

Sunday December 29th 2013
The Signs of the Times

1). Although we are not continuing with our study of the Book of Malachi today, we do find this written at the beginning of Chapter 3 –
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.*

a). This is a verse that speaks about the coming of the Lord – concerning both His first advent and His second – and what we realize is that both of these advents are inextricably connected one with the other.

b). At the Lord's first advent we find in - 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!" 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

c). And this is what the scripture records of John - Lu 1:17 *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

d). A verse drawing directly from Malachi Chapter 4 - Mal 4:5 *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

e). And Jesus Himself said this of John in - Mt 11:13 *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

f). So then for those with ears to hear and eyes to see, knowing the Book of Malachi, the events surrounding the ministry of Jesus should have been easily recognized – but this was not the case as we will see from this recorded in - Mt 16:1 ¶ *Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 "and in*

the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

g). Signs, as we know in scripture, all point to future events, and within our particular context they would have to be pointing to that which will be accomplished at our Lord's second coming.

h). In fact the signs given to Israel concerning this are also found in the events surrounding our Lord's birth – As we will see.....

2). *Lu 2:6 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 ¶ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

a). What we see recorded in our scripture here is the birth of our Lord and the announcement of His birth made to the shepherds in the fields.

b). Christ the Lord is born in the City of David, Bethlehem, just as the scriptures said He would be - *Mic 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."*

c). Now the last part of this verse will take us to the promise made with regards to the Seed of the Woman in Genesis – taking us back into foundation.

d). *Ge 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

e). So let's take a moment here to remember what is being said and to whom it is being said - This is God the Father speaking to the serpent, Satan, the present ruler of this world after Man has sinned as a result of Satan's deception – and He, God the Father, is promising not only a Redeemer for

fallen Man, but also, as a result of the coming of the Redeemer and His redemptive work, the overthrow of Satan's kingdom by a new order of rulers.

f). Christ is the Seed of the woman and is the One to be Ruler in Israel – He is the One whose goings forth are from everlasting – the One in whom and by whom, God's plans and purposes for the ages in fulfillment of the Genesis 3:15 promise will be accomplished – Col 1:16 *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

g). To stir us up by way of reminder once again – it has been God's plan and purpose from the ages of eternity past, even before the creation of the original heavens and earth recorded in Genesis 1:1, that God the Son along with members of the created human race would rule together for a specific period of time over this one province in God's universal Kingdom.

h). And it is of course the birth of God the Son, the Seed of the Woman, whose going forth is from old, that is being announced to the shepherds.

3). Ga 4:4 *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

a). Christ's birth was not at an arbitrary time, nor in an arbitrary place, nor entrusted to a randomly selected couple.

b). Rather we see from our Galatians scripture that it was when 'the fullness of time had come' – precisely at the point God had set.

c). We have already seen from Micah that the location would be Bethlehem, the House of Bread, to which the living Bread from heaven would come.

d). Bethlehem is also the city of David – and the angel of the Lord had made an announcement to Mary concerning David - Lu 1:32 *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

e). And the angel's words here in Luke are in alignment with and in fulfillment of that which God had promised David - 2Sa 7:12 *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a*

house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.

f). With further commentary on this in - Isa 11:10 ¶ *"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."*

g). And here in - Jer 23:5 *"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.*

h). And of course through Mary and Joseph, both of whom are descendants of David, we would see Christ's right to David's throne within a human context - Through His adopted earthly father, Joseph, comes Christ's legal right to the throne through Solomon, as Joseph is from Solomon's lineage, and through Mary, Christ is in the bloodline of David through David's son Nathan.

i). Therefore at the time of His birth His kingship is already established, proclaimed by the angel - and then attested to by the Wise Men, - Mt 2:2 *saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."*

j). And later confirmed by the Lord - Mr 15:2 *Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered and said to him, "It is as you say."*

4). Now here is the interesting thing for us concerning the signs of the times - everything surrounding Christ's birth was exactly according to scripture and the event itself declares both regality and rulership.

