

MALACHI

or

WILL A MAN ROB GOD?

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

MESSIAH'S COMING IGNORED

“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple” (Malachi 3:1).

THE DARKNESS OF UNBELIEF has a disastrous effect upon spiritual vision, and it had wrought serious havoc with these people. It was more than a contraction of the cornea; it was a case of obscuring cataracts—a blindness which remains to this day over the eyes of Jewish people.

As the coming of the Lord is the ultimate in expectation for the saints today, even so the advent of Messiah was the paragon of hope for the Old Testament Hebrews. But, as the day drew near, the darkness deepened in their hearts. Hope that ceases to inspire is no longer hope. Expectation that fails to encourage is no longer dynamic. An outlook without inducement is no longer vision.

No one would suspect that a people so profoundly guilty of apostasy could show any joyful interest in the fulfillment of divine prophecy. Their sun going down while it was yet day (Jeremiah 15:9) was an eclipse of national glory. Their apostasy of Malachi's day was a blackout of spiritual hope.

Four hundred years of darkness ensued as the lamp of prophecy did not shine until a stellar spotlight from heaven focused on a humble stable where lay a Babe Who was Immanuel-Saviour. The record speaks for itself: **“He came unto His own, and His own (the Jews) received him not”** (John 1:11).

As the callings of God are without repentance (Romans 11:29), so are His promises.

Whether man is faithful or unfaithful, true or untrue, God remains faithful, for He cannot contradict Himself (II Timothy 2:13). We may be assured, therefore, that the timetable of the Almighty will develop on schedule. God will do what He has promised. If man willfully chooses to ignore and reject it, he must suffer the consequences.

This is Israel, not only of the past, but of the present and of the (at least immediate) future.

The day will come, of course, when, as with Paul having his eyes opened (Acts 9), they shall see Him whom they have pierced (Revelation 1:7). A nation will be born at once (Isaiah 66:8). Messiah shall **“extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream”** (Isaiah 66:12).

THE FORERUNNER

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me” (3:1).

That this is John the Baptizer is supported by the words of Jesus, who, when referring to John, said, **“This is he, of whom it is written”** (Matthew 11:10). And His reference, of course, is to Malachi 3:1.

John was **“sent from God . . . to bear witness of the Light [Jesus] that all men through him might believe”** (John 1:6, 7). In his faithful witness, he declared, **“He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me”** (John 1:15). Expounding the truth, he emphasized that out of Christ's fullness have all received grace upon grace. Also, that **“the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”** (John 1:17). Then, in a most striking introduction with a pointing index finger, he announced, **“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29).

The Book of Malachi is irrefutable proof that the covenant people were ill-prepared for Messiah's coming.

It is evident that the dark inter-testament period did not change this condition. When the curtain rose on the New Testament era, it revealed a people who had no room for Messiah, imprisoned and beheaded His forerunner, hated intensely His message, conspired frequently to destroy Him and finally had Him impaled on a Roman cross between two dying thieves.

John identified himself by calling attention to Isaiah's prophecy (Matthew 3:3), then assumed his God-given responsibility of preparing the way for Messiah (Matthew 3:3). His uniform was made of camel's hair, gathered about him with a leather belt, and he subsisted on a simple diet of locusts and wild honey.

This envoy of the King, during his brief ministry, baptized repentant residents of Jerusalem and other parts of Judea. He castigated the Pharisees and Sadducees for their pride, pretense and traditional bias. Then, in graphic statements, he bore testimony to the work of Christ as Saviour and Judge (Matthew 3:11, 12).

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

“The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant” (3:1).

No segment of humanity should have understood this announcement better or appreciated it more than Malachi's people, although it fell on deaf ears in that day.

The announcement is both clear and concise. Someone was coming. It was someone whom they were seeking. It was the messenger of the covenant, even the Lord Himself.

“Whom ye seek” may seem inconsistent with the attitude of the people of that day. Can one be bent upon backsliding from the Lord (Hosea 11:7) and seeking for Him at the same time? Not likely. It must be conceded, however, that ever since the promise was given, there is a sense in which the people sought for His coming, or at least kept the thought of the glorious event in mind. There is a sense in which Messiah is expected by the Jews today.

Following are two excerpts from the Jewish prayer book:

- (1) “Blow the great triumph of our delivery, and raise the banner of the ingathering of our exiles and assemble us together from the four corners of the earth.”
- (2) “And return in mercy to thy city of Jerusalem and dwell in her midst as thou hast spoken, and restore her with a perpetual restoration speedily in our day.”

