

Faith Lost in the Promises of God (Part 1)

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[0:00] Well, welcome once again to our Wednesday night Bible study in the prophecy of Malachi.

! Last time we finished up chapter 2, looking at God's dealing with the men of the nation! and the divorce of those men from their original wives for the purpose of marrying heathen women. God severely dealt with that and promised severe judgment upon that. Now, with that, along with the previous studies of the sin of the priesthood that God dealt with, we find as we begin in chapter 3 that there was a real spirit of discontentment among all of the people of Israel, not just those that were the priesthood and those that were divorcing their wives, but it was prevalent throughout the nation that there was real discontentment among the people. The reason being is that they were expecting from the promises of God that the glory of God would once again be prevalent among the people, that he would manifest his glory to them in various ways.

But that didn't seem to take place. You recall as we looked earlier at the reconstruction of the temple after the regathering of the people into Israel, that the temple was smaller than the original, than Solomon's temple. And when that was completed, we found that everything was there except for one thing, and that was the fact that the glory of God was not present in that temple.

We saw then that the reason being was that the people were not ready for that outward symbol, if you will, and the reality of the renewed fellowship with God to come. They were not ready for that because of the continued sinfulness of the people. And so we kind of see that prevalent here in Malachi's prophecy, that that discontentment comes because they felt that God had not secured or not fulfilled the promises that he had made to the people. So as a result then, they had lost faith in the promises of God. So in their despair, they called the holiness and justice of God in question here.

Where is the judgment of God? And thusly, they began to deny the coming of the Lord in judgment upon the world. So those feelings were expressed in the writing of Malachi in the last verse of chapter 2. That's verse 17. And this is what we see in that verse. The scripture says, So prevalent in their mind and their heart. Again, not just in the unrighteous, but that has come down to the righteous as well within the nation. We'll see that a little bit later. But as a result then, God raises that question through Malachi that the people had in their heart or their mind. Where is the faithfulness of God in essence? Where is his judgment? So Malachi then uses that as a means of announcing the fact that the day of the Lord is indeed coming. Now, then he speaks as well in chapters 3 and 4, of the nature of the nature of that day of the coming of the Lord. Now, those who murmured against God, according to Malachi 3, 7, were those who had departed like the fathers from the law of God that God had given to them. And they also had defrauded God in the tithes and the offerings that they failed to give.

[4:13] Now, those that feared God in verse 16 of chapter 3 are placed in contrast to those that did not fear him. The reproach brought against them in Malachi 2, 17 is where he says, You weary Jehovah with your words. And in verse 13 of chapter 3, your words put constraint upon me. And all of that shows that they do not belong then really to those that are truly righteous. But you realize with me that even the righteous have means or have have a way of allowing and letting the discouragement of the day filter down into their hearts and minds.

And so we see that happen here as well. You know, it's easy in our flesh to get discouraged, even to begin to wonder where is God in the midst of all of that. Well, Malachi deals with that, and God gives an answer to all that here in just a moment. So even the righteous are affected by this temptation, and their minds have raised similar complaints about where the faithfulness of God is in his promises to the nation. So God responds to the murmur in addressing the entire nation of the righteous as well as the unrighteous, and deals with that through the writing of Malachi.

The judgment that they want to see would unfold upon the sorcerers, adulterers, and the gross sinners, but the only persons distinguished from those are those that are truly righteous, who remember the name of the Lord, and we'll see that in verses 16 through 18. So small handful of godly men who formed that vanishing minority of believers, of true believers in the faithfulness of God. So their complaint comes down to this. Everyone who does evil is good in the eyes of God. And Jehovah takes pleasure in the wicked. Now, the statement, those that do evil are not really what we would consider the notorious sinners in their midst, but they were the heathens that are enjoying undisturbed prosperity. Now, we see that in our generation as well, of course. We see unsaved people that do well financially, do well in earthly possessions, and seem to have no difficulties or no worries at all. We see that in the day of Malachi here. And that is their reasoning for the statement that God seems to be pleased with them because they're prospering. But again, let me remind you that outward prosperity is not an automatic sign or signal of God's pleasure and blessing upon a people. I've known people, and you probably have too, that just have the skill, they have the talent of making money, of making things work. And it doesn't mean that they have the pleasure of God upon them or that they are truly saved individuals. No, don't mistake me. There are some that truly are saved, but that's not an indication necessarily that they are just because they have prosperity. But that's what happened in the day of Malachi. Those that do evil are those that have undisturbed prosperity in the heart and mind of the people of Israel. Now, so that type of reasoning then leads to the question that seems to be in their mind that Malachi raises. Where then, if God seems to be pleased with them, where is the promised judgment of God that has not yet come? Why doesn't God punish the ungodly and the heathen? Why isn't he coming as the judge that he promised to come as if he doesn't have pleasure in those that are wicked? Now, those are the type of speeches and comments that seem to weary God.

