

Malachi:
A Messenger
of
Hope
in a
Day of Declension

by

John R. Ecob D.D.

The Book of Malachi

The name Malachi means “my messenger”. He was a prophet who was God’s messenger to rebuke Israel in a day of declension. He also prophesied that John the Baptist would come as God’s “messenger” to prepare the nation for the first advent of Christ and that Elijah would appear as God’s “messenger” to prepare the nation for Christ’s second advent.

In a lesser sense, every servant of God is a “messenger” to proclaim the Word of God to the people. Preachers have no right to run their own agenda for they are merely servants to bring God’s message to God’s people and to sinners.

Prophets received their message directly from God either by visions or by audible message but since Scripture was completed by the Apostle John, preachers are messengers to expound the Word of God. This means that, as faithful servants of God they are to

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Tim.2:15).

Peter spent three years with the Lord, listening and learning before he was commissioned by the Lord to “*feed My sheep*” (John 21:15-19). During those three years there were times when Peter and the other disciples preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and Jesus said He saw “*Satan as lightning fall from heaven*” (Luke 10:18).

Young servants of Christ should preach the Gospel but they should not be in leadership, feeding “*the flock of God*” and shepherding Christ’s sheep until thy have maturity and knowledge to equip them for the task.

Messengers in the Church of God are “elders”, who are

“blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1Tim.3:2-6).

Before Peter could take the leadership in the Church at Pentecost he had to experience the cross and the resurrection and the indwelling Spirit. He had to learn through failure, to be humbled, before he was mature enough to shepherd Christ's sheep.

In the same way young believers need to learn that the cross is not only the place where atonement is made for sins but it is also the place where self is crucified and until the flesh is given its place on the cross they cannot know the risen life of Christ. Paul spent three years in Arabia with God after his conversion before he came to Jerusalem to see Peter and began to preach in Syria and Cilicia.

Messengers of God need to be equipped by the Spirit of God to serve the Lord. They should be encouraged to testify and share the Gospel immediately after conversion but to rush young believers into leadership is a serious error.

When David was old his son Absalom led a rebellion against him. In the battle, Absalom was defeated and fled. He was found hanging from a tree and Joab shot three arrows into his body and his armour bearers took Absalom down and slew him and buried him.

Immediately, a young man named Ahimaaz asked Joab if he could run to tell David the news but Joab said,

*"Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings **another day**: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. Then said Joab to Cushi, **Go tell the king what thou hast seen.** And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.*

*Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, **seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?** But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run" (2 Sam.18:20-23).*

Ahimaaz was a younger man than Cushi and outran him but when he reached David he had no message to deliver so David said, "Turn aside and stand here." Then Cushi arrived and was able to tell the King what he had seen.

Without personal experience we are ill equipped to feed Christ's sheep and to be a true messenger of the Word of God. Zeal is no

substitute for knowledge. Paul said of Israel:

“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom.10:2).

In a lesser sense Christians sometimes take on leadership before they are equipped with the knowledge they need for the task. When God calls a person to be His messenger, He equips that person for the work. There is no substitute for experience!

Background to the Book

We know nothing about Malachi except that he had *“the burden of the LORD to Israel”* (Mal.1:1). We know he lived after the Temple had been rebuilt following the Babylonian captivity (536 - 516BC).

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to Artaxerxes in Susa (Persia) and in the 20th year of his reign Artaxerxes wrote a decree for Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

Josephus states that Nehemiah stopped at Babylon on the way to Jerusalem to encourage some Jews to join him and that he arrived in Jerusalem in the 25th year of Artaxerxes (441BC).

Scripture states that **after 12 years in Jerusalem**, Nehemiah returned to Babylon (429BC) for *“certain days”*. We know that Artaxerxes reigned until 423BC and that Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem before the death of Artaxerxes (Neh.5:14; 13:6). Josephus states that Nehemiah

“came to a great age, and then died ... Now this was done in the days of Artaxerxes”.