More specifically, of course, it must be assumed that Malachi 3:1 has reference to a future time, a time that finds them delighting in the Lord— **“whom ye delight in.”** Then there will be a seeking.

More than that, there will be a finding (Jeremiah 29:13). Then covenant relationship will be resumed. They shall no more be termed **“Lo-ammi”** (*not my people*) as in Hosea 1:9. Neither will they then be termed **“Forsaken”** anymore (Isaiah 62:4).

DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN

“He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap” (3:2).

This language is not consonant with joy and peace and blessing. Neither is it synonymous with millennial praise in the receiving and greeting of the Kings of kings and Lord of lords. No, there is a period of dense darkness before the day dawns, and our text alludes to it.

The questions, **“Who may abide?”** and **“Who shall stand?”** speak of the intensity and fearfulness of that day. We need not go beyond the context to find a description:

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up [consume them], saith the Lord of hosts” (4:1).

As to character, **“that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness”** (Zephaniah 1:15).

The foes of Christ will be hardened, as was Pharaoh. There will be wars, pestilences, earthquakes of great magnitude, dreadful suspense and anguish. The details are given in Revelation chapters 6 to 19.

But the questions asked are not without purpose: **“Who may abide?”** and **“Who shall stand?”** (3:2). Obviously, if any are to abide or stand, there must, of necessity, be divine intervention. And there will be.

John, in his apocalyptic vision, relates, **“I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried in a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads”** (Revelation 7:2, 3).

THE MESSIANIC PURGE

“He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi” (3:3).

Here is a new portrait of Messiah, a necessary portrait, if the blessings He holds in store for Israel (and the earth) are to be bestowed. **“Shall sit”** refers not so much to posture as to position, the work He must accomplish.

“The refiner’s art consisted in the separation of the dross from the pure ore, which was effected by reducing the metal to a fluid state by the application of heat, and by the aid of solvents, such as alkali (cf. Isaiah 1:25), which, amalgamating with the dross, permitted the extraction of the unadulterated metal” (Smith’s Bible Dict.).

It is evident, therefore, that there remains a preciousness in His people in spite of ages of departure, and it will be as pure gold when the dross of unbelief is purged away. The Refiner’s fire (judgment) is said to be like **“fuller’s soap.”**

The word **“fuller”**, as a basic root, means *“to trample”* as in the process of washing. Oriental women in early days used their feet as an agitator in doing their laundry. This is an added reason why **“shall sit”** (3:3) suggests position rather than posture. If it were to be taken literally, we would have Messiah sitting and trampling at one and the same time.

This is expressive terminology, albeit figurative. Messiah will purge out the dross. As the priesthood was first to be indicted (1:6), so the priesthood (**“Sons of Levi”**) are the first to be purged.

Verse 5 tells of Messiah’s return (not here in His triumphal second advent) to His dealings with His people. It explains also that He himself has witnessed the transgressions and iniquities of His people. He will not only be a witness but the Judge as well.

The offenders are termed sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, oppressors, and disregarded of strangers’ rights (3:5).

All of this impurity must go before fellowship with the Almighty and His people can be restored.

Jeremiah pleaded, **“O Lord, correct me, but with judgment [compassion]; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing”** (Jeremiah 10:24).

The reason the Jews will not be exterminated, either by Antichrist in his persecution or by the Lord God in His purging, is stated in 3:6: **“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”** (See Lamentations 3:22, 23).

The coming of Messiah should have been as much of a purifying hope for the Old Testament saints as the coming of Christ is for the Church (I John 3:3).

“That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3).

That we are again projected into the future is apparent by the contrast between the insincere and feigned worship of Chapter I and the righteous worship alluded to in the above reference.

A new day will dawn! Messiah will set things right at His coming. It will necessitate a dross purging and refining, pursuant to which God's people will reflect a rightness in their attitudes and actions.

This will be especially manifest in their worship, and worship is a barometer of devotion. The Lord God cannot rest until this is accomplished (Isaiah 62:1). Then and then only will He evidence His pleasure. Israel shall be called, **“Hephzibah—My delight is in her”** (Isaiah 62:4 Robert Young).

“Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years” (3:4).

