

## **The Burden of the Word of the Lord in Malachi**

**(The last book of the Old Testament Scriptures)**

### **Meeting 7**

It is important to know what the Lord is speaking to us today and how He wants to lead us, especially as the signs of the times show that He is coming soon. Many believers are expecting His second coming. The question is, how do we prepare for His coming? To know that He is coming is one thing, but to be ready is another thing.

God has given us many warnings concerning His coming through the things that are happening in this world today. Malachi says that when He comes there will be severe punishment, especially for the unfaithful priests. For this reason, God tells us to hear His commandment and take it to heart (Mal. 2:2). Do not just hear God's word and then forget it but meditate on it. Repent, turn to the Lord and give glory to His name by obeying His word and doing it. Do not just praise Him and "give glory to His name" but then disregard what He tells you to do. If you do not obey Him, it is impossible to give glory to God! You will just be giving lip service to Him. To give glory to the Lord is to obey Him and to do what He says.

If you refuse to listen to Him, God will send a curse upon you (Mal. 2:2b). In Malachi, the curse meant complete destruction. The nation of Israel refused to listen to what God spoke through the prophets and did not repent. Even when God came to them directly as the Messiah, they did not listen to Him. The result was that God sent Titus in 70 A.D. to destroy the city and the sanctuary – exactly as prophesied in Daniel 9:26. The whole nation disappeared from the face of the map; it was utterly destroyed! We see this curse in the last verse of the book of Malachi (Mal. 4:6). If the priests refuse to listen, not only will He send a curse upon them, but He will throw the dung of the sacrifices on their

faces and even throw them out together with the dung (Mal. 2:3)! We cannot imagine God saying something that terrible. He must have been really disgusted with them! In reading the book of Malachi, it is impossible not to feel what God is feeling as He speaks from His heart to the priests.

But God made a covenant with the priestly tribe of Levi, a covenant of life and peace (Mal. 2:4-7). If we take heed to this covenant in the church, there will be life and peace. If we take a look at what is happening every day in our lives and in our relationships with one another, do we have life and peace? The life of Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of life dwells within us. Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Are we experiencing death or life and peace? Especially in the priesthood, we should put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit so that we will live (Rom. 8:13); if we walk according to the flesh, we will surely die spiritually, just like Sardis. The whole priesthood must live according to the Spirit, live Christ.

The priests are the messengers of the Lord of hosts. If you want to be a messenger, then you must be a priest. Malachi 2:6a says, *"The law of truth was in his mouth..."* Revelation 14:5 shows us a wonderful characteristic of the firstfruits, *"and in their mouth was found no deceit."* If you want to be a firstfruit, speak the truth in love. It is not a matter of criticizing, nor is it a matter of speaking sweet words to someone. Paul says, *"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt"* (Col. 4:6). Every time you speak it should be for the edification of others. To speak the truth is always good. No lie should come out of your mouth. Learn to say nothing if you have nothing good to say. Even if people do not want to listen, you still must speak the truth.

*"Injustice was not found on his lips"* (Mal. 2:6b). We must be righteous, not self-righteous. Even if I am right, I am still wrong, because my person is wrong. That is why no one is justified by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). God does not look at your opinion, but your person. Be righteous according to Christ; let Him be your righteousness. Christ is our righteousness. Then, no injustice will be found on our lips. So, what we speak is very important.

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*“He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity”* (Mal. 2:6c). Remember Enoch; he walked with God and was taken (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). We want to be raptured; therefore, let us walk with God! And we ourselves must walk in righteousness if we are to turn many away from iniquity. If we are people who are always fighting, questioning, and criticizing, we are not walking with God but walking according to the flesh. But if we walk with God, there will be peace and uprightness. Then we will turn many people away from iniquity, not only by preaching the gospel, but even by our presence. It will have a calming effect on people; they will behave and be afraid to do bad things when they are around us.

*“For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth”* (Mal. 2:7a). This knowledge refers to the knowledge of the Lord, not dead doctrine. Therefore, we need the spirit of wisdom and revelation to know the Lord in His person. We need to know God’s word and apply it in a proper way, then people who are seeking will get help from us. There are many seeking people, but they are seeking in the wrong place. Some may stay in a place for forty years and then realize that they have been in the wrong place! Pray: “Lord, I seek You. I want to know You, not doctrine.” Read the Bible yourself. The Holy Anointing will teach you if you have a seeking heart. May we seek Him in such a way so that we can help others who are also seeking.

