



Malachi 3:1

The Messenger of the Covenant

The book of Malachi gives us the last recorded revelation from Yahweh in the Old Testament. It will be 400 years before another voice is heard. These were long silent years in preparation for the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant. Malachi means my messenger and was written shortly before 432 B. C. It parallels the conditions in Ezra and Nehemiah. This book best fits the situation existing after Nehemiah's first visit before he returned from Persia in 432 B. C. Until the appearing of John the Baptizer no other messenger was directly sent to Judah from Yahweh.

In spite of Judah's sins and rebellion against the LORD there is the appealing words, "I have loved you," says Yahweh to His people. The message shows how the love of God will prove His choice of Israel. A day of healing or a day of burning is coming depending upon the response of the people. As in our day they were orthodox, but denying the power thereof. He gives a message to the priests in the opening chapter and then the balance is addressed to the people. A corrupted priesthood equals a corrupted people. The Lord has the right to demand the best, for He is a great King. "

Malachi presents a remarkable picture of God's holiness and man's unrighteousness. It is a message of God's unmerited, free grace and man's self-righteous demand of reward.

THE LORD WILL COME TO REDEEM AND JUDGE

Yahweh is an unchanging God of holiness and infinite grace. He warned His people to repent because their past behavior had worn Him out (2:17). "You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, How have we wearied Him? . . . Where is the God of justice?" They had succeeded in making Yahweh tired of His people! They were blinded by their self-righteousness. They insolently asked, "How have we wearied Him?" They insulted Him in their whine, "Where is the God of justice? Who are You to grow tired of us who have meticulously observed Your Law? Others in rational piety asked, "Where is the God of judgment? They had no realization of unmerited grace of God in their lack of understanding of total depravity and unworthiness. Their sense of the grace of God became darkened. They were charging Him with injustice and were too blind to see their own self-righteousness. Chapter three opens with an urgent plea and warning to His dissatisfied, rebellious self-righteous people who charged the Lord with injustice. How does the Lord answer their false charges?

"My Messenger" (3:1)

It was through My messenger, Malachi that Yahweh declared, Behold, I will send My messenger (using the same word as the prophet's name), and he

will send My messenger (using the same word as the prophet's name), and he shall prepare by clearing the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He shall come, says the Yahweh of hosts (3:1, Pounds Paraphrase).

Behold I will send . . . He shall come. Yahweh of Hosts is the speaker. Driver notes, "It asserts forcefully and suggestively the certainty of the approach. The LORD was predicting the coming of the herald of the King, Messiah, in such a way that it was plain that the Messiah Himself was identified with Yahweh. He shall prepare the way before Me. The LORD sends My messenger, My angel, My herald to announce the Lord's coming and to prepare the way before Me (Isa. 40:3). The messenger will prepare the way for the Lord by calling the rebellious self-righteous people to repentance. He will remove the spiritual stumbling blocks of self-righteousness, arrogance, unbelief, crookedness and perversity. Only God can do that! The messenger will deliver God's message.

Keep in mind the word in Hebrew for angel and messenger is the same. John the Baptizer was the angel of Jesus, but Jesus Himself was the Covenant-Angel of whom Yahweh had said long ago, "My name is in Him" (Exodus 23:20, 21). It was to this very temple, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and enlarged by Herod, that the Messiah suddenly appeared.

All four of the Gospels identify the messenger by declaring that Isaiah 40:3 was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; 11:7-10; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). He is also called the second Elijah (Malachi 4:5).

The angel told Zechariah, "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16-17).

Jesus quoted Mal. 3:1 giving His acceptance that John the Baptizer was the fulfillment of this prophecy. Matthew 11:10-15 says: "This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way before You. Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'"

The Hebrew scholar E. W. Hengstenberg gives a good argument for the messenger as a collective term that included all prophets preparing the way for Christ and coming to a climax in the person of John the Baptizer. I think, however, it is best to take this prophecy as being specifically fulfilled in the mission of John. Malachi presents a messenger to come in the future, who is definitely identified by Christ and others as John the Baptist who is the special herald of the Lord. Cf. Matthew 3:2-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:7-18; John 1:6-8, 19-

Baptist who is the special herald of the Lord. Cf. Matthew 3:2-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:7-18; John 1:6-8, 19-36; 3:22-36.

What will be his responsibility? "Clear the way before Me." His job will be to remove or "clear away" all the impediments lying in the road. He will remove all that retards the coming of the Lord. The enmity toward God, ungodliness of the people will be removed by calling upon the people to repent. Cf. Isaiah 40:3. The Messenger will call the people of Judah to turn from their sins to the Lord with a pure heart. Was that not the message of John the Baptist? When he arrived on the scene in the wilderness of Judah his message was clear and penetrating. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:1-2). Matthew quotes Isaiah 40:3 demonstrating that John is that messenger of the LORD (v. 3).

We hear the voice of Yahweh speaking in the first person announcing His advent and then suddenly speaks of Him whose way shall be prepared in the third person. The Lord . . . will suddenly come. The name for God here is L'rd (*adon*) the same word in 1:6 translated master, ruler. He is the one vested with authority and power. With the article He is the Supreme Ruler.

