

THE REFINER'S FIRE

(How The Master Refiner Extracts The Dross From The Gold)
Malachi 3:1-7



LORD CHANGE ME

- ◆ The Refiner's Fire
- ◆ The Fuller's Soap
- ◆ The Righteous Offering

"He Shall Sit As A Refiner And Purifier Of Silver, And Shall Purge The Sons Of Levi As Gold And Silver, That They May Offer Unto The Lord an Offering In Righteousness" (Malachi 3:3)

Bill Kirk

“THE FIRE OF THE LORD”

(That Prepares Us For The Return Of Jesus)

Text: Malachi 3:1-7

Subject: “The Spirit of fire in your heart today” (or)
(An offering of life that is pleasant to the Lord)

Introduction

- ◆ The name Malachi means, “My messenger”.
- ◆ Malachi was a messenger with a powerful message.
- ◆ In 538 B.C., King Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews exiled in Babylon to return to their land.
- ◆ About 50,000 returned and in 515 B.C. they completed the temple rebuilding.
- ◆ Ezra visited the Jews in 458 B.C.
- ◆ In 445 B.C. Nehemiah became a governor and served for twelve years.
- ◆ While Nehemiah was in Shushan, things began to fall apart in Jerusalem.
- ◆ Drastic measures were needed for reformation.
- ◆ It was at this time (a spiritually low time for Judah) when Malachi was called by God.

Question: What did Malachi have to address?

Answer: The same things Nehemiah had to address:

- #1. There were poor crops and a faltering economy. (3:11)
- #2. There was intermarriage with unbelievers. (2:11)
- #3. There was a lack of support for the temple. (3:8-11)
- #4. There was oppression of the poor. (3:5)
- #5. There was defilement in the ministry by the priests. (1:6)
- #6. Some people were questioning God’s love for them. (1:2)
- #7. Joy had turned into weariness. (1:13)
- #8. There was turmoil in the home. (2:14-16)
- #9. People couldn’t discern between good and evil. (2:17)
- #10. Many felt that their labors were in vain. (3:14)

(And In The Midst Of All Of This)

- ◆ Malachi was called by God, to call the people back to God, so that God could be God in every heart once again.

(Malachi Chapter 3 Is “Preparation” For “Visitation”)

- ◆ Two messengers are spoken of in (v. 1):
 - #1. There is the work of John the Baptist preparing for Jesus’ first coming.
 - #2. There is the work of Jesus, preparing us now for His second coming.
- ◆ “...The messenger of the covenant” in (v. 1) is Jesus.

Question: Why is Jesus called “The Messenger of the Covenant”?

Answer: Because Jesus fulfilled the demands of His covenant in three ways:

- #1. In His life, he walked on earth without sin.
- #2. In his death, he suffered the penalty that we deserved on the cross.
- #3. In His resurrection, He ushered in the New Covenant of Grace (which allows you and me to come to God boldly because of the work of another - Jesus).

Question: Pastor, what is the message of John the Baptist and Malachi before us?

Answer: Both speak of one predominant work:

- ◆ The purifying energy of Jesus which is likened to a cleansing fire. (Repeat)

Question: Is fire that important in the Bible?

(Hear With Your Heart)

- ◆ “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a flame of **fire** out of the midst of a bush” (Exodus 3:2)
- ◆ “The Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in **fire**” (Exodus 19:18)
- ◆ “And there went out **fire** from the Lord...” (Leviticus 10:2)
- ◆ “Everything that may abide the **fire**, ye shall make it go through the **fire**, and it shall be clean” (Numbers 31:23)
- ◆ “For the Lord thy God is a consuming **fire**, even a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24)
- ◆ “Then the **fire** of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice” (I Kings 18:38)
- ◆ “David built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the Lord, and the Lord answered David from heaven by **fire**” (I Chronicles 21:26)
- ◆ “God makes His servants a flaming **fire**” (Psalm 104:4)
- ◆ “The **fire** devours the stubble and the flame consumes the chaff” (Isaiah 5:24)
- ◆ “Walk in the light of your **fire**, and in the sparks that ye have kindled” (Isaiah 50:11)
- ◆ “The lead is consumed in the **fire**” (Jeremiah 6:29)
- ◆ “The Lord contends by **fire**” (Amos 7:4)