Unfortunately, the priesthood degraded (Mal. 2:8-17). It is very easy to fall into degradation or to get stuck. Many people are stuck because they are happy with where they are and do not want to press on. Do not get stuck spiritually like those in Laodicea who thought they were rich and said they needed nothing. Once you do not go on, you will backslide and become corrupt. Then, you will even persecute those who want to go on. Paul said, *“not that I have already attained, or am already perfected...”* (Phil. 3:12). He was pursuing, pressing toward the mark. Our hearts must always be seeking until we see Him face to face. I always ask the Lord, “Lord, what is next? How will You lead us on?” Do not presume to already know everything and keep doing what you have always been doing. It is hard to change, but you must be open to new things from the Lord because things are always changing. There is

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always room for progress, spiritual progress. May the Lord have mercy on us.

If the priesthood is corrupt, the whole nation will be corrupt. In the US, the current administration is corrupting this country; and what is happening here is happening globally. That is a sign that the Lord is coming soon. The world leaders want a one world government. Evil is developing; wickedness is growing and becoming more terrible. Those practicing evil are out in the open and are not ashamed to show their true colors. Why then are we ashamed to be priests, to tell the truth, and to testify to people concerning this wonderful God? They are getting more wicked, and we should be getting more holy, more righteous, more glorious!

God's people must be a holy people. If the millions of Christians on earth today would be a holy nation, the whole world would already be subdued. But we are unholy, self-centered and self-righteous, just like the world. We are not a living testimony. Malachi says that if we are really a holy and royal priesthood, then His name will be great among the nations (Mal. 1:11). But *"the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you"* (Rom. 2:24). That is why Satan, in his fallen wisdom, corrupted the church. Look at Catholicism. It claims to do things in the name of Christ, but in reality it is a big, terrible system where Satan is being worshipped. So, we need to shine! We need to be Zion today! We should not just confine ourselves to shine in our little meeting and go home and stop there. We need to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the golden lampstand!

Malachi 2:17a says, *"You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, 'In what way have we wearied Him?'"* God spoke to the priests and exposed their condition but the priests did not admit to their wrongdoings because they were not even conscious of what they were doing. God answered, *"...In that you say, 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,' or 'Where is the God of justice?'"* (Mal. 2:17b). Have you ever said, "Look at these terrible people! Why are You not stopping them, Lord? Have You forgotten about what is happening here to us? Is it not bad enough? Can it get worse? Where is Your justice?" How can we not react when

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we see so many terrible things happening in this world? But if you speak like this, you are wearying the Lord. In effect, you are saying everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord. The Lord will tell you, “Stop wearying me.” Just wait and be patient – His judgment is coming. Judgment is coming because our God is a God of judgment, He is a just God. His scepter is the scepter of righteousness. He is just waiting for the cup of iniquity to run over. And it is very close to running over.

### **Prophecy Concerning the Sudden Coming of the Lord**

In chapter 3, Malachi prophesies concerning the sudden coming of the Lord: *“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”* (Malachi 3:1). If something happens suddenly, it means it happens at a time you are not expecting it. The Lord is going to appear suddenly. If your heart is evil, you will say, “Don’t worry, just relax, the Lord is not coming yet. Forget about the priesthood; it is useless. You still have time.” You do not know how much time you still have. And suddenly, the Lord will appear. It is better to expect Him as the saints in the early age did – they expected Him to appear in their lifetime. This is the proper attitude of all those who are waiting for Him.

The first point of the prophecy is, *“Behold, I will send My messenger.”* Before the Lord comes again, He will also send His messenger, just like He did at His first coming. At His first coming, He only sent one messenger: John the Baptist. Isaiah prophesied concerning this: *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight...a highway for our God...the crooked places shall be made straight’”* (Isaiah 40:3-4). Today, everything is more crooked than ever before – the mainstream media, social media, the government, many Christian leaders and groups, and the entertainment world. Everything is crooked! What about us? Some criticize, “Oh, you talk too much about politics and what is happening in the world. Do not talk about the world.” How will you make straight the way of the Lord if you do not know what is going on? Either you feel comfortable in this crooked world, or you do not. If you do not feel comfortable, there should be a reaction within you concerning what is going on today. We

cannot be comfortable with the lies that are all around us today because we are a holy and righteous people; we are people of truth.