This would indicate that Nehemiah died before 423 BC.

When Nehemiah returned he found that some of the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Moab and Ammon and the Hebrew language was not being spoken by the children born to these marriages. He corrected the problem of mixed marriages as described in Nehemiah chapter Neh.13:23-31.

In addition, Nehemiah had found that the Jews were not paying their tithe and Temple worship was neglected (Neh.13:10-13).

In Malachi's day these same problems existed and it would seem

that the corrections made by Nehemiah no longer prevailed. The nation had once again slipped back into apathy and for this reason commentators place the Book of Malachi about 400 BC.

The 70 “weeks” prophecy recorded in Daniel chapter 9:24-27, indicates that the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt in “troublesome times” and that it would **take 49 years** from the time the decree was made (i.e. 397 BC) by Artaxerxes. While Haggai and Zechariah speak of the building of the **Temple** there is no mention of construction of the **city** in the prophecy of Malachi which may indicate that the city had been completed or was virtually complete. This also points to a date about 400 BC for the prophecy of Malachi.

Spiritual Declension Brings Judgment - (ch.1:2-14; 2:1-9)

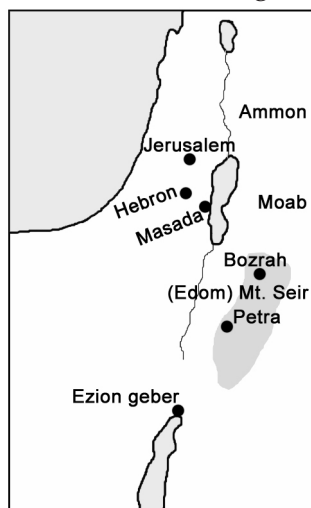
After the passing of Nehemiah the Jews had slipped into apathy and departed from keeping God’s Law. They even questioned the love of God for Israel and God said

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness” (Mal.1:2-3).

Israel replied, “Wherein hast thou loved us?”

God gave the land of Canaan to Jacob and to his seed and He gave the mountains of Seir to Esau (Edomites). However, the Edomites had a perpetual hatred for Israel and when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC) the Edomites assisted them in the siege as Psalm 137:7 indicates and 1 Esdras 4:45,50 states that the Edomites actually burned the Temple down and joined in ransacking the city.

God had judged the Edomites about 550 BC when the Nabateans drove them out of Mount Seir into Judah which had been left vacant after the Babylonian invasion. Then when the Jews returned after the 70 years captivity in Babylon, the Persians



compelled the Edomites to return the cities in Judah to the Jews. God had taken Israel's part and the Edomites were punished as proof that God loved Israel. In spite of the fact that the land of Judah was being judged by God and the Babylonians had been sent by God, the judgment on the Edomites was evidence that God had not given up on Israel and that He still loved them.

Next the priests are accused of despising God's name by offering sick, lame, injured, and blind animals as offerings at the Temple. Priests only served in the Temple if they were paid to do so and would not even shut the doors of the Temple or light the fire on the altar without being paid. God said *"I have no pleasure in you... neither will I accept an offering at your hand"* (Mal.1:10).

Those who kept healthy male animals in their flock but offered corrupt (sick, injured, blind) animals would be cursed. In chapter 2 verses 1-9 God accused the priests of not serving from the "heart" and having no fear of God. They had been appointed to *"turn many away from iniquity"* and were the *"messenger of the LORD of hosts"* (Mal.2:6-7) but they had failed and God said, *"one shall take you away"* (Mal.2:3).

This was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans and the priests taken away into slavery among the nations.

Unseparated Marriages and Divorce - ch.2:10-17

Whenever there is spiritual declension, moral standards slip. When men are at variance with God they are at variance with their fellow man who is made in the image of God. Nehemiah had severely rebuked some of the Jews who

"married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews language" (Neh.13:23-24).

