

The Burden of the Word of the Lord in Malachi

(The last book of the Old Testament Scriptures)

Meeting 8

To understand God's speaking to His people and especially to His priests in Malachi we have to consider their background and situation. They were rebellious towards God and worshiped idols. The ten northern tribes of Israel had already been taken captive by the Assyrians and were scattered throughout many nations. Finally, Judah, Jerusalem, and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians, and God's people were brought into captivity for seventy years. It was a horrible situation. Then, when the Israelites were freed from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem, they were still ridden with many problems, as recounted in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. As seen in the book of truth in Daniel, after the fall of the Persian empire and the rise of the Grecian empire, their condition had not gotten any better. Malachi was written at this time. God's anger toward His people can be felt in His speaking. After this, there was no more record of God's speaking until John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. And when the Lord Jesus came to this earth, the situation was no better; the four gospels show that the Jews wanted to get rid of Him and kill Him. The Lord told His disciples that they would do to Him whatever they wanted (Matt. 17:12). And indeed, they crucified Him!

What is our situation today? There are many Christians in so many different groups. Are they going on with the Lord or have they been practicing the same thing for the past forty years? Not much change is evident. This is very sad. Is the Lord happy with our

condition? It is not a question of whether or not we are happy, but if God is happy. The priesthood in Malachi was in a fallen condition; and if they were fallen, imagine what the condition of the whole nation of Israel was like. God told them that He loved them. They said, "What? Do You really love us? In what way have You loved us?" They did not feel anything at all. They did not recognize the condition they were in at that time. Our situation today is not any better.

It is no wonder then that the Lord asked, "*when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:8b). You may say, "Oh, I believe in the Lord," but in what way do you believe in the Lord? How often does the Lord appear to you? Do you hear His speaking every day? Are you obedient to Him? Are you hungry for Him? Do you truly love Him as your best love? How faithful are you to Him? Is your experience of Him always growing, or are you still the same every year and not improving? Are you just concerned with teachings and interpretations of the Bible, or do you really love God? Do you seek to be taught by the Anointing? We all should ask ourselves these questions.

We are living in the time of the Lord's second coming. If you look at the whole situation today, and your spirit is alive, you will realize that the Lord is coming very, very soon. So, we need to be prepared. At His first coming, only a few were prepared. Today, how many Christians are prepared for His second coming? Many Christians think that since they believe in the Lord and are saved, they will all go to heaven when the Lord comes. Instead of caring about what the Bible says concerning Christ's second coming, they listen to traditional teachings and preachers who say, "Do not be afraid; all Christians will be raptured." With that mindset, believers will think they are all set for Christ's second coming, and no one will see the need to prepare! But what does the Bible say?

At His first coming, Christ was the Messenger of the covenant. What He accomplished was wonderful: the redemption of the whole world! He died on the cross as our sin offering: *"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:2)! That is why anyone who receives the Lord Jesus Christ today can be saved from eternal judgment. But there is still a need to be saved to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). Philippians 2:12b-13 says, *"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."* Not many Christians, including ourselves, take this word seriously. Do you believe that you have to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? If you do not, God can do nothing. It is like two sides of a coin. On the one hand, God is working within you to will and to do for His good pleasure. But on the other hand, we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The two sides must work together. If we do not do this, we will be in trouble at His second coming.

Malachi 3:2a says, *"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?"* When He comes, all of God's people must stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of the things done in our body (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). What account will you give Him? This is not about the amount in your bank account, but it is an account of your living. The priests in particular will have to give an account. The priesthood is so important in God's plan. Unfortunately, the word "priest" immediately brings the Catholic priests to mind. Most Christians do not consider themselves to be priests since very few Christian groups call the believers priests. Are you a priest? Are you of the tribe of Levi? This is a very important question because God's speaking in Malachi 3 is especially to the tribe of Levi. *"Who can stand when He appears?"*

“For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap” (Mal. 3:2b). Paul must have read Malachi, because he also writes in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 that we must be careful about how we build. If we build with wood, hay, and stubble (materials which refer to the flesh and whatever we do with our own natural means), then the day of His coming will be like a fire that will burn up anything that is burnable. Nothing will remain. If we build with gold, silver, and precious stones (materials that are not afraid of fire), our work will endure. The higher the temperature, the more gold and silver are refined. So, we must take heed to how we are building today.