John the Baptist preached, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heavens is at hand!”* (Matt. 3:2). The Lord preached the same thing (Matt. 4:17), and His disciples preached the same thing. What do you preach? Do you even use the word “repent”? Or, do you say “Believe and your sins will be forgiven; you will not go to hell but to heaven.” If that is your gospel, then you are not a faithful messenger because that is only a small portion of the whole message and it is not accurate. What about being transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13), and about receiving an inheritance together with the saints in the light (Col. 1:12)? Paul preached this wonderful inheritance to open the eyes of the people who were in darkness and to have them see a great light!

John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord’s first coming. Now the Lord must make us His messengers to prepare the way and make the paths straight for His second coming. On the one hand, we are preparing ourselves for His coming. On the other hand, we are also preparing the way for Him to come back again. Both are part of the same thing. For example, if you say, “The Lord is not coming,” then you are neither preparing His way nor are you preparing yourself for His coming. Would you be ready if He were to appear tomorrow? No. So, in our preparation, we must prepare the way for Him to come and at the same time must also prepare ourselves for His coming.

*“...He will prepare the way before Me”* (Mal. 3:1a). This is not a preparation out of fear concerning His coming, but it is a wonderful privilege. If you want to be such a person, a messenger to prepare the way for Him, you must be one who has the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). Read about Elijah again. At the time of King Ahab and Jezebel, things were so terrible. Jezebel brought in idols and killed all the prophets. Israel was so corrupt, and all the prophets were in hiding and afraid. Elijah was the only one who was not afraid and even challenged the priests of Baal. What a spirit! What power! God was with him. Fire came down from heaven. Are you afraid to speak the truth? Paul says that our weapons are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling

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down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4). Do not challenge others in the flesh, but in the spirit. Arguing with people will not turn them to the Lord; reply to them in the spirit, in a peaceful, loving way, hoping to turn them to the Lord. We must be messengers of the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. This means we must have a close relationship with Christ and the Father and must walk according to the Spirit and in truth (2 John 1:4). John the Baptist was asked if he was Elijah because he looked and dressed like Elijah and he did not fit into Judaism in those days. He spoke the truth and was not afraid but was bold. If we look and act like the people in the world today, we cannot be like Elijah. Paul asked the saints to pray for him: *“that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel”* (Eph. 6:19), the mystery of God and the mystery of Christ, the truth. He spoke with boldness and yet with love. We need to practice being bold and having courage. Courage does not just come by itself. This is what we need today to prepare the second coming of the Lord.

*“And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple...”* (Mal. 3:1b). At His first coming, Jesus Christ suddenly came to Israel, and they missed Him! Only a few people were expecting His coming. At His second coming, He will suddenly come to His temple, His building and not just to Israel in a general sense. So, one way to prepare for His coming is to build the house of the living God – the right house, not just any house.

*“...Even the Messenger of the covenant in whom you delight”* (Mal. 3:1b). Not only did God send a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord, but, at His first coming, the Lord Himself was sent by God as the Messenger of the covenant. He is the Sent One, the real Apostle. He was sent by God to accomplish redemption and to bring in the new covenant. A messenger does not do whatever he wants to do. Accordingly, the Lord did not come to just do whatever He wanted to do – He had a job to do! Jesus Christ was the faithful Witness, the faithful Messenger. This is why we have the new covenant today! He was so faithful to the Father: He sacrificed Himself and was obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8), He ended the old covenant, fulfilled every righteous requirement of God and brought in the new covenant that we are enjoying today. He is the Messenger of

the covenant. His forerunner was a faithful messenger, and He was also a faithful Messenger unto death. First, there was the age of the old covenant. Then, at Christ's first coming, His major work was to bring in a new age, the new covenant, and the kingdom of heavens. At His second coming, He will bring in another new age, the millennial kingdom.

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord"* (Mal. 4:5). The disciples asked Jesus, *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"* (Matt. 17:10). He answered, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first...But I say to you that Elijah has come already"* (Matt. 17:11-12). John the Baptist came as Elijah, namely in the spirit and power of Elijah. The Lord told His disciples that the people did whatever they wanted to with John the Baptist and that they also wanted to get rid of Him (v. 12b). So John the Baptist was the Elijah who already came, but before Christ's second coming, Elijah is still going to come (Rev. 11:3-13).