Nehemiah contended with them, cursed them, plucked off their hair, and made them promise not to give their sons and daughter to the heathen in marriage. But in Malachi's day men had put away their wives and married heathen women. The altar at the Temple was covered with tears of the women who had been so rejected

and harshly treated. What sorrow is caused by broken marriages yet these heartless men could see nothing wrong with their actions and continued to bring their offerings to God at the Temple. When rebuked they replied, “Wherefore?” (Why?). God said:

*“Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and **hath married the daughter of a strange God**. The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts” (Mal.2:11-12).*

When a man takes his marriage vows, **God is witness** “between thee and the wife of thy youth” and those vows must be kept. She becomes his companion for life in an indissoluble covenant (Mal.2:14).

Marriage is more than a physical relationship; in marriage a man and a woman become one and their spirit is joined for ever.

*“And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed**. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Mal.2:15).*

In procreation a man and a woman join to give life to their offspring to raise a “godly seed”. How can anyone raise a Godly family if they put away a wife and take an ungodly woman in her place? Children are part of man and woman and have received life from mother and father. Broken marriages are treachery and an abomination to God. It is violence of the worst kind both to the wife and the offspring and God said:

*“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” (Mal.2:16).*

Malachi deals with the case of men putting away their wife but today, when women have greater independence, it is sad to see women walk away from their husband and their own children to live in an adulterous relationship with another man: such action shows that these women are devoid of natural affection.

It was tragic that these Jews could see nothing wrong with their actions; they became reprobate and said:

"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?" (Mal.2:17).

Today there is no public conscience about broken marriages. Couples "shack up" together and despise even the thought of a covenant of marriage. If another comes along who they find more sexually pleasing they can break their "relationship" with impunity. If there are children to the relationship the welfare of the children is of little consequence. They are like the woman of Samaria to whom the Lord said, *"thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband"* (John 4:18).

There are many things that God hates and divorce is one of them. He hates: *"A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren"* (Prov.6:18-19).

God is a covenant-keeping God and marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman to which God is the witness. The security of the marriage covenant is representative of the security that every believer has as a part of the bride of Christ. He would never divorce us and we are bound by His Spirit to Him for time and eternity.

The Messenger to Prepare for Messiah - Malachi 3:1-6

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal.3:1).

Jesus identified the "messenger" who would come before Him to prepare the nation for Messiah. When John was in prison he heard of Jesus' ministry and the miracles that were being performed and so he sent two disciples to ask Jesus:

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt.11:3).

Jesus sent the disciples of John back to report that miracles were being done by the Lord and those who accepted Him were blessed.

Jesus then said that John had fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi:
"This is he, of whom it was written, Behold, I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare thy way before thee" (Matt.11:10).

The Two Comings of Messiah

The Old Testament prophets did not distinguish between Messiah's first coming and His second coming. They knew He was coming and it was a mystery to them that he should suffer. They understood full well that Messiah would come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory and that His enemies would be slain however, the Church age that divides the first advent from the second advent was a mystery *"kept secret since the world began"* (Rom.16:25); it was not *"made known unto the sons of men"* in *"ages past"* (Eph.3:5).

The disciples on the Emmaus Rd had only comprehended the second advent when they said:

"We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"
(Luke 24:21).

But Jesus instructed them:

*"Ought not Christ to have **suffered** these things, and to enter into his glory?"*

The gap in time after the first advent to suffer had been missed in the disciples' thinking and Malachi gives no clue to them that this long Church age would occur.

Malachi passes right over the Church age and speaks of the second advent:

"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, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Mal.3:2-3).

The second advent will be for judgment. Israel will be judged and two thirds will perish in the fires of the Great Tribulation (Zech.13:8-9). The remnant will be purified that they may *"offer an offering in righteousness"*. This did not happen at the first advent but it will happen in the days before Christ returns:

"Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Mal.3:4).

