

**Place: Lurgan Baptist 19:2:2012**

## **MALACHI'S MIGHTY MINISTRY**

**Reading: Malachi 2:17-3:6**

### **5. WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUDGMENT ? HE IS COMING**

At 10:00 o'clock in the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> May 1780, people in the eastern seaboard noticed a strange haze spreading across the sky. Then a thick darkness settled over the eastern part of the United States. By noon, schools were dismissed, candles lit, and torches set in the streets. By one o'clock in the afternoon, fear had turned into panic as the premature nightfall continued. Thousands crowded into churches to hear ministers expound on the day of Judgment. In Hartford, Connecticut, both houses of the legislature were meeting. One was dismissed since its members thought the world was about to end at any moment. The other body continued, although greatly distressed. Finally one man made a motion to disband, since the day of reckoning was thought to have come. A Mr. Davenport, a Christian objected, “ *Mr. Speaker, this is either the Day of Judgment or it is not. If it is not, there is no need of adjourning. If it is, I desire to be found doing my work. I move that candles be brought in and that we proceed to business.* ” The meeting went on. One day the Lord Jesus will come and I will be called to stand before Him. My .... it is my prayer, that I may be found doing the work the Lord gave me to do. Many years ago I made

preparations to be accepted when He returns. But I also want to make preparations to be acceptable when He returns. You see, for some the second advent of Jesus Christ is *alarming*. It is alarming because people, saved and lost, are not ready for His return. For others the second advent of Christ is *assuring*. There is no fear or dread. They have been saved and they have been living for the Lord Jesus. They have nothing to be ashamed of or fearful of when they meet Him. Instead of a dread for His return, they have a delight in His return. Now Malachi answers the question of ( 2:17 ) “ *Where is the God of judgment ?* ” By declaring in our passage “ *He is coming.* ”

Now do you remember the context ? When the remnant came back from Babylon there were times of revival and blessing. I mean they built the walls and erected the temple. After that period they began to cool off and indifference, carelessness, godlessness, and even wickedness began to grip their hearts. God raised up three prophets to speak to them, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and Malachi God's messenger fearlessly cataloged the sins of God's people.

Do you recall them ? I mean here were a people who *doubted* God's love. ( 1:1-5 ) They *dishonoured* God's name. ( 1:6-2:0 ) they *profaned* God's covenant ( 2:10-16 ) and now they were *questioning* God's justice. ( 2:17-3:6 ) If you go through the chapters quickly you will find that 7 times this word “ *wherein,* ” occurs. Do you see it again in ( 2:17 ) ? You see, when Judah returned to the land, she expected to experience prosperity

and glory just like the days of Solomon. But this was not to be the case. In fact she found just the opposite. Her wicked enemies lived in prosperity while Judah suffered privation and this caused the people to question whether God was holy and just. Their cry was “ *Where is the God of justice ?* ” And Malachi’s response was, “ *He is coming.* ” My .... God has a plan to right every wrong and to punish all evildoers and that plan centers in His Messiah the Lord Jesus who will suddenly come not to Zerubbabel’s temple, not to Herod’s temple but finally to that millennial temple which Ezekiel describes in his prophecy. ( Chs 40-48 ) Now there are three words that summarize all I want to say this .... ! **Disillusionment, Announcement, and Judgment.**

### (1) A DISILLUSIONMENT THAT WAS TRAGIC

You see, these Jews were attacking the providence of God by bringing up the age old question, “ *Why do the wicked prosper ?* ” and “ *Why do the righteous suffer ?* ” Now we all wrestle with this question from time to time. It’s especially hard when you have done right and you get penalized, while the man who did wrong got ahead. Perhaps you have been praying and counting on God’s promises but things did not turn out the way you expected. I mean does it seem as if God does not hear your prayer ? While the man, who mocks the Lord is doing great. Burdened believer, are you disillusioned this .... ? Are you saying, “ *Why follow the Lord when all I get is trials. If there is a God of justice in heaven why doesn’t He do something about all the injustice in the world ? Is it really worth it to follow the Lord ?* ” Now this was the problem

that the Jewish people in Malachi’s day were struggling with. In fact, they had become cynical toward God for he not acted according to their preconceived notion. You see,

### (a) *The People of God were Exasperated:*

Do you see their three fold complaint that they uttered against God ?