In Revelation 3, the Laodiceans thought they had gold and were rich and wealthy. But the Lord told them they were wretched, miserable, and poor. He counseled them to come to Him to buy gold refined in the fire (Rev. 3:17-18). Have you ever asked yourself, “How much gold do I have?” You probably know how much you have in your bank account, but do you know how much refined, heavenly gold you have? What would you tell God? How can we buy gold? Gold and silver, in their natural form, are not pure. Much refining is needed to get rid of all the mixture. If gold does not go through the refining process, it cannot be weighed. This is God’s way. *“The Lord will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver”* (Mal. 3:3a). If we do not build with the refined gold, silver, and precious stones today, when the Lord comes again, our work will be burned up - He will still refine us, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:15). Don’t wait until He comes for Him to refine you! We must exercise to be refined by the Lord every day, to have Him take away any mixture in us. As priests, it is so important to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We must continually purge out any mixture, any evil things in our mind, in our heart, in our whole being. Have you done some purging out today? Purging out does not mean simply blowing some dust away. We have so many stains that cannot simply be removed with some water but

require launderers' soap. And we only deal with the visible stains that we are aware of, but what about all the invisible stains we have? We might think we are clean until we are put under the microscope. Then we will be shocked by everything that still needs to be purged out. Our Lord is like a refiner of gold and silver. It is not easy but He will purify and sanctify us completely, to the uttermost.

If the Lord were to ask you, "How holy are you?" it would be difficult to give an answer. If He were to ask you, "How unholy are you?" then you would be able to give many examples. There is so much going on in our minds and hearts; there are so many decisions we make without Him. How perfect are you? Are you saved to the uttermost? How often do you spend time in the Holy of Holies (not just reading the Bible)? Are you willing to let the Lord do the refining work? It is not easy, because fire hurts. Nobody likes to be burned, but there is no other way to be refined and purified. You might have gold, but is it pure or still full of mixture? And do you like the mixture instead of wanting to get rid of it? We would not eat physical food if it is dirty or if we find the cook's hair in it. Why then do we eat heavenly, spiritual food from anybody, anywhere, or from any source? We just eat and take in anything without discernment, without asking the Lord. If our heart is not pure, we will take in anything. So many Christian groups are in trouble today because they believe and eat anything. Even dogs do not just eat anything. But we Christians are so gullible. We believe anything except the truth. We do not like the truth, because when it is spoken, it is sharp and cuts into our hearts. Paul said that the time will come when people will have no ear for the truth, but will believe the lie (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

We should not be like that. Our hearts must be stirred up to realize that we need the refiner's fire and the launderers' soap.

We are dealing with a holy and a righteous God! The fire is to remove the mixture. The soap is to clear out all the dirt. The Lord must open our eyes and shine His light upon us. Otherwise, we will not realize our condition and will not care to change. The more the Lord purifies our hearts, the more we will realize that there are things that we should not be touching, things we should not be thinking about, and things we should stay away from.

His second coming is for refining and judgment. Today, the Lord will not force us to be refined, but at His second coming, we will have no choice. It is better for us to be open to let Him do His refining work in us today and carry out His salvation work in us by His life and His light. Let us be open to His exposing and disciplining and allow His grace to train us not to love the world so that we will not have to go through the fire when He comes. This is why we must experience Christ in His humanity. He must strengthen us in the inner man to put off the old man and to put on Christ, to experience Him as the sin and trespass offering, and to receive light from Him today. At His second coming, no one will be able to endure if he is not prepared. You may not feel the urgency or need to prepare today (just like the unbelievers who do not believe that God's judgment will come); but when the sixth seal is opened, everyone will be so afraid and try to hide but to no avail. In that day, everyone will know that the great day of God's wrath has come (Rev. 6:12-17). It is better to be saved to the uttermost today!

"He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi" (Mal. 3:3a). Today, the Lord still has time to refine us slowly, every day. He is sitting there patiently as a purifier of silver to purify the sons of Levi. He has a special interest in sanctifying and purifying the sons of Levi, the priests, because their service unto Him is very special. We must be sanctified completely and should be holy and without blemish at the coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23). We must be changed into His likeness, be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29, 2 Cor. 3:18) and be perfect as He is perfect (Matt. 5:48)! Unfortunately, not many Christians talk about these things today. There is the saying, “Nobody’s perfect.” Yes, that is right! But that is why we need to be and can be perfected! Being sanctified, purified and refined so that there is no more mixture, is very, very important. No doctrine, teaching, and knowledge can purify you. Only the Lord’s dealing with you and exposing you using circumstances and fiery trials can purify you. All the apostles of the Lord went through severe trials, tests and tribulations. In the end, all of them became martyrs. We do not realize how impure our hearts are. This is why the book of Malachi is especially important.