Jeremiah foretold that this time would be *"the time of Jacob's trouble"* (Jer.30:7) and Jesus spoke of it as the *"beginning of sorrows (travail)"* (Matt.24:8). Isaiah wrote:

*"...shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as **Zion travailed**, she brought forth her children" (Isa.66:8).*

We might ask, Why is a remnant in Israel to be spared? For thousands of years they have rejected their King and Saviour; they have bitterly opposed the Gospel. The answer lies in the covenants that God has made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David:

*"For I am the LORD, I change not; **therefore** ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal.3:6).*

Restoration only Comes after Repentance

God cannot bless Israel until she repents and seeks the Lord. Therefore God says:

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal.3:7).

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal.3:10).

Israel's response was consistent with previous responses.

"Wherein hast thou loved us?"

"Wherein have we despised thy name?"

"Wherein have we polluted thee?"

"Wherein have we wearied him?"

"Wherein shall we return?"

"Wherein have we robbed thee?"

Sadly Israel had no conscience of failure and there was no likelihood that God could return to them. That self-righteous attitude prevailed when Jesus came the first time and Paul drew attention to it in Romans chapter 10:

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to

establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom.10:3).

Jesus said:

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt.5:20).

God is seeking **righteousness in the heart** but at Christ’s first advent the nation had slipped into dead religion and tradition. The apathy of Malachi’s day was replaced by two systems of religion represented by two sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The Sadducees rejected the truth of resurrection, of angels and miracles. They were humanistic, holding that man had no immortality of the soul which they affirmed, perished with the body. They saw man entirely as master of his own destiny.

The Pharisees on the other hand believed in the resurrection, in angels and miracles. They were academic and fatalistic, teaching that every event was foreordained by God similar to Calvinistic Reformed Theology today.

Both of these sects produced belief systems that failed to produce a personal relationship with God and so in the sermon on the mount Jesus reminded the Jews that

“Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt.5:21-22).

*“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already **in his heart**” (Matt.5:27-28).*

It is sadly the case that many have adopted a **system of belief** but have never truly repented and personally sought the Lord from the heart. Consequently when things go wrong they are not slow to blame God, to question His faithfulness and love, and to justify themselves and deny the sinfulness of their evil heart.

Storehouse Tithing

In more recent times there has been great emphasis on finances in the church and preachers have misapplied Malachi 3:10 in order to ensure a steady flow of cash to meet budget targets.

The tithe was collected every third year in Israel and was ordained by God for the support of the *“Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat in your gates, and be filled”* (Deut.26:12). Today these services are largely provided by Government from the taxes we pay which amount to much more than 10%.

Nowhere in the New Testament was the Church commanded to pay tithes. Only freewill offerings are mentioned in the New Testament and the general principles are outlined in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.

The concept that the local church is God’s storehouse and that Christians must give 10% of their gross wages is totally without Biblical authority.

Paul says every man should give

“according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2Cor.9:7).

Giving to God is a grace and Paul desired that the Christians *“abound in this grace also”* (2Cor.8:7).

We are to give *“as God hath prospered”* (1Cor.16:2) and another principle is that the poor should not be burdened by giving. Whatever we give must be from a heart of love for Christ and His servants. Nobody should put pressure on any saint to give:

“For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality” (2Cor.8:12-14).

The great men of faith such as Hudson Taylor and George Muller would never beg for bread. They prayed and proved that *“My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil.4:19).

Many saints have proved that the Lord is faithful and have rejoiced to be able to give to God's work, God's servants, and to those around us in need. *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20 :35).

It is one of the greatest joys in the Christian life to be able to share our material wealth with those in need especially with those who have gone out to the mission field or into some other ministry. We need wisdom to exercise this gift and not to waste our limited resources on organizations that fail to present the Gospel to lost sinners.

There are precious promise to Israel if only they will obey the Lord. He promises that He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessing that they cannot contain. He promises to make them prosperous and increase their capacity to give.

