

Malachi 3

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 08 February 2010 21:22

This chapter is about returning to the Lord. How many Christians fail to repent and return to Him because they feel such shame for their sins? How many think they have done such awful things, God will never forgive? Or, even think they have no reason?

This is a satanic deception! God will always forgive His children when they repent, each and every time, no matter what the sins were. To forget this promise is to live forever in the shadow of death, the realm of Satan and his wicked angels, who will never, ever know repentance or forgiveness.

But God's chosen people? We are always His, even if we sin dreadfully. The answer is to return to Him, by repenting and obeying, right now.

Verse 1

1.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to this temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

As with atheistic wicked men of today and even sinful Christians who have little understanding or faith, they all think God is far away. Or, is dead. Here, we see reference to the coming of Christ: in this text, that time when He came to earth as a baby. He is the Lord, Who will have His way prepared by the messenger, John the Baptist, the embodiment of Elijah. The people listening to this prophecy, especially the priests, claimed to delight in the coming Messiah, the Lord of all, made flesh – but their actions and words negated delight. They were double-minded and useless to God. Even so, God, as their Father, allows them insight into what will come.

Today, we know the same Christ will return, for the last time, to gather His elect. I, and others with similar ministries, know that earth's time is short. All the signs now point towards fast-approaching final days. Yet, how many Christians understand this? How many understand and repent? The only sign we are ready, is if we repent and change our lives dramatically! If these things do not occur, we are liars, contemptible creatures unworthy to look upon our Saviour.

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How many truly believe? If we truly believe, we will obey and do every commandment of God. That is what Jesus said. Do you believe it? Do you obey? Are we different from those around us, whose end is not just death but eternity in hell? The demand is very simple: if we say we delight in the Lord, we must *prove* it.

Verses 2 - 6

1.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

2.

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

3.

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

4.

And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

5.

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

God asks these questions: when His Son comes, who will be glad and stand to be counted? Who will be counted worthy to belong to Him? Christ is like a piercing light. A laser that burns through all that is deceptive, lax or foul; all that pretends to be holy and true. Only truth will

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remain. In this life we may be fooled by fellow men who claim to belong to Christ. But, they will not stand strong when Christ's eyes scorch through their very souls.

The refiner's fire burns everything that is dross, for his task is to get rid of everything that is not pure gold. All dross is burned away. The Fuller stamps everything underfoot with soap, to cleanse thoroughly, clearing away dirt and impurities. Who will withstand the terrible actions of Christ as He searches for what is true and holy in us? Are we holy? Or, are we pretenders?

Christ will work His way through our souls and hearts, to find what is good and remove what is bad, just as a refiner deals with molten silver. Only those who are elect will be under this trial. In those days, Malachi was talking to the sons of Levi, the priestly tribe. Today, he is talking to us all, those of us who are elect and saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, by grace. If we are found wanting when He investigates our souls, will He be able to find anything of worth? Any silver or gold? Or, will there only be dross? If we are elect, there must be something of value left... but how much of it? The small residue clinging to our moment of salvation? Or, a greater amount, the product of living holy lives, in repentance and growing purity? Which will He find in *you*?

You will note the sureness of this act? God is telling us that Christ WILL come and when He does, He WILL test our hearts and souls. He will not go easy on us, but will scour every trace of sin from our failing hearts. Like a surgeon who has to cut away putrid flesh from a wound, so Christ will strip us bare in order to get rid of everything vile. And that is a moment of beauty! When He has finished, we will be left with what God requires - a spirit tried, tested, and purified. Let us thank God for all such trials!

The priests would be severely tried and tested. They would be found wanting. Yet, when they repent and have come out of the trial, they will be holy men. Only then could they offer genuine sacrifices to God! Note that God did not say they would all be scattered and killed for their laxity and crude offerings? They belonged to God's chosen tribes and He would change them so that they met His demands perfectly.