Micah is stressing that the Son of David called his Lord (*adon*) who is sitting at the right hand of the Lord Yahweh (Psa. 110:1). Jesus said to the Pharisees who were gathered about Him: What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He? They said to Him, The son of David. Jesus responded to them, Then how does David in the Spirit call Him L'rd, saying, The LORD said to My LORD, sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet? If David then calls Him L'rd, how is He his son? (Matthew 22:42-45). The one sitting at the right hand of the Yahweh is Yahweh Our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5f), and our eternal royal high priest. He is one with Yahweh in one indivisible essence and being. The message is clear to all who will yield to Him: when the Lord Jesus the Messiah comes, Yahweh comes. And the Father are one (John 10:30). He who has seen Me has seen the Father . . . the Father abiding in Me does His works. . . I am in the Father, and the Father in Me . . . (John 14:9-11).

Jesus said it was John the Baptist in Mathew 11:10-14; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27, referring to Malachi 4:5. Note the context. Cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:25; 14:6.

This messenger is a concrete personality. How interesting that not a single prophet rose in Israel between the Hebrew prophet Malachi and the coming of John the Baptist. John is the extraordinary messenger of God in the spirit and character of Elijah.

THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

"The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple" (cf. Mal. 1:7, 10; 2:13; 1 Kings 8:11; Hag. 1:9, 14; Ex. 25:8; 40:34ff). The Lord is (*ha Adon*) Adonai. He will come suddenly, unexpectedly as a thief in the night. Suddenly is never used to denote immediacy, but always means unexpectedly, regardless of the lapse of time.

God will "send His messenger," John the Baptizer who will announce the "Messenger of the Covenant," or angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's birth was announced suddenly, unexpectedly (Luke 1:5-22). The unexpected sudden announcement of the Messiah's birth came shortly thereafter (1:26-38; 2:8ff; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-8). The unexpected voice was heard in the wilderness calling men to repentance (Luke 3:2ff), and the Messiah appeared suddenly (Lk. 3:21ff; Jn. 1:10f, 29ff, 46ff; 2:18; 6:41f; 7:40-53). All these events took place just as Malachi prophesied. They were literally fulfilled.

At His first coming Jesus did appear in the Temple after the preparatory work of John the Baptizer (Lk. 2:22ff, 41-49; John 2:13-22; 5:1ff; 7:14-53). He was announced by His forerunner crying in the wilderness,

2:22ff, 41-49; John 2:13-22; 5:1ff; 7:14-53). He was announced by His forerunner crying in the wilderness, "Behold the Lamb of God who lifts up and takes away the sin of the world." He came preaching repentance and announcing the coming of the kingdom of God.

In the light of fulfilled prophecy it is evident that this prophecy gathers up both the first and the second comings of Jesus Christ. Even though there is judgment involved in both comings, the ultimate fulfilment will take place at the second coming of Christ. The essential fulfilment took place at His first coming.

At His first coming Christ was preceded by the forerunner, John the Baptist. In the light of this fact we can conclude that the prophecy's final fulfilment will take place at the coming of the great Day of the Lord at the second coming of Christ.

At His second coming Jesus will appear suddenly in His literally "palace." The God-King will dwell therein forever (Ezek. 43:7; 37:26, 26). For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The *Maleakh*, "the Covenant angel" is One in essence with Yahweh, the coming of the Lord to His Temple is represented as a coming of *Maleakh*. He is fulfilled in the coming of Christ in whom *Malekah*, the Logos, became incarnate (Isa. 42:6; Ex. 3:6f; 14:19; 23:20; 33:14; Heb. 9:15; 12:24; Mark 1:2).

The Angel of the Lord is the Son of God before His incarnation. This Angel appears first in the age of the patriarchs and then throughout the history of Israel in every age from Moses, the Judges, David, Elijah, Zechariah, and here in Malachi it is the same person as the Angel of the Covenant. This Angel of the Covenant or Messenger of the Covenant is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, before His incarnation. He is seen as One with Yahweh. The LORD identifies the Angel of God with Himself (Exodus 23:20ff). The Lord calls this Angel God, Lord, Yahweh (Gen. 16:7-11, 13; 32:28; Hosea 12:4f; Ex. 3:2-15; 13:21; 14:19; Num. 20:16; Judges 6:12-16). This Angel of the Lord is I AM THAT I AM (Ex. 3:2-14) and is just as truly Yahweh's Messenger, His Angel sent by the Lord. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? . . . Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me . . ." (14:9-11; cf. 17:21-26). For an in depth look see our study on the Angel of the Lord in this series.

The Lord will come into His temple to sanctify and judge (3:2-6). And who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? His coming is like the refiner's fire and the alkali of the fuller. John the Baptizer announced, "As for me, I baptize you in water because of repentance, but He who is coming after me . . . He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). He comes to refine and purify. He comes to give a new heart, to break to pieces the stony heart out of their flesh and give them and soft sensitive heart to His presence. He comes to put the Spirit in them and to clothe them with garments washed in His own blood, robes of righteousness. He comes to implant in their hearts faith in the Redeemer and He continues to do it until the day He calls them home to be with Him in heaven. This purifying refining work goes on throughout the believer's life on earth (Rom. 6:11-21; 7:5-25; 8:1ff; Gal. 5:13-26).

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart. If you need help in knowing Him in an intimate personal relationship here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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