The messenger's purpose is to *"turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"* (Mal. 4:6). Does this mean there will be peace among family members? Did the Lord not say, *"...I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...'"* (Matt. 10:34b-35a)? So what does Malachi 4:6 mean? To understand this word we must turn to Luke where the angel told Zacharias that his son, John the Baptist, would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and that *"he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"* (Luke 1:16-17). Who are the disobedient, and who has the wisdom of the just? The disobedient are usually children. In Malachi, God the Father asked, *"If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?"* (Mal. 1:6b). The disobedient children were the priests. The priests were so corrupt and did not respect the Father. Their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were God-fearing people who kept the covenant; but from the days of their fathers they were rebellious, disobedient and did not keep His covenant (Mal. 3:7a). They broke His

covenant. It was God's right to curse them because they were disobedient. The children did not care about keeping God's covenant. So, the Lord came the first time, through the preparation of John the Baptist, to bring God and His children back together. Otherwise, He would have to carry out His judgment. But His people did not turn to Him. So, the curse came upon them after the first coming of the Lord Jesus – the whole nation, the whole temple and city of Jerusalem were destroyed. But praise the Lord for the Gentiles, for us. We turned to the Lord, and He turned to us! Is that not wonderful? *"...to turn...the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord"* (Luke 1:17).

During the time of the Old Testament days, the prophets did not realize that the new covenant would come and last 2,000 years. They did not realize that there would be two comings of the Lord. Even Daniel did not know about it when he wrote about the 70-week prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27); he expected the 70<sup>th</sup> week to happen right after the 69<sup>th</sup> week – no gap was indicated between the two weeks. But today we know that the Messiah already came once, and now we are expecting the 70<sup>th</sup> week (the last 7 years) of the prophecy to begin so that the Lord can come again.

Like Daniel, Malachi did not realize that Christ would come a first and a second time. Malachi 3:1 refers to the Lord's first coming, namely to John the Baptist (His messenger) and the Lord Himself as the Messenger of the covenant, a covenant of life and peace. He came as a lowly King, riding on the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9) to accomplish redemption, to be slaughtered as a lamb, to shed His precious blood, the blood of the covenant. He came to bring in the kingdom of heavens, a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of grace and truth, to give us life and to bring peace. The kingdom of God today *"does not come with observation...For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17:20-21). This refers to the first coming of the Lord. He did not come to destroy everything right away and bring in the kingdom of righteousness, but He came to turn the hearts to God the Father. Through our gracious God, He came to forgive, to bring mercy and grace in order to turn us, the rebellious ones, into gifts to build up the body of Christ, His temple. That is why we have life and peace today.

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Malachi 3:2, however, refers to His second coming: *“Who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears like a refiner’s fire and launderers’ soap?”* This did not happen at His first coming though He did begin the process of refining at that time. The second coming of the Lord will be for refining and judgment. *“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”* (Mal. 3:3). For this reason, we must experience the refining today. 1 Peter 1:6-7 says, *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation [parousia] of Jesus Christ.”* We all need to go through these various trials. There is no one who does not need them. Our home life, for example, is a place of trial for the parents as well as for the children. The only way to be refined and to be found to the praise, honor, and glory at the revelation – the second coming – of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be tested by fire. Do not complain but be thankful for everything that happens – the nice things as well as the fiery trials. They are necessary to refine us. Otherwise, we will be like a wild donkey, like Ishmael, who signifies the untameable flesh. Be open to the Lord and ask Him to refine you by His life and by all the circumstances in your life. The “fireplace” at home is there to make us precious. Praise the Lord!

We do not realize how fallen our nature is. We think we are refined, educated, and professional, like ladies and gentlemen. But, when certain situations arise, suddenly the wild donkey, the rebellion, and Ishmael come out. We need to be tested by fire so that we may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. There is no other way, no short cut! Paul said, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22b). You cannot surf into the kingdom! But praise the Lord for His grace! Grace does not mean that it’s all free though. Grace comes with fire to train us. Otherwise, we will not be found to praise, honor, and glory. That is why, when I look back into my past, my heart is not bitter towards anything or anyone. We need to be thankful. *“...all things work together for good*

*to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). That is not according to our concept. May the Lord have mercy on us. Go on – do not look back! If you look back, say, “Praise the Lord!” and go on toward the goal.*

Another wonderful point in Malachi 3 is that even though the sons of Jacob were so terrible, God did not consume them. Why? Because God does not change His mind (Mal. 3:6). Once He saves you, you will never lose your salvation because the calling of God is irrevocable, unchangeable. He will not change His mind concerning you. When you look at yourself, you may think that God made a mistake. God does not make mistakes! He will make it with you to the goal, by any means. He is God and does not change. He is the perfect “I AM.” You must trust the living God. The God who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will not go back on His word. We always change our minds, but He is not like us. God does not change His mind. Praise the Lord for such a wonderful God!

*Note: The above content has not been reviewed by the speaker.*