This, of course, envisions the prophesied time when, not only will the people have the oil of joy instead of mourning (Isaiah 61:3), but the Lord will have honor instead of grief. He will have the deference due but so long denied Him. Instead of rebellion, there will be reverence; instead of treachery, there will be trustworthiness. When worship is pleasant to the Lord, all matters are acceptable to Him for worship is the heartbeat of spiritual conduct. When worship is pleasant, it is a sweet-smelling savor. When it is unpleasant through corruptness it is a stench in His nostrils.

RETURN AND REHABILITATION

When the way of the believer fails to coincide with the will of the Lord, there is broken fellowship with its attendant loss. There is an alienation of affection, a misplaced devotion. Foreign interests usurp control of the heart. They become tenacious tenants and difficult to expel. Thus, as long as Ephraim (Israel) was joined to idols, the instruction was **“let him alone”** (Hosea 4:17). The bent toward diverting idols must be curbed and the perverseness of heart purged before one is amenable to the way of truth and righteousness. This is definitely prerequisite to acceptable worship, and this is precisely what this prophecy has in view.

The foregleam of this rehabilitation is nowhere so vividly developed as in Hosea 14. There, in prophetic portrayal, Ephraim (Israel) renounces his idolatry, testifying, **“I have heard him [the Lord God], and observed him”** (Hosea 14:8). Then, with the proper perspective, he assures, **“The ways of the Lord are right, and the just [justified] shall walk in them”** (Hosea 14:9).

These future developments in the wise and wonderful economy of God will involve:

(1) *a resurrection of saved deceased Jews:*

“Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:12);

(2) *a regathering of saved living Jews:*

“Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land” (Ezekiel 37:21);

(3) *and a revival:*

“I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever . . . they shall not depart from me . . . Yea, I will rejoice over them” (Jeremiah 32:39-41).

Here, it should be emphasized that Jew and Gentile alike are lost in this day of grace if the provisions of the Saviour's cross work are not appropriated by faith. In this respect, there is no difference **“for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23).

HEALING IN HIS WINGS

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (4:2).

Deity, covered with the light as with a garment (Psalm 104:2), has been symbolized or manifested by such figures as a burning bush, a pillar of fire, the true Light, the bright and morning star, the Sun of righteousness. His Word also is spoken of as a lamp. (Psalm 119:105).

Israel's sun had gone down while it was yet day (Jeremiah 15:9). That is, they were cut off, dispersed, before their day had been accomplished. They have trodden the path of darkness ever since; and, while the immediate future is more threatening than promising, light will return! Here is the promise:

“I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations . . . thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob . . . Thy sun shall no more go down” (Isaiah 60:15, 16, 20).

The Sun of righteousness will arise **“unto you that fear my name”** (4:2).

This speaks of reverential trust or a state of godliness. Since “**Sun of righteousness**” here and “**Saviour and Redeemer**” in Isaiah 60:16 above are one and the same, it would seem that “**who fear His name**” is a designation for the saved.

When Christ returns for His Church, some will have died; some will be living. An identical situation will obtain with Israel. For the Church, there will be:

- (1) *a resurrection* (I Thessalonians 4:16),
- (2) *a rapture* (I Thessalonians 4:17).

For Israel, there will be, as stated above,

- (1) *a resurrection* (Ezekiel 37: 12),
- (2) *a regathering* (Ezekiel 37:21).

The members of the Church will have a “**spiritual body**” (I Corinthians 15:44) in order to go into Heaven with the Lord. “**We shall all be changed**” (I Corinthians 15:51). “**We shall be like him**” (I John 3:2).

There is nothing said about such a change for Israel since they are raised and regathered to enter the land (Ezekiel 37:12, 21; Jeremiah 32:37, 41).

“**Healing in His wings**” speaks of His power and His purpose to correct all ills and to set things right—the day of His triumph!

It will be a time of great celebration, when gladsome voices will mingle in saying, “**Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God**” (Revelation 19:1).

THE LIBERTY OF DELIVERANCE

“**Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall**” (4:2).

More freely, this would read, “***Ye shall go forth as calves out of the stall and grow.***” A calf of the stall portrays an animal secured by a halter and confined to narrow quarters, rendered captive and deprived of freedom. To loose it and turn it into the pasture to prance at liberty as it grows is an apt illustration of Israel's release from the oppression, persecution and displacement of these many centuries.

Yokes and bondage will be no more. Idolatry and self-will will cease. There is in the divine schedule of events a “set time” to favor Israel (Psalm 102:13), and this will be it.