But God does respond, and in essence, he says, I'm going to deal with that. Don't worry about it. I'm going to deal with it, and I'll do that in my time, in my way. And so in chapter 3, verse 1, we see how God's going to deal with that particular issue. What is it that someone years back said, payday with God, payday is not always on the 1st and the 15th. It's going to come. It's going to come.

[9:01] So in verse 1 of chapter 3, Malachi writes to us, as God says, behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom you delight in. Behold, he shall come, says the Lord of hosts.

So in response to that question, where is or remains the judgment of God, the Lord himself replies by simply saying, he will suddenly come to his temple. Before his coming, though, he will send his messenger to prepare the way for him to come. Isaiah chapter 40, verses 1 through 5 deal with that, and here's what it says. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Now, before his coming, that messenger will come, and the person whose voice Isaiah hears calling to make that way of Jehovah in the desert is described as my messenger, the messenger whom Jehovah will send before him, before his coming. The messenger is not a heavenly messenger, or a spiritual being, or the angel of Jehovah, but he is an earthly messenger of the Lord, sent to the nation, and we see in later scripture that that that messenger then is identified here as John the Baptist, and he came immediately before you remember the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now, the evidence of that being John is twofold. First of all, there's not a single prophet that arose in Israel between the entire period of what, 400 plus years between Malachi and then the coming of John.

The context, secondly, the context of the message before us is the other evidence of it being John. The sending of the messenger was to take place immediately before the coming of the Lord to his temple. Now, it's true that in Malachi 2, 7, the priests are called the messengers of God, but realize the scripture here says, behold, I send my messenger. So that prevents the term messenger as referring to the priests in Malachi's day. The priests were standing mediators, yes, between the Lord and his people. But realize, and remember, in the day of Malachi, those priests failed to fulfill

their responsibility and their duty as those ambassadors of God. So the Lord was then not going to use them as that messenger. This is going to be an extraordinary messenger that would come to fulfill that particular personage. And then he would prepare the way for Jehovah, preparing the way by clearing away all the impediments that lie in the road that would prevent his coming or his passage to be able to come. So it denotes the removal of everything that would hinder the Lord from coming to his people. And not just the fact of his appearance, but coming in a way that would bring the heart and mind of the people toward him. The taking away of the enmity toward God and of the ungodliness of the people. And that would come by the preaching of repentance and the resulting conversion of sinners. Realize with me that John, as he came in his earthly ministry, preached that means, preached that message rather of repentance. In Matthew chapter three, verses one through six, the scripture says, in those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken by the prophet Isaiah saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel hair and a leather, a leather girdle about his loins and his meat was locust and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around about Jordan and were baptized him of Jordan, confessing their sins. You remember there was a time as well in John's ministry in preaching that message of repentance, that those would come and ask if he was the one or if he was on the prophets. And he simply said that there was one coming that he was not worthy to loosen the shoes of. And that was, of course, relating to the Lord Jesus. So he preached a spoke of the fact that he was one that was a predecessor to the Lord Jesus Christ. So the implication in the announcement of this messenger is that first of all, the nation in his existing moral condition was not yet prepared to receive the Lord. Just as in the day of Jeremiah, they weren't prepared. Just in the day of the reconstruction of the temple, they weren't prepared to receive the Lord. So his glory did not fill that structure. So now in Malachi's day, even we see here that they still were not yet prepared in their spirit and in their heart to receive the Lord and thus receive those things that God had in store for them when he came. So as a result

of that, they really had no grounds to murmur, no grounds to complain about the fact that God in his judgment had not yet come. And there was a delay then in the manifestation of the glory of God.

[16:01] They likewise ought to all rather murmur about their own condition spiritually, their own sin, and likewise their own estrangement from God. Now, when the way shall have been prepared for the Lord, the Lord will suddenly come, he says, not just immediately, but unexpectedly. The farther you realize, even though there's been promises, the farther people go into sin, and the farther we go from the actual pronouncement of the promise, the less we really have in our heart and mind the reality of that to come. It seems like a thing that will never, ever transpire. That happened in the day of Malachi, and that likewise is happening, I think, in many in our day. I think that's one of the things the coronavirus situation has brought to light, and that is especially in the people of God, and that is that, hey, this thing's lining up with a lot of things we see transpiring during the tribulation period. So it kind of brings reality to light here for us in the fact that Jesus could very well come at any time. So God said he will come unexpectedly to his people. It's the Lord that will come, the Adonai, and he is God, of course, evident from the fact that he is coming, and when he comes, he's coming to his temple, the temple of Jehovah, that place where God would meet and did meet with his people and dwelt among them in that most holy place. So he comes to his temple, and then the Lord whom you seek points back to the question, where is the judgment then of God? The Lord comes to his temple, but he comes to his temple as the God-King of Israel and there to dwell forever. Ezekiel chapter 43, verses 1 through 7, see this,

Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like a noise of many waters, and the earth shined with its glory, and it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the visions that I saw by the river Shabar, and I fell upon my face, and the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the Spirit took me up and brought me into the inner court, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. I love that statement there. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house, and the man stood by me, and he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. And my name, or excuse me, my

holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they nor the kings, nor by their whoredoms, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. So God said, this is the temple, this is the place, this is my house where I will come, and I will live there, if you will. I'll dwell there, and I'll dwell there forever.

