

Malachi 3 - His Coming; God is Faithful; Giving

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VI. God corrects Judah for questioning the benefits of practicing righteousness (Mal 3:13—4:6)

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Malachi 3

- (4) God's promise to cleanse Judah (3:1-7)
 - (A) Messenger's coming (3:1a)
 - (B) Lord's coming (3:1b)

1 "Behold, I am sending **My messenger**, and he will clear a way before Me. And the Lord, whom you are seeking, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the

covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of armies.

1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the LORD, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

1 "Watch out! I'm sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly, the LORD you are looking for will come to his Temple. He is the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Watch out! He is coming!" says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

- "...My messenger" - a play on the name of the prophet Malachi. Who is the messenger? Some see two messengers:

(1) John the Baptist, who is to go before and prepare the way (Cf. Matt 11:9-10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; John 1:23, drawing on Is 40:3-5)

- John was not the final or complete fulfillment of Elijah (Rev 11; Matt 17:11; Mark 9:12; Acts 3:21)

(2) "the messenger of the covenant" - Jesus Christ

- This appears to refer to His 2nd coming—as a Judge, establishing His Kingdom on the earth

(C) Cleansing described (3:2-5)

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like **launderer's** soap.

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

2 But who will survive the day when he comes? Or who can stand when he appears?

Because he's like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap,

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he [is] like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

- Judgment in view: the 2nd Coming

- "...launderer" - a person whose occupation was to clean, whiten, bleach, thicken, shrink, or dye cloth

— The fuller cared for newly shorn wool or woven garments

— The process generally included washing with lye ("fuller's soap") and cleansing by pressure, usually the treading of feet, as the Hebrew word implies (Ex 19:10; 2 Sam 19:24)

3 And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

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3 he will sit refining and purifying silver, purifying the descendants of Levi, refining them like gold and silver. Then they'll bring a righteous offering to the LORD.

3 And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

- Focus of "Jacob's trouble" is Israel. He is going to cleanse those who enter the Millennium.

4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old, and as in former years.

4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

4 Then the offering to the LORD by Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable as it was in the past, even as in former years.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 "Then I will come near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the **sorcerers**, the **adulterers**, against those who **swear falsely**, those who **oppress the wage earner** in his wages or the widow or the orphan, and those who **turn away the stranger** from justice and do not fear Me," says the LORD of armies.

5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

5 "I'll come near to you for judgment. I'll be a witness, quick to speak against sorcerers, against adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who defraud the laborer of his wage, against those who defraud¹ the widow and the orphan, against those who deprive the alien of justice, and against those who don't fear me," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that

oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

- "...sorcerers" - the occult. Widespread today, and increasing; demon worship, drugs; forbidden (Ex 22:18; Lev 20:27; Deut 18:14)
- "...adulterers" - glamorized by Hollywood, and our "popular" culture; forbidden (Ex 20:14)
- "...swear falsely" - liars; forbidden (Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Cf. Rev 21:8)
- "...oppress the wage earner" - exploiting the poor; cheating the laborer (Cf. Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14-15)
- "...turn away the stranger" - Ex 22:22-24; Lev 19:10; Deut 24:19-32; Zech 7:10

(D) God's covenant faithfulness prevents His cleansing from destroying Judah (3:6)

6 "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, the sons of Jacob, have not come to an end.

6 "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

6 "Because I the LORD don't change; therefore you children of Jacob aren't destroyed."

6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

- This is the key theme for the message of Malachi: God is immutable.

- They were not obliterated like the Edomites were because of grace.

- While a terror to the wicked, He is a comfort to anyone who will accept His grace.

(E) God calls Judah to repent to avoid cleansing (3:7)

(a) Call to repentance (3:7a)

(b) Judah's spiritual insensitivity (3:7b)

7 "From the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept *them*. **Return to Me**, and I will return to you," says the LORD of armies. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'

7 "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'

7 "Ever since the time of your ancestors, you have turned away from my decrees and haven't kept them. Return to me and I'll return to you," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies. "But you ask, 'How will we return?'

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

- The sixth of their haughty rebuttals, their affected injured innocence

- Israel had spent 70 years in Babylon and was now out, but Babylon wasn't yet out of Israel
- They were so far gone that they did not realize their true condition
- Ritualism has been substituted for reality; pageantry has been substituted for power, the aesthetic for the spiritual, form for feeling, the vocabulary without the Spirit
- "...Return to Me" - OT word for repent, turn around, change of mind

V. God corrects Judah for withholding tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8-12)

- (1) God's accusation of robbery (3:8a)
- (2) Judah's denial (3:8b)
- (3) God's explanation: Judah's withholding of tithes and offerings (3:8c)

8 "Would anyone **rob** God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, '**How have we robbed You?**' *In* tithes and offerings.

8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' *In* tithes and offerings.

8 "Will a person rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "By the tithe and the offering.

