

“The Coming of the King.”

Malachi 3:1-7

The book of Malachi brings up discussion of a messenger, a person who is to prepare the way of the Lord. Who is this messenger? Who is this person coming that will bring about justice and make people right with God? Do we know who this person is? Can we know who this person is? As Christians in the modern era, I believe we can answer these questions.

The book of Malachi was written after the Babylonian exile, and if you have not been around or have forgotten the Babylonian exile is when the people of Jerusalem were sent to live in Babylon after the Babylonians conquered Judah. The Persian king Cyrus then conquered the Babylonians and allowed the people of Judah to return to their homes.

As a side note, many of you have asked about the Exile and I plan on giving a more detailed sermon or sermon series to discuss the exile and understand at a deeper level as to what means to us as Christians. It is a huge event in the life of our spiritual ancestors and it is something that we should be aware of, understand, and appreciate as believers today.

Now I mentioned Malachi was written after the exile. We don't know too much about Malachi, the prophet that this book is attributed to. It really is unfortunate that we don't know much about Malachi, like many of the Minor Prophets. Malachi is seen as a big key in the story of God's love for God's people.

Malachi can be seen as a book of the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament that connects with the story of the New Testament. This connection is seen by Christians and that is why Malachi is placed where it is. If you haven't noticed, Malachi is the last book of the Hebrew Scriptures.

It is placed there in the Christian canon, or order of books. In the Jewish traditions Malachi is placed more towards the middle, as a part of the prophets and the books known as the writings,

such as the Psalms or Proverbs, follow afterwards. Yes, there is a difference in order between the two traditions of Christianity and Judaism and it is something to be aware when we look at our scriptures.

In forming of the Christian canon, the connection between Malachi and the New Testament was observed by the early fathers of the church and when it came time to order the books, they intentionally placed the book here. When you look at the text of Malachi, especially the section from which we read from today, do you see a person that we know of in the text?

The book says that there will be a messenger preparing the way for the Lord. There will be a messenger of the covenant in which you will delight. The messenger will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and purify the descendants of Levi and make them pure again. The offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old.

We also have the common statement of the minor prophets that if the people would return to God then then the Lord will be pleased with the people. We know of a person that came to us to bring us back into a relationship with God. We also know of a messenger of a covenant that brought the people back into a relationship with God. We know these things today as Christians in the modern era.

The person that I speak of is Jesus Christ. I believe that Malachi may have known of a person that would come and bring about the people to God, but did he have Christ in mind when he said these words? Did he have in mind that the Son of Man would come to bring about justice to the world and fulfill the law?

I believe myself that Malachi may not have know the extent of the person he spoke of. I believe that Malachi may not have known the Son of Man was coming in his specific prophecy. But we know that other texts from the Hebrew Scriptures written in this era spoke of a Messiah that would come and bring about peace and a new life for the people of Judah.

The most common prophet that we look to for prophecy of the Messiah is Isaiah. This past

advent we looked at Isaiah and his prophecies of the new messiah, so I won't dive into a great detail now on what they say. But they do say that the King would come and bring about a new life for the people who had been suffering and that the new Messiah would suffer on behalf of the people. We know that Christ came and suffered on behalf of the people, for he suffered on the cross so that we may have a new and complete life in our God.

The big point that I want to make today is that the coming of Christ was something that was predicted by our spiritual ancestors in their time and place. They knew a great King would come. They knew that a Messiah would come and deliver the people. But I ask this. Did they expect this King and Messiah to come as Christ came? Did they expect the Son of Man come in the manner that he did into this world? Do we today understand how Christ came into this world and how he lived his life for us so that we may have everlasting life?

I believe that if the prophets of old had seen Christ they would have both been surprised and satisfied in the way Christ came. I say this because I believe that they would have been surprised that Christ came humbly, he came from a low estate. He came from a small place in a great empire and lived his life plainly and simply. The prophets of old would have expected something great and amazing, perhaps a triumphant king at first. Then again, they would have known the God that they serve acts in ways that seem unusual at first.

I say that the prophets of old would have been satisfied in the coming of Christ. He fulfilled everything that they spoke of. Christ came in with the full force of the Father, doing great things such as healings, teachings, and being with people who needed the love and care of God. Christ suffered in such a way so that all people would never have to taste the sting of death, and instead they can experience the power of salvation. They prophets would have been satisfied in the way that Christ did the work of the Father while he was on earth.

