

::R3683 : page 376::

THE MESSENGER OF JEHOVAH

—MALACHI 3:1-12—DECEMBER 17—

Golden Text:—“I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me”

MALACHI the prophet spoke for and represented Jehovah to the returned Israelites. His prophecy is supposed to have been written during the time of the absence of Nehemiah, the governor, at the court of the king of Persia. The interim of his absence is thought to have been one of religious declension, as the record shows a considerable stirring up and setting in order again after his return. Malachi's prophecy, therefore, may have served a double purpose—first to reprove and stimulate the people of that time, and secondly, and much more important, to give a general lesson applicable all the way down through the more than twenty centuries since. His prophecy is the last one of the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures, and closes with exhortations and promises respecting the coming of Messiah, for whom the Jewish people had at that time waited for more than fifteen centuries.

The Golden Text is the key to this lesson. The Messenger whom Jehovah would send is the Christ—not alone the man Christ Jesus, who was pre-eminently the divine Messenger, but inclusively the whole Christ, the Church, the body, the under-associates, with Jesus

::R3683 : page 377::

the Head. As we have already pointed out, this Messenger appears in the two following capacities: First as the suffering one, the sacrificing one, and secondly as the anointed, glorified one, the King, the restorer. The work of suffering belongs to this Gospel age, the reign of glory belongs to the Millennial age. The suffering began with the consecration of our Lord and Master at the time of his baptism into death. The three and one-half years of his ministry were so much of his delivering himself into death or baptism into death, and that personal sacrifice was finished at Calvary. During this Gospel age, in harmony with the divine plan, our Redeemer has accepted a little flock from the world upon their renouncement of sin, their acceptance of him as their justification, and their consecration of their little all to his service, “to be dead with him that they might also live with him, to suffer with him that they might also reign with him.”

Throughout this Gospel age this overcoming class, the Church, has been faithfully laying down,

sacrificing, life and earthly prospects and interests because of their love for the Lord and for the principles of righteousness which he represents. Thus this entire Gospel age has been one of suffering. As stated by the Apostle, the prophets foretold the “sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow.” (1 Pet. 1:11.) The glory of this great Christ, Head and body, cannot be ushered in until all of its sufferings are at an end. Hence, as the Apostle urges, it is for us to appreciate the situation and understand our privilege to “suffer with him,” or “to be dead with him,” “to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ,” to “present our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service.”—2 Tim. 2:11,12; Col. 1:24; Rom. 12:1.

THE CHRIST IN THE FLESH, THE ELIJAH

As we have already pointed out,* Christ in the flesh, Head and body, is the antitypical Elijah, which does a work in the world preparing for and introductory to the reign of glory, of the same class, on the spirit plane as the Christ of glory, Head and body. The Messenger of Jehovah is the same, though under two different conditions: first in the flesh, in weakness, in ignominy, in sorrow and pain and dying, despised and rejected of men; second, in glory, crowned with all power in heaven and in earth, establishing righteousness and forcefully subduing and bringing into subjection to the divine will every creature and every thing, and triumphing so that finally, by the end of the Millennial age, this great Messenger—by the two parts of his service, first in suffering and second in glory—will accomplish all that the great Jehovah purposed respecting the race of mankind. By these two parts of his service this great and glorious Messenger will have prepared the way of Jehovah, will have made straight all the paths, all the arrangements, all the affairs for the establishment of the everlasting reign of the Kingdom of heaven.

*See Millennial Dawn, Vol. II., Chap. viii.

This brings us down to the period mentioned by the Apostle respecting Christ: he must reign until he shall have put all things under his [Jehovah's] feet. Then the Son, the Christ, having put all things into subjection, will himself be subject to the Father, that the Father may be the all in all of the universe (1 Cor. 15:28), though the Father graciously and generously provides that his Messenger—whose loyalty will have been so thoroughly demonstrated both by the sufferings of the present time and the glories of the age to come—that this glorious anointed One shall forever be associated with him in the everlasting Kingdom, as it is written, “Let all the angels of God reverence him.”—Heb. 1:6.