*"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. **And all nations shall call you blessed:** for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts"* (Mal.3:11-12).

Many saints have proved God's faithfulness in the supply of their material needs and of the blessing of giving to God. God is no man's debtor!

Religious but Lost

In Chapter 3 and verses 13 to 15 God reminds Israel of their "stout words" against the Lord. They say, *"It is vain to serve God". "What profit is it that we kept his ordinance, and that we have **walked mournfully** before the LORD of hosts?"*

Their motive was wrong. At the beginning of the prophecy God said they only served God in His Temple for what they could get out of it. They would not even close the doors of the Temple or light the fire on the altar unless they were paid. Now they look at the ungodly and see them enjoying their worldly pleasures and they are envious. They had no joy in service for God. It was a **doleful duty** that they **endured** wishing they could be free to please themselves.

How like all false religion which sees virtue in afflicting ones self. The prophets of Baal cut themselves and leaped on the altar at Carmel to impress their god and get a response. Monks sit in caves and recite endless prayers and in the Philippines Roman Catholics occupy crosses or flog themselves until their backs are bleeding to show devotion to their religion. Self mutilation has never been a part of the worship of the God of heaven.

When people find religion an endurance test or a penance by which they deprive themselves of worldly pleasures to pay for their sins or to be more holy, they have missed the message of the Bible that there is real joy and freedom in serving Christ. The Lord did not come to put us into bondage to a religious ritual but to set us free.

The Jews who contended with Jesus were legalists who placed all kinds of regulations on the people to prove they were devoted to God. Jesus said:

*"For they bind **heavy burdens and grievous to be born**, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men"* (Matthew 23:4-5).

The born-again child of God doesn't want the pleasures of the world because God has given him His Spirit and day by day he **rejoices in the Lord** with *"joy unspeakable and full of glory"*. I don't read my Bible as a duty but because I delight in the law of the Lord. Nine times in Psalm 119 the psalmist said that the law of the Lord was **his delight**! The unregenerate soul finds delight in reading sensual books or watching sensual shows but the regenerate soul delights to meditate in God's law day and night.

These unregenerate Jewish priests were doing **their religious duty** at the Temple but they looked around at the ungodly men of the world and called:

*"the proud happy; yea, **they that work wickedness are set up**; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered"* (Mal.3:15).

They were **envious of the freedom of the wicked who could do as they liked and lived for self and in the pleasures of sin**. Sin has its pleasures for a while but it always ends in sorrow. The

adulterer has pleasure for a while but the consequences of his unfaithfulness to his wife are enormous grief to himself, his wife, and his children. The drunkard finds pleasure in binge drinking but what brawling, violence, immorality, and damage flows from his drunken behaviour! The Bible says:

*“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. **At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder**” (Prov.23:31-32).*

Young people think they are having a great time when they break free of parental restraint and guidance but when the chickens come home to roost they find their life is scarred for the rest of their days.

Sin has its pleasures but only *“for a season”*.

*“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; **Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season**; Esteeming the reproach of Christ **greater riches than the treasures in Egypt**: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb.11:24-26).*

Moses could have had fame and fortune and could have ruled Egypt. He could have lived in pleasure all his days with wine, women, and song surrounding him, but he could see that in the end he would be drowned in the *“sorrow of the world”* which works death (2Cor.7:10).

God’s Jewels in the Last Days

However, not all the Jews were of this frame of mind.

“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).

There was a fellowship of kindred minds among a remnant who feared the LORD. These were the ones who really belonged to God and would one day be rewarded when He would *“make up His jewels”*. These would be spared in the day of God’s wrath, and when the saved and unsaved are separated, these would be preserved.

*“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” (Mal.3:17).*

Those who fear the LORD are God’s jewels, precious, and of high value. Jesus spoke of redeemed Israel as a *“treasure hid in a field”* (Matt.13:44). It was *“hid in a field”* but when found, the man sold all that he had to purchase the field so that he could recover the treasure for himself.

