

Sunday December 1<sup>st</sup> 2013  
Malachi – God’s Messenger  
Part Seven

1). Mal 2:5 *"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. 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.*

a). We had seen last week how the Lord’s covenant with the Levites was based upon their zeal for the Lord’s holiness. We had seen dramatic examples of this in the action of the sons of Levi following the golden calf incident and the action of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron after the flaunting of a Midianite woman before the congregation of Israel.

b). This zeal for the Lord in the sons of Levi is then described to us through the 4 lifestyle traits that we see at the beginning of v6 – ‘The law of truth was in his mouth’, ‘injustice was not found on his lips’, ‘He walked with Me in peace and equity’, and he ‘turned many away from iniquity’.

c). In this lifestyle of holiness and faithfulness we see that the sons of Levi feared the Lord and were reverent before His name – the Lord’s covenant then, with the sons of Levi, was a covenant of ‘life and peace’ because of this.

d). Now the covenants of God exclusively belong to the children of Israel, there are no covenants made with Christians, nor will there be. Covenants are a part of God’s economy with the Jews alone – And this is true not only for the ‘old’ covenant, but also for the ‘new’ covenant. We will no doubt remember this from our previous study of the Book of Hebrews where the author quotes from Jeremiah - Heb 8:8 *Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—* And this is the same ‘new covenant’ that the Lord refers to on the night of the last supper - Lu 22:20 *Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.*

e). However, although there is no covenant made with Christians we do find a promise in the scriptures for those Christians who would have the same zeal for the holiness of the Lord as that which describes Levi in our opening verses from Malachi - Ro 8:6 *For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

f). To be carnally minded in the case of the Christian would parallel the condition of the priesthood in the days of Malachi's prophecy, whereas to be spiritually minded for the Christian would parallel the sons of Levi's zeal for the Lord's holiness and the promise for the Christian is that those who are spiritually minded, those who think the same way about things as God does, who are being transformed by the renewing of their mind through the Word of God, that such a lifestyle of faithful obedience is for them 'life and peace' – which should of course be seen within the context of the coming Kingdom of Christ.

g). In this we would see both life and peace relating to the future day of the Lord, but there is a present application that we would find concerning the word 'peace' – to be spiritually minded is to walk according to the Spirit, it is to have absolute trust in the Lord irrespective of our circumstances and in this we find the peace of God - Php 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

h). To be spiritually minded would mean that we are anxious for nothing as we don't focus on our present, but on the fulfillment of the promises of the Lord with regards to our future - 2Co 1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.* Col 3:14 *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* God is faithful – God can be trusted – He will do exactly as He has said and therefore we should let the peace of God rule in our hearts.

i). We can find additional commentary on this whole concept in – Pr 3:1 ¶ *My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; 2 For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, 4 And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man. 5*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 ¶ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.*

2). Having drawn attention to that which is commended in the sons of Levi the Lord then goes on to speak of that which He had always come to expect within the priesthood *"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 idea here is that keeping knowledge and sharing the truth with those who look for it should be the normal practice of the priest – this is not something special, but rather is expected – and this should be expected as their reasonable service because the priest is ‘the messenger of the Lord of hosts’ – he is the one who is to encourage and exhort and warn and make plain the purpose, plans and promises of God.

b). And as we had noted last week the idea behind the word ‘keep’ – ‘a priest should keep knowledge’ – is that of protection; being protective of the truth of God so that His truth is neither compromised nor corrupted.

c). And this we can understand in a variety of ways – firstly we can see the idea of protecting the truth by not allowing the truth to be dishonored or compromised because of our actions. This we can see in - Eph 5:1 ¶ *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. 3 ¶ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; 4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

If we are indeed imitators of God as dear children then neither our actions nor our words ought to bring shame and dishonor to the Word of truth or compromise its integrity.

d). Secondly, to protect the truth it is necessary to be constantly in the truth, believing unequivocally that which God has said and studying that which He has said in exactly the way He has given it to us, exactly as we are instructed within the scriptures themselves, so that it would become impossible for error to find its way into our understanding. We can see this in 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

e). And thirdly the protection of the truth comes through sharing the truth that others may govern their lives in accordance with God's purpose also; sharing with others may be for the purpose of instruction, for clarification, for warning, for encouragement or all the above depending on the circumstances.

f). Within our own setting there are a number of scriptures that speak to this very thing, one verse of which we looked at in Colossians Chapter 3 a short while ago - *16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

And we see here very clearly that teaching and admonishing one another must come from allowing 'the word of Christ' to dwell in us richly in all wisdom - which through the companion scripture to this in Ephesians we know to be the same thing as being continually filled with the Spirit - 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,*

g). We would also see this same thing in the previous Chapter from Ephesians from a slightly different perspective - Eph 4:13 *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

h). And then within a broader context we see this in - 1Pe 3:14 *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 ¶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*

i). And finally for those who minister the Word through the preaching and teaching of the Word there must be the unshakeable determination to

hold nothing back - Ac 20:26 *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

j). Again, within our own setting we should realize that what we read in Colossians, Ephesians and 1Peter should not be thought of as out of the ordinary, but rather should be our consistent practice. What we read in these scriptures is not something for someone else to do, no, this is for each of us individually to do – it is a most significant part of why we gather together and should not be taken casually or overlooked - 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.*

k). And as we think about this we will call to mind the admonition also given to us in the Book of Hebrews - Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*

l). Just as with the original recipients of the letter to the Hebrews the Lord has not been miserly in revealing to us the treasures of wisdom and knowledge from the depths of His Word – in consequence each of us ought to be able to ‘teach’ out of the abundance of that which we have been given.