“THE MASTER WHOM YE SEEK”

The word Lord in this second sentence is not in the Hebrew Jehovah, but signifies master, superior, teacher. Jehovah is represented as the speaker, who evidently refers to the Lord Jesus, assuring those who have the ear to hear and understand that the Messiah whom they seek shall suddenly come to his Temple. There is a difference between the significations of “quickly” and “suddenly.” The Messiah did not quickly come to his Temple, for over two thousand years have elapsed since this prophecy was written, and the Temple itself (“which Temple ye are”) is not yet complete, though the living stones for it have nearly all been chiseled and polished with the adversities of this Gospel age, and we are now living in the time when these living stones are being brought together on the other side of the veil. When the whole work shall have been completed, and the glory of the Lord shall fill the Temple, the prediction of this Scripture before us shall have its fulfilment. It will be a sudden matter in that the Jews, and others outside the Temple class, will be in such complete ignorance respecting the whole procedure that the results will be wholly unexpected, a time to them most sudden.

In a certain sense or degree, in a shadowy sense, Jesus at his first advent offered himself to the Jewish people—“he came to his own and his own received him not,”—and he said to them, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:38.) That entrance into Jerusalem, riding on an ass, hailed by the people with palm branches as the King, the Messiah, the Son of David, and his entering into the Temple and scourging therefrom the money-changers and merchants, was indeed a sudden matter, wholly unexpected by the people of that time, and to a certain extent it fulfilled this prophecy, because that people on that occasion were typical of the great presentation of himself as the King, due now to be accomplished on a higher plane, on a plane of glory, Jesus the Head now presenting himself, not merely as the King of Israel, but as the King of the world—not merely as the man Christ Jesus, but as the glorified Christ with his glorified body, which is the Church.

THE OATH-BOUND COVENANT

Our Lord Jesus was indeed the Messenger or Servant of the Covenant, the one through whom the Covenant would have its fulfilment. The Abrahamic Covenant, the Oath-Bound Covenant, is referred to. It is the hope of natural Israel and the hope of spiritual Israel, “which hope we have as an anchor to our souls, sure and steadfast, within the veil.” (Heb. 6:19.)

The Messenger or Servant of that Covenant is the one through whom its provisions will be accomplished, namely, the seed of Abraham—“which seed is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16.) Again, we see that this seed has its two developments, one in the flesh, in suffering ignominy, the other in the spirit, in power and great glory—the one to mediate the Covenant by offering the sacrifice of atonement, the other to execute the gracious provisions of that Covenant, made possible by the

atonement sacrifice. The sufferings of Christ sealed or ratified this Covenant, and made it possible for him to be the Mediator of it, and to extend through that Covenant blessings to the

::R3684 : page 378::

entire human family, who were under the curse and who are mentioned in the Covenant, “all the families of the earth.”

Again we note that in the divine plan the “Church,” the “saints,” the “very elect,” the “little flock,” the “Bride,” is associated by the Lord with both phases of this work, “in the sufferings of this present time and in the glories that shall follow.” It requires the work of this entire Gospel age to seal the New Covenant. The New Covenant is to benefit and bless Israel after the flesh and all the families of the earth; its provisions are the forgiveness of sins, the renewing of a right heart in all those who desire to come into harmony with the Lord and a restitution to them of all that were lost through the original transgression and its curse. As a result of this operation of this New Covenant there shall be no more curse, and tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and there shall be no more sighing and no more dying and no more pain, for the former things shall have passed away.—Rev. 21:4.

JOINT-HEIRS WITH HIM

The Church, the Bride of Christ, is made partaker reckonedly, by faith, of the benefits and blessings of that New Covenant; justification is reckoned as restitution, although not actually restored or perfected. The sins of the believer are covered and the consecrated ones are reckoned as new creatures, even though they still tabernacle in imperfect flesh. The acceptance of the Bride of Christ is not under the New Covenant but under the original Abrahamic Covenant, not to be part of those who will be blessed by the seed but to be associates and joint-heirs with Christ as members of the seed. This the Apostle distinctly points out, saying, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29.) If we are heirs according to that Abrahamic promise it means that we are members of the seed class, and that our great mission is the blessing of all the families of the earth. A certain amount of this blessing comes to the families of the earth during the time of our sacrificing, namely, the reflected or refracted light of the glory of God enjoyed by us through his Spirit; but the great bulk of the blessing for Israel after the flesh, and for all the families of the earth, waits until the seed shall have been completed, until the change from a body of humiliation to a body of glory, until divested of the imperfections of the present and clothed upon with the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature, to which we are heirs through our Lord Jesus.—2 Pet. 1:4.

