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## **RIGHT AND WRONG CONDITIONS AND THEIR RESULTS.**

– DEC. 17. – MAL. 3:13 TO 4:6. –

**"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." – Gal. 6:7.**

HOW FORCEFULLY divine truths were expressed by the Prophet Malachi! While no doubt his words were more or less applicable at the time and to the people addressed, it is very evident that his, like the other prophecies, was specially intended for the Gospel Church – more than for those who heard his words – as the Apostle Peter explains. – 1 Pet. 1:10-12.

We apply this lesson then to fleshly Israel in the time of the Prophet, and note its complete fulfilment in respect to the "wheat" and "chaff" of that age in its harvest time – the wheat gathered to the garner of the Gospel Church as spiritual Israel, and the chaff element burned in the fiery destruction which overthrew their national polity. But more particularly we apply it to the Gospel Church and to the harvest time at the end of this Gospel age, when the "wheat" will be glorified in the heavenly Kingdom and the "tares" will be destroyed in the fiery trials of the day of vengeance, the great time of trouble with which this age will be wound up, preparatory to the inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom's triumph. [R2542 : page 270]

The lesson divides itself into four portions, vss. 13-15 expressing the attitude and sentiments of nominal Christendom; vs. 16 telling of the attitude of the true saints; vss. 17 – 4:3, the Lord's declaration respecting the two classes (the nominal Christians, or tares, and the true saints, the wheat), and vss. 4-6 being counsels for the interim for whoever has ears to hear.

Nominal Christendom is represented (13-15) as restive, out of harmony with the divine arrangement: the inquiry is, What is the use?

How will it profit us? What advantage will we have? This view is from the purely selfish standpoint, which hears the divine requirements as so much of penal servitude – not having the heart interest in the Lord, his truth and his service. In the past it has walked mournfully, that is to say, with an outward show of reverence, contrition, observing Lenten seasons, etc., etc.; it brought lame, sick and blind gifts and sacrifices to the Lord's altar, as duty, but not being prompted by the spirit of love, the sacrifices were meager and inferior to those offered to themselves and to their families. The lesson represents that this condition, having continued for quite a while, toward the end of the age, is finally measurably dropped – and this we see about us today. Many who once made a more or less hypocritical confession of sins and penitence and of an outwardly careful walk are inclined to say, What is the use? What is the profit? We might just as well have a good time. As the Apostle foretold, one of the signs of our times is that men are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, while still having a form of godliness they deny its power. – 2 Tim. 3:4,5.

As the Jews were inclined to look about them and note the prosperity of the other nations not favored with divine promises, as they were, so many professors of today incline to look at the general world conditions, **[R2543 : page 270]** and to say to themselves, Are not the proud the happiest? Are not the workers of iniquity the most firmly established in the world? Do not even some outwardly profane opposers of the truth get along well? As a result we see a decrease of reverence for God and for holy things, and an increase of doubt and skepticism as respects there being any advantage to be gained by a godly life – doubts respecting any future rewards, or at least any that would compensate self-denials for the present time.

Then (vs. 17) the Prophet points us to the few, the "little flock," exceptions to the nominal whole, who are taking the proper view of matters. The general attitude of the nominal system in rejecting the way of holiness and consecration will only tend to draw nearer to the Lord and to each other these who at heart reverence and love the Lord.

So long as the nominal mass professedly walked in the same way of outward observance of divine ordinances and with an outward manifestation of reverence, contrition and devotion, these having the spirit of the Lord that thinketh no evil, felt a fellowship and companionship in the nominal church; but in the harvest time under divine providence circumstances tend to make manifest the true from the false, and to separate them. Those who have not the matter at heart as they more and more neglect the outward forms will naturally hate the others who, having the matter at heart, are as faithful as ever – because their faithfulness is a standing rebuke and evidence of the unfaithfulness of the other. And the faithful few, coming to realize that all were not Israel who were of Israel, will be drawn nearer to each other as they realize that after all the number of the faithful is extremely small.

This leads them to speak often one to another. Each finds his own need of help, counsel and encouragement, and realizes that the others need the same: and this draws them together. The further the nominal church gets away from the Lord and the truth and even from outward signs of reverence, the greater blessing it proves to be to this class, because it separates them from fellowships which all along have been unfavorable, hindrances to their spiritual development. Many of these today are meeting with *us* in little groups in various parts of the world for the study of the divine plan of the ages, and very many solitary ones meet with us (through the same medium – ZION'S WATCH TOWER publications) to break the heavenly bread and to commune concerning the Lord and his great purposes respecting us – our discipline as members of the body of Christ and our preparation to be his joint heirs in the promised Kingdom which shall bless all the families of the earth.