In our own day, those who are saved often fail God. All of us do. Many pretend they do not – and I have known quite a few, even amongst pastors and preachers. These will be left to their own devices and will not know the real blessings of their God. They are not righteous, but pretend to be. Let us be open before God, for He knows our hearts anyway! He will then bless us mightily, for we are His.

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The priests are told that after their trial of faith, if they repent and obey, they will be righteous before God, and their sacrifices will be acceptable to Him, just as they were in previous centuries. The same goes for us today. Even as Christians, God will not accept what we do or say or think, unless we stand firm and are righteous in our daily walk. We will enter heaven even if we sin, but a life on earth that is not lived truly will never know God's benefits.

God tells the priests He will be a "swift witness" against all who transgress His laws, giving a list of those He judges. They are not the only ones: they are just the 'samples' of those who sin openly and consistently. The list starts with 'sorcerers', *kashaph* – those who practice witchcraft. In this text it refers specifically to using witchcraft incantations, magical songs, and occult prayers in the worship of idols. Of course, witchcraft in general had long been condemned by God, so the priests knew they should never use it.

Today, we find witchcraft used in many situations, particularly charismaticism and Romanism. But, also, many Christians visit witches (with different names) to hear fortunes, or to contact the dead, or read horoscopes in newspapers... the list is almost endless. All stand condemned by God. And all suffer the consequences of consorting with the occult.

Next, the Lord mentions adulterers. How easily people commit adultery! Sadly, I have known a number of well-respected pastors who have fallen into this trap, mainly by counselling women without having another woman present. They fell in disgrace, but continued to marry their adulterous lovers, making matters far worse. Of course, adultery is also used to describe the worship of idols.

Then there are "false swearers" who, under oath, lie to get their own way. The word 'swearer', *shaba*, comes from the sacred word for 'seven'. Oaths were confirmed by seven sacrifices, or by seven witnesses and pledges. The same word also referred to enchantments uttered by occultists, and in both cases can also refer to worship of either God or idols. So, to swear falsely usually involved a group of at least seven, who stuck to a deception for purposes of fraud, or basic lying. In this case, the swearers made promises together that were false, probably towards God. This is a really silly thing to do, for God knows everything anyway! Christians seem to forget this fundamental truth – that God knows what they say even before they say it – so why lie to God?

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Another person condemned by God is the employer who oppresses his employees. Take note, modern company owners! God condemned those who take advantage of widows; even in the time of Christ it was commonplace for priests and chief priests to steal the property and money of defenseless widows and orphans. This is an abuse of power and position.

God's wrath was also poured upon those who turn away strangers. These could either be incomers to a locality who have no inherited rights, or, most likely, to foreigners in the land who *did* have rights. Examples were foreign shepherds with their flocks, or nomadic tribes not of Israel and passing through. These were supposed to have courtesy shown towards them, but Malachi complained that they were abused instead and not shown basic kindnesses. Hospitality was of high priority to God, and still is.

Today, Christians tend not to care for those who come their way – not even fellow Christians. No-one really cares if they live or die. There is no widespread courtesy shown towards believers by other believers, and few offer help in times of need. Yet, it was this very trait (helping the needy) that proved to the unsaved that believers were really saved and really cared for each other, in the days of the early churches.

As one who has endured, without reason, over 25 years of maltreatment by fellow Christians, I know this goes on daily. Christians tend to think only of their own lives and comfort, preferring to heap up their own wealth than to help those in need. This is a trade-off of a foul kind: one man lives in comfort at the expense of his fellow, who he supposedly 'loves', and who fails through neglect. As we head fast towards the end of the age, what will Christians do with each other? Look after 'number one'? Or, will they turn back to what Christians were once like, when they loved each other, even if they did not personally know many?

It is a truism: it is better to give than to receive. Gathering for one's own barn when someone else's barn has burned down, is not a good sign of Christian love! And this is why God condemns such an attitude. It shows a lack of fear of the Lord, Who always expects fellow believers to treat each other with kindness and love.

Verses 7 & 8

1.

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein

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shall we return?

