

The Messenger of the Covenant – Malachi 3:1-6

I. Introduction:

- A. Let's have a study about studying the Bible this evening.
 1. Our subject is actually "*The Messenger of the Covenant.*"
 2. But let's use that to consider some of the ingredients in studying God's Word.

- B. I rarely ever do this, but I'd like you to empty your minds for a few minutes.
 1. I would never recommend that you empty your hearts, but once in a while a memory-refresh is a good idea.
 2. When some technological device goes haywire, sometimes the best thing is to shut it down and reboot.
 3. I don't want you to reboot your brains, but let's at least clear your RAM: your random access memory.
 4. If you didn't already have some idea about the characters of this paragraph, where would you begin to figure them out?
 5. Let's lay aside the fact that we know that the "*Messenger of the Messenger*" is John the Baptist.
 6. Tonight let's consider the more important question: who is the "*Messenger of the Covenant?*"

- C. When the Lord puts a scripture before me to study and to teach, there is a pattern which I generally follow.
 1. After reading and re-reading the verse I'd like to address, I jot down words or things that jump out at me.
 2. The second thing I do is try to understand the context of the verse in question.
 3. Our text for this evening is a part of a six verse paragraph, or if we include 2:17, seven verses.
 4. And even though there is more information about our mystery messenger in the context, there is not a statement which clearly identifies Him.
 5. (Remember, you have an empty mind. You have no previous background information.)

- D. Having reread the context and jotted down notes, one of my next steps is to check the margin of my Bible.
 1. Most study Bibles have published references either in the margins or down the center of the page.
 2. Along side verse 1, my chain-link study Bible has six subjects and one extra verse which the editor thought relate to the subject matter.
 3. And even though he has a link to "*Divine Messenger*" there is nothing on "*Messenger of the Covenant.*"
 4. In looking up his suggestions, I find his thoughts a little too general.
 5. There is nothing explaining who the "*Messenger of the Covenant*" might be.

- E. After that, I go to the three Bible study programs which I have in my computer.
 1. Using those programs, I am able to look at the verse in the original language, sometimes gleaning helpful information, and sometimes not.
 2. Sometimes the information isn't really useful, but it's fun, like knowing "*messenger*" is also translated "*angel*"
 3. In this case there isn't anything in the Hebrew language to help me identify this second Messenger.

- F. Also in those programs are a handful of well known commentaries, to add to the two which I have in my library.
 1. There are a lot of students who turn to their favorite commentators before doing anything else.
 - a. Brethren, this is a mistake.
 - b. We should always approach the Bible with a surrendered heart and as clear a mind as possible.
 - c. I want the Lord to show **me** things in the verse **before** I get confused with the ideas of other men.
 - d. One reason this is important is that those commentators often contradict one another.
 - e. Despite their intellectual genius, they are not really smarter than any child of God led by the Holy Spirit
 2. Eventually I look at the opinions of those other men, and I add some of their more interesting thoughts to those already on my note sheet.

- G. Who is this mysterious "*Messenger of the Covenant?*"
 1. Perhaps if we understood which covenant is described, we'd have our answer.
 2. But therein is the problem in this case: there is nothing specific to identify that covenant.
 3. And this is one area where my commentators diverge from one another.
 4. When this takes place, I fall back on the direction which the Lord gives to me, your teacher.

II. If we could identify this covenant, we might be able to identify its Messenger.

- A. But this is complicated by the fact that the Bible is replete with covenants.
1. Of course. The Bible is divided into **two major covenants**: the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 2. Then there are the **personal** covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David.
 3. There are scholars who talk about an **Edenic** covenant, **Palestinian** covenant and **Heavenly** covenant.
 4. There are **conditional** covenants and **unconditional** covenants.
 5. To which covenant is our Subject the messenger?
 6. This is where our earlier study of the context can be of help.
- B. But before we get to what the Bible says, what do our experts suggest?
1. Here are the words of **John Gill**: This covenant is *“not of the covenant of works with Adam, of which there was no mediator and messenger;
a. nor of the covenant of circumcision, at which, according to the Jews, Elias presides;
b. nor of the covenant at Sinai, of which Moses was the mediator;
c. but of the covenant of grace, of which Christ is not only the Surety and Mediator;
d. but, as here, “the Messenger”; because it is revealed, made known, and exhibited in a more glorious manner by him under the Gospel dispensation, through the ministration of the word and ordinances.”*
 2. In other words, Gill takes a very New Testament, evangelical approach, which I generally enjoy.
 3. But remember from chapter 2, sometimes he takes his position, totally ignoring the obvious context.
- C. In this case, what does the **context** suggest?
1. For example, what does the reference to *“coming to his temple”* mean?
 - a. Is this referring to **the Lord’s church** as His temple? I don’t think so, especially in the larger context.
 - b. And did the Lord Jesus *“come”* to His church, or did He establish and build it?
 - c. And what about the word *“suddenly?”*
 2. And what is it be **unable to abide** the day of the Messenger’s arrival, **verse 2?**
 - a. This doesn’t seem to be speaking about the Lord’s incarnation.
 3. He shall be a **refiner & purifier** with **fire & judgment**, things which don’t suggest Christ’s first coming.
 4. And then there is the **restoration** of the old order: the priesthood and offerings, **verses 3 & 4**.
 5. Sorry, Brother Gill, but this doesn’t exactly sound like the ministry of the Lamb of God.
 6. But of course, as good students we don’t dismiss Gill completely, we just lay him aside for a while.
- D. Another commentary built into one of my computer programs is that of **Jamieson, Fausset** and **Brown**.
1. This trio were conservative Protestants, Anglican and Church of Scotland, if I remember correctly.
 2. And I have to admit I often like what they have to say and how they say it.
 3. They are not usually as verbose and confusing as Gill; they usually get right to the point.
 4. And as the English might say, they are often *“spot on.”*
- E. This is what Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say about the covenant and its messenger.
1. *Namely, of the ancient covenant with Israel (Isa. 63:9) and Abraham, in which the promise to the Gentiles is ultimately included (Gal.4:16, Gal.4:17).*
 2. *The gospel at the first advent began with Israel, then embraced the Gentile world: so also it shall be at the second advent.*
 3. *All the manifestations of God in the Old Testament, the Shekinah and human appearances, were made in the person of the Divine Son (Exo.23:20, Exo.23:21; Heb.11:26; Heb.12:26).*
 4. *He was the messenger of the old covenant, as well as of the new.”*
- F. In other words, it may not be necessary to define and explain the covenant at all.
1. Because Christ, the Son of the God is the fulfilment, or the administrator, of all of them.
 2. He is the promised son of David to sit upon his father’s throne.
 3. He is the One to bring Israel into the land He promised to Abraham.

