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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**THE MESSENGER, THE MESSAGE**

**AND THE MINISTRY**

**MALACHI 3:1-18**

***Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."***

God declares, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple. This text is quoted in Mark 1:2 and applied to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and called people to repent. A clear path must be made by cutting down the mountains of human pride to make a humble plain for God’s glory to land on. John the Baptist was a messenger sent to proclaim the coming of the Lord. Jesus was brought to the temple on the 40th day to dedicate Him. Simeon and Anna, both old in years, recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah, when He was brought to the temple. Jesus was Emmanuel {God with us}. He is the Mediator of the New Testament. John is the messenger to proclaim Jesus, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the message, and the baptism of Jesus Christ is the ministry to proclaim God.

***Mark 1:1-5***

***1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;***

***2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.***

***3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.***

***4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.***

***5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.***

***Luke 7:26-28***

***26 "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet."***

***27 "This is [he], of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."***

***28 "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."***

***Malachi 3:2 "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:"***

But who can endure the day of his coming? Indeed, when he comes, Malachi says, it will be like a refiner’s fire. The coming of Jesus {Messiah} at His physical birth did not bring peace. Families were separated, because some believed He was Messiah, and others did not believe. This will have a greater fulfillment, when He comes as King and Lord. The sheep will be separated from the goats at that time. The refiners fire and the fuller’s soap both get rid of the dross. The Christians are tried as by fire, to see what they are made of. They are washed and made white as snow, when they receive the righteousness of Christ. The judgment is spoken of here. It is the judgment separating the sheep {Christians} from the goats {unbelievers}.

***Malachi 3:3 "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."***

***Malachi 3:4 "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."***

This is the fire that burns up all the dross and leaves the pure silver {redeemed}. The fire of God takes out all of the evil, so the vessel will be pure. After the sin is purged away, then God will accept their offerings from a pure heart. That is, the Lord first has to bring judgment in order to bring blessing. Just as the refiner puts gold and silver in the flame to burn off the dross, God has to refine and purify his people. He must remove what doesn’t belong so they can receive his covenantal benefits.

***I Corinthians 3:13 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."***

***II Timothy 2:20-21***

***20 "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour."***

***21 "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work."***

***Malachi 3:5 "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."***

They had asked, "where is the judgment?". Now, He tells them, it will extend to all of the people, as well as to the priests. God judges His own family first. Then, He judges the sinful of this world. The sins, listed above, are those He really hates. Notice, He starts with sorcerers. These were pertaining to magic and witchcraft. Many of these sins, they had learned from their heathen neighbors. The sins, listed here, are sins against God and their neighbors. There is no need to explain each sin. It is enough to know, that these sins will keep us out of heaven. The Lord will come in judgment against those who demonstrate in a variety of ways that they think they can go to church on Sunday and treat others with injustice and contempt the rest of the week.

***I Corinthians 6:9-10***

***10 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,"***

***11 "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."***

***Malachi 3:6 "For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."***

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never changes. The things that were a sin in the sight of God 2000 years ago, are a sin now. The sons of Jacob are not consumed, because of God's covenant. God not only is the same in judgment, He stays the same in the calling we have on our lives. When God calls you, He never changes His mind about wanting you for that purpose. Though they thought God was being unfair, he reminded them of one of the greatest truths: the Lord has not changed. Therefore, they had not been destroyed. In theology, this unchangeableness of God’s essential nature and character is called the immutability of God. People change, but God is consistent and faithful. Therefore, in spite of our unfaithfulness, we faithfully receive grace and mercy rather than what they deserve, condemnation and judgment!