“WHOM YE DELIGHT IN”

The Jews had exulted and delighted in the promise of the coming Messiah for centuries. They were delighting in this great promise and the hopes attached to it at the very time the Redeemer was in their midst and they knew him not and crucified him. They are still delighting in this promise of the Messiah—yea, the whole world has caught to a large extent the infection, and is hoping and waiting for “the Desire of all Nations” (Haggai 2:7) that then shall come, although they associate with the gracious hope and promise many misconceptions and gross error.

When Messiah’s Kingdom shall be established, invisible to men—when its reign shall begin, after it shall have reached the point of putting down sin, after the great time of trouble shall have humbled mankind, after the reign of righteousness shall have been thoroughly established—it will prove to be the desire of all nations, the delight of all nations. The Lord knows just what the world wants, but the poor world at the present time is blind through sin, ignorance and superstition, misconceptions, etc., and must learn its lesson and thus be prepared for the blessing which the Lord is preparing for it.

“THE DAY OF HIS COMING”

“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, and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, and they shall offer unto the Lord offerings of righteousness.”

Ah! there it is. The world is anxious for the blessing, but realizes not to what extent the inbred sin is incompatible with the reign of righteousness which it desires, and in which is the great blessing God has promised. Before the blessings come, the day of wrath, the “fire of God’s jealousy,” must pass upon the world. It is not to be a fire merely to destroy but specially to purify; it is not to be a literal fire but a symbolical fire, following which the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, a pure message, a clear declaration of the divine will and plan of salvation. (Zeph. 3:8,9.)

While this Messenger will serve the world as an instructor, as the antitype of Elijah, reproofing sin and seeking to bring the world into harmony with God, and succeeding in finding only the Israelites indeed, there will come an end to this work when the little flock all have been found and when their purifying and chastisement will be over. The first work of the Messenger of the Covenant on the plane of glory will be a work of judgment—indeed the entire work of the Millennial age is to be a judging of the world in righteousness—punishing each sin promptly on its committal and rewarding every effort for righteousness promptly with blessings and favors. Under that reign of righteousness the whole world will have fullest opportunity for reconciliation with God, and those who will not accept the reconciliation will be utterly destroyed from amongst the people.—Acts

3:23.

“AS A REFINING FIRE”

The beginning of the judgment will be especially upon the sons of Levi. The Levites represented the household of faith, who have made a consecration of themselves to the Lord. A certain class of these Levites, termed in the Scriptures “more than conquerors,” will constitute the Royal Priesthood, the body of Christ, while the remainder of it, called in the Scriptures “the great company, who wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb,” will be dealt with first by the great Messenger of the Covenant, not with a view to their destruction or injury, but with a view to the destruction of the flesh, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Cor. 5:5.)

We may even go further than this and understand that the living members of the Royal Priesthood will be subjected to fiery trials, as the Apostle points out. The fire of this day, he says, shall try each man’s work of what sort it is, and shall prove which have built their faith with gold, silver and precious stones, and which have built with the wood, hay, stubble of profession and outward show and theories of men. (1 Cor. 3:12.) All of the gold class will be purified, the little flock; all of

::R3684 : page 379::

the silver class will be purified, the great company, to the intent that the offerings that they made to the Lord may be fully accepted of him, even as the Apostle exhorts us, “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service.” If it is our privilege to have some share in the fiery trials at the close of this age, and at the inauguration of the new dispensation, let us rejoice in whatever will bring us nearer to our Lord, in whatever will bring us closer into harmony with him and his service, purifying our hearts and arousing our faith and making us all that would be acceptable and pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

“AS IN THE DAYS OF OLD”

“Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old and in the former years.” The fiery trials of the great time of trouble will thoroughly purge and purify all who are truly the Lord’s people, all antitypical Israelites, and thenceforth they shall be fully in the Lord’s favor and have his rich blessing, and only by wilful sins will they ever take themselves out of that blessed condition; but they may go on from grace to grace, from knowledge to knowledge, from opportunity to opportunity, from restitution to restitution, until at the end of the Millennial age they shall have attained to all the good things of the divine provision through this great

Messenger of the Covenant.

