

## Messengers of THE MESSENGER

### Malachai 3:1-6

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"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness. "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts. "For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.""  
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To begin, we have a quote from the Scofield Study Bible in the commentary section before, what is the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi. "Malachi means my messenger, which is probably an abbreviated form of the messenger of the LORD. Apart from the meaning of his name, nothing is known of Malachi, who carried out his ministry in the second half of the fifth century B.C. [which incidentally, Malachi is the last recorded prophet in the Bible, until 400 years later when John the Baptist begins his ministry. Subsequently then...] this final message of the Old Testament contains the prophecy of John the Baptist's ministry, the fulfillment of which begins the New Testament. Malachi develops his main theme, which is the corruption of the priests and the sins of the people against the family and their miserliness toward God, followed by questions from those addressed and statements proving the original assertions, a dialectic form of discussion which later became quite popular in Judaism."<sup>1</sup>

I preferred the following definition of dialectic as being succinct or straight to the point. It is defined as "The art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments."<sup>2</sup> You ever have those "dialectic" conversations with God? For instance saying something like, "Lord Your Word says that as Your disciple I will bear much fruit for your glory. Where's the fruit?" The people that God was having Malachi speak to were first of all not honoring

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1 Scofield Study Bible, The (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

2 Dialectic. <https://www.wordnik.com/words/dialectic> (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition). (accessed Jan. 6, 2023)

God. As God says to the people in **Malachi 1:6**, "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'" The people also had accused God of not being fair as the prophet Ezekiel mentioned in **Ezekiel 18:25**. What was God's response? He replied saying, "O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?" You ever get to the place where you realize, that as God is perfect in all of His ways, there really is no room for arguing with Him and in trying to persuade Him to act contrary to His perfect and just will? It is, or should be, humbling indeed, to where you perhaps cut your words short and say, "ok Heavenly Father. Your will be done." Just as Jesus cried to His Father, "**Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.**" (**Mark 14:36**) That can be a tough one to say at times. After all, no one wants to suffer, right? As the man of God Job concluded, in the midst of His suffering, he really had two statements that summed up the whole of of his "dialectic" discussions with God and his so called friends that kept telling him that he needed to repent of what must have been some hidden sins in his life. First Job states, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him." (**Job 13:15**) There was nothing wrong in Job taking His case to the Highest Court as God is and will be our Judge. He is our Father our Master. That is, after all, what we are saying in calling Him Lord. Again, He is our ultimate Judge, just as it is written, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (**Romans 14:10**) What was God's response to Job? Basically, it was God saying to Job that He alone is God Almighty, Creator of all things, and that His ways are perfect. Who can argue with that? The other key phrase though that Job said was, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth." (**Job 19:25**) In the midst of his suffering, Job still found a way to rejoice in his salvation, that he was clinging to the hope and truth that his Redeemed indeed lives! That is where we as Christians have our hope (I hope and pray we all that hope). As our Redeemer does most certainly live, we have that hope that we will stand with Him as we are IN Christ Jesus.

Our hope in believing that our Redeemer lives begins with these words of Jesus, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**" (**John 3:16-17**) Jesus has paid the FULL penalty of our sins against God and is our Redeemer to all who will put their trust in Him and "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." (**Proverbs 30:5**) "He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." "He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him."

Before the coming of Christ though, Malachi says, "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me." To clue us in to who Malachi is talking about, our Bibles have that word messenger start with a lower case m. Malachi is speaking of none other than the one who said to those who asked him who he was, he said, "I am 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord," ' as the prophet Isaiah said.'" (John 1:23) That was none other than John the Baptist. John the Baptist was "making straight the way of the Lord" by preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" and he was called the Baptist because he was baptizing people after their decision to repent and turn to God for forgiveness and salvation. He knew a Savior was coming which was preached by the prophets of old. What they didn't know initially was that the Savior of the world, to all who will believe on Him and receive Him, was Jesus. John the Baptist knew when he saw Jesus coming toward him, to get baptized, John proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Could he have said such a thing for just a mere messenger or just another prophet of God? All of God's people, including John the Baptist were waiting for the one Malachi spoke of saying, "the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts." With this Messenger it is with a capital M. He is THE MESSENGER. The word Lord in "The Lord, whom you seek" is the word adon or adown which is the root of Adonai. Adonai means master and could be applied to human rulers or to God as THE MASTER. The Master that Malachi was pointing to, as was John the Baptist, was Jesus, who was and is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69) All of creation has been subjected to Jesus, as it is written, "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." (1 Peter 3:22)

No other prophet or messenger before Christ or after Christ can that be said of them. He is THE Messenger and THE Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, to those who receive Him and believe on Him; and He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him! "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13) "I believe", one may say, "so how do I receive Christ to be saved?" Jesus preached the same message that John the Baptist preached saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4:17) That is where Jesus said, "'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'" (John 14:23) That is where we can rejoice and proclaim it on the mountaintops that "My Redeemer Lives!" That is the being born-again, the receiving of the Spirit of Christ that works in us His Wisdom and Righteousness, sanctification, and Redemption,

that, as it is written, let he/she who glories glory in the Lord! (**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**) Jesus promises us this also, "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." (**John 8:51**) In that same dialogue that Jesus had with the Jewish leaders He claimed, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (**John 8:58**) To the Jewish leaders Jesus couldn't have been clearer as they knew that Jesus was saying that He was (and is) God incarnate, that is God in the flesh. That is where they picked up stones and wanted to stone Jesus to death.

