never be returned to national Israel in the same way as the rights of the firstborn could never be returned to either Esau or Reuben – it is now the exclusive province of the eternally saved from this dispensation, both Jew and Gentile.

g). But it does not belong to everyone who is eternally saved just because they are eternally saved – just as we have seen with the Levites so it is with the Christian – those who enter into an adulterous relationship with the world, who are unfaithful and disobedient will bear their iniquity – it will be those who are faithfully obedient, who are zealous for the Lord's holiness in the midst of those who are not, who will discipline their lives with a view to the salvation of the soul who will ascend the throne with Christ in that Day - Mt 5:20 *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Lu 11:23 *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.*

There is no middle ground here - 1Pe 2:6 *Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

5). Mal 2:6 *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 Lord tells us that 'Levi' feared Him and was reverent before His name and the lifestyle that characterizes this is presented in v6 showing 4 specific areas – Firstly, 'the law of truth was in his mouth' – he spoke the Word of God – now this is not about quoting the scriptures, but about governing what comes out of the mouth so that what is said is in line with the scriptures.

b). James addresses this issue quite thoroughly – let's look at a few verses - Jas 3:10 *Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. 13 ¶ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

c). Secondly, we see that 'injustice was not found on his lips' – the word translated 'injustice' comes from a word that means 'to distort morally', 'to deal unjustly'. This would have to do with treating people after an equal fashion no matter what their standing – and we can go to James again to look at a verse that provides an example of this - Jas 2:1 ¶ *My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? 8 ¶ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;*

d). Thirdly, 'he walked with Me in peace and equity' – to walk with God would be to be in step with Him, to be a conversant, to follow His leading. We might remember another individual who walked with God - Ge 5:21 ¶ *Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. 22 After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. 23 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24 And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

And as Enoch forms the foundational type for the rapture of the 'Church' his actions are instructive for us.

We also see that 'Levi' walked 'in peace and equity' – in the word 'peace' we would find not only peace with God, but also the peace of God. All of which would remind us of - Eph 6:15 *and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

Equity is a word that means 'made straight', 'uprightness', 'righteously'.

Ps 5:8 *Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.*

e). And fourthly, he 'turned many away from iniquity' – both through example and teaching many were turned away from their iniquity with the thought being that they then followed the example of 'Levi' –

Php 3:17 ¶ *Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*

Jas 5:20 *let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

f). And having given the example of 'Levi' Malachi then turns to the role that should be embraced by every priest - 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.*

g). Again here we see a reference to that which is to be said through the use of the word, 'lips' – and the lips of the priest are to keep knowledge – the idea here is that of protecting [literally to place a hedge around]. The lips of the priest then are to protect the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, by not saying anything that would undermine or compromise the truth.

h). And because of this consistency 'people' will come to the priest to find out what the scripture says.

i). And then we find the extraordinary statement that the priest is 'the messenger of the Lord of hosts'. And the use of the word 'messenger' seems fraught with significance – the writer of the Book is called Malachi which literally means 'God's messenger'. Then the word is used again twice at the beginning of the 3rd Chapter - Mal 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.*

j). Putting this together we cannot overlook the role of the priest as the messenger of the Lord who has a responsibility to 'prepare the way before Me'.

k). But we will have to continue with this next time, if the Lord is willing.