a). But we will notice that Christ's assertion that He is 'King of the Jews' in our Mark scripture comes shortly before His crucifixion.

b). That which began in Bethlehem amidst angelic exaltation did not end at this time with the King on His throne, but with the Sacrificial Lamb on the cross - exactly as it should be.

c). For Christ to be the Savior of Israel and to redeem His people from bondage the Passover Lamb had to be slain and the blood appropriated in fulfillment of the type set in Exodus 12 - Joh 1:36 *And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"*

d). The Seed of the woman would have to have His heel bruised in accord with Genesis 3:15 if the serpent's head is to be crushed.

e). And all of this is perfectly consistent with that which had already been prophesied in scripture - Isa 53:2 *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And*

when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 ¶ Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

f). And the Lord Himself points this out to His two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection - Lu 24:25 *Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

g). The type had already been set in all the scriptures – set, in the account of Joseph who was rejected by his brothers and thrown into prison, symbolizing death, who would then deliver his brothers from tribulation and bless them at their second meeting, having first married a Gentile bride.

h). And set with Moses, who, rejected by his brothers, then went to a far country before returning a second time as their deliverer, having first married a Gentile bride.

6). We can see this same thing signified in the detail of the angel's announcement on the night of the Lord's birth - Lu 2:12 *"And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."*

a). How does the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger, point to something yet to come? Because of what we see on the day of the Lord's crucifixion - Joh 19:40 *Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.*

b). And then there is the Lord at His birth laying in a manger, which is literally a feeding trough, pointing to that to be offered by the Bread from

heaven – Joh 6:51 *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."* 52 *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"* 53 *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*

c). And in the eating of His flesh there are echoes of eating the flesh of the Passover Lambs on the night of the Exodus prior to deliverance and the eating of the shew bread in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

d). Then the gifts brought by the Wise Men also confirm this – Mt 2:11 *And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

e). The gold of course would signify His deity.

f). Frankincense is a spice that was placed on the shew bread, which itself is a type of Christ that we see referenced in John Chapter 6 - which would then be eaten by the priests as it was most Holy.

g). And together with myrrh would be used as an incense, as an offering to the Lord, and also together, frankincense and myrrh, were spices used for embalming the dead – these would be the spices referred to in John 19:40.

h). And none of this would really be surprising for us as these are the signs of the times pointing to the outworking of God's plans from eternity past. These are the markers on the pathway to regality and rulership in the age to come - Heb 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*

i). Re 13:8b.....*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

j). Only in this way, through His suffering, death and resurrection, would it be possible for Him to bring many sons to glory.

8). Although a multitude of the heavenly host declared – 'peace on earth' at the Lord's birth, Jesus Himself declares in - Mt 10:34 *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'*

a). And in this declaration the Lord is quoting from Micah Chapter 7, which contextually has to do with the righteousness of God towards His people Israel in the day the nation is restored.

b). And this quotation from Micah inevitably take us to the Lord's response to His disciples' question in Matthew 24 - Mt 24:3 *Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*⁴ ¶ *And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. 10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.*

d). Verse 10 here gives us commentary on Matthew 10:34-36, and vice versa

e). So we are looking here at events during the time of Jacob's trouble, the Great tribulation – specifically as they relate to the nation of Israel.

f). The many who will be offended, and betray one another and hate one another are Jews.

9). Christ's birth, when the Word became flesh, advanced the motion, so to speak, of a chain of events recorded in the written word, manifested through Christ, that would ultimately lead to a time described in – 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.*

These were the signs of the times that should have been discerned.

a). Although this most awful time of tribulation will be a reality with around half of the population of the earth being killed and two thirds of the nation of Israel perishing and the material creation brought to almost total devastation as God's judgment is exacted – the outworking of judgment is, and always has been, redemption and this is where the signs are pointing – God's redemptive purpose through His Son.

