

The Third Advent Prophecy The Messenger Of The Covenant.

Text: Mal 3:1

1) A Convincing Proof Of His Identity

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Blessed Purpose Of His Coming

6, 12, 13, 793, 621

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Malachi 3:1, ¹ ***“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A prophecy is a prediction made under divine influence and direction. The acid test of a prophecy is in the accuracy of its fulfilment.¹ When false prophecies are spoken in the name of the Lord, they become doubly sinister, such as the various dates for the second coming of Christ fixed by Seventh Day Adventists and others.

The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament speak for themselves. They are a stronghold of Christian faith. They present the evidence of divine inspiration in their fulfilment.

Like a battery of search-lights spread over thirty-six centuries of time they cast and focus the brilliant rays of divine revelation upon the Child of Bethlehem, upon His arduous task as the Sin-bearer of the world, upon His pierced hands and feet, and upon His crown of victory.

No mere human explanation is possible; for these prophecies are not broad sayings, permitting many interpretations, but specific statements, foretelling certain historical events which have been fulfilled in every detail.

With Christmas at our doors, let us devote our heartfelt attention to the outstanding Figure of our text, — *The Messenger of the Covenant*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Messenger Of The Covenant A Convincing Proof Of His Identity.

The True Messiah Was to Have a Forerunner, or Way-preparer. This is the definite assertion of the text. “*Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me.”* When Malachi wrote this prophecy, some four hundred years before the birth of Christ, and with his book closed the sacred canon of the Old Testament Scriptures, he had no earthly way of knowing any of the important events which future generations might hold in store for his Church or his country.

Martin Luther, for instance, lived about as long before our time as Malachi before the birth of Christ. Now, Luther with all his gifts and learning could not possibly know that a new country would be discovered and called Australia. Likewise he could not know that the American continent would be discovered and that North America would be nominally Protestant and South America overwhelmingly Roman Catholic.

We may speak of men with forethought and vision, yet the keenest minds cannot penetrate the mists that hide the events and possibilities of future ages. We cannot even strip aside the veil of tomorrow and know whether banks will open or close, whether stocks will rise or fall, or whether we will live or die.

Yet Malachi here boldly writes to foretell future events. He definitely assures the people of God that the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, would suddenly come to His Temple and that He would not come alone, but have a forerunner, a messenger, to prepare the way before Him.²

If, then, the promised forerunner, or herald, of the Messiah had not put in his appearance, one of two things would be established — either Jesus of Nazareth was not He the One who would come, the Messenger of the Covenant, or Malachi was not a true prophet and the Bible is not the Word of God.

But Jesus Christ, the Messiah, did come proving that Malachi was a true prophet and that the Bible is the Word of God

The Forerunner Came in the Person of John the Baptist. All four evangelists state this in unmistakable terms. The angel Gabriel said in Luke 1:16–17, ¹⁶ *And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

We read what Zacharias said in Luke 1:76–77, ⁷⁶ *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins.*

And the Saviour, the Messenger of the Covenant, followed hard on the heels of His way-preparer, being born before the end of the same year and appearing immediately after him in public.³

We may wait a long time for Christmas, and suddenly it is upon us. The shepherds, Simeon, Anna, all the faithful, waited patiently for the coming of the Messiah, and suddenly He was there. About two years later the Wise Men arrived.

How did John prepare the way for the Lord? By his fearless preaching and call to repentance.⁴ John was not a reed shaken with the wind, but a prophet, and more than a prophet.⁵ So powerful was his testimony, so earnest his appeal, so impressive his baptism, so striking his appearance,⁶ that many began to believe that he might be the Christ.⁷

But he was true to his trust, rebuking sin in high and low places⁸ and pointing to Jesus as the Preferred,⁹ the Mightier,¹⁰ the Increasing One,¹¹ the one true Light of men,¹² the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.¹³

The Fulfilment of This Prophecy Establishes the Identity of the Promised Messenger of the Covenant. It is a convincing proof that Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s Son, born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary, is the One who would come and that we are not to look for another.

The miracles of Jesus prove it;¹⁴ His preaching proves it;¹⁵ His resurrection proves it.¹⁶ Thomas identified the risen Christ by the marks in His hands and side. We identify individuals by photographs, measurements, and finger-prints.

The identity of Jesus as the long-expected Messenger of the Covenant is made equally certain, yes, more so, by the appearance and testimony of His forerunner in the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy.¹⁷

This is but one of many Messianic prophecies that have been literally and unquestionably fulfilled in Him.¹⁸ He, Immanuel, the Lord of the Temple, was to be conceived by a virgin,¹⁹ born a child,²⁰ in Bethlehem,²¹ in the days of Herod²², called out of Egypt,²³ live at Nazareth,²⁴ be a Blessing,²⁵ a Prophet,²⁶ a Shepherd,²⁷ a King,²⁸ the Son of David,²⁹ the great Physician, the Deliverer, and the Preacher of good tidings,³⁰ the Sun of Righteousness,³¹ the Victim,³² and the Victor.³³

Can there be any doubt? We believe and we are sure, as we read in John 6:69, *“Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

2. The Messenger Of The Covenant The Blessed Purpose Of His Coming.

The first purpose of His coming was To Meet an Urgent Need. This need was expressed in the earnest desire of the faithful in Malachi’s day, indeed, long before, that the Messenger of the Covenant would come.

