
MALACHI 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; and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, he comes!" says the LORD of Armies.

In allusion to the custom of sending pioneers to prepare the way for the march of an eastern monarch, the coming of Christ's forerunner is described, and then the coming of Christ himself, Mal 3:1; with the terrible judgments which were to accompany that event, in order to refine and purify his people and his priests, Mal 3:2-6. The following verses reprehend them for withholding the legal tithes and offerings, with large promises in case of their repentance and amendments, Mal 3:7-12. The prophet expostulates with the people for their hard and profane speeches against the conduct of Providence, and declares God will one day make a fearful and final distinction between the righteous and the wicked, whose different characters are in the mean time carefully recorded, Mal 3:13-18.

Verse 1

Behold, I will send my messenger - מלאכי Malachi, the very name of the prophet. But this speaks of John the Baptist. I, the Messiah, the Seed of God, mentioned above, will send my messenger, John the Baptist.

He shall prepare the way - Be as a pioneer before me; a corrector of civil abuses, and a preacher of righteousness.

And the Lord, whom ye seek - The Messiah, whom ye expect, from the account given by the prophet Daniel, in his seventy weeks, Dan 9:24.

Shall suddenly come to his temple - Shall soon be presented before the Lord in his temple; cleanse it from its defilement, and fill it with his teaching and his glory.

The Messenger of the covenant - He that comes to fulfill the great design, in reference to the covenant made with Abram, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. See the parallel texts in the margin, and the notes on them.

MALACHI 3: 2 "But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like launderer's soap;

Verse 2

But who may abide the day of his coming? - Only they who shall believe on his name; for they that will not, shall be blinded, and the unbelieving nations shall be destroyed by the Romans.

Like fuller's soap - כבורית keborith, from ברר barar, to cleanse, any thing that deterges. Kali, or fern ashes, or such things. I doubt whether the composition which we call soap, was known in ancient times.

MALACHI 3: 3 and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

Verse 3

He shall sit as a refiner - Alluding to the case of a refiner of metals, sitting at his fire; increasing it when he sees necessary, and watching the process of his work.

The sons of Levi - Those who minister in their stead under the New covenant, for the Old Levitical institutions shall be abolished; yet, under the preaching of our Lord, a great number of the priests became obedient to the faith, Act 6:7; and, as to the others that did not believe, this great Refiner threw them as dross into the Roman fire, that consumed both Jerusalem and the temple.

MALACHI 3: 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.

MALACHI 3: 5 I will come near to you to judgement; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the perjurers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and who deprive the foreigner of justice, and don't fear me," says the LORD of Armies.

Verse 5

I will come near to you to judgment - And what fearful cases does he get to judge! Sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, defrauders of the wages of the hireling, oppressors of widows and orphans, and perverters of the stranger and such as do not fear the Lord: a horrible crew; and the land at that time was full of them. Several were converted under the preaching of Christ and his apostles, and the rest the Romans destroyed or carried into captivity.

MALACHI 3: 6 "For I, the LORD, don't change; therefore you, sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Verse 6

I am the Lord, I change not - The new dispensation of grace and goodness, which is now about to be introduced, is not the effect of any change in my counsels; it is, on the contrary, the fulfillment of my everlasting purposes; as is also the throwing aside of the Mosaic ritual, which was only intended to introduce the great and glorious Gospel of my Son.

And because of this ancient covenant, ye Jews are not totally consumed; but ye are now, and shall be still, preserved as a distinct people - monuments both of my justice and mercy.

MALACHI 3: 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my ordinances, 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?'

Verse 7

Gone away from mine ordinances - Never acting according to their spirit and design.

Return unto me - There is still space to repent.

Wherein shall we return? - Their consciences were seared, and they knew not that they were sinners.

MALACHI 3: 8 Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me! But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In tithes and offerings.

Verse 8

Will a man rob God? - Here is one point on which ye are guilty; ye withhold the tithes and offerings from the temple of God, so that the Divine worship is neglected.

MALACHI 3: 9 You are cursed with the curse; for you rob me, even this whole nation.

Verse 9

Ye are cursed with a curse - The whole nation is under my displeasure. The curse of God is upon you.

MALACHI 3: 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and test me now in this," says the LORD of Armies, "if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough for.

Verse 10

Bring ye all the tithes - They had so withheld these that the priests had not food enough to support life, and the sacred service was interrupted. See Neh 13:10.