2.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

The priests, said God through Malachi, have not kept to the laws their forefathers lived by (verse 7). "Return unto me, and I will return unto you". This tells us that the priests were in sin. It also tells us that God had thereby left them alone, without His presence. This is something I always warn people about: that if they continually sin, God will remove His presence from their lives, sometimes even until they die. If the priests return to Him in repentance, He says He will come back to them. The same promise is with us today; do not delay, and repent! Do not be like the ancient priests and ask "Why?" Our understanding, or even our acceptance, of what God says is irrelevant! We are to obey simply because we are creatures and He is the Creator.

Men claim they do not rob God, yet they do, with regularity! God tells the priests they have done so, and yet they churlishly demand to know *how* they have robbed Him. If God says we have done something wrong, it is not up to us to question what He means. It is sufficient that we stand condemned! But, the priests were so far-gone in their sins, they did not even know what they had done wrong. So God tells them: they stole tithes and offerings meant for Him alone, or, they abused what was given to them.

The 'offerings' were those gifts of grain, money and goods brought by the people, to be given to God. The tithes were a tenth-part of all earnings, whether cash or goods. Every third year the tithes were to be used at home, to pay for providing hospitality and help to strangers and kinsmen alike. In between, the tithes were used to maintain the Temple. But, the priests used it all on their own selves.

There is no formal tithe nowadays, but many Christians wish to follow the practice by conscience. A tithe today may be time, effort, skills, money, goods, property... whatever a person has accrued. Some give far more than a tithe, as led by God. The real joy is to meet fellow believers who do not think of what they have as their own, but as being entrusted to them by God, Who owns everything!

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The sadder example of tithing is when Christians dutifully give a tenth IF they have spare money, and only because they feel compelled to do so! God does not compel a tithe today. He expects it to come from a heart overflowing with love for His own. There is no longer a Temple to maintain, but there is much to assist, and many to help, in God's kingdom! Reluctance in this area indicates a lack of love for God.

We should never be fools and give without reasoning, but nor should we refuse to give, because we wish to keep all to ourselves. Neither of my sons are saved (yet), but I am always humbled by their generosity. (In this they follow my late mother). They would give their parents anything we wanted, if we asked - and even when we do not. Oh to see such a spirit in the saved, who claim to be brethren!

Verses 9 - 12

1.

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

2.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

3.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

4.

And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.

Those God condemns in earlier texts are "cursed with a curse". Christians who think God only

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loves, or that we must always do the same, stand corrected by this verse! God not only curses some, He condemns them and may even put them to death! To 'curse' is to detest, to abhor. This is done by allowing the sins of the priests to have full influence over their lives, causing misery and dullness of mind and heart. Look at the lives of the unsaved; are they truly happy? No, for they know, in their hearts, that their day of death comes, sooner or later, and this engenders fear within, a fear that increases with every ensuing year. The priests did not just ignore God, their actions and bad teaching affected the entire nation of Hebrews.

God commands them to return the tithes to the Temple treasury for proper use. He demands untainted meat to be used for sacrifices. This is one of the few texts in which the Lord asks His people to test Him, to see if what He says is true. People weakened by their own sins are unable to fully place trust in God, because their affections have rested with their own minds and hearts. God, knowing this, graciously offers to assist. He does this by letting the priests repent and so return to the true Path.

God does this for us today. We are miserable creatures, always ready to forget God. But, because, like the priests, we belong to Him, He will not let us stay in a pit of our own making, but gives us an opportunity to repent. He tells us: "prove me now", so that we may no longer trust in self, but only in Him. He invites us to faith! And if we comply, He will "pour you out a blessing"! He is not our 'policeman' but our Father, Who loves us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

God will "open you the windows of heaven" if you obey and repent. He will hold nothing back. Indeed, He will shower us with so many blessings "that (there shall) not (be room) enough (to receive it)"! We deserve nothing when we sin, yet He promises us abundant blessings if we repent; so many blessings we can never contain them all. As we are told in Matthew, if we ask and do not doubt, we will receive what we ask for, and more. The promise of God is not just to sinful priests, but to us, also.