“**For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea**” (Habakkuk 2:14); and when the Lord thus shows mercy to His people, their joyful song of dedication and devotion shall fill the air:

“Behold as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God” (Psalm 123:2).

A MARKED REVERSAL

“And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet” (4:3).

All the manifold indignities and indecencies which marred Israel's record are irrefutable proof that they allowed the wicked to triumph, to lead them astray.

They were tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. It was not always a living being who constituted an influencing and diverting enemy, such as those who introduced them to the golden calf dance (Exodus 32), or the escapade of Baal-peor (Numbers 25), or the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:18), or the weeping over Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14).

There were other wicked influences. These consisted of personal sins such as covetousness in the case of Achan (Joshua 7:21), jealousy, as when they asked for a king like the heathen (I Samuel 11:19), rebellion (Jeremiah 44:17), and disobedience (Jeremiah 7: 24). The day is coming when evil forces shall no more prevail. This is the power of God in fulfilling His holy purposes.

“I shall do this, saith the Lord” (4:3), must be noted carefully. In New Testament expression, **“It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure”** (Philippians 2: 13).

When God works, worship is pleasant, obedience is sweet, and praise is as natural as breathing.

A REMINDER

“Remember ye the law of Moses” (4:4).

Apparently the millennial kingdom will have no laws other than those already given through Moses on Mt. Sinai, with the possible and probable addition of what King Emmanuel gave in His Sermon on the Mount, which antedated the Cross and was, therefore, under the old covenant.

All the finer points of jurisprudence in nations such as those composed of English-speaking peoples are derived from the Holy Scriptures. There can be no higher type of human deportment than that advocated in precepts of the Bible.

When the Law, this law of God's Word (Isaiah 2:3), goes out from Jerusalem in Zion, then shall the swords be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks. They shall learn war no more. All suspicion and suspense shall disappear. Espionage, sabotage and inhuman carnage shall be things of the past. Arms races will be unheard of. Security pacts will be unnecessary. Destructive weapons will be converted in utilities for the benefit of mankind.

MESSIAH'S FORERUNNER

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (4:5).

When the name is specifically mentioned and the office stated, there should be no confusion as to the identification. Language cannot be more explicit. This is a clear introduction: By no implication can Elijah be thought of as John the Baptizer, nor John as Elijah.

The only similarity between Elijah the Tishbite and John the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth is:

(1) that John, the forerunner of the Lord in His first advent, was to go **“in the spirit and power of Elijah”** (Luke 1:17)—the same spirit and power Elijah will manifest as the forerunner of Christ in His second advent.

(2) There is a stated similarity in the purpose, though not in the execution of their ministry—**“to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.”** Elijah will have power to withstand any enemy until his ministry is accomplished. Then the beast, ascending out of the bottomless pit, will kill him and the other witness (Revelation 11:7).

In verses 5 and 6 we are clearly and concisely told:

- (1) when Elijah is to be sent;
- (2) why he is to be sent;
- (3) to whom he is to be sent;
- (4) who does the sending.

When will Elijah be sent?

Let the Bible speak for itself. **“Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord”** (4:5).

This period is referred to in Revelation 11:3-6. It is the second half of Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:27), the day of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). It will begin when the **“abomination of desolation”** shall **“stand in the holy place”** (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15). This period will be in duration three and one-half years, otherwise referred to as **“time, times and half-time,” “forty-two months,”** or **“a thousand two hundred and three score days.”**

Elijah is to be sent as one of the two special witnesses for the Lord in the Great Tribulation.

Why will Elijah be sent?

He will come to **“turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers”** (4:6). This apparently is a double expression of a single fact—the restoration of affection toward the Lord God like unto that of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the Lord was forced to declare His covenant people “**Lo-ammi**” (*not My people*) in Hosea 1:9, allowing them through their own self-destruction (Hosea 13:9) to be dispersed among the nations (Jeremiah 39:1), and to be “**many days** [now approximately 2500 years] **without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice. . .**” (Hosea 3:4), their hearts were removed far from Him (Isaiah 29:13), and their dealings with Him were not from the heart (Hosea 7:14). The blueprints of the Lord God call for a reversal of these conditions as follows:

“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them . . . I will bring them again unto this place . . . and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them and of their children after them” (Jeremiah 32:37-39). God will use Elijah to bring this about.

To whom will Elijah be sent?

“Behold, I will send YOU Elijah” (4:5).

