

Mal. 3:1 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.

We don't have to speculate as to the identity of the messenger in this verse since Jesus quoted this scripture in reference to John the Baptist.

Matt. 11:7-10 And as they departed, **Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John**, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For **this is he, of whom it is written**, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, **which shall prepare thy way before thee.**

Luke gives the clearest reference as to John's purpose.

Luke 3:2-4 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto **John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness**. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, **The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord**, make his paths straight.

How did John prepare the way for the coming of Jesus the Messiah? By preaching the need to repent and be delivered from sin.

"the Lord, whom ye seek" = a reference to the long-awaited Messiah
The prophet Malachi is declaring God's promise of the coming Messiah who will represent the Father in fulfillment of His word. Yes, from a human perspective, they have waited a long time—but He is coming says YHWH.

As we will learn in the next chapter, John is a type of Elijah yet to come before the Lord Jesus returns as King.

Mal. 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

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

These three verses skip over the first coming of Jesus to the second coming. The sons of Levi were not purged at His first coming. In fact, they rejected Him. When He returns as King, He will be like a refiner's fire in that He will destroy all the wicked, the dross of humanity, and like fullers' soap in that He will purify the people who enter His Kingdom. I've learned in other journals that the refining of silver is done by heating it with very high heat that burns off the impurities and results in the refiner being able to see his image in the silver. When gold is purged / purified, the metal is scraped and the residue treated with acid to see if it disappears; if it does, it is not gold. The application is pretty clear. During the 70th week of Daniel, the last 7 years on planet earth before the Lord

returns, Israel is going to undergo a terrible time of tribulation from which will emerge a remnant of believers who will then be allowed to enter the Messiah's Kingdom.

Dan. 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Dan. 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Matt. 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Matt. 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

He will then establish a new covenant with them that will ensure that never again will the people turn away from their God and King as declared by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Jer. 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Jer. 31:33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, 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.

Ezek. 11:17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

Ezek. 11:18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

Ezek. 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

Ezek. 11:20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

At that time the sons of Levi will be purified and the Lord will once again take delight in the offerings made at His house by His people as He did when the tabernacle was first built and the temple in Jerusalem dedicated.

As I was reading through this section again, it hit me that the focus is on the Levites, the priests, the religious leaders. Leadership is key in influencing the direction of the people being led.

Mal. 3:5 *And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.*

At that time the Lord comes in judgment He will personally testify against those that have blatantly disregarded His law—

- Sorcerers – Those who practice witchcraft.
- Adulterers – The Hebrew includes not only the sexual sin, but also apostasy.
- False swearers – Those who lie and make false oaths.
- Those that oppress workers, widows, and the fatherless – This is a reference to those that pay unfair wages and take advantage of widows and orphans in their need.
- Those that turn aside strangers – The other translations make reference to depriving foreigners among you of justice.
- Those that do not fear God – Frankly, I would think that all of the above fall into this category as would every other sin. We only sin without guilt and repentance because we do not fear God. That is a frightening indictment.

I couldn't help but think of the last chapter of Revelation in reference to the New Jerusalem as I went through this list.

Rev. 22:14 Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Rev. 22:15 For without are dogs, and **sorcerers**, and **whoremongers**, and murderers, and **idolaters**, and **whosoever loveth and maketh a lie**.

God has been consistent in His expectations of His people from the beginning.

Ex. 20:14 **Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

Ex. 22:21 Thou shalt **neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him**: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ex. 22:22 **Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.**

Deut. 18:10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, **or a witch**,

Deut. 18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

Deut. 24:14 **Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant** *that is* poor and needy, *whether he be* of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that *are* in thy land within thy gates:

Deut. 24:17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

Deut. 24:19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: **it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.**

Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*;
Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal. 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Gal. 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

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

The verses above just emphasize this truth. Because God is faithful, He has not destroyed the sons of Jacob, the nation of Israel. God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and despite the rebellion of their progeny, the Lord is preserving a remnant that will one day blossom into a mighty nation that will enjoy all the blessings of the earthly kingdom that He promised Abraham.

Gen. 17:5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

Gen. 17:6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Gen. 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Gen. 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Mal. 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Sadly, scripture records that it didn't take long for the children of Israel to rebel against God and turn to idolatry. Still, a merciful God is ready with open arms to receive those who will turn back to Him in faith and repentance. God is aware that the people don't even acknowledge their sin and anticipates their question. What do we need to turn away from?

Mal. 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Mal. 3:9 Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.

At this point God singles out their lack of tithes and offerings. He is making a point that by doing so they are robbing Him; the tithes and offerings were necessary to the effective function of the temple.

Deut. 12:5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

Deut. 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

Deut. 12:7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

The Lord had clearly established through Moses the importance of obedience to His commands.