1. “ *Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord,* ” the leaders reasoned that the Lord prospered the wicked and left His own righteous people in poverty, therefore the wicked must be considered good in God’s eyes.

2. “ *He delighteth in them,* ” Not only did God prosper the wicked but He took pleasure in doing so.

3. They asked, “ *Where is the God of justice ?* ” With sarcastic skepticism they questioned whether God was even available to take action against the wicked.

I mean their words were cynical and skeptical, “ *We came back to the land, rebuilt the temple, and restored the worship,* ” they said, “ *but look at the difficulties we’re experiencing. Why isn’t God keeping His promises ? Where are the blessings He promised through the prophets ? Where is the Messiah who was to come ?* ” Now to be cynical is to be scornful of the motives, virtue or integrity of someone. Some people are just cynical by nature they are just plain cranky. I heard about an old boy who had a large bushy moustache. While he was sleeping,

some young pranksters smeared limburger cheese on his moustache. When he awoke his first comment was, “ *this room stinks.* ” He immediately went into another room and said, “ *this house stinks.* ” He then stepped outside and sniffed and muttered, “ *the whole world stinks.* ” I’ve known some people who thought the whole world stank when the real trouble was right beneath their own nose. My ... do you hear these people ? Malachi says, “ *ye have wearied the Lord with your words.* ” ( 2:17 ) They were disillusioned at the rebuilt temple. It didn’t compare to the former glory of Solomon’s temple. ( Haggai 2:7 ) They had become disappointed with God. He had not done for them what they had hoped. They thought that God had let them down. Some even mocked God saying that He delights in evil people calling them good. Now I trust that you’ve never said such things, but I know that you have thought such things. We all have. You thought that when you trusted Christ, He would give you an abundant life and relief from some major problems, instead you seem to have more problems that you did before.

You didn’t use to struggle against sin, but now it’s a daily battle that you often lose. You didn’t use to worry about pleasing God about your use of time and money but now you feel guilty about squandering those things. In fact, now you feel guilty about things you didn’t even know were sin before you became a Christian. *Have you prayed a lot about that situation, about that unsaved one ? But rather than things getting better, have they got worse ?* Are you wondering, “ *Does it pay to serve God ? What difference does it make if I follow the Lord or not ?* ”

*Where is the God of justice ?* ” On the one hand (a) But on the other,

### ***(b) The Patience of God was Exhausted:***

For Malachi cries “ *Ye have wearied the Lord with your words,* ” ( 2:17 ) Of course, God never gets weary in a physical sense because God does not have a body. ( Is 40:28 ) but He does get weary of some of the things His people say and do. The hypocritical people in Israel wearied God with their iniquities ( Is 43:24 ) and the Jewish remnant in Malachi’s day wearied Him with their words. I mean the patience of God is amazing. The Bible talks about God being “ *the God of patience.* ” ( Rom 15:5 ) Peter says, “ *The Lord .... is longsuffering to us ward.* ” ( 2 Pet 3:9 ) Robert Ingersoll, known as the great agnostic, used to solemnize his audiences by reminding them of Bible passages where God had judged people for their blasphemy and irreverence. He would take his watch out of his pocket, place it on the table before him say, “ *I will curse God and give Him five minutes to strike me down dead.* ” One minute would pass, The two minutes. At three minutes the crowd would become anxious. Women would faint. Four minutes.

Five minutes. Ingersoll would snap his watch shut and exclaim, “ *There you see, there is no God or else He would have struck me down dead.* ” The story of his actions were told to Joseph Parker, the great London preacher. Dr. Parker’s reply was a classic answer to Ingersoll’s words of defiance. “ *And did the American gentleman think that he could exhaust the patience of God* ”

*in five minutes ?” My .... if God’s patience lasted no more than five minutes most would be in hell and the others would be in heaven. But could it be possible that at times our words weary the Lord ? Is it a possibility in the New Testament era that our hymns weary the Lord ? Is it possible that our prayers weary the Lord ? Some years there was a slogan on a wayside pulpit that went like this, “ If you could only hear your prayers, you would sympathise with God.” Now we might think that that’s a little bit sacrilegious, but it would fit in with what God was saying through Malachi, “ If you could only hear your prayers, you would know why I am wearied.”. You might say, “ What could weary God in prayer ? What could weary God in hymns ? What could weary God in words ?” Simply this, “ This people draw near me with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart from me.” ( Is 29:13 ) Their heart was far from Him. Is that you ? Is your heart far from the Lord ? And the result is, you’ve become disillusioned, disappointed, and discouraged. (1)*