Israel is God’s treasure in the earth as Moses wrote:

*“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, **then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine**” (Exod.19:5).*

The Psalmist wrote:

*“For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and **Israel for his peculiar treasure**” (Ps.135:4).*

The jewels in the treasure chest are the redeemed remnant of Israel. The nation has been hid in the “field” which is the world, but there is a day coming when the Lord will come to make up His jewels.

At Christ’s first advent He died to purchase the field; the world. He was the *“Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of **the world**”* (John 1:29). Buried among the nations is the remnant of believing Jews who will make up the nation of Israel. When *“all Israel shall be saved”* during the Tribulation the Lord will say, *“They shall be mine!”*

Christ is the King of Israel and Israel are therefore His people. The Church is the Bride of Christ and she is seen as the *“pearl of great price”* for which Christ sold all that He had *“and bought it”* with His own precious blood. He gave up the glory of heaven to come to a sinful world in order to pay the price for His bride.

*“Husbands, love your wives, even **as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it**” (Eph.5:25).*

Down through the centuries Israel has been hid in the field; the nations; but the jewel box will soon be opened to reveal the treasure of all those saved and sanctified Jews who have believed like faithful Abraham. When Christ returns He will send forth His angels with the great sound of a trumpet to gather His elect nation and He will say, *“These shall be mine!”*

The Great Tribulation will Destroy the Wicked

*“BECAUSE (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” (Mal.4:1).*

There is a day coming immediately before the Lord returns in glory and power when God’s wrath will be poured out on a Christ-rejecting world.

Amillennialists tell us that this time does not exist but that when Jesus spoke of Great Tribulation He was referring to the trials and tribulations that every Christian endures. Didn’t Jesus say, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation?”* they say.

The tribulation that the Christian endures comes from the world but the Great Tribulation that Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 is wrath from God. The Christian is appointed unto the tribulations coming from the world (1Thess.3:3) but the Tribulation of the Day of the Lord is wrath from God and *“God hath **NOT appointed** us to wrath (of the Day of the Lord)”* (1Thess.5:9).

Israel however, will endure the Great Tribulation for God will use that time to bring the nation to repentance. For this reason Jeremiah called it *“the time of **Jacob’s trouble**”* (Jer.30:7) even though *“he shall be saved out of it”*.

Micah says that day will burn as an oven! All the wicked will suffer and when it ends there will not be one unsaved person left on earth; *“it shall leave them neither root nor branch”*(Mal.4:1). When Christ returns, Antichrist and all who follow him will be cast into the lake of fire and there will be no trace of them left on earth. The angels will *“gather out of His kingdom all things that offend...and shall cast them into a furnace of fire”* (Matt.13:41-42); Or, as the parable of the net teaches, *“the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire”* (Matt.13:49-50).

Malachi expresses it as: *“all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: the day that cometh shall burn them up.”*

At the judgment of the living nations (Matt.25:31-46), Antichrist and all who followed, him will be sentenced and cast into everlasting fire.

Israel to be Blessed at he Second Advent

*"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. 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" (Mal.4:2-3).*

The second advent is seen in these verses when the Lord will come in *"flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God"* (2Thess.1:8) but He will also come to rescue His redeemed people.

This has nothing to do with the Church. It is at the end of the 70th week of Daniel chapter 9; at the end of the Tribulation. The Lord will come as the Sun of righteousness to Israel and the Gentile nations but He comes **before this event** into the air as the *"bright and morning star"* to the Church. Jesus said:

*"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. **I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star**" (Rev.22:16).*

To the Church at Thyatira Jesus said:

*"And he that overcometh (those who are saved), and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations...And **I will give him the morning star**" (Rev.2:26-28).*

All the saved from this Church age will be Raptured **before** the Day of the Lord and Christ claims the title, *"morning star"* because He appears **before** the Day of the Lord to receive His bride.

