



1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. (Mal 1:1)

Each book of the Holy Bible occupies a special place and serves a special purpose. The Book of Malachi is certainly no different. Malachi signals the close of the Old Testament that has proven such a trial for the people of God in keeping the Law. The book was written during the sixth centuries BC after the exile in Babylon. Two other post-exilic prophets wrote during this period – Haggai and Zechariah. I have read the accounts of a number of pseudo-theologians who attempt to raise doubts of the authorship of Malachi and thereby prove their lack of faith and belief in the very words of Holy Scripture; for the leading verse tells us frankly that the author is MALACHI! God indicts Israel of evil in fourteen accusations and ten denials of Israel. Israel has been hypercritical of even the justice of God. Malachi, as God's prophet, mentions five messengers: 1) Malachi himself as "my messenger" in vs. 1:1; 2) The true priest in vs. 2:7; 3) John the Baptist in vs. 3:1; 4) The Messiah vs. 3:1-3; and 5) Elijah in vs. 4:4-5.

Malachi also castigates the priest whose sins have displeased God and departed from the truth: 1) Departed out of the way; 2) Caused many to stumble at the Law; 3) Corrupted the covenants of Levi; (all vs. 8) 4) Did not keep God's ways - vs.9. and, 5) Were partial in the administration of the Law with respect of persons. Nothing much has changed in our day, has it?

An overriding purpose that is clearly intended in this Book is to warn post-exilic Israel that God will not long tolerate the same apostasy that had led to their exile to Babylon in the first place. Now that they have returned, God expects a change in character from those carried away captive years earlier.

Malachi, being the 39th Book of the Bible is the last of the Old Testament under which Israel has attempted, with futility, to live according to the Law of God. It is no coincidence that the last word of the Book of Malachi is the word CURSE! *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live*

in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:" (Gal 3:10-13a) The greater promise and Star of Malachi is that of the Coming of Christ, the Messiah!

The Lord has forever born a burden for the people of His making. But no man can truly bear a burden for God as He is All-Powerful and not needing a burden bearer. The BURDEN of which Malachi speaks is the burden of the Lord for us that is revealed in His written Word and in Himself as the incarnate Christ. *"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house."* (Jer 23:31-34) How often do we hear the false prophets shout from their pulpits their "burdens for the Lord" to extort money from the people and to shear the lambs' clan of their wool? The Lord has born OUR burdens and has suffered many stripes for us. But the false prophet does not mention the true burden of the Lord, but of his own lust for wealth and power.

Malachi speaks both of the justice of God and also the mercy. If justice were to be discounted, there could be no mercy. We deserve justice but, because of the suffering of Christ, we may obtain mercy.

Four days hence we shall take up the detailed devotion of Malachi. If you read ahead, you may dig out more gems of beauty than I am able to find. If we search together, we shall receive the multiplied reward of a thousand eyes of witness.