If we are not at least seeking to be right with God, our offerings will be defiled, and God will not accept them, as is written in Isaiah 1 (Isa. 1:11, 13). Not only were the offerings defiled but those bringing the offerings were defiled. God even said that He would not listen to their prayers (Isa. 1:15). He said that His people did not know Him and that they were rotten from head to toe (Isa. 1:6). They were utterly corrupt! *“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”* (Mal. 3:3b). That means it is not a matter of what you bring but about who you are. The one who offers must bring his offering in righteousness. That is why the sons of Levi must be purged. It is not the offering that must be purged but the ones who offer who must be purified. What a wonderful God! This should not discourage us from bringing the offerings, but rather cause us to aspire to be cleansed, to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to purge out the leaven. We want to walk with God in peace and uprightness. As long as we are learning, making progress, that is what is important. In Philippians 3 we see that Paul was also not yet perfect. He said, *“not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on...”*

(Phil. 3:12a). He kept going on, kept pursuing. So as long as we are pursuing sanctification, this is good. Praise God! May the Lord encourage us all to be like the sons of Levi who are being purged and in the process of sanctification. But if you do not care and are not in that process, and your relationship with the Lord is not right, then your offering cannot be offered 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” (Mal. 3:4). If the offerings of the sons of Levi are offered in righteousness, then the offerings of all of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD. Hallelujah! The priesthood is so important! Many people are not able to receive this word because they do not know they are priests, do not want to be priests, or do not want to practice the priesthood. Do not force anyone to be a priest; each one of us needs to see what God wants. In the former days, when the tribe of Levi, namely Aaron and his sons, were practicing the priesthood in holiness, they walked with God in peace and uprightness and they kept the ordinances of the law. Unfortunately, that was in the former years. How is it with us now?

“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” (Mal. 3:5). At His second coming, the Lord will come to bring judgment upon all the evildoers, both Jews and Gentiles, because they did not fear the Lord. Malachi mentions the fear of the Lord many times. Do you fear Him? We all need to fear Him because He is God. If we do not fear Him today and do many things that are against Him and offend Him, then there will be judgment. God will be a swift witness. He will come as a judge against sorcerers and adulterers. Don’t think adultery and fornication are not serious. The law says that He will

be a judge against perjurers, against liars who bear false witness, against those who exploit wage earners, who steal from others, who cheat other people, and take advantage of people, especially the weaker ones like the widows and the orphans. He will be a judge against those who turn away an alien, someone who needs help. If someone truly needs help in the Lord (and is not just pretending to need help), we need to help them. We need to be wise and discerning, otherwise we will be cheated. The evildoings were a result of the people not fearing God. Everything that is happening today is also because people do not fear God. They even try to challenge God: "Oh, where is God? Look, we are doing all these crazy, evil things and nothing is happening to us." This is what the priests thought and said at that time too. May we see how serious their and our condition is. This is God's warning not only to them, but to us.

"For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:6-7a). This is a wonderful word. Do you know how much the Lord loves us and how patient He is with us? He is so very patient. Don't these verses sound like turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just (Luke 1:17; Mal. 4:6)? God said, *"Return to Me, and I will return to you."* Don't give up hope at any time. Return to Him. God also said this through the prophets and to the prophets. As long as we are still in the age of grace there is always a chance to turn to Him. Do not wait until the last minute because you will miss out on a lot! Time is very important for us to gain Christ. This is a very precious short word. Make a U-turn! There's always another chance to make a turn. But don't keep missing the turn. The farther you go, the more time you need to come back. I love these words, *"Return to Me."* These are sweet words. Although

God is strict and His speaking is so strong, it is necessary; otherwise, we will not change, we will not return. We will still think we are right. Many years ago, while I was driving, the Spirit told me that I was going in the wrong direction and should turn. I kept saying, "That can't be. I'm not going in the wrong direction. Why should I turn?" So, I kept driving until I realized that I was indeed wrong. I had to drive a couple of more miles until I was able to make a U-turn and then I also had to drive a long way back. This happened because I did not listen to the Holy Spirit's speaking. At that time, I had told the Lord, "I want to experience Your speaking. If you are truly dwelling in me then teach me in all things, including in my driving." Then He taught me, but I didn't listen. In the end I had to repent, turn around and then come back. *"Return to Me."* Don't give up! We are not yet perfected. We make mistakes, but there is always a chance to make a U-turn. Remember this word. It is not just that we should return to Him, but He will return to us! This is wonderful!