This is a big deal because I believe strongly that Christ was foretold by the prophets. I believe that the story of our spiritual ancestors led us to the time when Christ would come to save us all. But what does this mean for us today? What do we have to understand from all of this? What

can we learn from this great story present in our scriptures?

I think we should take comfort in the story present for us today. I believe that the whole of the Bible, from the beginning to the end is one continuous narrative of God's love for us. I believe that right from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation God is revealing to us how much he loves and cares for us. We are God's. We are made in the image of God. We have been offered a way to a new and everlasting life in Jesus Christ. We have a future of glory in God. The sum of all that we need to know in order to have a whole and complete life in God through Jesus Christ with the guidance of the Holy Spirit can be found in the scriptures.

There are some religious groups out there that will tell you that parts of the scriptures on pertain to a certain people in a certain time and place. These folks will also have you believe that parts of the scriptures don't mean anything to us today because they are from so far back. There are also people today that will tell you that the canon of scriptures is open. I find that these folks, while they may have good intentions, are a bit misguided.

To the people that believe that the scriptures, especially that of the Hebrew Scriptures are irrelevant today because they were to a certain people in certain time and place, I have this to say: I believe that dismissing the stories of old and the prophecies of old diminish the capacity for us to understand God's love and especially the love of God for us found in Jesus Christ. The continuous narrative of God has the great capacity for all of us to gain understanding of God's love. To dismiss the Hebrew Scriptures as old and unimportant is to diminish our understanding of God.

We keep the Hebrew Scriptures in our Bible because they have stories to tell us. They have life giving elements for us to understand. They have a message of hope for us to learn from and appreciate the Son of God all the more and to appreciate the future that we have with God on this earth. We can't dismiss the great story of our spiritual ancestors in a whim like some people will want us to believe.

There are some people that will say that our scriptures are still open and that God's message for us can be learned from specific people. In this situation, I'm speaking directly about people who

are like the Mormons or other similar groups. They believe that a specific person can reveal God's truth to us in a continuous fashion. They believe the Bible needs more truth for it to make sense for us. I believe that this is the opposite fashion of the people who dismiss our scriptures.

I believe that this view of scripture dismisses the great story of faith and of the great story of our coming Lord and King Jesus Christ. This view of an open canon diminishes the love of Christ, for it says that the love of Christ is incomplete and can be fulfilled by a man. Christ's message for us is complete and whole. Christ's message of love and salvation is key because it came from Him, the one who was fully human and fully divine.

I find that these two views of our story are damaging and diminish the view of God's love for people. I believe that we as Christians need to stand firm in our view of the continuous narrative of God's love and of the continuous love that comes from our coming messenger and most of all king in Jesus Christ. We have to stand firm in our faith so that others can see the love of God. We do this because we have been given so much in Jesus Christ that we should serve our God in this fashion. By sharing the love of God in our firm faith we give others the opportunity for others to experience the love of God and make new disciples of Jesus Christ.

I say these things today about our faith because things are coming that will challenge us in our faith and we need to stand united with Christ. There are many people in this world that want our faith to be shaken, so that the darkness of the world will enter us and diminish our capacity for sharing God's love. There are spiritual forces of darkness out there that would be pleased that our faith would be diminished so that others cannot stand in the light of God and experience God's love.

We have challenges to sharing our faith in this world. We have challenges sharing the continuous love of God to people. We have challenges sharing our faith in Jesus Christ to the world. I encourage us to stand firm in our faith and share the stories that we have in the Bible for all the world. We need share the love of God through our actions, our thoughts, and our simple way of living so that others can see the light of Christ in us.

We have a faith that can withstand the spiritual forces of darkness in this world. We have a

faith that can stand firm in the challenges we may experience in sharing the love of Christ to the world. We must continue to stay focused on God's Word so that we will not break under the darkness.

Today I say these words in the name of Jesus Christ, our coming King. We have the prophets of old, including Malachi that tell us to be prepared for the love of Christ coming to us. Many of us here have experienced the love of Christ in our lives and I encourage those of you who have experienced this love be prepared to share that love to all that you meet. If today you are hearing of the love of God for the first time and are curious about the love that we speak of and of Jesus Christ, then we are here for you. We are here to share the love of God to all people, including you.

All are welcome in the love of Jesus Christ. All are welcome to share in the continuous love of God. All are welcome to understand the salvation that comes to us in Jesus Christ. There are no barriers to entry, no test to pass. Only an acceptance of Christ is needed to find the love of God. In the name of the One, Jesus Christ who comes for all people, let us pray.