

CONNECTING THE DOTS - JUST BEFORE THE SILENCE – PART 2

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

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL

Last week I just summarized the accusations of the Lord against Israel. As I thought about it, I realized there is just too much in these first two chapters for us to skip over it, so today we will delve into them.

THE ACCUSED



God is very thorough in His accusations as He divides the guilty into two groups deserving judgment:

a) the **priests** – 2:1-17

b) the **people** – 3:4-15

God has accused them in the strongest way possible by using the first person singular, “*I have...*” reflecting that He, personally, is the One they offended. Notice in Malachi 1:2-5

² **I have** loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet **I loved** Jacob, ³ And **I hated** Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. ⁴ Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the **LORD of hosts**, They shall build, but **I will throw down**; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the **LORD** hath indignation for ever. ⁵ And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The **LORD** will be magnified from the border of Israel.



Whenever God calls Israel Jacob, the context indicates God's **disapproval** or judgment upon the people of Israel.

God's Relationship with His People during Judgment

In verse 2, God reminds them that He has cared for Israel [Jacob] throughout their history, while Esau [recall that Esau settled Edom and is strongly linked to it and its history against Israel] has been destroyed.



This is a significant contrast, for God contrasts Israel and Esau – the **protected** versus the enemy.

Israel was always in danger from her enemies, having few natural defenses and little wealth; whereas Edom had impregnable fortresses like Petra with its wealth.

Israel however, was supernaturally protected and Edom became insignificant and ultimately destroyed by Malachi's day.

In verse 6 God accuses the priests of a lack of respect or disdain for Him.

Notice the change of name to Lord of Hosts – the Lord of Hosts always conveys God **power** to bring judgment, for those God is dealing with should be in fear of His power to act.

*A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the **LORD of hosts** unto you, O **priests**, that despise [disdain] my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?*

God uses two relationships to suggest chastisement rather than destruction.



First, a **son to his father** and second, a **servant to master**; both relationships cannot be dissolved. Again we see God's love for His people, Israel.

God is very specific in how **they** have failed to fear Him [1:7-14].

They have cheated Him in their offerings.

It always is easier to cheat the One you cannot see than to cheat the one you can see, such as the visible government authorities around you.

People always tend to **fear what is visible** and **forget about the invisible**.

In Malachi 1 verse 14 God expands on His grievances as the decedents of Jacob who was a deceiver:

*But cursed be **the deceiver**, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.*

Verse 14 is an allusion to Jacob's lying and deceiving referred to in verse 2.

Remember God changes not (3:6), therefore, just as their deceptions are found out, so too, even in the Church Age, deception and cheating is known by God.

Never forget that God always deals with sin.

Further, for the priesthood of Malachi's day, the judgment would continue to affect the succeeding generations of priests.

We will see that during **the Inter-testament period** few priests heeded God's warning and the priesthood's holiness further declined.

Remember, God wanted the priesthood of Israel to be passed on by birth. First, Aaron then Levi, and so on down to these men. Yet by Christ's day, they bought their high positions of power.

You might wish to stop and read Leviticus 10:1-5 to understand why the priesthood should understand the fear of the Lord. Specifically, look at verses 1 and 2:

*¹ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and **offered strange fire before the LORD**, which **he***

commanded them not. ² And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

The priesthood had the highest calling from the Lord, for the priests were to proclaim the law of truth, the Scriptures [Malachi 2:7].

⁷ For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for **he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.** ⁸ But ye are departed out of the way; ye **have caused many to stumble at the law;** ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁹ Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but **have been partial in the law.**

Further, that law was to be applied justly and fairly with all the people [2:8] and not overlook some sins of the “right” people. The priests were to walk with God and be holy in their life style; they were to be different from the world [2:9].

God expected His people to be totally dependent upon Him and to remain **faithful** in their walk with Him.

He then illustrates with the picture of marriage – verses 14-17.



They were to stay true to Him as a man to the wife of his youth.

There was to be no spiritual adultery, for they were to stay true to Him **regardless** of their circumstances during “marriage.”

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

Malachi 3:6

God then re-enforces His relationship in verses 15-16:

¹⁴ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the **wife of thy youth**, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the **wife of thy covenant.** ¹⁵ ...Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. ¹⁶ For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that **he hateth putting away:** for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

“putting away,” or divorce, creates the **wrong** picture of our relationship to our Lord.

Priest's Guilty but so too, the People

Finally, God reaches His limit of tolerance in verse 17 when the people question whether God is just and righteous, for they looked around and saw evil succeeding. They wondered where God's justice was:

Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, **Where is the God of judgment?**

Their ignorant, unbelieving accusations against God was wearisome to God and reflected their own lack of knowledge, understanding, and study of God as taught in His Word.

Yes, the priests were guilty, but the people could have asked questions and inquired about the teachings of God. I believe God would have led them to someone capable of teaching them about the True God.

It is no different today. In the church today many Christians do not know the true God of the Bible. Significantly, they don't know God's plan and purpose of history. They don't make the effort to study about the Lord, His Word, or the role of prophecy.



It is only a small minority that makes the effort to grow in the Lord – 2 Peter 3:18.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Part III

In Chapter 3 verses 13-18 God contrasts two classifications of religious people:

The first:

- They know their worship is merely formalism or false worship.
- They reverse the truth, and do as they please
- They tempt God to act or respond
- They are the majority of the people

The second group consists of those who are the remnant [vv. 16-18]. By contrast

- They seek true worship
- They seek to learn the truth about God
- They will be protect by God even during the silent years
- They are a small group, a minority
- They will be revealed one day and blessed for it, v. 18

*Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, **Where is the God of judgment?***

Remember Malachi had declared this message a burden – pointing to national judgment.