The corrupt NIV Bible gives Satan this title in Isa.14:12 by changing *"Lucifer, son of the morning"* to *"O morning star, son of the dawn."*

The Sun of righteousness (the Lord Jesus) will arise after the Tribulation and bring a **new day** for Israel and the Gentile nations. The dark night of the *"day of the LORD"* will pass and the glory of God will be revealed. Isaiah wrote to Israel:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa.60:1-3).

When Christ returns Anti-Christ will be reigning and will have gathered all nations against Jerusalem but God's remnant are given the promise that

"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" (Mal.4:3).

Of those days Zechariah stated:

"In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zech.12:8-9).

Much has been said of how Antichrist will turn on Israel at the mid-point of the Tribulation and this is true for we read that

"When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman (Israel) which brought forth the man child (Christ)" (Rev.12:13).

However, since Israel turns to the Lord in the first half of the Tribulation the Lord will fight with them and for them during the last 42 months of the Tribulation. At that time Israel will be a powerful fighting force taking a heavy toll on her enemies. Zechariah wrote of that time:

"And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance" (Zech.14:14).

Perhaps the military preparedness of the nation in our day is a preparation for their last stand against Antichrist. The nuclear devices that Israel holds and the amazing weapons development that has occurred in Israel in recent years could well be the preparation for her brilliant fight against Antichrist when all of those weapons are in the hands of **believing Jews** who know that Christ is about to appear to establish His kingdom. God has special protection prepared for Israel during the Tribulation and we should remember that Israel never lost a battle while they walked with God.

Israel Will be Established as the Head of the Nations

*"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. **And all nations shall call you blessed:** for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal.3:11-12).*

We have looked at this verse in relation to Israel in Malachi's day but there is a prophetic significance which must not be passed over. The promise to Israel in Malachi's day was not fulfilled in history because the spiritual declension that had begun only deepened until the time when Christ came. If we read Matthew 23 we can gauge the spiritual condition of the nation in the time of Christ and it was not good. The rulers were plotting to kill Christ and He openly exposed the hypocrisy and worthlessness of their religion. Jesus called these religious leaders hypocrites, fools, and blind guides.

There is no evidence that the nation responded positively to Malachi's preaching and certainly it could not be said that *"All nations shall call you (Israel) blessed."* We must therefore conclude that the fulfilment of the promise is yet future when *"the Sun of righteousness"* shall arise *"with healing in his wings"* and the land will be so blessed that *"all nations shall call you blessed."*

Other prophets foretold that Israel will one day become the head of all nations in the world. Isaiah wrote:

"For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa.60:12). See also Isa.2:1-4.

Moses wrote in the Palestinian Covenant that while Israel obeyed the Lord,

"All people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee...And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Deut.28:10-13).

Many Scriptures tell of Israel's exalted position over the nations during the Millennial Kingdom and Malachi's prophecy that *"all nations shall call you blessed"* is yet to be fulfilled.

Israel's Conversion in the Tribulation

Israel will remember the law of Moses with the statutes and judgments for the entire nation will turn to the Lord.

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

Paul wrote:

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom.11:26).

During the Tribulation the remnant of Israel will remember the law of Moses; the Temple will be operating in the first half of the 7-year Tribulation and there will be two prophets preaching at Jerusalem.

*"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are **the two olive trees**, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed" (Rev.11:3-5).*

Zechariah also makes mention of these two Spirit-filled witnesses in Zech.4:3-6 where they are described as *"two olive trees"* that supply oil for the seven lamps to keep the testimony burning brightly.

Malachi speaks of one of these two witnesses:

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 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**" (Mal.4:5-6).*

The task of Elijah the prophet will be to *"turn the heart of the fathers to the children"*. Just as John the Baptist was sent to *"prepare the way"* before the Lord at His first advent, so Elijah will come to prepare Israel for the Lord's second advent. John called Israel to *"Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt.3:2) and the two witnesses will no doubt proclaim the same message.

