

Malachi 3:3

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.

The first thing that ‘hits’ us about our study this morning is that our verse refers to something that would happen in the future, - “he shall sit”, “he shall purify”. It is an event that *will* occur, and Malachi is speaking about that event.

Malachi 3:3 is set in the midst of a passage that is concerned with the coming of the Messiah (vv.1,2a). The Messiah will come to His people (the Jews) and to the temple in Jerusalem. But His coming begins a process that has dire consequences upon the children of God.

About four hundred years later there was a man called Simeon,

Lk. 2:25 the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Shortly afterwards there was a woman called Anna, - a beautiful lady that served God so faithfully, - and she was in the temple too. We read ...

Lk. 2:38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

About thirty years later the Gospel-writer John wrote,

Jn. 1:14 we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

He is the One we are talking about this morning. Malachi said about Him,

3:2 who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?

Why does the day of His coming/appearing cause so much havoc? Simply because His ministry *tried* the religion of the day and found it wanting!

The religion of the day denied Him ...

- * His Messiahship
- * His Lordship
- * ... and His Godhood!

But Malachi teaches us that the last word does not remain with the opposition; here is what it says,

3 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.

Again, - please remember, - we are considering the prophecy of Malachi within the context of the subject of holiness. It is the believer that we are considering. ... So, believer, what is the refining process all about? When Jesus Christ drew near to your soul a refining process began to take place. As that process is carried out there is a cleansing of the soul, - a cleansing/refining that only God can do. In this refining process there is a purifying and a purging in order that ...

Eph. 5:27 That he might present [you] to himself [as part of] a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

To be a Christian is to be constantly going through a process of refinement. Being saved from sin is only the start! There then follows a process of refinement (or sanctification) that makes ready the believer for Heaven and the eternal presence of God.

Yes, it is Biblical through and through, and it also makes sense that such a preparation for God's presence must be undertaken.

How is the refining process carried out?

Paul again speaks about this process with regards to the preparation of the Church,

Eph. 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

I love preaching, - it's no guarantee I'm much good at it from a human point of view, - ... but 'at the end of the day' I trust that it is not a man's ministry that you have invested into but *the Word of the Lord*. God's Word says this,

Jer. 23: 29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Those are two terrible descriptions that Jeremiah uses! ... but so profound. God's 'furnace' is in the midst of Zion for the refining of His people. The process of preaching the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit is a refining process that none should seek to change. Sometimes it may not please you, or suit you, but I can't change it, it is the process of refinement that fits the child of God for Heaven.

And of course, another means of refinement is fellowship with God. Yes, prayer, Bible Study, and fellowship with God. Enjoying His company. Being jealous and zealous for God. This subject of the Holy Spirit, let's consider what further He has to teach us in Malachi 3:3.

HIS POSTURE

He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:

- * "He shall sit", - what does that mean?
- * Does it mean that God is indifferent to the sufferings of His people?
- * When the swell on the Sea of Galilee began to increase and the fishermen in the boat became frightened, ... where was Jesus? ... what was He doing?
- * He was in another part of the boat, ... with His head on a pillow, ... *asleep!*

- * They wakened Him, ... *Master, carest thou not that we perish?*
- * Is there a side of God that is indifferent to the cries of His people? Is that why He doesn't do what we ask Him in our prayers?
- * "I'm being tossed about, and yet it's as if my Refiner sits still, and does nothing" ... That's how it seems.
- * C.H. Spurgeon tells about a Welsh preacher used a very simple illustration,
 - * The mother has her little baby on her knee, and it's bath time.
 - * And the wee baby doesn't like his face being washed, and he begins to cry, and the cry turns into a bawling match!
 - * What's the mother doing? ... but singing a song, ... apparently completely oblivious to the tears of the child.
- * That's how it looks, but in reality she would not be a good mother if she was not concerned with the cleanliness of her child.
- * I remember shortly after my meningitis period I had to go to the dentists, - now, I'm not afraid of the dentist (except when he gives me the bill!), - but on that day when he lowered me back in the seat, I became so absolutely frightened, - terrified!
- * And because I hadn't been well, Pearl was standing beside me as the dentist was there too.
- * She saw how frightened I was, - I was crying with fear, - but Pearl had to allow the dentist to sort me out, ... *for it was ultimately for my own good.*
- * She wasn't standing 'enjoying' my fear, but she realised that I needed *real attention*.
- * Why does the Refiner sit? I believe He sits for He watches tenderly as His jewels (v.17), - the silver and gold, - are honed and carefully transformed into the creation He seeks for them to be.
- * But there is something else here that is tremendously important and it is the Hebrew word for 'sit', - it's the word that is used for the posture of the king upon the throne.
- * In other words, it is *the posture of power*.