***Exodus 34:6-7***

***6 “And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,***

***7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”***

***John 3:16-18***

***16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

***17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.***

***18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.***

***Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”***

***Malachi 3:7 "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 shall we return?"***

When you study the wilderness wanderings, you discover how unfaithful they really have been. God has forgiven them over and over. The Ten Commandments that God spoke from the mountain to the people before Moses went to the mountain to get them engraved on stone, was spoken aloud to them all. They broke the very first commandment, when they built the golden calf. God forgave them and started them out again. It was their lack of faith that caused them to wander 40 years. They were disobedient, and God let the faithless die off, before He allowed their descendants to go into the promised land. Even in this lesson, God wants them to repent, and turn to Him. They are so calloused with sin they are not even aware they have sinned. God offers his people hope: Return to me, and I will return to you. But the proof is in the pudding.

***Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."***

***Malachi 3:9 "Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation."***

***Malachi 3:10 "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]."***

The Lord’s next grievance against his people has to do with something that continues to own the affections of humanity today: money. Just as there is an indicator light in my car that tells me when there’s a hidden mechanical problem, so, too, an attitude toward money often serves as an indicator light revealing spiritual problems. Your level of spiritual seriousness and development will always show up in your checkbook. Genuine repentance is known by its fruit. So, what must they do? He asks them, Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! How? By not honoring or trusting God with their tithe and offerings, God’s financial plan for His church. The tithe (one tenth of all thine increase) belongs to God and given to support His ministers. Offerings (free will from the remaining nine tenths of all thine increase) are given to support the church.

***Numbers 18:24 “But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”***

***1 Corinthians 9:11-14
11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?
12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.***

***13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?
14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.***

God considers anything less as theft! Of all attempted robberies, surely robbing God must be considered the most ludicrous. We have not given anything really, until we have given our tithe. Offerings are over and above tithes and should be in relation to how the Lord has prospered you. God commanded the Israelites to tithe. By giving back to God ten percent of what he had provided, his people acknowledged his sovereignty, expressed gratitude to him, and demonstrated faith that he would continue to provide. When they did that, they came under the cover of his covenant. This practice and purpose of the tithe continued in the New Testament, because Jesus continues the priesthood of Melchizedek who received a tithe.

***Hebrews 7:5-10***

***5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:***

***6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.***

***7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.***

***8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.***

***9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.***

***10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.***

We see from this, that Israel (like many believers today) had failed (for whatever reason) to give their tithes and offerings. Though God was faithfully giving to them, it seems that the whole nation had stopped giving to God. Subsequently, God challenged them. God says He will multiply all that they give Him so abundantly, that they will not have enough containers to hold it all. It is not just money that we should tithe. If we give God His tithe of our time, talent, and treasure, we will find we become much more prosperous in every aspect of our lives. Faithful Christians practice firstfruits giving and living.

***Proverbs 3:9-10***

***9 Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:***

***10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.***

***Matthew 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”***

***1 Corinthians 16:2 “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”***

***2 Corinthians 8:1-3
1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;
2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.
3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;***

***2 Corinthians 9:6-8
6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.
7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:***

***Matthew 23:23 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”***

***Haggai 1:5-10***

***5 Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.***

***6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.***

***7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.***

***8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.***

***9 Ye looked for much, and, lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.***

***10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.***

***Malachi 3:11 "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."***

***Malachi 3:12 "And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."***

The blessings God bestows on the one who gives abundantly to God's work are not just money. God blesses everything they put their hand to. God sends the rain at the proper time and the sun. Their crops grow abundantly. All nations will realize that they are blessed of God. Many who erroneously preach a “prosperity gospel” misuse passages like this one. God does not promise to give you earthly wealth when you give generously to the kingdom. He’s not a slot machine. What is a “blessing” from God? It’s experiencing, enjoying, and extending the goodness of God in your life. After all, you can have money and not be blessed. You can be wealthy and have no joy or peace. God has already blessed believers in Jesus Christ with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). But, to access those blessings, he calls us to come under the cover of his covenant. He calls us to align ourselves with his kingdom agenda. When we do, we’ll realize that what we already have is worth far more than anything we’ve been withholding (stealing) from the collection plate. Then, unbelievers will take notice and consider us “blessed”, because it will be obvious that God is with us and His favor upon us.