Deut. 11:26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

Deut. 11:27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

Deut. 11:28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

Mal. 3:10 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.*

I think this verse ties in to verse 7 as well. The Lord is pleading with His people to turn back to Him and evidence their sincerity by bringing in their tithes. He wants to see His house, the temple, functioning as was intended among His people. He even challenges the people to test Him. What an amazing, merciful God we serve! He promises that if they will obey Him, He will bless them so abundantly that they will have far more than they can possibly use.

The principle is the same today—You can't outgive the Lord.

Mal. 3:11 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.

Mal. 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

As the God of Creation, He is sovereign over that creation. He can prevent things that are harmful to the crops (insects, harsh weather, disease) from affecting the crops. He can ensure that the crops are allowed to reach full maturity. The other nations couldn't help but notice that God was blessing His people as they experience such abundant provision.

These two verses are like a transition. Even as they are connected to the blessing of verse 10, they are also separate from the "if" statement in that verse. They seem to stand out as a promise of future blessing during the Messiah's Kingdom.

I don't think since the time of Solomon that there has been any time in Israel's history that the nations considered her a "delightful land." This promise seems to connect with the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Is. 65:19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

Is. 65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed.

Is. 65:21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

Is. 65:22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

Is. 65:23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

Is. 66:10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

Is. 66:11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

Is. 66:12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees.

Mal. 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

Mal. 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

Mal. 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that tempt God* are even delivered.

The Lord now confronts the people with another sad truth. Their words had dishonored YHWH. Again, He anticipates their refusal to acknowledge their sin. They claim not to know how they had dishonored Him. As always, the Lord is clear and direct in identifying their sin. My paraphrase—"You say that it is not worth it to obey Me. You have decided that it is better to be proud and disobedient since those who are such appear to be happier and have escaped My judgment."

I can't help but be reminded of the verse from Ecclesiastes.

Ecc. 1:9 The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.

David was troubled with the same thoughts concerning the wicked.

Psa. 73:12-17 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should

offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.

And Habakkuk.

Hab. 1:2-4 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

And Peter foretold it for our time

2Pet. 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

2Pet. 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

Mal. 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

As always when the Lord's word is given, there are some hearts ready to receive the message. The Lord was making note of those whose conversation revealed their fear of Him. I don't think He is making reference only to those to whom Malachi was speaking. I believe there is a special book in heaven in which God has recorded the names of those that fear Him and think upon His name. You would think this book would be the same as "The Book of Life" referenced in Revelation.

Rev. 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Rev. 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

You would think that everyone who is saved would all qualify as those who fear God and think upon His name. Somehow, I just don't think so. Salvation is a gift predicated on faith—not works. Scripture is clear that some believers will find that they have no qualifying works to be rewarded at the judgment seat.

1Cor. 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1Cor. 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

1Cor. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: **but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.**

It would seem to me that something would survive that would qualify for reward from someone who truly feared God and thought about Him with reverence and a desire to obey, but that evidently won't be true of every believer.

I remember really noticing this "book of remembrance" when I first did a study on "The Book of Life." The Hebrew for *thought* includes *value*. It would seem that there are many true believers, those who have placed their faith in Jesus, who choose for whatever reason not to invest much of themselves in that relationship. There are others who, in varying degrees, are challenged to serve and grow because they are so humbled by the forgiveness they've been given and in awe of the God that saved them. This verse tells me that God takes delight in those whose lives give evidence of their reverence and worship of Him. It stood out to me that this evidence includes the desire to talk about Him with other believers. When I thought about it in that light, it helped my understanding. I have friends and family who profess faith but who just don't seem to enjoy discussing the things of the Lord. I know I value those times that I can fellowship with someone else who is just as interested in scripture and spiritual things as I am.

Mal. 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

"jewels" = peculiar (treasure), proper good, special

When I saw the definition for jewels, I couldn't help but think of the phrase "peculiar people." This is a phrase in scripture used to identify the nation of Israel and the true church.

Deut. 14:2 For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

What is He going to spare them from? Condemnation and eternal punishment. Since this message is being directed to the people of Israel, I think that in context you have to make application to the tribulation when the Lord is purifying the nation of Israel to establish a believing remnant. I would think that those who are preserved through the tribulation (maybe in Petra) would be in direct reference here as the jewels as a part of the greater whole; they will be one strand among many. Again, the connection is to those that value Him by worshipping (from the Hebrew for *serveth*) Him.

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

The prophet is declaring that the time is coming when there will be a clear distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those that

serve/worship God and those that don't. The implication--the lines between the two groups--righteous worshippers and wicked nonworshippers--had been blurred. I think that would be a real understatement regarding today's concept of each. Many who claim to be righteous through faith in Christ seem to want to mix with the world in the name of tolerance and not wanting to appear judgmental, and sometimes those who refuse to accept Christ are more loving and selfless in their actions than those who claim to be believers.