4. And of course He is the Saviour of sinners on both sides of the racial divide.
5. With this information in our intellectual basket, some of the confusion of our text melts away.

III. Who is the Messenger of the Covenant?

- A. In my preliminary notes, I highlighted all the pronouns and their antecedents.
1. The first and sixth verse tell us that the **speaker** is the **LORD of Hosts; Jehovah**.
 2. And He says, *“Behold, (I) will send my messenger, and HE shall prepare the way before ME.”*
 - a. By this scripture alone, it is probably premature to say this is God the Father speaking of God the Son.
 - b. But I have no doubt, but that is the case.
 3. *“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.”*
 - a. Notice that the first “Lord” in this verse is **not Jehovah** but **Adonai** printed in lower case letters.
 - b. And yet it is this Adonai who comes suddenly to **HIS** temple.
 - c. This does not take me away from interpreting this as the Second Person of the God-head.
 - d. Not only is Christ our eternal God, but He should also be our Lord and King.
 4. *“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:*
 5. *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.*
 6. *Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.”*
 - a. Remember we are talking about the Messenger. He shall judge, refine and purify.
 - b. The Second Person be the King of the Millennium Kingdom, when Israel will be in the promised land.
 - c. Those priests will once again be offering sacrifices, but with a more New Testament purpose.
 7. *“And (I) will come near to you to judgment; and (I) will be a swift witness ...*
 8. *For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”*
 - a. At the end of this paragraph we seamlessly move from the Messenger back to Jehovah, the LORD.
 - b. But actually, there doesn’t seem to be any real transition; they go back and forth, back and forth.
- B. Why does it appear that the Messenger blends with the LORD of hosts who sends him?
1. For an answer to that we have some better-known scriptures.
 2. I hope you are familiar with **John 1:1**: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.*
 - a. *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*
 - b. *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*
 - c. *And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*
 - d. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*
 - e. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”*
- C. No one should miss the fact that **John 1** talks about the messenger of this Messenger – John (the Baptist).
1. John was sent by God to be a witness to, and to bear witness of the “Light.”
 2. And a few verses earlier that “Light” is called the “Word.”
 3. Now I admit there is no direct statement that the Word is the second Messenger of Malachi.
 4. But it doesn’t take the genius of John Gill to make that connection.
 5. After that all we need to do is follow some of the references our Bibles provide to see that this Word is the Creator.
 - a. **Colossians** says, *“In him (God’s dear son) we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*
 - b. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created.”*

- D. But it's not that the Word is the Creator that I want you to see at this point.
1. Notice in the first verse in **John** we have the same melding of Persons that we see in **Malachi**.
 2. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **WITH** God, and the Word **WAS** God. The same was in the beginning **WITH** God."*
 3. What is seen in both scriptures is a glimpse of the Divine Trinity – the Father & the Son working in unison.
 4. There are other scriptures which make the same kind of revelation.
- E. Take for example what the Lord Jesus Himself says in **John 10**, beginning with **verse 27**.
1. *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

 - a. *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*
 - b. *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."**
 2. Skip down to **verse 38**: *"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."*
 3. God the Father, is not in the Son in the same way as energy is contained in gasoline, or life can be found in a living body.
 4. God the Father is in the Son in what Jesus said earlier: *"I and my Father **ARE** one."*

IV. Conclusion:

- A. Going back to where we began: *"Who is the Messenger of the Covenant?"*
1. It is He who is one with the Father. Either one might be rightfully called *"Jehovah."*
 2. But the Second Person of the Godhead had a very special purpose in becoming incarnate.
 3. He came to satisfy and complete God's covenants, including the New Covenant of Salvation.
- B. The Messenger of the covenant is known to us as the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.