

LESSONS FROM A COMPLAINING GOD

Malachi 3

by Harold E. Turner

1. The Prophecies Of God Are Certain And True (v. 1) — Two messengers are mentioned in the verse no doubt referring to John the Baptist and the Christ who would "suddenly come to his temple," and these two messengers came exactly as Malachi (and the other prophets) foretold. Such prophecies and fulfillment cannot possibly be wild guesses that just happened to luckily and without divine direction hit the target hundreds of years later. It is a nervey thing to predict something to take place in a few days (ask any weather man), but what would you think of a local T. V. station predicting weather for the year 2400? These various men of the O. T. period had that kind of nerve time and again, and it worked successfully in every instance. To fail to see God at work in such, indicates clearly that one is not inclined to faith at all.

2. The Time Of The Messiah Was To Be A Cleansing Time (vv. 2, 3) — He was to come like "a refining fire and like fullers soap," and he would "purify the sons of Levi" and generally give his people a good scrubbing. How desirable is cleanliness. Hardly ever do you encounter one who upon becoming dirty physically does not soon thereafter seek out a means of cleaning up or removing the dirt and filth from his body. Strange indeed is the attitude on our part that despises the dirt of the body but evidences no sense of urgency in the cleansing of the spirit. The Messiah has come to provide such cleansing, and to that condition we should aspire with our might.

3. The Offerings Of Priests Would Then Be Acceptable (vv. 3b, 4) — "Then" in verse 4 is important. Being of the scrubbed category, we can "then" offer to him acceptable service and render sacrifices that are "pleasant unto Jehovah." To strive for the latter without the other being in place is to lie to ourselves in the extreme and to become a part of the most common mistake among the Israelites of old, i. e., thinking that a butchered goat had some kind of intrinsic value while being offered by dirty hands. It was never so, and it is not so today.

4. God Takes Note Of Specific Sins (vv. 5, 6) — He is not far removed from us, unconcerned and indifferent to us. To the contrary, he not only takes note, but he takes careful and detailed note to such an extent that a list of specifics is at his disposal regarding us all, and as concerns our transgressions, not a single one is hidden to him. Each category of life must be influenced by him. No matter how skilled we might become in many areas in applying his standard, this in no way at all clears us in stubborn rebellion in one area. He expects us to be complete and well-rounded in our service.

5. Men Become Thieves By Failing To Give As Taught (vv. 7-9) — "I don't see how throwing a dollar in a bucket could possibly be worship" is so trite that "pitiful" hardly describes it. It is a large mistake to fail to give "giving" good solid thought and study and then a faithful place in our activities. A casual attitude toward such makes one a casual

thief, and if one has gotten in his head that this matter of faithful giving is some dinky little matter of indifference to the Father, then let him read the verses again. That should dispel that bit of folly forever and create faithfulness here too.

6. Those Who Speak "Stout" Words Against Jehovah Have No Fear (vv. 13-16) — Notice that after the discussion of those who speak these "stout" words against the Father, he then changes (lbff.) to those who "feared Jehovah." Thus to speak out against him in some kind of bold fashion evidences a lack of reverence for him. That such has its reward is too obvious to be denied. Their thinking concerned the old problem of the respective conditions in life of the godly and ungodly. "If everything doesn't go for me exactly as I think it should, and if a continual bed of roses is not mine, then what good is there in serving God?" is the thinking. "And besides that, I know an old boy who is rotten, and he does very well and never shares in the ills and woes of my miserable state." And on and on it goes, all of which says, in essence, that we will serve as long as we are being served (tub of butter style), otherwise, "It is vain to serve God." That point of view fails to take into account many things (an exhaustive list being prohibited by space) such as: (1) man has no business sitting in judgment upon God about anything, and then, (2) the matter of final disposition. "Stout" words spoken Godward indicates a "stout" ungodly attitude which needs repentance more than additional butter.

7. When God Claims His Possessions, Then Men Will Judge Accurately Whether Or Not It Is Good To Serve Him (vv. 17, 18) — Read the verses carefully. The time will come when looking back upon it all will put everything in its place, bring to an end "stout" words and make it easy for anyone to correctly evaluate rebellion to and then service toward the God of heaven. Is it worth it all? Is it a "vain" matter? Have we been called upon to do something that was wretched and that somehow is overshadowed and out advantaged by lives of wickedness? Is it "poor little deprived servant" as is opposed to "lucky wonderful free spirit" doing whatever is desired? When the Lord claims those that are his as his final possession, all of this will clear up and out and there will be no problem at all in summing up such things.