In that time the Lord will come near in his judgments, they will be prompt, the people will learn distinctly and in a practical form what is pleasing and what is displeasing to the Lord; he will be a swift witness against every evil thing and rebuke it, and thus all shall be taught of the Lord, and the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

“I, THE LORD, CHANGE NOT”

The basis for all these hopes of Israel and others is in the fact that God is unchangeable; he has promised and he will not fail—yea, he has sworn to this Covenant and it is therefore an Oath-Bound Covenant, and as a result all the families of the earth shall be blessed. There can be no failure, no miscarriage of this plan, for God has pledged himself in word and in oath to its certainty. What a confidence this gives us! This was the Apostle’s assurance as he thought of Israel after

::R3685 : page 379::

the flesh and how they were rejecting Jesus, and he wrote to us, “I would not, brethren, that ye be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part [temporarily] is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in [until the full number of the elect from the Gentiles shall have been completed, the divine predestination respecting the Church, the body of Christ]. Then all Israel shall be saved [recovered from the blindness into which they are now going—the blindness in which they have been for nearly nineteen centuries].” Rom. 11:25.

The Apostle quotes in proof of this the divine promise, assuring us that the gifts and callings of God are things that he will not repent of. (Rom. 11:29.) It is on this unchangeableness of the divine character that the Apostle predicates all of his hopes respecting the restoration of Israel to divine favor and blessing through the glorified Church, and in turn the blessing of all the families of the earth through natural Israel under the glorified Church. As the Apostle again says, Thus the fall of Israel becomes a channel for the enlightenment and blessing of the world.—Rom. 11:12.

A LOCAL APPLICATION

Then follows a part of the prophecy which seemingly was applicable to fleshly Israel: the Lord reproves them, showing them that his course toward them as a people fully conformed to the engagements of their Covenant at Sinai. Had they remained faithful to him according to their agreement they might have had the great blessing even in Malachi’s time. There is in this passage an exhortation for Israel to return to proper accord with the Lord, and to prove him that he would

be as prompt and faithful in giving them blessings as he was prompt and faithful in giving them chastisements for their unfaithfulness. The Lord represents Israel as not being aware of their true condition, of not being aware of how they were failing to keep their Covenant. Their hearts had become so selfish, had been so stunted in development along all spiritual lines, that they apparently did not realize that they were merely praying to the Lord with their lips while their hearts were far from him. He points out to them that while keeping his ordinances in a certain outward and formalistic manner, they were not fulfilling the requirements of the Law as they should reasonably have understood them.

From the statement here made it would appear that, instead of coming to the Lord with the very best that they had as offerings to him and his cause, they were inclined to seek to perform the letter of the Law and to avoid its spirit; apparently they were ready to bring sacrifices and offerings, but the selfishness of their hearts and their lack of true appreciation of the Lord led them to proffer him the weak and the lame and the poor while they kept the better for their own use. The Lord urges upon them that they test him, prove him, and see whether or not he would grant them great blessings if they would but enter into the spirit of their consecration and offer unto the Lord the best of what they possessed.

A LESSON HERE FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

Spiritual Israel, the Elijah class, the Lord's consecrated people still in the flesh and seeking to make their calling and election sure to the Kingdom glories, may gain a profitable lesson from these sharp criticisms of natural Israel. How is it with us? We as spiritual Israelites have vowed unto the Lord the first fruits, the very best, the very chiefest, the most valuable of all that we have and all that we are—of time, influence, talents, money, all. To what extent are we rendering unto the Lord our offerings and sacrifices in harmony with this our Covenant?