## **(2) AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WAS SPECIFIC**

The word “ *behold,*” indicates that something startling and unusual is on the verge of taking place. The Lord is speaking through Malachi and he says, “ *Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me,*” that’s another messenger. Malachi whose very name means “ *messenger,*” is the messenger of the Lord here and yet he is speaking about another messenger who is about to be sent, who “ *shall prepare the way before me, saith the Lord of hosts.*” But don’t stop there for the Lord

says through Malachi “ *and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant.*” Now this is still another messenger. So we have three messengers in this announcement. The first messenger is Malachi but who are the other two ? Will notice that this announcement speaks about,

### **(a) THE MESSENGER WHO WOULD COME:**

#### 1. Notice His Identity:

“ *Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me,*” ( 3:1 ) It is clear from the Gospels that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy when he announced the Lords first coming. Matthew speaking of John the Baptist says, “ *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord make his paths straight.*” ( Matt 3:4 ) All of the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all identify this messenger. Indeed the Lord Jesus Himself confirmed that Malachi’s prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist. ( Matt 11:10 ) Now did you notice the words ? “ *Behold I will send,*” John the gospel writer speaking of John the Baptist says “ *There was a man sent from God whose name was John the same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light ....,*” You see, the Lord Jesus is the Light. When you go to the book of Revelation, you discover that in

1. Chapters 1-3 He is the Lord in the midst of the churches
2. Chapters 4-5 He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne

3. Chapters 6-18 He is the Lion in the midst of the nations
  4. In Chapter 19 He is the Lover in the midst of the supper
  5. In Chapters 21-22 He is the Light in the midst of glory
- Now can you this messenger's identity ?

## 2. Notice His Ministry:

“ *Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me,*” ( 3:1 ) It's the custom of clearing the road and preparing a town for the coming of the king. You see, before the king traveled he sent out messengers who proclaimed his coming. They didn't have the D.O.E. back then to keep the roads in good shape. So when the townspeople heard that the king was coming, they would go out and fill in the potholes and clear away the rocks and debris and get everything ready for the coming of their king. My .... the King came the first time, but the King is coming the second time are you ready ? Like John the Baptist are you getting others ready ? Are you willing just to be a message boy to announce the coming of the king ? This announcement speaks of (a)

### **(b) THE MESSIAH WHO WOULD COME:**

For Malachi says, “ *And the Lord whom ye shall seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant.*” ( 3:1 ) Who is this ? Christ. The Hebrew word for “ *Lord,*” is Adon. When used with the article, as it is here, it always refers to God. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. ( Heb 12:24 ) When will He come ? Well, this prophecy was partially fulfilled in his First Coming: When Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus

into the temple, and there was the old man Simeon and the old lady Anna they were among those “ *that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” ( Lk 2:38 ) Then later in his ministry, there is the cleansing of the temple, as the Lord Jesus goes into the temple and clears out all those traders who had made His house a den of thieves and robbers, when it should have been a house of prayer and worship. ( Matt 21:12 ) *So this prophecy was partially fulfilled in His First Coming but it will be ultimately fulfilled at His Second Coming.* For do you see that word “ *suddenly,*” ? It is found 25 times in the Old Testament and in every case except one ( 2 Chron 29:36 ) it is connected with disaster and judgment. My .... Do you know what that equates to ? Another occasion spoken of in Jeremiah as “ *the time of Jacob's trouble,*” ( Jer 30:7 )

Jacob of course being Israel, a day when Israel will be troubled and judged, and it's referred to in the New Testament as “ *the day of the Lord,*” or “ *the tribulation.*” ( Matt 24:21 ) My ..... after the church has been raptured, there will be seven years of tribulation, through which the nation of Israel will be purged ( Ezek 20:33-38 ) then the Lord Jesus will come in His second advent and judge the world, slay Israel's enemies, and begin a reign of a thousand years of righteousness on the earth.

Now this is not His coming to Bethlehem, this is not His coming to the air for the church, this is coming to the Mount of Olives “ *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives .... And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.*” ( Zech 14, 4, 9 ) At His first coming He came as the Lamb. When He comes to the air, He will

come as the Lord, but when He comes to the earth He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Thus we see here,

### **(3) A JUDGMENT THAT IS PROPHETIC**

A judgment that is yet to come. Now many judgments are mentioned in the Bible. Let me try and tie this all together by using three words.