"And the Lord hearkened and heard it." Thus he would represent to us his interest in our efforts to understand his plan, and to offer him in loving sacrifice the very best of everything that by his grace we possess. O, that as we meet (personally or through the printed page)

we could always realize our Heavenly Father's interest in us and his willingness to bless our efforts in the study of his Word and in the development of character! Such a realization would probably make all such meetings increasingly profitable. Those who do not recognize the Lord's presence in the gathering of his people are apt to exercise an injurious rather than helpful influence upon others, and are less likely to get any profit for themselves. Let us more and more remember as we meet in the name of our Lord his promise, "Where two or three are met in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:19,20.) Those who realize the Lord's presence amongst his people when they meet will be very careful of the words of their mouths, their actions and the very thoughts of their hearts: pride, vainglory, slander, and all evil things ("works of the flesh and of the devil") will be carefully shunned, if his presence is clearly realized by the eye of faith.

The Lord presents to us great truths under figures which the least learned can comprehend: for instance, **[R2543 : page 271]** instead of telling us that he has knowledge of and will never forget those who are his, and their diligent efforts to know and to serve him, he pictures the lesson, telling us that he has a "book of life" and "a book of remembrance." Through these figures we get the thought that the Lord would have us get, viz., that he takes full knowledge of his true people. And he tells us that this class not only reverence him, but also "think upon his *name*" – his character, his goodness, his infinity, his plan, his love – thinking upon these things they come to know him more and more intimately and to realize his grand perfection, and thus more in his company and well acquainted with his character they become more and more like him.

The Lord encourages these with the assurance that their love and devotion shall have its reward in the future – that a grand change is coming, and that then every sigh and every tear and every sacrifice, for righteousness' sake and for love of the Lord, his cause and his brethren, shall be fully rewarded in a manner that is beyond our present comprehension. They serve not for selfish reasons, but from devotion,

from fidelity, and consequently from love, and hence they shall find that the light afflictions of the present, which are but for a moment, will work out for them a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory – looking not at the things now seen, but at the things now unseen, the eternal things. – 2 Cor. 4:17,18.

Without attempting to detail what are the riches of grace in reservation for them that love God, two figures are used, which are quite expressive to the eye and ear of faith – God's Jewels, God's faithful Sons. These two thoughts suggest a full explanation of present experiences: the proper father will instruct, correct and discipline his son, tho he may pass by the greater faults and blemishes of others who are not his children. Then, as respects Jewels, we all know the necessity for cutting, trimming and polishing them to the intent that their real qualities may be developed. Thus we see ourselves in the Father's school of discipline and preparation to be his heirs – joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom – we see the necessity of the trials and perplexities and persecutions of this present time that we may be polished and prepared for the glory-time to come.\*

*\*See Old Theology Tract, No. 44.*

We may apply this gathering of Jewels in one sense to the Jewish nation, fleshly Israel, and say that the Lord gathered the faithful ones from that nation in the harvest time of their age, beginning A.D. 29. But the figure would not be complete there; its completeness is shown in connection with spiritual Israel and the polishing of these diamonds during this Gospel age. From this standpoint the time for making up the Jewels is the present "harvest" time. The faithful from the Lord's day until now will have part in the first resurrection, and all of the Jewel class now living, when polished and found worthy, will be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," to be like and with the Lord – the moment of their death being the moment of their change – they having no need to sleep in unconsciousness, for behold, the "harvest," the gathering time, has come. They will be gathered into the Kingdom, as represented in our Lord's parable. (Matt. 13:30-43.) They

will be "spared" from passing through the great time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation, as our Lord has said, "Watch ye, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape" all those *things coming upon the world*.