See Isaiah 40:3 - 5

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

In answer to Malachi 2:17

People see evil apparently rewarded so they ask where is justice? The Answer is 2 messengers from God the Father.

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:

In an ancient royal procession, the messenger went before the king to announce his arrival, to indicate the route, and to remove any obstacles in the road. John the Baptist fulfilled this exact ministry for Jesus. The same idea is indicated in [Isaiah 40:3-5](#).

i. God's purpose for bringing this specific prophecy through Malachi in his day was probably because Israel complained that the Messianic promises of Haggai and Zechariah were not fulfilled. *Here Malachi showed that the way for the Messiah must be prepared, and they were not ready yet.*

ii. Before Me: The LORD promised that He Himself would come – not merely a new or better prophet, but the LORD Himself.¹

and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, [He comes to fulfil the prophecy of the kingdom] whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

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:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:

both the launderer and the refiner work to clean, not to destroy.

i. he will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver: “the beauty of this picture is that the refiner looks into the open furnace, or pot, and knows that the process of purifying is complete, and the dross all burnt away, when he can see his image plainly reflected in the molten metal.” (baldwin)²

and he shall purify the sons of Levi,

He will purify the sons of Levi: In the first two chapters of Malachi, the LORD spoke out against the corruption of the priesthood. Here, God gave His ultimate answer for that corruption – the Messiah **will purify the sons of Levi.**³

and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

¹Enduring Word -

²Enduring Word

³Enduring Word

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 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**.

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.

Mal. 3:16-18 – b. **A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name:** When they saw the wicked rewarded and the righteous suffer, it made them think that God forgot all their goodness. Here Malachi promises that not only will God remember, but He will write it down!⁴

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.

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

Malachi 4:1 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, **saith the LORD of hosts**, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

The language is abrupt, "Behold, the day cometh! It burns like a furnace." The abruptness imparts terrible reality to the picture, as if it suddenly burst on the prophet's view.⁵

2 But unto you that fear **my name** shall the **Sun of righteousness** arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Such a remnant of godly ones was in existence in Malachi's day, and when they passed away others took their places. The Lord preserved such a godly seed in every generation throughout the four hundred silent years. And when that silence was broken, by the Angel's message to the ministering priest Zechariah, we see such a remnant on the threshold of the New Testament. Good old Anna and Simeon, the shepherds and

⁴Enduring Word

⁵JFB

others belonged to this waiting, God-fearing remnant. And so it will be before His second coming. A similar remnant will then be on earth awaiting His glorious return.⁶

*3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet **in the day** that I shall do this, saith the **LORD of hosts**.*

*4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which **I commanded** unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.*

*5 Behold, **I will send** you Elijah the prophet before **the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD**:*

THE PROMISE REGARDS **ELIJAH** BECAUSE HE MINISTERED IN A TIME OF CRISIS IN ISRAEL, WHEN THE NATION WAS FAR FROM GOD, AND A TIME THAT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED A TERRIBLE JUDGMENT.

i. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT IN THESE CLOSING WORDS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD REFERS TO BOTH MOSES AND ELIJAH. THEY BOTH MET GOD AT MOUNT SINAI (ALSO KNOWN AS HOREB, [EXODUS 3:1](#) AND [1 KINGS 19:8-18](#)). THEY ALSO BOTH MET JESUS AT THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION ([MATTHEW 17:1-5](#)). THEY ARE PROBABLY THE TWO WITNESSES OF [REVELATION 11](#).⁷

*6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest **I come** and smite the earth with a curse.*

i. This ending of the book of Malachi bothered the ancient Jews. “The Masorites, who have given us most of the copies of the Hebrew Old Testament we have.... were so bothered by this that they repeated the next-to-the-last verse of Malachi after the last verse. Similarly, the Septuagint reverses the last two verses so the Old Testament ends, not with a curse, but with a blessing.” (Boice)⁸

A FINAL THOUGHT

Let us pause and think about why Israel failed and how we may not follow their path, we in the Church Age.

Israel . . .

- Had the Word of God
- Had God’s blessing
- Had Godly men
- Knew their unique position in the world
- Knew conditions of blessing and cursing

Why did they fail?

⁶Gaebelein’s Annotated Bible

⁷Enduring Word

⁸Enduring Word

- They got caught up in daily life – Haggai teaches this
- Made worship and spiritual life routine – Malachi
- Were busy being God's people but did not fellowship with God Himself
- Did not look for His coming

What happened?

- God brought an interruption and judgment to the nation in 70 AD
- God offered them a final time to awake
- God warned them not to quit looking for His coming

A remnant stayed true – the Gospel was given to those who looked for His coming at His birth: shepherds, Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Simon, and the wise men [Gentiles]. Notice, only those looking for His coming saw Him.

But . . .

Judgment and wrath came to those who ignored Him, even though God is loving, He still must judge!

Remember two passages as a closing to this course:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:8

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,

and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

2 Peter 3:1-13

“God could not reveal all this, however, to the Old Testament prophets; for, had He done so, Christ would never have come and made a bona fide offer of Himself to Israel as Messiah [Baxter, 267].

So begins 400 years of silence and waiting . . .