#### **(a) CLASSIFY:**

You see, we need to classify these judgments. The Bible teaches that everyone will be judged but not all at the same time, nor in the same way, nor for the same reason, nor with the same results. There is,

#### **1. The Judgment of Sin:**

This took place at the cross. Two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus shed His precious blood for a world of sinners lost. He did not die for His own sin, for He knew no sin but He was made sin for us. ( 2 Cor 5:21 ) My .... that question of divine judgment against our sin is over and we are free. ( Jn 5:24 )

#### **2. The Judgment of Sons:**

For as believers we are subject to our heavenly Father's discipline and rule. ( Heb 12:6 )

#### **3. The Judgment of Servants:**

This is to do with giving an account to the Lord of our service and life for Him. ( 2 Cor 5:10 )

#### **4. The Judgment of Subjects:**

This is the judgment of the living nations when “ *before Him shall be gathered all nations.* ” ( Matt 25:32 )

#### **5. The Judgment of Sinners:**

For John says “ *And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.* ” ( Rev 20:11 ) I wonder, will you be there ? Now as think of these judgments we need to classify.

#### **(b) IDENTIFY:**

Not only classify these judgments but identify this judgment. You see, this is God's judgment of the Jewish people. For the Messiah of Israel is

#### **1. Coming to Refine:**

Look at ( 3:3 ) Can you picture a refiner sitting in front of the fire, his crucible is full of molten metal, and he is skimming off the dross. That's what's the Lord is going to do with Israel at His second advent, beginning with the Levites. ( Ezek 48:11 ) The Lord will use the fires of the great tribulation to burn away the dross.

#### **2. Coming to Revive:**

Look if you will at ( 3:4 ) It seems that the Old Testament offerings will be revived in the Millennium.

( Ezek 44-46 ) In Old Testament times the offerings were anticipatory, they pointed forward to Calvary but in the Millennium they will be commemorative, they will be a vivid reminder of Calvary. “ *This do in remembrance of me,* ” will be the idea behind the offerings.

### **3. Coming to Remove:**

You see, what is a refining process, for the remnant of repentant Jews who acknowledge their Messiah ( Rom 11:25-27 ) will be for others utter destruction. “ *Where is the God of judgment ?* ” sneered the scoffers. “ *Here He is,* ” says Malachi as he declared the word of the Lord. “ *And I will come near to you to judgment .....* ” My .... these are the practices that will mark the end times. Indeed are these not the very sins that mark our times ? Think of the masses who dabble in witchcraft and demonic practices. ( Ex 22:18 Lev 20:27 ) Those who violate their marriage vows, those who lie under oath, those who oppress the poor and needy ( James 5:1 ) Why did they do these things ? Because they had no fear of God. They thought that God was like themselves that he would close His eyes to their sins and not judge them for breaking His Law. ( Ps 50:21 ) The only reason the skeptics of Malachi’s day were not destroyed was the immutability of God. “ *For I am the Lord .....* ” God was simply being true to His righteous character, true to His covenant promises.

If God had not been unchanging He would have given the skeptics what they asked for, judgment. My .... could it be that you are mocking God ? Disobeying God ? That you are saying, “ *Where is the God of judgment ? Can I tell you, “ He is coming,* ” coming to bring you to judgment.

### **(c) PURIFY:**

Do you see ( 3:3 ) “ *And he shall purify .....* ” Is this not the state we believers ought to be in, in anticipation of the coming of the King. My .... the King is coming. And John says “ *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.* ( 1 Jn 3:3 )

When Dwight Eisenhower was President of the U.S.A. he took his holiday in Denver, Colorado. There was in Denver a six year old boy who had incurable cancer. The boy expressed the wish that he might see President Eisenhower. One Sunday morning the President arrived in his presidential limousine. He walked up to the front door and knocked, The father opened the door in his old blue jeans, having a dirty shirt on, with a week’s growth of beard. The President took the little boy out to see the presidential limousine and spent a little time with him. Then he shook his hand and left. For many days after the father would recount the story and say, “ *And just to think I stood with blue jeans, my dirty old shirt and a weeks growth of beard, what a way to meet the President.* ” My .... the King is coming. What way will you meet Him ?