So that day will come. Where's his judgment? How come it hasn't come? How come his glory hasn't been manifest? It will. They're not ready for that at this point, but he will come, and that will transpire.

Now there's another important aspect to notice here. The first phrase of verse 1, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. That phrase is quoted in the New Testaments in regards, of course, to John the Baptist. In Matthew chapter 11, verses 7 through 11, we read this, And as they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? And 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, and 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 the way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than me. So, that first phrase is quoted in the New Testament. But the second phrase, when he says, The Lord whom ye seek, is nowhere quoted in the New Testament. So, together, that all means everything in that latter phrase, The Lord whom ye seek, is yet to be fulfilled.

[21 : 42] The only exception to that is the first advent of the Lord Jesus as Messiah, of course. Yet, at that time, he did not bring the judgment that was mentioned and promised in verse number two.

Now, we did know when he came, and when he died on the cross of Calvary, he paid the judgment for all sinners. But there's a more complete fulfillment, if you will, of that particular idea that we have in mind here, that Malachi has in mind. Now, the secondary fulfillment of all that, first of all, came in Luke chapter two, at the dedication of the Lord Jesus when he was eight days old.

In Luke chapter two, verses 21 through 24, the scripture says, When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. Then in verses 40 through 47 of chapter two of Luke's gospel, we find that when he was 12 years of age, that he was also presented to the Lord.

And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Now, his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, they returned, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him. And it came to pass that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. So there at that age of 12, we see Jesus Messiah having come to his temple. Of course, at that moment, they did not recognize him as such. And, you know, unexpectedly, perhaps. But again, the judgment of God had not at that point been poured out. And then at the beginning of his earthly ministry, we see in Matthew chapter 21, verses 10 through 14, that epic time when Jesus comes into Jerusalem and goes through the temple and finds the wickedness there in the temple and deals with that. And when he was coming to Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of

Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of money changers and the seats of them that sold doves. And he said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

[25 : 22] And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. A little bit of judgment there, but not quite the fulfillment of what Malachi is speaking of here. Now, in Revelation chapter 4, we see Jesus just before the opening of the seven seal judgments during the tribulation

period.

After this, I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that was to look upon like a jasper and sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats, or thrones. And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices, and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man. And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him.

They were full of eyes within, and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. And then in Revelation chapter 7, we see this statement made. One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto them, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them, and they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And then we see later on in the seventh trumpet judgment, as it's about to sound, we see the voice come from the throne of God. Picture there again of God in his temple, that of course in the heavenly temple during the tribulation period, and at the end of that period as well. So he comes then to his temple. Revelation 21 speaks to us as well of him being the temple, him and God, the Lamb and God being the temple of that new Jerusalem. So he comes as the angel of the covenant, for whom the people are longing. The Lord at his coming, also that messenger, that angel of the covenant, that covenant that the people, or the coming that the people were longing for, and that longing as far as they're concerned, was for the judgment of God, and to see it at work. That coming as the messenger of the covenant deals with that covenant that God again made with the people of Israel when he redeemed them out of the land of Egypt. He went before them visibly as by a cloud during the day, and by a pillar of fire at night to lead them through the desert of the wilderness to the promised land of Canaan. Now, God is going to come in that reality that Malachi speaks of here, a primary fulfillment that is yet to come. He will come, and we'll deal more with that because I think our time is about expired now, and we can pick that up next time. So let me just encourage you to study the rest of chapter three of Malachi's prophecy. We'll pick that up next week, unless God deals mercifully and graciously, and we can all come together next week, and we'll do that here. So God bless you. Let's pray together. Father, again, thank you for your love and grace to us. Thank you, Father, for the time you've given us here today. And again, I thank you for the promises that you've made through your word to your people, and that promise of the blessed return and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to set up his millennial reign after the rapture, the tribulation, and then bring us back with him to set that reign up and to enjoy that time together with him and then eternity future. So Father, thank you for that. And in this day of difficulty that we're living in now, may that be an encouragement to us to know that you're faithful to your promises, and every single promise that you've made will come true. And we'll thank you for it. Bless your people, we pray. Keep them well. Keep them safe. In Jesus' name, amen.

[31:49] Amen.