Then there shall be a turning point (return), a change in the divine administration, tho not a change in the divine plan – for the plan of God formed from the beginning did not contemplate the perpetuation of the present condition of things, in which whosoever doeth righteousness suffers and in which the unrighteous prosper. It contemplated and arranged for the great *re-turn* of the rule of righteousness now about to take place, which will transfer the dominion of earth from Satan, its present supervisor, and from the kingdoms of this world, its present dominating powers, to the dominion of Christ and his Church in glory and in power, – the Millennial Kingdom, in which he that doeth righteousness shall be blessed, and he that doeth iniquity shall be punished, and if the correction be not heeded, shall eventually be cut off from amongst the people in the second death. – Acts 3:22,23.

The day that brings the glorification to the faithful "jewel" or "wheat" class brings a different experience to the "tare" class. To them it will be a hot time – a time of *fiery* trouble that will completely consume their hypocrisies and pretended devotions to the Lord, which were merely in form without the heart and without power, and unacceptable to him. In that trouble-time their pride, their ambition, their world-love and their spirit of selfishness, will meet a retribution that will be terrible in the extreme – such a time of trouble as the world has never yet witnessed. The Lord's fierce anger will burn against their hypocrisies and shams; and will utterly consume the same – but not, we understand, consume the individuals. They will cease to be "tares," but not cease to be human beings; they will cease to make professions of consecration, as the Lord's true Church, when at heart they have neither part nor lot in the matter and are not in sympathy either with the Lord or his spirit, his righteousness.

This burning day is referred to by Zephaniah also (3:8,9): and through him the Lord declares, "I will pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth [the present social order] shall be *devoured with the fire of my jealousy.*" That this does not mean the literal earth nor the people of it, is clearly evident from the next statement of the [R2544 : page 271] prophet, viz., "Then will I turn unto the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

While the "fire" of this day will burn the "stubble" and "tares" quickly, nevertheless the same fire of the Lord's anger against hypocrisy and pride and every evil thing will continue to burn throughout the entire Millennial age, wherever such things shall be manifested – even down to the end of the Millennial age, when some in the final testing will be found unworthy of life eternal. (Rev. 20:9.) Thus will evil eventually be destroyed, root and branch.

Following the fiery time or day of trouble will come the new era, in which the Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth, dispelling the darkness of the present time – healing the wounds of sin and death and [R2544 : page 272] bringing in joy, peace, love and blessing. Then the righteous shall rejoice in their liberty and shall realize that the restraints of this present time have been blessings in disguise, for thereby they have been made spiritually fat – "stall-fed" during the winter of the prevalence of sin, they shall go forth to liberty in the springtime of the new age.

Vs. 3 indicates the completeness of the victory of righteousness over sin, of the Lord's faithful over the workers of iniquity: a strong figure of speech is in the words, "Ye shall tread down the wicked" – as ashes.

Then (vs. 4) the Prophet addresses the people of his day, "Remember ye the law of Moses," but the expression is equally applicable to the Spiritual Israelite who recognizes Christ as the

antitype of Moses and the New Covenant as the antitype of the Law Covenant, and the new Law of Love as the antitype of the Decalogue.

The faithful in fleshly Israel were not to expect the gathering of the jewel class immediately, but would know that before that time the Lord would send a great antitypical Elijah whose mission it would be to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. Should he succeed in doing this the great burning day would not be necessary; but should he fail, then the burning day, the time of trouble, would come, and the Lord would smite the earth with a foretold awful trouble.

The turning of the hearts of parents to children and children to parents would seem to mean the establishment in the earth of a spirit of reciprocal love. And it would further mean, the turning of the minds of the aged so that they would become as little children, humble, teachable; and had they become thus childlike they would have been ready to turn their hearts to the teachings and example of the early fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy prophets, and they would have been made ready for divine favor and blessing and to be spared from the foretold curse or trouble.

John the Baptist fulfilled this prediction so far as Fleshly Israel was concerned, endeavoring to turn their hearts so that they would be ready to receive Jesus in the flesh; but John the Baptist failed to turn them to repentance, and they crucified the Lord, and hence the curse or time of trouble came upon the nation, destroying it A.D. 69-70.

But as the prophecy relates still more particularly to Spiritual Israel than to Natural Israel, so it relates still more particularly to the antitypical Elijah sent to Spiritual Israel than to the antitype sent to Natural Israel. For the evidences that the little flock throughout this age has been and still is the Elijah to the nominal system, exhorting it and seeking to bring it into harmony with God, and that it has failed so to do, as foretold in the Scriptures, and that hence the great time of



trouble impends, we must refer our readers to MILLENNIAL  
DAWN, Vol. 2, Chap. 8.

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