- * And here's what the Scriptures say,
 Heb. 7:25 He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him,
 I Cor. 10:13 God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
- * If God hadn't have looked upon you in grace, and if He hadn't have thought you were worth saving, then He would never have began the process of refining.
- * A backslider can often praise God for this refining process, for it was what brought Him back to God again.
- * Many is the child of God that can testify to God's refining grace because through the whole process he/she has been brought closer to God,- Pearl and I can testify to that through my meningitis experience and through the deaths of Pearl's mother and father.
- * ... **HIS POSTURE**, He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver:

HIS PEOPLE

He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver

- * Now, this is not the same process as what happens to the unsaved, - that can often go under the name of judgement, ... but we are not thinking about that tonight; tonight we are considering the refining process as far as the child of God is concerned.
- * God has a people that He has set apart unto Himself that it is His intention to purify.
- * God's election of His people is all to do with holiness.
- * Holiness is not a carnal concept; it is something that man of himself would never crave after,
- * It is as a product of salvation, - you can't have holiness without first being saved, - salvation is the prerequisite to holiness.
- * And it is very definite that God has saved out after Himself the sons of Levi, a special people,
 - * I Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:
- * Christian, do you require refining? We all require refining.

- * You have a beautiful bush/plant in your garden, - it needs to be pruned, 'cut back', etc.
- * They are precious already to the Refiner, - they are *already* silver and gold! - ... *but even the silver and gold need His refining touch!*
- * God doesn't only wash the outside of the cup, - He washes the inside too.
- * Doesn't it seem at times as if He melts us through to our very core, - that's what known as the refining fire; it is meant to be thorough and it is meant to be lasting.
- * When Christ's refining fire is completed there is no need for the purgatory of the Roman priest,
- * When we leave this world to enter God's glory there will be **no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but we shall be presented holy and without blemish.**
- * And that is ...

HIS PROMISE

that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

- * These sons of Levi had got caught up in the trappings of the day.
- * They had forgotten their high calling and why they *were* sons of Levi in the first place, - it was to serve God around the Tabernacle and in the Temple.
- * You see, **the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance (Dt. 32:9)** and what He wants for His people is for their good.
- * And despite the Lord's people, - the children of Levi, - going far from God He promised them,
 - * **that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.**
 - * - that's grace, giving to us something we never deserve.
- * The work of refinement, ... and God wants us to do good work and service unto Him.
- * Ah, sometimes we need a wee bit of pushing, because we are not only supposed to do the work, but we have to do it well.
- * Have you ever looked back upon your life for God and thought to yourself, "Could I not have done better?"

- * Well, there is time yet, - He hasn't withdrawn the breath from your body.
- * You are a child of the King, and He calls on you to be occupied with Him totally, ... and look at the promise of the next verse,
 - * 4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

CONCLUSION.

What have you got out of God's Word tonight? **HIS POSTURE, HIS PEOPLE, HIS PROMISE.** What has God been saying to you? What are you saying to Him? Is anyone saying, "God, I don't want to go through that refining process". Well, look at it from another angle.

There is the refining process, or there is the process by which all the rubbish and all the dirt that held unto the silver and gold has been cast to the one side. The dirt and the rubbish will never be of any use, ... only for throwing away.

Which would you prefer, - the refining process of God to fit you for Heaven or the process of being rejected by the One upon the Throne.

Entry into Heaven is on God's terms. Eternity is a concept we can never imagine, ... but we are all facing it. Far better to experience God's refining process that wait for the fires of hell out of which there is no release.

This refining process we are considering this evening is a work of God applied to the believer for the glory of God and the sanctification of His people.