"But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'" (Mal. 3:7b). In effect, this question means, "I don't know what You are talking about. Why should I turn?" If you think you are right, then you will not return, you will not repent. If you keep going that way, then you will be in trouble. This attitude is a problem. Don't wait and harden your heart! *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). We have Jesus Christ the Righteous as our Advocate; He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2). Learn to repent quickly. Don't wait. The faster you do it, the better it is.

"Will a man rob God?" (Mal. 3:8a) This is the next problem. Do you dare to rob God? You should not dare to rob anyone, let alone rob God! They were robbing God by not giving God what was due to Him. God told them, *"Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?'"* (Mal. 3:8b). Again,

their response was, “What are You talking about? How have we robbed You?” God answered, *“in tithes and offerings”* (Mal. 3:8c). Tithes are the best of the produce of the land, the wine, the oil, the corn – a tenth of all is to be given to God. It belongs to God because there is so much need in the temple. Remember that the Levites did not own land as their inheritance. God Himself was their inheritance.

Unfortunately, “tithing” has become a big problem in Christianity. There are so many man-made organizations today, which are not the temple of God. When you “tithe,” to whom are you giving your money – to God, or to the organizations so that they can build bigger buildings? In God’s temple, would God use the tithes to build a gym, a basketball court, tennis courts, and a pool table so that the priests can play in their free time? What do your “tithes” support? People may say, “We have a Yamaha piano, but for God we need a Steinway.” Does God need a Steinway? Many organizations have so many buildings and even rent them out to corporations. Some pastors own three jets. Is this what tithing, the money of the saints, should be used for? Did God want Aaron and his sons to be billionaires? We should give back to God from the blessings He has given us, but we must give with discernment!

The proper tithing is right. Actually, whatever you own belongs to God, and you must be a faithful steward. Don’t waste the money. Don’t just throw it away. Don’t try to make Aaron and his sons rich and spoil them. Be a faithful steward. Help the poor. The Lord did not build a big meeting hall. No, He met with others on the mountain. Meet in the homes. Be simple. Be a good steward of the Lord. Ask the Lord, “Where is the need? I want to help in whatever You direct me to do.” This is tithing. Give to God what He wants from you. Paul did not ask for any support. He trusted in God. God is your inheritance – why are you worried? We all need

to learn to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God. This is normal. But today's situation is not normal anymore. Look at Crystal Cathedral for example. Many Christians poured money into it, but when the whole group collapsed, the cathedral was sold to the Roman Catholic Church. It was all for nothing. We cannot be like this. We have to know the Lord and give Him what is due to Him, wisely, with discernment, and always asking Him.

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’” (Mal. 3:10). If it is not His storehouse, His house, don't bring anything! Bring food into the storehouse. That is good enough. God did not say that He needs a big account; no, He just needs food in His house to meet the need. That is good enough. Otherwise, everything will be fallen and corrupt. Praise God! If we bring the tithes into the storehouse, the Lord will bless us in many, many ways.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the LORD of hosts; ‘and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 3:11-12). He will rebuke the rats, the raccoons, the locusts, the beetles, the mice. They will leave your garden alone. God will bless us with the spiritual, heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus. There will be spiritual food in God's house. God's food in His house will come from all the saints. There will be enough spiritual food for everyone.

Do not rob God! What we need in God's house today is the real spiritual food. Praise the Lord! Because we are the sons of Levi,

the priesthood, each one of us can contribute something when we come to the Lord's Table, the festal gathering. Everyone can and should come prepared. One comes with a wonderful preparation for the Passover. Another comes with a word concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and another comes prepared for the Feast of Firstfruits. One brings some wonderful barley and another brings wheat for the Day of Pentecost. We can all bring this wonderful spiritual food. We can all bring something from the last harvest, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. Everybody will enjoy this without being forced to do so. Let us come because we want to bring food to God, into His house. Bring God the offerings, His food! The offerings are all food – the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the wave offering, the heave offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the drink offering. Wouldn't you rather bring Him food than to just sit there and listen to someone give a message and fall asleep?

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" (Matt. 24:45). Bring food into God's house! Everyone can prepare something. It is good to prepare food, even if everyone prepares just a little bit – it does not have to be much. We all have seven days to prepare some food for the feast. It is the heart that counts. If we prepare in such a way, the church will be blessed by the Lord because there will be so much food. The meetings will be wonderful and so rich. Then we will be a blessing to so many people. When the seeking ones come, they will find so much spiritual food. They will be satisfied, God will be satisfied, we will be satisfied, and God will be glorified. Is this not a good way? It is a good way because it is God's way!

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