

# 17. MALACHI

460 BC

Malachi is the last prophet of the OT. The next prophet, John the Baptist, was the last prophet under the old covenant. Between these two prophets, there were 485 years of silence. Where is the Messiah? When will the prophecies be fulfilled? Malachi prophecies about the messenger who would precede the Messiah before that great and awesome day of the Lord.

## **The Lord's messenger precedes the Messiah**

*Malachi 3:1-4*

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come” (Mal 3:1). The Lord will send his messenger, who will prepare the way before him (that is, before the Messiah). The Lord whom Israel seeks, the Messenger of the Covenant, will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger is John the Baptist, and the Messenger of the Covenant is Jesus.

The word for messenger in Hebrew and Greek can also mean angel. So the Messenger of the Covenant may be interpreted as the Angel of the Lord who in ancient times appeared to people in human form and spoke to them as the Lord himself. As there is no evidence of the Father and the Holy Spirit appearing to people on Earth like this, it can be assumed that the appearances of the Angel of the Lord are appearances of God the Son.

The messenger who was sent is, according to Jesus (Mt 11:10), the prophet, John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus. He

preached repentance and pointed people to Jesus, whose sandals he was not worthy to untie. The messenger is spoken of again by Malachi, when he says, “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord comes” (Mal 4:5) But this is a different occasion.

Jesus went to the temple each year during his ministry, but hardly suddenly. These verses have two fulfillments relating to the two comings of Jesus. The first and second comings of Christ are here brought together.

“But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap” (Mal 3:2). This relates to his second coming. Only the saints will stand tall on that day, those who trust in Jesus and have been made righteous by his shed blood. When the Messiah returns, one purpose is to come in judgment as a refiner and to purify the Levites and reinstate them in the temple worship, so that appropriate offerings can be made to God. Jeremiah also prophesied about the role of the Levites in the Messianic era: “For this is what the Lord says: “David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel, nor will the Levitical priests ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices” (Jer 33:17-18). He added that the fulfillment of this prophecy is just as sure as the continuance of day and night (Jer 33:20-22).

## **The Lord’s treasured possession**

*Malachi 3:16-18*

The Lord knows those who are his, their names are written in his Book of Life, and he will save them. As in the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Lord will treat the righteous differently from the wicked. The phrase ‘treasured possession’ hearkens back to Exodus 19:5-6, where God told Israel that if they obeyed him, they would be his treasured possession among all peoples, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Peter, likewise, views the Church as being a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s treasured possession (1 Pet 2:9). These verses concern those who fear the Lord, not the whole

nation of Israel. They are the righteous, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and they will be resurrected and constitute the monarchy in the Messianic kingdom.

## **The Great Day of the Lord**

*Malachi 4:1-6*

The day is coming, the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. It is a day of judgment and a day of fire, burning like a furnace. All the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble that will be burnt up. The righteous will tread down the wicked as ashes under their feet. This is the judgment on the wicked on the Day of the Lord when Jesus returns. A Psalmist describes this event like this:

“Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the Earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the Earth” (Ps 97:2-5).

When Jesus returns, we should think of the glory of the Lord as seen by Ezekiel in his visions.

“And I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the East. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory” (Ezek 43:2).

His coming will be very bright and noisy. Isaiah said:

“See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with his sword the Lord will execute judgment upon all people, and many will be those slain by the Lord” (Isa 66:15-16).

Paul expresses it this way:

“This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:7-8).

Peter builds on these prophecies:

“But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the Earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Pet 3:10).

In case we think it is the end of the world, he adds:

“But in keeping with his promise (Isa 65:17-25) we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new Earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13).

The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in its wings for those who revere his name. Half the English translations personalize the sun, others leave it impersonal, but it is hard to see the meaning of a righteous sun or the sun as righteousness. The Sun of Righteousness has been interpreted by many as the Messiah who will come to dispel the gloom and destruction of the great tribulation and to usher in a new era of righteousness. He is like the sun which has health and healing in its rays. The righteous, those who fear his name, will be so happy and excited at the coming of the Lord that they will jump around like young calves. How else could one express the excitement of that event as the resurrection and raptured saints rise to meet the Lord in the air?

The saints will rule in the Messianic kingdom. They will have authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron. They will trample down the wicked as ashes under their feet. The righteous will at last have dominance and the wicked will be killed or at least humbled before them. The righteous are told to remember the commandments that Moses received on Mt Sinai because they are to rule with justice and righteousness.

Verse 6 is quoted by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father (Luke 1:14-16). He said that John would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. Jesus confirmed that (Mat 11:14) but he also leaves open a second coming of Elijah when he says “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things” (Mark 9:12). His ministry is seen as a reconciliation between the fathers (the godly patriarchs) and the children (their degenerate descendants), or else a general change of heart toward their fellow man. The Septuagint translates Malachi 4:6 as: “Who shall turn again the heart of the father

to the son, and the heart of man to his neighbour, lest I come and smite the Earth grievously.”

The context here is “before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord” which is not the time of Jesus’ birth, but rather the return of the Messiah in judgment. Malachi saw a prophet like Elijah in the distance, preceding the ministry of Jesus and calling Israel to repentance; that was John the Baptist. Then he sees Elijah again before the Day of the Lord and this time it is not John the Baptist.

Malachi mentions Moses and Elijah in these final verses of his prophecy and we meet them again at the transfiguration (Luke 9:31) where they speak with Jesus about his death, resurrection, and ascension. The Lord’s two unnamed witnesses of Revelation 11, who preach for the last 3 1/2 years before the Lord’s return, resemble Moses and Elijah since Elijah brought drought for 3 1/2 years (James 5:17) and called down fire on people, while Moses called down plagues on people and turned water into blood (Rev 11:5-6). For the whole nation of Israel to be converted to Jesus, it is appropriate that the two witnesses should be strong representatives of the Law and the Prophets.

As a result of their ministry and their ascension after an earthquake, seven thousand people die and the rest give glory to the God of heaven. The ungodly Gentiles at this time do not repent or give glory to God; they can only curse him (Rev 16:9, 11, 21), so those that give glory to God here may be in preparation for Israel’s imminent conversion when the Messiah arrives and pours out his Spirit upon them (Zech 12:10).

The context here fits the Messiah’s coming in judgment. Israel is warned that if they don’t repent, their land will be marked for destruction.