(In The New Testament)

- ◆ “Jesus shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with **fire**” (Matthew 3:11)
- ◆ “Everyone shall be salted with **fire**...have salt in yourselves” (Mark 9:49,50)
- ◆ “Everyone’s work shall be revealed by **fire**, and the **fire** shall try everyone’s work to see what sort it is” (I Corinthians 3:13)
- ◆ “Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming **fire**” (Hebrews 12:28,29)

(And Finally)

When John saw Jesus on the Isle of Patmos, Jesus was standing in the midst of the church:

- ◆ “And His eyes were as a flame of **fire**” (Revelation 1:14)

(In Malachi Chapter 3, Pastor...)

- #1. What does the fire have to do with me?
- #2. In Malachi 3:2, what do the two questions mean?
 - ◆ “But who may abide the day of His coming?”
 - ◆ “And Who shall stand when He appears?”
- #3. Why is Jesus likened unto a refiner’s fire and a fuller’s soap in (v.2)?
- #4. Why must we be refined and purified as silver. (v. 3)?
- #5. In (vs. 3 & 4), what is an offering in righteousness and an offering pleasant unto the Lord?
- #6. In (v. 7), what does Jesus mean when He says, “Return unto Me and I will return unto you”?
- #7. What difference does it all make in my life today?

- ◆ **Last week:** The Process of The Fear Of The Lord.
- ◆ **This week:** The Process of The Fire Of The Lord.

I. The Anticipation Of Christ’s Appearance

(Notice the 4 references in Vs. 1 & 2)

- (V. 1) ◆ “He shall suddenly come to His temple”
- (V. 1) ◆ “He shall come saith the Lord of Hosts”
- (V. 2) ◆ “Who may abide the day of His coming”?
- (V. 2) ◆ “Who shall stand when He appears”?

Question: Pastor, what is this appearance of Jesus?

Answer: This is an absolute guarantee that all of us are to be anticipating!

(What Is It?)

- #1. That Jesus will visibly and personally appear.
- #2. That Jesus is preparing now for His return.
- #3. That Jesus will be revealed to the universe.
- #4. That Jesus will resurrect all the dead.
- #5. That Jesus will open the books for all to see.
- #6. That Jesus will reward those who served Him.
- #7. That Jesus will bring every hidden thing to light (and every secret thing into the open).

Question: How many of you believe the Bible, that Jesus is coming again?

Question: Pastor, how does believing this affect the way I live?

**(Malachi Shows Us In V. 2)
Two Questions In V. 2**

Question #1: "But who may abide the day of His coming?"

Question #2: "And who shall stand when He appeareth? (In Other Words)

- ◆ Who will be prepared for the inspection day?
- ◆ Who will be ready for the close inquiry?
- ◆ Who will be able to appear without reservation?
- ◆ Who will be unashamed to stand before Jesus?
- ◆ Who will have lived on earth in anticipation?

Fact: It won't be the careless!

Fact: It won't be the worldly!

Fact: It won't be the self-righteous!

Fact: It won't be the hypocrite, compromiser or selfish!

Question: Who is it pastor, that is getting ready for Christ's appearing?

Answer: It is the one who knows the Fire of the Lord!

II. The Purification Of Christ's Spirit

(Look at Jesus Described)

- #1. (V. 2) "He is like a refiner's fire"
- #2. (V. 2) "He is like a fuller's soap"
- #3. (V. 3) "He is like a refiner and purifier of silver"
- #4. (V. 3) "He is like one who purges gold"

Question: Pastor, what is Jesus doing now (as we prepare for His coming?)

Answer: He is purifying us all so we can stand before Him unashamed.