The impact of John the Baptist should not be underestimated: Multitudes repented at his preaching.

Is Elijah One of the Two Witnesses?

Many have speculated on who the two witnesses will be. The miracles they perform are similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah but that does not mean that Moses and Elijah will be the two witnesses of Revelation chapter 11.

Moses and Elijah were Old Testament saints and we know that **all the Old Testament saints were raised with Christ**; Paradise was taken to heaven when Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives (Matt.27:52-53; Eph.4:8-10).

Since Moses and Elijah have received their resurrection bodies it is impossible for them to be put to death as the two witnesses will be; They therefore cannot be Moses and Elijah. The same question was raised when Jesus came the first time and we read:

*“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That **Elias is come already, and they knew him not**, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. **Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist**”* (Matt.17:10-13).

When the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth would have a son and call him John he said:

*“And he shall go before him in the **spirit and power of Elias**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children”* (Luke 1:17).

Perhaps the two witnesses will do likewise in the first half of the Tribulation: These will be two Jewish preachers who will *“go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah”* to turn the nation back to God. The conversion of the nation



<p>Zech 4 <i>aggai & Zechariah encourage the Rebuilding of the Second Temple</i></p>	<p>Rev 11 <i>Two future Prophets encourage the Rebuilding of the Third Temple</i></p>
--	---

in the first half of the Tribulation will no doubt be the fruit of their ministry.

The two witnesses are also identified with the two olive trees supplying oil to the seven lamps in Zechariah 4:3. In Zechariah's day they were Haggai and Zechariah who were Spirit-filled prophets used to encourage the building of the 2nd Temple. The two witnesses will be involved in construction of the third Temple.

The 144,000 Witnesses

In addition to the two witnesses, we learn from Revelation chapter seven that there will be 144,000 men from the 12 tribes of Israel who will be sealed by God to take the Gospel of the Kingdom into "*all the world*" during the first half of the 7-year Tribulation (Matt.24:14).

Israel's conversion to Jesus Christ in the Tribulation is going to impact greatly on the nations of the world. The "blindness" of Israel will be finished for "*blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*" (Rom.11:25). Paul wrote of Israel:

"their minds were blinded...nevertheless when it (Israel) shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2Cor.3:14-16).

After centuries of denial, every Jew left on planet earth will profess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Ezekiel speaks of this wonderful day in chapter 36 of his prophecy:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek.36:26-27).

Again Ezekiel states:

*"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set **my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore**"* (Ezek.37:26).

And again:

*"Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have **left none of them any more there.** Neither*

will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek.39:28-29).

This conversion of Israel will be amazing for it will involve the entire population of Jewry world wide. It is hard to contemplate such an amazing work of the Spirit of God but Jeremiah wrote:

*"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall ALL KNOW ME, **from the least of them unto the greatest of them**, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:34).*

Worship in the Kingdom of Christ will be centred in Jerusalem; at the Temple. Sacrifices will be offered in memorial of Christ's sacrifice as Israel remembers *"the law of Moses...with the statutes and judgments"* (Mal.4:4).

A Book of Remembrance

*"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).*

The remnant that feared the Lord in Malachi's day and the remnant that fear the Lord in the last days may be included in this passage. It is comforting to know that, in a day of apostasy, as the Godly remnant get together to encourage each other, God is tuned in and records all the discussions. It shows the value that God puts on the discussions of His people.

Today we live in a time of declension and faithful saints often feel isolated. Many meet in small companies; house churches are not uncommon. These saints have *"gone forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach"*(Heb.13:13) but their fellowship is sweet and every word is recorded by God in a book of remembrance.

This book of remembrance is written *"for them"*. Like a family history the rejected remnant will be able to recall the battles fought, the trials endured, and the victories won - God has them all recorded so that in the future we can reminisce and rejoice!