Likewise, the priests had the opportunity, and the answer was in their own hands: to repent and enjoy blessings, together with the whole nation, or to reject God's mercy and continue as they were, with catastrophic results. What do you do, today? Do you repent and wait for His blessings? Or, carry on as normal, relying on your sinful ways? You have now read His promises, despite your sins – which way will you go?

Furthermore, God promises, to those who return to Him, to hold back or get rid of, the nation's enemies – roving wild beasts that eat crops and animals, locusts that feed off everything green,

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and famine or pestilence that ruins vineyards. In summary, those who repent and obey are promised, unequivocally, God's abundant blessings. Most of us tend to rely, if only in a small part, on our own strength and will; we use natural cunning and cleverness. But, this is not what God wants. Yes, we may use all those things, but only AFTER we hand everything over to Him. He may take us along a route we never even thought of, and if we obey and comply, He will pour out such blessings that we could never use them up!

Note, too, the side-effect of personal and national repentance: surrounding nations will be blessed, too! When a whole nation follows God and shows love to their fellow believers, all other lands will marvel as they watch godly men and women following their God. They will want the same. The man or woman who genuinely lives out their lives in holiness will affect those around them. If they work, they will affect the company in a good way. If a group of like-minded Christians live as they ought, they will affect the locality or town. And if all areas contain obedient Christians, the nation itself will benefit... even those who are unsaved.

Today, we see a nation under punishment from God for laxity, a loose collection of uncaring Christians whose lives fall far short of holiness. Hence, the awful things being done to us by leaders and the wicked. Turn back, then watch the changes... if God wills to cut short His anger. I once fought hard – for over 20 years – against those who practice a wicked perversion. But, that time is now past. Past laxity caused the wicked to breach the city walls. Now, our only resort is repentance and prayer. The time of human actions alone is past. God only is our refuge at this time. Repent. Sit quietly and wait for His command. Live in holiness. Then see the benefits of God poured from on high, benefits that others can only envy.

Verses 13 - 18

1.

Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

2.

Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

3.

And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

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4.

Then 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 that thought upon his name.

5.

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

6.

Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

God reminds the priests of their evils, which have been 'stout' or strong. Yet, they dare to question God, and ask Him *how* they have spoken against Him! They were so sinful they questioned their duty towards God as priests... they asked themselves 'What is the point of all our duties and where has repentance got us?' So, they relaxed God's commands and did as they saw fit.

Many Christians routinely live like this! They do not trust God. This much is obvious by the way they talk, think and live. Their personal holiness has been ruined by human aims and desires, which have tarnished the word of God. They interpret scripture in their own ways and live like their ungodly neighbours. They have no faith in God, yet pray vainly to Him for help! Such prayers are ignored by God, and though these Christians do not live as they ought, they blame God for not responding. And so they feed their unfaithfulness and do not trust in Him.

Because the children of God did not live properly, surrounding wicked men thrived and idolatry increased. Arrogant rulers took what was not theirs, and they despised the chosen tribes of Israel, who showed no evidence of God in their midst. Even then, a few remembered God and gave their trust and hearts to Him. Are YOU one of the few? Or, one of the many who follow after sin? Today, we are reaping the sour fruits of our laxity, as wicked men and evil rulers throw out every trace of godliness in our nation.

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Even so, God hears the faithful and responds. He has recorded the names of those who trust and obey, and will shower them with blessings. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts". In the end of time, when he calls all men to judgment, He will remember the faithful when he "makes up my jewels"... those who are considered His own treasure. Those He says are worthy, through the Son's sacrifice, will be spared, just as an earthly father looks after his own son who acts wisely.

And, when the priests, and the nation through them, again follow the Lord, God will know who is faithful and who is not. He will know the true from the false, just as every Christian is given discernment, to know right from wrong, bad from evil, wicked men from holy. Return NOW.

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