Question: How is Jesus doing this?

#1. Like A Refiner's Fire

- ◆ The way a jeweler purifies his metal in his furnace.

#2. Like A Fuller's Soap

- ◆ The way a launderer washes dirty cloths.

Question: Why is the Lord bent on purifying every heart here this morning?

Answer: (V. 3) "So that we can offer Him an offering (our lives) in righteousness" (and)
(V. 4) "So that our lives will be an offering pleasant (acceptable) unto the Lord"

(In Other Words)

- ◆ **Acceptable service can only come from a pure heart!**

Question: How many of you want your life to be an offering of righteousness unto the Lord?

Question: How many of you want your life to be an offering pleasant for Jesus to receive?

Question: How many of you want to be free from all debris and dross and defiling influences?

(Let's Go For It)

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#1. Experience The Fuller's Soap

- ◆ This is the milder of the two processes.
- ◆ The fuller's trade was well known in Judea.
- ◆ The Jews wore white garments on all festive occasions.
- ◆ The fuller (or launderer) cleaned the stained garments by rubbing them with a marl (or wooden mallet).
- ◆ The soap was a vegetable alkali taken from various plants near Joppa.
- ◆ The soap would extract the stains and separate the stains from the garments.

Question: Pastor, what does this have to do with me?

Answer: As the fuller could conquer the stains in the garments (so Jesus can conquer any stain in the heart).

- ◆ He can wash out the toughest stains,
- ◆ He can remove the deepest grime,
- ◆ He can extract the things you could never extract (what is His ingredient?)

(I John 1:7)

"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin".

#1. The Fuller's Soap

#2. Experience The Refiner's Fire

Malachi 3:3 "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver"

Question: Why is Jesus sitting? (Because)

Answer: The refiner always sits so that he can watch the metal carefully.

- ◆ If the metal is left a minute too long or a minute too short, it is spoiled and ruined.

Question: Why the refiner's fire pastor?

#1. Because of your potential in God

(Proverbs 25:4) "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer"

#2. Because of the will of God for you

(I Thessalonians 4:3,4) "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...that you should know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor"

#3. Because of the Holy Spirit's ministry

(John 16:8) "When the Spirit is come, He will convict of sin"

#4. Because of the rejection of every counterfeit

(Jeremiah 6:29,30) "The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed in the fire, the founder melteth in vain...reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them"

(It Is The Ministry Of Fire)

- #1. The refiner removes the dross from the ore.
- #2. The purpose is to make the silver shine.
- #3. What Jesus did in person at His first coming, He does now by His Holy Spirit"

(What Is The Fire Of God?)

- ◆ It is the Holy Spirit penetrating and exposing and extracting everything that taints and stains the image of Jesus in me. (Repeat)

(What Encourages Us When In The Fire?)

4 "Silver Secrets" From Psalm 66:10)

- #1. Refined silver requires care and skill in the silversmith!
 - ◆ The refiner measures, compensates and with utmost care he deals with the silver.
- #2. Refined silver requires just the right furnace
 - ◆ Not just any oven will do, it must be an environment to produce a good metal.
- #3. Refined silver requires just the right heat
 - ◆ All the attention of the silversmith is on the thermostat (it must be neither too hot nor too cold).
 - * If It is too cold, (the base metals and tin will not separate from pure silver).
 - * If it is too hot, (the minute portions of silver will be carried off with the lead).
- #4. Refined silver requires just the right timing
 - ◆ The silversmith knows when to take the metal out of the heat.

(Ever Ask Yourself)

- ◆ “Does the silversmith (the Lord) know what He is doing?”
- ◆ “Does the silversmith (the Lord) have His eyes upon my fire?”
- ◆ “Does the silversmith (the Lord) keep His hand upon the thermostat?”
- ◆ “Does the silversmith (the Lord) know how much I can handle?”

all



(Let's All Read Leviticus 6:10-13)
3 Essentials In Tending The Flame

“The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar, it shall never go out!”