Primarily, then, he will be sent to the children of “**their fathers**”; that is, to the descendants of Jacob, to Elijah's own people as to the flesh. That the Lord is not through dealing with Israel is prodigiously revealed in the prophecies. The curtain fell before Israel's day was done (Jeremiah 15:9). Her sun will rise and never more go down (Isaiah 60:20).

When God asked, “**O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter** [who made the marred vessel over until his product pleased him]?” He meant that He would do the same with Israel which is the clay in His hand (Jeremiah 18:6; Isaiah 64:8).

And this He will surely do!

“Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [*My delight is in her*]” (Isaiah 62:4).

The Lord will be restless until this is accomplished (Isaiah 62:1); and when it is accomplished, the nations will call them, “**The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord**” (Isaiah 62:12).

Jeremiah attempted this but failed. “**Stand ye in the ways,**” he appealed, “**and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.**” The people brazenly answered, “**We will not walk therein**” (Jeremiah 6:16). Then they cast him into prison.

John the Baptist made a similar attempt (Luke 1:17) and he was decapitated as the people plunged onward in unbelief. In all three cases, the faithful spokesmen suffer in delivering the message. But Elijah will meet with success before he meets with martyrdom.

By whom will Elijah be sent?

“I [the Lord] will send you Elijah” (4:5).

John, the forerunner of the Lord in His first advent, was “**a man sent from God**” (John 1:6). Elijah, the forerunner of the Lord in His second advent, likewise, will be a man sent from God, specially commissioned.

The Scriptures seem to leave no doubt about Elijah's being one of the two special witnesses during the Great Tribulation period. The question naturally arises, who is the other witness? Who will be Elijah's contemporary during that dreadful time? A surprising number of expositors favor Moses; a lesser number, Enoch. Of the two, Enoch would seem to be the more likely for the following reasons:

1. God's Word is definite in stating that “**it is appointed unto man ONCE to die**” (Hebrews 9:27); and that “**death hath passed upon ALL men**” (Romans 5:12).

Now, if one of these witnesses of Revelation 11 is other than Elijah or Enoch, he will have died twice, for these two witnesses are to be killed (Revelation 11:7). If Enoch is not to be one of these witnesses, then he will not have died ONCE.

Until the Rapture and the intervention of our coming Lord, ALL men are under the appointment of death.

2. Enoch's message equips him admirably for a ministry during the Great Tribulation period. Here is the record of his prophesying:

First, “**The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints**” (Jude 14).

Second, when Christ returns, He will “**execute judgment upon all**” (Jude 15).

3. If it be insisted that the one witness is to be Moses because the water is to be smitten and turn to blood, and plagues are to be called forth on the earth (Revelation 11:6), and Moses did both of these at a former time, let it be remembered:

(1) the turning of water to blood and producing plagues were by no means “**exclusives**” with Moses, thus robbing this suggestion of any support here. Aaron also performed such miracles (Exodus 8:6). Not only that, the magicians of Egypt did likewise, duplicating almost everything Moses did (Exodus 7:22; 8:7, etc.).

(2), if God gave Moses and Aaron that power in the days of old, and permitted heathen magicians to do the same, there can be no good reason to doubt that the Lord is able to grant such power to Enoch.

4. Since there are “**ranks**” (I Corinthians 15:23), “**parts**” (Revelation 20:6) and “**lots**” (Daniel 12:13) to the First Resurrection, and since Moses “**rests**” with the other saved Jews of the old dispensation, and since their “**lot**” is to “**stand**” (be resurrected) at the end of the (1260) days or the end of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:13), Moses would still be in his grave while the two witnesses are prophesying.

5. If Moses is to be raised from the dead to be one of the two special witnesses of the Great Tribulation, and this is nowhere even intimated in the Bible, and since both witnesses are to be killed (Revelation 11:7), then Moses will have died TWICE. This cannot be, for the Bible teaches there will be no SECOND death for a believer.

6. Add to all of this the fact that, according to the plain statements of the text, BOTH witnesses will have power to shut up the heavens. BOTH will have power to turn the water to blood. BOTH will have power to smite the earth with plagues: **“THESE have power to shut heaven. . . and [these] have power over waters . . .”** (Revelation 11:6). Neither one is limited in this unprecedented ministry to what he had done in the past.

7. It is not unusual strategy for an athletic coach to take two star players from the lineup for a more advantageous moment to place them in the field. Just so, the great God of the universe removed these two from the lineup of humanity without their tasting death (II Kings 2:11; Hebrews 11:5) in order (presumably) to return them to the scene of human operation for a special ministry before death can strike them.

