

SOUL FOOD

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MALACHI 3 GOD'S UNCHANGING JUSTICE AND GRACE

People may be faithless, but the Lord does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. That changelessness is the basis of God threatening judgment. It is also the reason the people are not destroyed. Hope depends on God's gracious intervention, grounded in his changeless character. God will always be glorified both for His perfect justice and grace.

“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.” Only when the Lord comes will the purpose of the rebuilding of the temple be fulfilled. And the Lord will fulfill that promise. First, he will send his “messenger,” a forerunner “to prepare the way before me.” And then suddenly “the Lord you are seeking” will come to His temple, “the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire.” Before the Lord Himself comes—the Lord they seek, the messenger of the new covenant—there is another messenger who prepares the way. From Jesus we learn that the forerunner of whom Malachi spoke is none other than John the Baptist.

Whenever God discloses himself in a special way to His people, there is wrath as well as mercy. Anticipation of the “day of his coming” therefore calls for deep and heart-felt repentance. In this passage repentance is to be done in the light of the ugly sins mentioned as well as to those more easily glossed over, but are still clearly ugly to God: robbery, robbing God of the tithes and offerings that are His offerings. This sin is rooted in cynicism that says serving God is a waste of time and money, that there is no good reason to put God at the center, that it is “futile” to serve the Lord.

Many Old Testament prophets faithfully fulfilled their ministry and saw something of a revival. Malachi saw fruit in the lives of those who heeded his message and began to live in the light of the promise yet to be fulfilled: **“Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name”** (3:16). God's people began to encourage one another and spur one another to greater love and deeds in the light of God's message through Malachi. May we talk to each other like this!