m). Let’s be encouraged by this to do our share and let’s think seriously about how we live before each other and the Lord and that which we say to one another when we meet together - 1Th 5:14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 ¶ Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

3). As we know, the lips of the priests in Malachi’s day did not keep knowledge and those who sought the law from their mouth received only a perversion of the truth –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.*

In consequence the priests caused those in their charge to stumble at the law as they were neither taught nor corrected concerning their sin or taught that which the Lord required of an eternally saved people who were to occupy the

position as His adopted firstborn son – the end result being that they had corrupted the covenant of Levi – there no longer being life and peace for them- Ps 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.*

Pr 10:17 ¶ *He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray.*

a). And that which we see here with the priests in Malachi with regards to departing from 'the way' is the very situation found in Israel at the Lord's first advent – 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 it parallels exactly that which is current throughout the greater majority of Christendom witnessed in the lukewarm condition of the church of the Laodiceans towards the word of the Kingdom as recorded in the Revelation.

b). We will remember that our Lord said - Joh 14:4 ¶ *"And where I go you know, and the way you know." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

c). And interestingly, before Christians were called Christians, we see them referred to as follows - Ac 9:2 *and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

d). We would understand then that 'the Way' refers specifically to the lifestyle of faith necessary to the pursuit of the Kingdom of the Heavens – to be a part of that which the Lord has gone to receive for Himself.

e). We also know - Mt 7:14 *"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

To follow the way that leads to life is difficult because of the patient endurance, diligence and suffering that is to be found there and for many this is a price that is too high to pay as they choose to place the comfort of their flesh over the truth and promise of the Word of God – in effect then they have unbelief –Ro 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

2Ti 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

f). The way that leads to life is also difficult to find because for the most part it is not being proclaimed throughout the churches of the land. As a result

of the work of the enemy of our soul throughout the centuries the Way has been so corrupted as to be no way at all - 1Ti 4:1 ¶ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*  
2Pe 2:2 *And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.*

g). This is the result of the birds of the air nesting in the branches of the mustard tree, the tares sown amongst the wheat and the leaven placed in the 3 measures of meal in the Matthew 13 parables - 2Co 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

h). And then into this ungodly mix we must add those who have known and understood the way that leads to life but have chosen to turn away from it and pursue another course that can only lead to destruction - 2Pe 2:20 *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."*

i). And from our own experience we know that those who turn away inevitably take others, who are not properly grounded, with them.

j). Perhaps within all of this we can once again see the absolute necessity of keeping ourselves in the Word and encouraging one another on a continual basis.

4). Mal 2:9 *"Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law." 10 ¶ Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers?*

a). As we continue in the second Chapter of Malachi we find a part of the curse that the Lord has placed upon the priests – He had made them contemptible and base before all the people – and again we see the reason why He has done this - *Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law.*

b). Then, as we move in to v10, we encounter a shift in the focus of the Book. Up to this point we have seen how the corruption of the priests has affected their relationship with God as their Father – In v10 we now see how all of this impacts their relationship with one another.

c). And this shift in focus is presented through 3 questions, the first of which is – ‘Have we not all one Father?’ – God is the Father of all the Children of Israel – He is the One who has called them to a common purpose and He is the One who loves each one individually and without partiality. This spiritual relationship the nation has with Him takes them beyond the simple fact that they are all physical ‘brothers’, being the descendants of Jacob’s 12 sons, to the fact that they are brothers in the Spirit looking to the same purpose and the same blessing, with the same spiritual DNA if you will, that should draw them closer together - Ps 133:1 ¶ <<A Song of Ascents. Of David.>> *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-Life forevermore.*

d). The second question takes this thought to an even deeper level – ‘Has not one God created us?’ – Here we see a subtle shift from adoption to the foundation of creation. And in this question we would not only see the creation of Israel for the purpose of rulership - 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.* But we would also see a reference to God’s purpose for the creation of Man in the beginning - Ge 1:26 ¶ *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion*

e). And then putting these 2 questions together leads us into the 3<sup>rd</sup> – ‘Why do we deal treacherously with one another profaning the covenant of the fathers?’ The clear inference here is that this should not be so, but because of how they have chosen to relate to the Lord they do indeed deal treacherously with one another.

f). And here then is what we learn from this – How we relate to the Word of truth and consequently how we relate to the Lord will directly impact the way we relate to one another. Our dealings with each other would then provide us with a good measure in our progress towards spiritual maturity.

g). This is the very reason that we find this in - 1Jo 4:20 *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his*

*brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

h). And this in - 1Jo 5:1 ¶ *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.*

i). But we shall have to continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.