8. Also, since Elijah is to be sent particularly to witness to the Jewish people during the Great Tribulation, and since Gentiles are to be saved during that period, does it not seem plausible that Enoch, a non-Israelitish saint, might possibly have a message for the Gentiles, just as Peter was the apostle of the circumcision and Paul the apostle of the uncircumcision in the Church age? This in no wise implies a different message by each, but it does correlate with the fact that the gospel of the kingdom is to be preached to all nations.

PROPER PERCEPTION

“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (3:18).

In that day, there will be no questioning of God's love, no profaning His name, no corrupting His worship. They will have a clear understanding of God's way and will, all because they will then be willing. This could have been their joyful lot from the beginning, but no one is so blind as the one who does not want to see.

To Jeremiah, they said harshly, **“As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee”** (Jeremiah 44:16).

The rebellious people to whom Hosea ministered were destined to disillusionment. They thought him foolish and irrational. The day was to come, and did, perhaps as they sat discouraged along the rivers in Babylon (Psalm 137), when they confessed the prophet was not a fool, the spiritual man was not mad (see Hosea 9:7).

The Roman centurion, directing the crucifixion, was also disillusioned. As the sky darkened and the thunder blasted and the lightning flashed and the earth quaked, he said, **“Truly this was the Son of God”** (Matthew 27:54).

The moral is, it is always wise to repose faith in God's Word. His Word is entirely dependable (Psalm 119:128). It is certain of fulfillment (Acts 27:25).

HIS JEWELS

“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels” (3:17).

The simile had a striking application when it comes to divine rewards. **“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).**

“There is one glory of the sun, . . . and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also in the resurrection of the dead” (I Corinthians 15:41,42).

The Lord God indicated particular delight in referring to the time of restoration. **“Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isaiah 62:3).**

These are His jewels—His precious ones, His peculiar treasure (Deuteronomy 14:2).

“And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (3:17). To spare means *to have compassion or pity*.

God spared not His own Son (Romans 8:32), yet He spares those who are devoted to Him in worship and service. To be spared means to be spared from something or for something. Of course, the worst thing to be spared from is unbelief. The best thing to be spared for is the blessing and reward of the Lord. This is why Paul reiterated the statement, **“I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren.”** He was reflecting the desire of God.

The **“sparing”** refers to the day that will **“burn as an oven” (4:1)**, but it does not necessarily promise immunity from the inevitable persecution. It offers no hope of escaping the wrath of **“the man of sin.”** It would seem that it is not a sparing FROM but a sparing FOR. They will be sealed. They will be sustained. They will be assured of divine rescue. They will be overcomers by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11). They will not fear him who destroys the body but cannot destroy the soul.

This closing book of the Old Testament has but four brief chapters, containing a total of only fifty-five verses, less than many single chapters in both Old and New Testaments. To study it, one must be prompted to say, *“Multum in parvol”*—much in little. Like the massive roots of a willow tree, much of its message is not seen on the surface. It reaches into almost every book in the Bible. It towers as a gigantic antenna with guy wires anchored firmly in the eternal inspiration of Deity.

It beams its challenging revelation:

- (1) to the people contemporary with its delivery,
- (2) as a warning to those to whom the ends of the age are imminent (I Corinthians 10:11).

It is monumental to the love and patience of the Lord God. It is likewise exhibit No. 1 read into the eternal record concerning the deceitfulness, rebellion, irreverence and sacrilege of the human heart.

God's people condoned what He condemned; went against His warning; and denied Him what He desired.

As their accelerated plunge toward the day of reckoning sent them near the precipice, the Lord wrote the epitaph, "**O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself**" (Hosea 13:9). He also assured, "***I know the plans I am planning, to give you a future and a hope***" (Jeremiah 29:11, lit.).

Trite comments have been made about the Old Testament ending with the word "**curse**;" But this is not the major note of the verse. It is an alternate word. It would be well to observe that climactic notes are predominant in all but the first verse of the last chapter.

- In verse 2, there is promised healing and liberation.
- In verse 3, there is triumph over wickedness.
- In verse 4, there is continuation of immutable divine Truth.
- In verse 5, the successful forerunner comes into view.
- In verse 6, there is a return to basic principles, when the disobedient shall be turned to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17).

Here Malachi ends.

Here the Lord God rests His case.

~ end of book ~

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