And prove me now herewith - What ye give to God shall never lessen your store. Give as ye should, and see whether I will not so increase your store by opening the windows of heaven - giving you rain and fruitful seasons - that your barns and granaries shall not be able to contain the abundance of your harvests and vintage.

MALACHI 3: 11 I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before its time in the field," says the LORD of Armies.

Verse 11

I will rebuke the devourer - The locusts, etc., shall not come on your crops; and those that are in the country I will disperse and destroy.

Neither shall your vine cast her fruit - Every blossom shall bear fruit, and every bunch of grapes come to maturity.

MALACHI 3: 12 "All nations shall call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of Armies.

Verse 12

All nations shall call you blessed - They shall see that a peculiar blessing of God rests upon you, and your land shall be delightful; like Paradise, the garden of the Lord.

MALACHI 3: 13 "Your words have been stout against me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against you?'"

Verse 13

Your words have been stout against me - He speaks here to open infidels and revilers.

What have we spoken - They are ready either to deny the whole, or impudently to maintain and defend what they had spoken!

MALACHI 3: 14 You have said, 'It is vain to serve God;' and 'What profit is it that we have followed his instructions, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Armies?'

Verse 14

You have said, It is vain to serve God - They strove to destroy the Divine worship; they asserted that it was vanity; that, if they performed acts of worship, they should be nothing the better; and if they abstained, they should be nothing the worse. This was their teaching to the people.

Walked mournfully - Even repentance they have declared to be useless. This was a high pitch of ungodliness; but see what follows; behold the general conclusions of these reprobates: -

MALACHI 3: 15 Now we call the proud happy; yes, those who work wickedness are built up; yes, they tempt God, and escape.'

Verse 15

And now we call the proud happy - Proud and insolent men are the only happy people, for they domineer everywhere, and none dares to resist them.

They that work wickedness are set up - The humble and holy are depressed and miserable; the proud and wicked are in places of trust and profit. Too often it is so.

They that tempt God are even delivered - Even those who despise God, and insult his justice and providence, are preserved in and from dangers; while the righteous fall by them.

MALACHI 3: 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke one with another; and the LORD listened, and heard, and a book of memory was written before him, for those who feared the LORD, and who honoured his name.

Verse 16

They that feared the Lord - There were a few godly in the land, who, hearing the language and seeing the profligacy of the rebels above, concluded that some signal mark of God's vengeance must fall upon them; they, therefore, as the corruption increased, cleaved the closer to their Maker. There are three characteristics given of this people, viz.: -

1. They feared the Lord. They had that reverence for Jehovah that caused them to depart from evil, and to keep his ordinances.
2. They spake often one to another. They kept up the communion of saints. By mutual exhortation they strengthened each other's hands in the Lord.
3. They thought on his name. His name was sacred to them; it was a fruitful source of profound and edifying meditation. The name of God is God himself in the plenitude of his power, omniscience, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. What a source for thinking and contemplation! See how God treats such persons: The Lord hearkened to their conversation, heard the meditations of their hearts; and so approved of the whole that a book of remembrance was written before the Lord - all their names were carefully registered in heaven. Here is an allusion to records kept by kings, Est 6:1, of such as had performed signal services, and who should be the first to be rewarded.

MALACHI 3: 17 They shall be mine," says the LORD of Armies, "my own possession in the day that I make, and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him.

Verse 17

They shall be mine - I will acknowledge them as my subjects and followers; in the day, especially, when I come to punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

When I make up my jewels - סגולה segullah, my peculium, my proper treasure; that which is a man's own, and most prized by him. Not jewels; for in no part of the Bible does the word mean a gem or precious stone of any kind. The interpretations frequently given of the word in this verse, comparing saints to jewels, are forced and false.

I will spare them - When I come to visit the wicked, I will take care of them. I will act towards them as a tender father would act towards his most loving and obedient son.

MALACHI 3: 18 Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who doesn't serve him.

Verse 18

Then shall ye return - To your senses, when perhaps too late; and discern - see the difference which God makes, between the righteous and the wicked, which will be most marked and awful.

Between him that serveth God - Your obedience to whom, ye said, would be unprofitable to you.

And hits that serveth him not - Of whom ye said, his disobedience would be no prejudice to him. You will find the former received into the kingdom of glory; and the latter, with yourselves, thrust down into the bitter pains of an eternal death. Reader, ponder these things.

In the great day of the Lord, at least, if not long before, it will be fully discovered who have been the truly wise people; those who took up their cross and followed Christ; or those who satisfied the flesh, with its affections and desires, following a multitude to do evil.