Is it not true respecting many spiritual Israelites that, instead of bringing the very best that they have to the Lord and to his service, they bring him merely the tail-ends, the imperfect things, offerings with which he is not well pleased. This is so in respect to all who use the best they have in self-gratification, in providing chiefly and best for their own natural conditions and appetites, honors, dignities, leaving for the Lord the remnants, the fag-ends of time, influence, reputation and money. Alas, we fear this is true of many Israelites to-day: they fail to grasp the thought that they have given their all to the Lord, and that what they have, therefore, is his, and that they are merely his stewards,

::R3685 : page 380::

pledged to him to use time, money, influence, all that he has committed to their care, as his and

to his glory to the best of their knowledge and ability.

The argument which the Lord used to natural Israel was that, if they properly loved and respected him as their God, they would feel that they had nothing too good to offer to him and his service, and that it was a privilege on their part to be permitted to lay their little all at his feet, the very best that they had or could present. How much more true is this in respect to spiritual Israel, whose eyes of understanding have to some extent been opened, who are enabled to see the Lord from the new standpoint, to realize what great things he has done for us and what wonderful things he has proposed to give us if we show ourselves worthy of them by faithfulness to our Covenant obligations.

As our Lord pointed out to the Jews, he requires these things not because he is needy, for all the gold and silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his, but that he seeks in us evidences of our sincerity, our faithfulness in respect to our Covenant engagement when we pledged all that we possessed, houses, lands, father, mother, sisters, brothers, yea, life itself, to be all subjected to and laid at the feet of our Redeemer and Master, that we might at any cost, at any sacrifice, be permitted to render such service as he would accept, realizing the while that all that he would accept would be a reasonable service, and on our part it would be an offering far too small to be worthy of our King and our Creator.

“PROVE ME NOW HEREWITH”

The Lord’s words to natural Israel should come to spiritual Israel with still greater force, “Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord.” If any feel themselves poor, if any feel that spiritually they are lean, that they are not enjoying such fellowship with the Lord as they would desire, that they are unable to draw as closely to him as they would like, to all such the Lord says the fault is, You have neglected your covenant: here are my words, “Prove me,” fulfil the terms of your Covenant, and see if I will not be faithful, and do for you exceedingly and abundantly more than you could have asked or thought.

It behooves us, dear friends, to look about us to note to what extent we have been faithful to our Covenant of sacrifice and to remember that it is not a sacrifice for a day or a year but, “even unto death.” “Be ye faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10.) A little while the trials will be over, but until that little while is past we are in the trial time, and it is proving us either worthy or unworthy of the glorious favors which we seek, the chief blessing, joint-heirship. If we appreciate it let us seek it in the Lord’s way, let us see to what extent there are other things in our lives that we might render unto the Lord and which he will accept, not through the worthiness of the deeds or the sacrifices but through the merit of Christ. Let us see if the days and hours as

they pass are spent in a consecrated manner; let us note to what extent moments and days are spent in some selfish manner, or wasted upon others beyond the reasonable requirements of duty as marked out in the divine Word. Let us see to what extent we perform our vows unto the Lord; let us take note of what of time or influence or money we are using in the divine service and what proportion this bears to the whole.

Of the Jews the Lord required a tenth, a "tithe." Of the spiritual Israelites he makes no positive requirements but leaves it for us, that by the degree of our sacrifices, according to our abilities, we may demonstrate the measure of our love. But who would say that one-tenth of time, influence and talent would be enough for the spiritual Israelite to render to the Lord for all his benefits? Surely all would agree that a fourth would be a very small measure indeed as compared with our true obligation. All should feel that the sacrifice is a whole burnt offering, a complete sacrifice of every item and element of our talents and powers and privileges; all should feel that he may keep for use upon himself and for use upon those dependent upon him only such measure as would seem to be necessary to decency and reasonable comfort and not for what might be termed luxury or waste. Those who accept the Lord's proposition heartily, and render to him their all to the extent of their ability, will find their leanness departing and their joy of heart increasing more and more.

=====

— December 15, 1905 —



Jeżeli zauważyłeś błąd w pisowni, powiadom nas poprzez zaznaczenie tego fragmentu tekstu i przyciśnięcie *Ctrl+Enter*.