

WAITING FOR MESSIAH

– *MAL. 3:1; 4:3. – DECEMBER 24TH. –*

"Behold He shall come, saith the Lord, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of His coming? for He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap."

– **Malachi 3:1,2.**

MALACHI'S PROPHECY, the most striking features of which constitute the lesson of today, concludes the Old Testament canon. It contains not only a Divine rebuke for sin, but also a Divine promise of rescue. It fits well to the time generally assigned to it – Nehemiah's period. It remained for Israel to show thorough repentance and to institute thorough reforms. The needed reformation fits equally well to our day. In their professed devotions they were robbing God and impoverishing themselves. It rested upon them to note what great blessings would be theirs if they rendered a whole-heart service to the King of kings.

The Jews, comparing themselves with other nations, perceived that as a result of being God's people they had been held to a more strict account than other nations, so that although their nationality was superior, it was through repeated and severe chastisements. They were even questioning the profitableness of being "God's chosen people." The arrogant, proud nations around them flourished in temporalities more than they. They could not stand this; they forgot that they were a people for a purpose, and that to fit them for Divine service in the future trying experiences were permitted, and were really evidences of Divine favor. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, then are ye not sons."

This lesson of a future reward is brought forward by the words, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before

Him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name. They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up My jewels." – Malachi 3:16,17.

ISRAEL – TYPICAL AND ANTITYPICAL

The foregoing has revealed very much of all prophecies respecting Israel's favors to be fulfilled – a portion in Spiritual Israel's experiences and another portion in Natural Israel's. The faithful of the Jewish Age, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets, will surely have a great reward. When Messiah's Kingdom shall be inaugurated on the spirit plane, invisible to men, those Ancient Worthies, who were once called the fathers, will have a very high rank of service in connection with the Kingdom, in that they will be its *earthly* representatives and exponents. "Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children" [of Messiah], whom Thou [Messiah] mayest make Princes [rulers] in all the earth." – Psa. 45:16. **[R4931 : page 443]**

Spiritual Israel, as history shows us, is the great Messiah for whom the Jews have so long waited. This Messiah has many members – Jesus is its Head, the Church are His members. This Messiah, Jesus and His members or Bride, constitute the Spiritual Seed of Abraham – "as the stars of heaven." These must first be completed, and will be glorified in Kingdom power before the Ancient Worthies can receive their blessing on the earthly plane, and before Natural Israel can be gathered to them as the nucleus of the Kingdom of God on earth, to which ultimately all nations, peoples, kindred and tongues shall flow for a share in Israel's New Covenant blessings. Of these St. Paul says, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's Seed [typified by Isaac], and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29.) These are to be God's jewels on the spirit plane, as the faithful Jews of the past are to be the jewels on the earthly plane, marked or enrolled for distinguished honor in connection with Messiah's Kingdom.

"MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT"

The Israelites, discouraged with their failure to keep the Law and to get the blessings promised therefrom, were encouraged by the Lord with the promise that some day a great Messiah would appear – greater than Moses, with whom God would make a New Covenant on their behalf. The New Covenant would be superior to the old one in that it would have a better Mediator, for Israel already [R4931 : page 444] had God's perfect law. The New Mediator would not relax the Law, either. The advantage to accrue through Him would be that somehow His Covenant and Sin-Offering would be more efficacious than that which Moses instituted, because it would put away sin forever and give willing Israelites a new heart, a heart of flesh, after which they would be given everlasting life on condition of their maintaining their relationship with the Almighty.

Jeremiah particularized this, saying: "It shall come to pass after those days, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah, not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers when I led them out of Egypt, ...but their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." – Jer. 31:31.

Israel's hope thenceforth was in the Messiah, whose coming would bring to them the New Covenant blessings. They have waited for Him since. Who can help admiring the persistency of the Jewish faith – their loyalty to God! Who can help noticing how sharply it is in contrast with their previous unbelief and idolatry! Who can doubt that God still loves His people whom He foreknew and whom He has promised shall be regathered – back to their own land and back to His favor under the New Covenant! – Rom. 11:25.

But the Prophet Malachi clearly intimates that there might be disappointment in connection with the much longed for Messenger or Mediator of the New Covenant, in whom the Jews so delighted and hoped. The declaration is that His day will be a strenuous one: "Who

shall stand when He appeareth?" "Who will abide the day of His coming?" (Malachi 3:2.) The intimation is that not many will abide, not many will stand – the majority will fall.

The reason is given. He will require such purity, such holiness, that few will come up to His requirements. The tests He will impose will be like fullers' soap, which is the foe of every spot upon a garment white. His requirements will be like those of a refiner of silver – all the dross must be eliminated, in a furnace hot enough to insure its separation. The test will last a considerable time, for He will sit as a refiner sits, giving close inspection, that the heat be neither too great nor too little, the time neither too long nor too short.

This great Messiah, the Messenger of the New Covenant, began His refining and purifying work more than eighteen centuries ago. He followed the Divine rule, "To the Jew first." He began to refine and purify a priestly class for association with Himself in the glorious Messianic work. To the Jew first came the privilege of being the antitypical Levites. Thousands of them responded at Pentecost, and subsequently, but not enough to complete the foreordained number of Spiritual Israelites, members of the Body of Messiah.

Since then the selecting work has been in progress for eighteen centuries. God has been calling and drawing from all nations, and as many as respond the great Refiner has been purifying; and if these suffer afflictions for righteousness they are sharing in the sufferings of Messiah that they may be accounted worthy also of a share in His glories to follow. Soon the "elect" number will be completed; the blood of the New Covenant will be made efficacious for Israel and for all the families of the earth, and on that basis the Messianic Kingdom or reign of righteousness will begin.

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