

# Route Sixty-Six

*Part Thirty-Nine*

*Malachi*

*Behold, He is Coming...But  
(John 5:39; Malachi 3:1)*

*With Study Questions*

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**“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:1).**

## **Introduction**

Speaking to a fellow minister recently, we were seeking to examine the proper response to the almost unprecedented turmoil in which we find ourselves. As we discussed the proper courses of action, we realized that pretty much all Christians recognized the cure to the ills of society rested squarely on the grace of the Gospel. Such a statement is generally met with a brief, ‘amen, amen’ followed by a ‘but what are we actually going to do?’

As we were accelerating past the Gospel into the weightier matters at hand, our short-sightedness gently slapped us on the back of our heads. In my normal fashion, I found a sports analogy. It’s almost as if the Gospel is an ‘also ran’. An ‘also ran’ are people in the race who didn’t win, but their mentioned by the sportswriter as a bit of a courtesy. My friend compared it to the free square in bingo. ‘Yes, the Gospel is a given, but we must focus now on the other squares.’

It is beyond dispute that there is more to the Christian faith than resting in the Gospel. In Malachi we will learn of the dangers of an unwarranted assurance in the promises of God. As the confession teaches of **“false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation (WCF, 18, 1).”** But Christians, and especially pastors, must be cautious of allowing their message to pass by the Gospel with a mere head-nod. This is particularly critical during critical times when we want to stop the bleeding. But the blood (pardon the graphic)

coming through the skin is a result of something internal. And the internal is addressed by the Gospel.

We are in part thirty-nine in our series. Route Sixty-Six is inspired by John 5:39 where Jesus taught,

**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).**

These words of Jesus are followed by a rebuke,

**But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life (John 5:40).**

Trying to transform the world apart from Christ is like trying to get a dead man into shape. The necessary implication of the above verse is that they do not currently have life.

This morning we finish the Old Testament. What is God's parting word for us before the four-hundred years of silence and the birth of Christ. What is the final message for us to ponder?

So much drama in these Old Testament accounts. Far more difficult circumstances that any current event can be compared to. The plagues, famines, judgments, hatred, betrayal, slavery, vicious sacrifice of babies and other innocents, can make the Old Testament almost unreadable in mixed company.

But the very first promise (in terms of redemption) and the very last promise, unambiguously point to Jesus. At the very beginning, at the fall of man, there is the promised Seed who will defeat the enemy of God's people.

**And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15).**

Thousands of years come and go, yet the promise remains. Here at the end of the Old Testament canon, we read of the astonishing immutability of God's covenant promise!

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This passage speaks of John the Baptist and Jesus. This will not happen for hundreds of years. But the message from cover to cover, from beginning to end, the Alpha and the Omega is Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the redemption of this fallen world. It is not an ‘also ran’. It is not the blank space in Bingo. It is our only hope.

### **Survey of Malachi**

Malachi begins with God expressing His great love. **“I have loved you”, says the Lord (Malachi 1:2a)** is the opening message. This is followed by one of their many questions, **“Yet you say, ‘In what way have you loved us’” (Malachi 1:2b)?** Seven times we see this type of dialogue.

**In what way have we despised your name...In what way have we defiled you...In what way have we wearied Him [the Lord]...In what way shall we return...In what way have we robbed you...What have we spoken against you (Malachi 1:6; 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8; 13.);**

Reminiscent these words are of Jesus on the last day.

**“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ <sup>45</sup> Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:44-46)**

A chilling theme in Malachi is though God may love all people without distinction, does not mean He loves all without exception.

The nation, during the time of Malachi (around 400bc.) lived under the false impression that their mere inclusion among the covenant people of God meant that all the glorious promises were for them, in spite of their cold, faithless hearts.

**If you will not hear, And if you will not take *it* to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the Lord of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take *it* to heart (Malachi 2:2).**

There is a good deal of talk today about systemic issues. At whatever level those types of things exist, it begins with the heart of the individual. The priests were corrupt, and the offerings defiled (1:6-2:9). Their religion had descended into a shallow and careless formalism (offering blind stolen and lame animals). Gifts even the lower magistrates (governors) wouldn't accept.

The infidelity of the individual, became the infidelity of the body. And the dire consequences of these cold hearts and lack of genuine faith was treachery. From the voice of the prophet we hear,

**Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers (Malachi 2:10)?**

There will be no brotherhood of man apart from a Fatherhood of God. But if there is a true Fatherhood found in the blood of Christ, the brotherhood cannot be stopped. A cold heart toward God will inevitably produce a cold and oppressive heart to one another. But we are reminded of a God who intervenes to rescue us from our naturally morbid and diseased condition.

### **Christ in Malachi**

There is no difficulty in finding Jesus in Malachi. We read it earlier:

**"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly**

**come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:1).**

But there is a following verse which must grab our attention. Many of the Israelites found a false comfort in verse one. But verse two tells a different story:

**But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver (Malachi 3:1, 2a).**

When Jesus came He initiated the biggest split in church history. **"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).** <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, **"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34a).**

The messenger, John the Baptist, preached of this very division. He taught that **"the axe is laid to the root of the trees" (Matthew 3:10).** Jesus would come with **"winnowing fork in His hand" (Matthew 3:12).** When we arrive at the end of God's revealed word, the oft quoted words are, **"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20b).**

Many a believer pines away for the rapture (or more accurately, the resurrection). **"But who can endure the day of His coming?"** Are you quite certain it will be Good News for you?

**Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light (Amos 5:18).**

The Apostle Paul speaks of how God **"diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14).** The true fragrance of Christ to some is the **"aroma of life leading to life" but to the others it is the "aroma of death leading to death" (2 Corinthians 2:16).**

The divisions of today's turmoil will pale in comparison to that division. The division begins wherever Christ is preached and it will continue to do so until there is the great division where the sheep will be separated from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). It is here that the hypocrites

will face the music of their false presumptions. It is here that we read of the **“When Lord, When Lord?”**

Malachi is a book which confronts false assumptions of peace with God when there is no peace at all. **“Behold He is coming...but”**. In His great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus confronts this presumptuousness. “Did we not prophesy, cast out demons, do many wonders” [Matthew 7:21-23]? To which they receive the sobering response, **“Depart from Me, I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23).**

The greatest fear of any pastor is that his church contains these people. There will be four hundred years of silence before we are greeted by John the Baptist and our Savior. But the Old Testament leaves us, as it were, with a warning:

**And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children,  
And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come  
and strike the earth with a curse (Malachi 4:6).**

The hope of humanity is found in having our hearts subdued by Christ, which inevitably unifies the hearts of sinful people. The inevitable outcome of the alternative is that God come and strike the earth with a curse.

## Questions for Study

1. Discuss how the difficulties of a particular era can tempt Christians/pastors to forget the importance of the Gospel (pages 2, 3)?
2. What is the promise that we read of from Genesis to Malachi? (pages 3, 4)?
3. What do we learn in the opening of Malachi? How is this responded to? There is a recurring dialogue throughout Malachi. What does this tell you about the people (pages 4, 5)?
4. False presumptions can be very dangerous. What false presumptions do we read of in Malachi (page 5)?
5. How does a system of darkness begin? How is it cured (page 5)?
6. Malachi teaches of the coming of Christ. Is this always good news for everyone? Why or why not (pages 5-7)