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? *In* tithes and offerings.

- "...rob" - steal, defraud, overreach

- "...How have we robbed You?" - the seventh sarcastic question. Pretending their pious, affecting a petulant ignorance.

- Feinberg lists four tithes: First-fruit—not less than 1/60 of corn, wine and oil (Deut 18:4); then:

- (1) 1/10th of the remainder after the firstfruits were taken, going to the Levites for their livelihood (Lev 27:30-33)
- (2) 1/10th paid by the Levites to the priests (Num 18:26-28)
- (3) A 2nd 1/10th paid by the congregation for the Levites and their own families at the tabernacle (Deut 12:18)
- (4) Another 1/10th every 3rd year for the poor (Deut 14:28-29)

- We, "under grace" are still to give, but the *basis* is broader

— Consider the Macedonian example (2 Cor 8:2-5)

(4) Curses and blessings (3:9-12)

(A) Curses for covenant infidelity (3:9)

9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation *of you!*

9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*

9 You are cursed under the curse—the entire nation—because you are robbing me!

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

(B) Blessings for covenant fidelity (3:10-12)

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this," says the LORD of armies, "if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

10 "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that [there shall] not [be room] enough [to receive it].

11 Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor will the vine in the field prove fruitless to you," says the LORD of armies.

11 Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the LORD of hosts.

11 And I'll prevent the devourer from harming you, so that he does not destroy the crops of your land. Nor will the vines in your fields drop their fruit," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

- Judgment comes upon a nation when it rejects God

— As in Amos 4:6-12 and Haggai 1:6, human spiritual progress—or the lack of it—can have an impact on nature, etc.

— At the Second Coming, all of nature will be healed (Rom 8:18-20)

12 "All the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of armies.

12 "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

- When Israel was right with God, they became a blessing to other nations (Gen 12:1-3)
- The ultimate fulfillment will be, of course, in the Millennium

VI. God corrects Judah for questioning the benefits of practicing righteousness (Mal 3:13—4:6)

(1) God accuses Judah of arrogance (3:13a)

(2) Judah's denial (3:13b)

13 "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'

13 "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'

13 "You have spoken arrogant words against me," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What did we say against you?'

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

- With the eighth impotent response, their rebuttal continues

(3) God explains that Judah has questioned the benefits of practicing righteousness

(3:14-15)

14 You have said, 'It is pointless to serve God; and what benefit *is it for us* that we have done what He required, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of armies?

14 You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?

14 You said, 'It is futile to serve God,' and, 'What did we get out of it when we carried out his requirements and went about like mourners in the presence of the LORD of the Heavenly Armies?'

14 Ye have said, It [is] vain to serve God: and what profit [is it] that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

[2 sets of answers: v13-15 by skeptics; v16-18, by believing remnant]

- "What good is it to serve God? It is an empty thing" (because their hearts were not in it)

15 So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also put God to the test and escape *punishment.*"

15 So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape."

15 and, 'Now we call the arrogant one blessed. Those who do evil prosper and those who challenge God escape the consequences.'"

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that tempt God* are even delivered.

- This is their atrocious statement of precisely the opposite of what God had stated in v10

— They thought they could tempt God and get by with it. But as Habakkuk found out in his day, God was moving and was going to judge them.

(4) God defends the benefits of righteousness (3:16—4:6)

(A) God will remember the righteous (3:16-18)

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened attentively and heard *it*, and a **book of remembrance** was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and esteem His name.

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.

16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other. The LORD listened and took note, and a scroll of remembrance was written in his presence about those who fear the LORD and honor His name.

16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

- These are those that "feared the Lord" (2x in this verse). A virtual synonym for righteous living (Lev 19:14; Deut 17:19; 2 Kings 17:34).

- God's "name" comprises His person, His qualities, His doctrine, His ethical and moral standards—these were the things that the believers judged to be their highest and most prized possessions!

— The believers thought on the name of the Lord and as a consequence it was reflected in their character (Matt 6:21; Prov 23:7)

— "...book of remembrance" - throughout Scripture, there is the theme that God keeps records (Rev 3:4-5, Dan 7:10; et al.)

— What does *your* report card look like? Where do you stand with respect to Him?

— Every time we even *think* on Him, it is recorded!

17 "And they will be Mine," says the LORD of armies, "on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will have compassion for them just as a man has compassion for his own son who serves him."

17 "They will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

17 "They'll be mine," says the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, "in the day when I prepare my treasured possession. I'll spare them, just as a man spares his own son who serves him.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

- OT: Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4

- NT: Eph 1:14; 2 Thess 2:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9

- The Pearl of Great Price: the Church [Oysters were not kosher...]

18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

18 When you return, you will see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and between the one who serves God and the one who does not."

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

- The final judgment will end all verbal abuse against heaven.

- In the Hebrew Bible, there is no 4th chapter of Malachi; the final 6 verses are part of chapter 3