



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. 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: 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. 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. 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. 6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Mal 3:1-6)

God now speaks marvelous words through his prophet, Malachi, of one who is to come who has been standing at the ready on the portico and shades of eternity past - as great a prophet as has ever graced the ears of men. John the Baptist is greatest among prophets, not for his personal merit, but that of the Coming Messiah of whom he will prophesy. Another five hundred years of abject darkness will elapse between the passing of the prophet Malachi to the next prophet, John the Baptist. The delay is well worth the wait for John the Baptist will announce the Coming of that Ancient Light which shall illumine the hearts and minds of those people who have sat in darkness from old time. *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."* (Isaiah 9:2) This is the same shadow of death made reference to in the glorious 23rd Psalm, and it is merely the SHADOW and not the real. To the people of God, death is merely a shadow and nothing of substance.

God always has a messenger for all who eagerly await the message. No messenger was sent during the intervening period between the Old and New Testament because the people had turned their attention away from God and did not desire a message from His prophets whom they murdered. They sat in darkness. The coming of John the Baptist was stark and profound to those whose religious fervor had fallen asleep. It came as rain water upon a *"dry and thirsty landwhere no water is."*

(Psalm 63:1 - General George Patton's favorite passage). As you will recall in Mal 2:17, the frail of faith asked, "Where is the judgment of God?" They waited five hundred years for the answer, but the answer is always sure with the Lord of Host. You may be of one of those of the persuasion that seek after a sign: "**An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**" (Matt 12:39-40) Men and women are searching for emotional impressions more than truth. But we have enough to know and believe through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! The question is still being asked by insincere detractors today: "**Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?**" (Matt 24:3)

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.**" The word 'BEHOLD' is crafted to draw our attention to a momentous statement or event! Read the words of John the Baptist that echo the majesty of the occasion referenced: "**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**" (John 1:29) Do not fail to heed the call to attention in Holy Scripture of this command - BEHOLD. Something great and new is being revealed that may be detrimental to your eternal well-being! Not only does the appearance of John break with unexpected abruptness, but the appearance of Christ whose Coming he heralds, breaks with even greater force and momentum upon a dazed world. John has the most important role of any prophet. Do not forget the beckoning words of Christ without the door of the Churches: "**Behold, I stand at the Door and knock!**" (Rev. 3:20) God has vowed to send His messenger, which He sends in the fullness of time, to prepare the way for that One which has been destined to come from the Foundation of the World - Jesus Christ. John echoes the ancient prophesy made by Isaiah and even before in the Garden at Eden: "**The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.**" (Isaiah 40:3-4) John was even more than a prophet in that his message was the culmination of all of the works and words of the prophets of previous centuries and millennia.

The birth of Jesus in a quiet little hamlet outside Jerusalem came as a shock to the powers of government, religion, and society. Though the old prophecy was sure and articulate, no one recognized the alignment of God's heavenly stars to bring this matter to fruition precisely on time and at the place prophesied - ". . . **the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.**" Christ came into His Temple made without hands and one which the Jewish rulers, in league with Rome, attempted to destroy - yet, He rebuilt it after three days and three nights in the Garden Tomb. "**We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.**" (Mark 14:58) ". . . **the messenger of the covenant.**" Which covenant? That which was made to Abraham and his Seed. Both the messenger and his message were fulfilled according to the Word of the Lord. ". . . **whom ye delight in.**" Yes, they did delight at the promise of His Coming, but many altogether for the wrong reasons. He came not as a temporal king to conquer large land armies, but as King of Kings to scatter and defeat the dark powers of the air who seek to destroy both body and soul.

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." In Old Testament times, Fuller's soap was used to clean woolen material prior to making garments. God cleans our hearts before our outer appearance is made clean and before the making us into His elect people. No one is able, by his own righteousness to abide the day of the Lord. No one can stand on the merits of his own goodness, but only upon the imputed merits of Jesus Christ! Without His Coming, not a single soul on earth could have been saved. Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Godhead, is a 'consuming fire.' All that is of dross and sin shall be burned with fervent heat - only those whose souls have found grace in His sight shall be spared. "*For our God is a consuming fire.*" (Heb 12:29)

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.*" This is one of my favorite illustrations of the Bible. God will purify His people of old and they will be made new. The Lord will sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver. In what way does this illustrate the cleansing and purification of the people of God (sons of Levi - the very ministers of God were corrupt)? The purifying process of silver and gold requires the metals to be brought to the melting point by fervent heat. When this happens, the impurities will float to the top in the form of dross. The dross is carefully scooped from the top and the metal heated once more, repeating the same process - usually seven times, until the Refiner is able to see His own Face on the surface of the silver or gold clearly. God purifies us with the fires of life - separating our sins from us more and more as we are sanctified in Him, until He beholds His likeness in our features. "*The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*" (Psalms 12:6) For those new translations that seek to drop entire verses from the Bible, perhaps this verse should be read for understanding. It is not the Word-Picture of God's Word that is important, but every WORD!

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.*" God will favor our offerings as pleasant sacrifices as were those spiritually sound offerings of Abel at Eden. Those offerings of the people of God are not expiatory for forgiveness of sins, but follow as a result of that sin forgiven us in Christ - prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and dedication of self!

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.*" The righteous shall welcome the coming near to them in judgment of God for they have already been Redeemed and made sure in Christ; and they shall welcome the coming of judgment upon a wicked world that has rejected the Lord of Love and Light. The righteous bear no mortal fear of the Lord, but a Holy fear of failing to glorify and honor the name of their Holy God. The wicked shall tremble and cringe, however, at His Coming - not as a Savior at the last, but as Judge of those who do wickedly to destroy them in Hell. What sweet reverie for the elect to be lost in the thoughts and dreams of our Heavenly Father.

Sons and daughters beware! 6 "*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" The rightful inheritance of God is preserved in the Seed of Promise: "*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise*

are counted for the seed." (Romans 9:6-8) The blessing passed from Abraham through his son, not of the natural, but of the miraculous, Isaac, who came by promise to Sarah - well beyond the age of child-bearing. The Promised Seed would come through Isaac and his spiritual, not fleshly, descendants. That Promised Seed is Christ, and all who belong to Him are the legitimate descendants of Abraham in the spirit. This is the Way of the Lord, and He does not change. Christ is the Ancient of Days, the Ancient Landmark, the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, and all in between. His character is genuine all the way through and not tin-plated as the false gods of the world. "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" (Heb 13:8) If we have been refined as the silver of His Table Service, we shall be silver, too, all the way through, and not as a plated spoon whose cheaper metal is revealed through time. What about you, Reader? Are you genuine all the way through?