11). The announcements made by the angels surrounding the Lord's birth concerning the King and His Kingdom are an absolute reality, but would not

be accomplished at His first advent, but signify through His first advent what will be accomplished at His second.

a). From the foundational pattern set in Genesis onwards God would only work in a timeframe of 7 days – six thousand years of work, followed by a seventh thousand years of rest.

b). And the Lord came to the earth, born of a virgin in the full assurance of His plans and purposes being completed within the exact pattern that had been set.

c). In fact in Hebrews we find the writer, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quoting from Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel - Heb 1:5 *For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?*

d). The word 'begotten' refers to the natural process of birth, and Christ is the only begotten Son of God as He is the only Son to go through this process.

e). And our quotation from Psalm 2 – 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten you' – would be better understood as 'You are My Son, for this day I have begotten You'.

f). And the day He has been begotten for is the 7th Day, the Day of Rest, The Millennial Kingdom.

12). God the Son, the Christ, went through the natural process of being born of a woman, taking on a human body of flesh and blood in subordination to the god of this world for the sole purpose of accomplishing that which is necessary to bring about the 7th Day, the fulfillment of His plans and purposes for the ages.

a). He came as the Word of 2 Samuel Chapter 7 made flesh to bring the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to Israel – but which He knew would be rejected.

b). He came as the Seed of the Woman to have His heel bruised for the purpose of bruising the head of the serpent.

c). He came in the fulfillment of Exodus Chapter 12 as The Passover Lamb whose blood must be shed for the redemption of Israel.

d). He came as the Seed of Abraham to be the sinless sacrifice so that those who believe on Him might have eternal life.

e). He came to die in the flesh that He would be raised by the Spirit that through His resurrection those who are eternally saved would have a living

hope, an inheritance, a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, the offer of a position of rulership with Him in His Kingdom to come.

f). He came so that He could go and send the Holy Spirit to us as our Helper.

g). He came as a man, that as a man He would prove Himself worthy to take the kingdom from Satan – to reinstate man to the position for which he had been created – to have dominion.

g). He came to make possible another day when another miraculous birth would take place - Mt 24:8 *"All these are the beginning of sorrows.[lit. 'travail' – that suffered by a woman in child birth]*

h). Re 12:1 ¶ *Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

i). The setting for our scripture is the mid-point during the Tribulation where we see the woman to be the nation of Israel, the fiery red dragon is Satan who in verse 4 is cast out of heaven and the male child who is born in verse 5 is the 144 thousand Jewish evangelists.

j). Just as Christ is born of a virgin, so this male child is born to a woman, Israel, who to this point has been barren

i). Just as Christ, following His birth, escapes into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod to return to Israel after an unspecified time and then preaches the word of the Kingdom – so will the 144 thousand Jewish evangelists, the first fruits of what will be a reborn, repentant nation, be caught up to heaven, from which Satan has now been cast out and in which he no longer has jurisdiction, to return after an unspecified period of time to proclaim the message of the Kingdom to the Gentile nations during the last three and one half years of the Tribulation - Mt 24:14 *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

j). Then will come the end of the Tribulation, the end of Gentile world power, the end of Man's day, the end of the age.

k). The inheritance, the material creation, will have been redeemed, Israel will have been redeemed and will be placed at the head of the nations to rule them with a rod of iron and in accord with the promise made to Abraham, all the nations of the earth will be blessed through her.

l). The Lord's Day will be manifested in the earth - His Kingdom will be established and He will sit on the throne of His father David.

m). *Isa 66:7 "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child. 8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children. 9 Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the LORD. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?" says your God. 10 "Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; 11 That you may feed and be satisfied With the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted With the abundance of her glory." 12 For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; On her sides shall you be carried, And be dandled on her knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforts, So I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."*

13). Is it any wonder that a multitude of the heavenly hosts was praising God that night when God the Son was born of a virgin?

a). Is it any wonder that the Lord rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for not discerning the signs of the times?

b). *Lu 2:30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

b). And what about our-selves? Signs are not for us, but what will we do with the knowledge we have of them through the scriptures? And the knowledge we have of Israel's failure to discern them? The prophetic Word is confirmed through the birth, death and resurrection of our Lord – the Judge is

at the door and His Kingdom beckons. Let's pray that we will have eyes to see and ears to hear.