***Malachi 3:13 "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken [so much] against thee?"***

***Malachi 3:14 "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?"***

Again, they have committed so much sin, that they are not aware they have sinned against God. Now, we see the statement they have made against God. They are looking for a reward for the things they have done for God. This, in itself, is a bad attitude. They were doing good to get something in return, not to please God. Your words against me are harsh, the Lord tells them. But they don’t know what he’s talking about. So, he spells it out for them. They have said, It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his requirements?

***Romans 9:20 "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed [it], Why hast thou made me thus?"***

***Jude 1:15 "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard [speeches] which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."***

***Malachi 3:15 "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, [they that] tempt God are even delivered."***

God had spoken over and over about His dislike for those who murmured. This is almost as if, they are jealous of the sinners. This reminds me of Jonah, who thought God should not save Nineveh. We consider the spiritually arrogant to be fortunate because they prosper. So, in other words, they feel they are doing a lot of religious activity for God and getting nothing out of it. The wicked, they believe, are thus better off than they. The problem we’ve seen repeatedly in Malachi is that he’s addressing a group of people who are fulfilling religious duty with no concern for a relationship. In a sense, they just want to come to church and get their cut. But the vital principle of covenant is relationship. The way to unlock the door to a new level of experience with God is to pursue a relationship with him to pursue him for who he is, not just for what we want him to give us.

***Malachi 3:16 "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."***

Taking God seriously is the key difference between the two groups described in Malachi 3:13-18. This first group takes God casually. For them, God is like a spare tire, someone to turn to when circumstances go flat. When he bails them out, they put him back in the spiritual trunk. This second group is described as those who feared the Lord. They took God seriously. And don’t miss this: The Lord took notice and listened. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom. It leads to life and away from evil. To fear the Lord is not to be terrified of him, but to hold him in reverence. Those who remembered God will be remembered on judgment day, when they stand before the Lord. When He opens the books, He will say, "Well done, thy good and faithful servant".

***Malachi 3:17 "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."***

***Malachi 3:18 "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."***

And how does he respond to their faith? He says, They will be mine, my own possession. I will have compassion on them. In the end, people will look at these two groups and be able to see the difference between one who serves God and one who does not. An appraiser is someone who examines something and sets a value on it. You and I must appraise God and see what he is worth. If we examine him honestly and see him as he has truly revealed himself in Scripture, we will find that he’s absolutely worthy of all our love and reverence and service. We, Christians, have been bought and paid for by the precious blood of Jesus. We belong to Jesus. We have taken on the name of Christ {Christian}.

***Matthew 25:34 " Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:"***

***John 10:27-29***

***27 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"***

***28 "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand."***

***29 "My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand."***

***Romans 6:16 "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"***

***Matthew 3:12 "Whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."***

**QUESTIONS**

1. Who was the messenger in verse 1?
2. Jesus was brought to the temple on the \_\_\_\_\_\_ day to dedicate.
3. Who were the two, in the temple, that recognized Jesus as Messiah?
4. What does "Emmanuel" mean?
5. He is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the New Testament.
6. Why were families separated over Jesus?
7. The Christians are tried as of by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. What are the vessels of honor in the house?
9. When shall Jerusalem's and Judah's offerings be pleasant unto the Lord?
10. What evil people are mentioned, in verse 5, that God will judge swiftly?
11. What question had they asked God?
12. Who does God judge first?
13. Where did they learn this evil?
14. God is the same yesterday, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. Why are the sons of Jacob not consumed?
16. What do you find about the sons of Jacob, if you study the wilderness wanderings?
17. What caused them to have to wander 40 years?
18. Who did God allow to go into the promised land?
19. Why do they not realize they have sinned?
20. How can you rob God?
21. Why are they cursed with a curse?
22. How does the Christian's giving differ from tithing?
23. What blessings do they receive, other than multiplying their gift from God?
24. All nations shall call you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
25. They had said it was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to serve God.
26. How did God feel about murmuring?
27. What will God say to those who work for Him?
28. What happens to the righteous at judgment?
29. What happens to the chaff.