#1. The Ashes

“Take up the ashes and put them beside the altar” (Leviticus 6:10)

“Carry forth the ashes outside the camp” (v. 11) **(What are the ashes?)**

1. Ashes are what remains after the fire.
2. Ashes are the residue left after the fire burns.
3. Ashes are the dross that God cannot accept.
5. Ashes are the flesh and corruption that will not be accepted.

Question: What does God say to do with the ashes?

Answer: “Carry them away, get rid of them”

Question: Why give time to the ashes?

Answer: Because the ashes must be removed before the next fire can be lit. (Repeat)

- ◆ Refuse to deal with the ashes and the fire goes out.
- ◆ Refuse to deal with the ashes and the flame is extinguished.

Removing The Ashes Means:

1. I must remove anything that would hinder the fire from burning.
2. I must remove anything that would quench the fire from igniting.
3. I must remove the ashes first, before I can expect to burn with the fire of God.

#2. The Garments

“The priest shall put on his linen garment and take up the ashes” (v. 10)

“And he shall put on other garments to carry off the ashes without the camp” (v. 11)

Question: Why is the priest given instructions concerning his dress?

Answer: Because it does matter how we appear before God and approach His throne.

(Clothing Illustrates Truth)

1. “Wedding Garments” (Matthew 22:12)
2. “White Raiment” (Revelation 3:18)
3. “Keep your Garments” (Revelation 16:15)
4. “Arrayed in fine linen, clean and white” (Revelation 19:8)

(What Is The Big Deal?)

- #1. We must be clothed with clean hands and a pure heart before our spiritual sacrifices will be accepted.
- #2. We are wasting time if we want to burn with Holy Fire, yet our clothes still carry the smell of ashes.
- #3. We learn here, that the slightest engagement in worshipping our Lord deserves to be esteemed as Sacred and Holy and Important!
- #4. We discover that I must live right at all times, so that I can pray right at anytime!

#3. The Wood

"The priest shall burn wood on it every morning" (v. 12)

Fact: Not just any wood would do!

Fact: Care was given by the priests in selecting the sticks to burn.

Fact: No rotten wood was allowed!

(God Said "Stoke The Fire")

Question: What kind of wood will ignite the fire?

Question: What kind of logs will keep the fire ablaze?

Question: What kind of material is demanded to burn?

Question: What kind of wood is combustible?

(Logs That Are Real Firewood)
That Allow God To Burn In Us

◆ Repentance

◆ Humility

◆ Confession

◆ Godly Sorrow

III. The Expectation Of Christ's Forgiveness

Question: Have you been guilty of something that Jesus wants to change?

Question: Has condemnation made its way (like a dark cloud) over your heart?

Question: Are you here today wondering what to do now?

Question: Do you think you've resisted too long or have you given up in the process?

Question: Has the devil lied to you and said, "What's the use?" (or) "You can't change?"

Question: Are you embarrassed to come again to Jesus for some dross to be removed?

(Hear The Word Of The Lord In V. 7)

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you saith the Lord" (Return From What?)
(V. 7) "The days you went away from my ordinances and have not kept them"

(In Other Words)

◆ The people had been attending church (in the temple)

◆ The people had been outwardly in motion.

◆ The people had been going through the form and rituals of religious service.

(But The Lord Pleads "Return")
Why Return Now?

#1. Because there was turmoil in the home. (Is there turmoil in your home?)

#2. There was compromise with the unbelievers. (Is there any compromise in your heart?)

#3. There was weariness in their Christian service. (Have you become weary in well doing?)

#4. There were some who felt that their labors were in vain, and wanted to quit. (Have you felt this way in recent weeks?)

Question: Pastor, what is the cure, the answer?

Question: It's in V. 7 - "Return, Return, Return unto Me", says the Lord!

Question: What happens when we move toward God?

Answer: (V. 7) God will move toward you!!!

(Altar call)

AMEN!

Bill Kirk, Pastor

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