To explain what Jesus said about those who keep His Word will not see death. You know when the "serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (**Genesis 3:4-5**) He, as always, spoke a half-truth, which is a LIE! Yes, they acquired the knowledge of good and evil but they would die a spiritual death and they were also going to die a physical death. The first death being physical, the second death being spiritual. How do we know that? Here's what Jesus says, "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." (**John 5:26-30**) Jesus is saying that all will be raised from the dead. Those who are Christ's will have both body and spirit, just as Christ does, and will not receive the second death, the death of the spirit. This is just my opinion but the way I see it is that for those who wanted to live for the flesh and not the spirit will have their wish. For the second death, of the spirit, is the complete and absolute separation from God and having to live in the torment of their choosing the flesh over the Spirit, that is, the Spirit of Christ.

"For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." One may say of that passage of Scripture and say that it is meant for just the Levites who were the priests and the caretakers of the temple. Get ready for this...in Christ, "you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are His royal priesthood. Not only are we grafted into the faith of Abraham but we are also in the priesthood of Aaron. From Scripture we know that Jesus is THE HIGH PRIEST. But He is as it says in **Hebrews 2:17** a "merciful and faithful High Priest." In Christ, we are also,

as the Apostle Paul said to the church of Corinth, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." God is preparing His people, cleaning us up and purifying us in the precious blood of Jesus to be His ambassadors, His messengers, to carry His message to all nations. That is the Great Commission spoken of in Matthew 28 that we are presently blessed to be called to. It is our responsibility but it is a great blessing and honor to be God's representatives of His eternal message that He has given us. We are to be sharing His message but living His message, that He is preparing us to be His royal priesthood, His own special people. We have as an example with the Israelites, at how they disobeyed God, and just did whatever they wanted to do and to where that led them.

"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?" In the full glory of God, who indeed can stand before the Lord? We are called into the covering and forgiveness that is in Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord! "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are **in Christ Jesus**, who do not walk according to the flesh, **but according to the Spirit**. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

You know how Jesus mused upon the people of Jerusalem as he looked out over the town saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" (**Luke 13:34**) That is where we are intended to be. Under the covering of Christ, covered by the blood of Jesus. Clinging to Jesus, for He is our life just as the Israelites were told to cling to God for He is their life. The counter to that or the separate distinction is in those who Malachi says, "I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me." Just because we are saved by the grace of God in Christ Jesus doesn't mean that we suddenly shouldn't have a fear of the Lord. We will be

That leads us back to the first messenger in our passage of Scripture. That is, John the Baptist. Before John the Baptist saw Jesus and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" he said, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy

Spirit." In that time period, it was only the lowliest of servants that would take off the sandals and wash the feet of guests as they came into the home. John the Baptist was saying that he wasn't even worthy to be the lowliest of lowly before Jesus the Christ. Once again, there's us---then there is God. There is us, then there is Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God! He alone is worthy of our complete honor, respect, and praise. He alone is Adonai, our Master. We have looked at in previous messages how the church in history, from after the passing away of the Apostles, soon turned into a church-state to where the church was taking incredible liberties in the name of Christ. The church was behind killing, stealing and enslaving the common folks or peasants (to which I'd say we all would have been in that category, since I don't see any aristocrats amongst us). Even today, while the operations of the evil in the churches may be somewhat more subtle in their abuses of the grace of God, it still remains that we are called to sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ. It may be tempting for us as we watch the 6-o'clock news and want to join the brigade in taking matters into our own hands in seeking justice, we are called to what Jesus tells us. He is our Lord. He is our Master, Adonai, and He is our Judge.

Jesus says this, "I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (**Matthew 5:44-45**) "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." (**John 12:26**) Jesus did not fight against the authorities and injustices of His generation. He "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." His reward? "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (**Philippians 2:9-10**) Once again, Jesus promises us that "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." To God be the glory! Yet He will honor those who serve Him, guaranteed. It is a promise from God, who cannot lie.

Listen to what is recorded in **Revelation 14:6-7**, "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the **everlasting gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."" After that, it is announced that Babylon is fallen and a warning to not take the mark of the beast or to worship the beast or his image. Then

it says, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (**Revelation 14:12**) We ARE called to believe on Christ Jesus for being the One who takes away the sins of the world and we ARE called to obey Him. That IS the fear of the Lord, the honoring God, and loving God. Jesus tells us that we are to obey God saying, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (**Matthew 7:21**) but He also has given us a new commandment. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (**John 13:34**) Yes we are no longer under the law in Christ Jesus but under grace but He is still God Almighty and He still desires for us to obey Him and honor Him and fear Him. After all, what would the difference be if we just acted like every other person in this world, killing, robbing, and hating? Where is the line drawn? How far do we go with honoring God and serving Him and loving Him? To hear the heart of God is to hear what Jesus prayed to our Heavenly Father, to His Heavenly Father just before He was to be crucified on a cross, to take away the sins of the world. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [the Apostles]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; **that they may be made perfect in one**, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." I don't think any of us can say that we have perfected the being one in Christ quite yet but He isn't finished with us.

Jesus has already perfected us in Him and now we are called to live as such. That is where "He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi [once again, that includes us], and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." That is how God is glorified, in us being made perfect in Christ Jesus. We are perfect in Christ Jesus and now we are being made perfect in Christ Jesus. As the Apostle John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (**1 John 3:2**) That is something worth getting excited about! Yes, it will be awesome and exciting being made perfect in the image of Christ, but when we see Him..."For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob." He is our Lord our God our Maker and our Savior, full of mercy and grace! How I long to be with Him. "To live is Christ [that's good]. To die is gain [even better]." (**Philippians 1:21**) Praise God for His mercies and grace in Christ Jesus!