In our text the promise reads, *And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple*, that is, to His Church and people. This promise, often repeated, was almost as old as the human race, dating back to the very beginning of sin.³⁴ Without this promise the whole human race would have been both lost in sin and would have been without God in the world.

But with it, hope survived in the hearts of the faithful, — an earnest expectation, which God in His mercy could and would not put to shame.³⁵ Feeling the burden of his sin, as well as the need of a Saviour and being absolutely certain of the divine promise, David, trusting in God’s faithfulness, exclaimed with longing in Psalm 14:7, *“Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!”* So God’s Son came into the world to meet a world-wide need and to fulfil the Scriptures.

The second purpose of His coming was To Keep the Covenant. A covenant is a solemn agreement to fulfil a certain promise under certain conditions. The

God of mercy and of truth, out of infinite love, had made such a covenant with fallen mankind.³⁶ He had a plan of redemption for sinners from eternity,³⁷ published and reiterated His Gospel promises through Moses and all the prophets,³⁸ and kept His gracious offer, even though it necessitated the giving of His only-begotten Son into death, the death of the cross.³⁹

So the Son, out of infinite love for both His heavenly Father and us sinners, cheerfully came to be the Messenger of the Covenant, the propitiation and atonement for the sins of the world.⁴⁰

We read in 1 John 2:1-2, *¹ My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

The hymnist wrote,⁴¹

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth
The guilt of all men bearing;
'Tis laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing.
It goes its way, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
Its spotless life to offer;
Bears shame, and stripes, and wounds, and death,
Anguish, and mockery, and saith:
All this I gladly suffer.

Our text calls Him *“the Lord.”* No mere man could have fulfilled the conditions of the covenant.⁴² But Jesus overcame the world,⁴³ conquering sin⁴⁴ and death⁴⁵ and redeeming sinful and lost mankind from the power of the devil;⁴⁶ thus restoring it to divine favour and making possible the glad refrain:⁴⁷

Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.

The third purpose of His coming was To Bring Abiding Joy and Delight to Our Hearts. Our text says, *Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.*

There were those among the Jews who delighted in the promised Messiah because of the earthly comforts, riches, and strength they hoped to attain through His coming.⁴⁸ True, He made many people happy with His kind words, deeds, and numerous blessings.⁴⁹

And certainly also today Jesus is able to be our Friend and Helper in pain and tribulation and in every need. We read in Hebrews 13:6, *“So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”*

But our greatest delight is in the spiritual blessings He brings. This blessed purpose of His coming dawns upon us with dawning faith, as we begin to believe and understand, not only that Jesus died, but that He died for us; not only that He somehow and somewhere bore some one’s sins, but that He bore our sins, being delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.⁵⁰

And through the power of this faith we shall be cleansed from sin⁵¹ and begin to bear fruit with patience,⁵² receiving the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, into our hearts and homes with rejoicing, serving Him with gladness,⁵³ and tasting something of the heavenly delight that stirred the soul of Simeon when he said in Luke 2:29,²⁹ *“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word.*

And when Christmas has come and gone, our faith shall not wane nor our interest lag. We read in Philippians 1:6 that we are to be *confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁵⁴

To God be the glory, great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Deut. 18:21-22

² Isaiah 40:3

³ Luke 1:26; Matt. 3:13

⁴ Matt. 3:2

⁵ Matt. 11:9-11; Luke 7:28
⁶ Mark 1:5
⁷ John 1:20
⁸ Matt. 14:4
⁹ John 1:27
¹⁰ Matt. 3:11
¹¹ John 3:30
¹² John 1:9
¹³ John 1:29
¹⁴ Matt. 11:4; John 3:2
¹⁵ Luke 4:22; John 7:46
¹⁶ John 10:18; 1 Cor. 15:6
¹⁷ 2 Pet. 1:20-21
¹⁸ Luke 24:27
¹⁹ Isaiah 7:14
²⁰ Isaiah 9:6
²¹ Micah 5:2
²² Gen. 49:10
²³ Hosea 11:1
²⁴ Matt 3:23
²⁵ Gen. 22:18
²⁶ Deut. 18:15
²⁷ Isaiah 40:11
²⁸ Jeremiah 23:5
²⁹ Psa. 132:11; Jer. 33:15
³⁰ Isaiah 60:1
³¹ Malachi 4:2
³² Isa. 53
³³ Gen. 3:15
³⁴ Gen. 3:15; Psalms 16 & 19
³⁵ Haggai 2:7
³⁶ Gen. 3:15; Gen 17:7; Psa. 111:5
³⁷ 2 Tim. 1:9
³⁸ John 5:39; Luke 24:27
³⁹ Rom. 8:32; John 3:16; Isa. 53:6
⁴⁰ 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:1-2
⁴¹ Hymn 57
⁴² Psa. 49:7
⁴³ John 16:33
⁴⁴ 1 Pet. 2:22; Gal. 3:13
⁴⁵ Heb. 2:14-15; Hos. 13:14
⁴⁶ 1 John 3:8, Hymn 195 v 3
⁴⁷ Hymn 33 v 1
⁴⁸ Acts 1:6
⁴⁹ Mark 7:37; John 6:14
⁵⁰ Rom. 4:25
⁵¹ cf. Romans 4:3
⁵² Luke 8:15
⁵³ Luke 2:20
⁵⁴ Hymn 793