

SERIES: "LAST...BUT NOT LEAST":

An In-Depth Study of MALACHI - the Final Prophet of the Old Testament Era-

PART XVIII - Malachi Chapter 3:13-18

"THE TWO FACES OF JUDAH"

WEDNESDAY, May 20th, 2009

- I. A decentful person is often called "two-faced" or a hypocrite.
- II. The word "hypocrite" comes from a word in the Greek which described an actor who put a large, painted mask in front of his face to denote the character he was playing, thus hiding his real identity.
- III. This description aptly described the priests of Judah who had behind the "mask" of innocence when the Lord charged them with corrupt worship and service.
- IV. The words of the priests "wearied" God for they made false claims against His character saying that God evidently delighted in their enemies because He was allowing them to prosper while His own people were permitted to suffer afflictions.
- V. This attitude of the "spiritual" leaders began to filter down to the people who also began to criticize the character of God!
- VI. God now was committed to addressing their arrogance ESPECIALLY after He had so clearly promised to BLESS them as they became obedient in their giving.
- VII. As the priests and people answered with a total lack of humility towards God's charges, the LORD went on to identify 3 WAYS in which they had spoken AGAINST Him:
 1. "It is VAIN to serve the LORD" (v 14) - Their own personal spiritual "BANKRUPTCY" had led them to incorrectly conclude that service to God was lacking in any personal fulfillment. While this WAS true in Judah's case BECAUSE OF their spiritual condition, in reality, it was exactly opposite of the truth...for serving God is designed to bring the greatest amount of satisfaction WHEN it is done in sincerity and truth!
 2. "Ye have said...what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?" (v 14) - How self-deceived they were ...for they had actually Broken ALL the laws of God!
 3. "Ye have said...what profit is it that we...have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" (v 14) - It turns out that

though the people had in fact fasted and prayed over national and personal sins, it had all been a facade to mask their TRUE spiritual condition.

NOTE: The word "profit" is actually a technical term which was used for a weaver "cutting a piece of cloth free from the loom." Malachi used it in a negative sense as if the people were gangsters or Racketeers who were just looking out for their cut or percentage of an evil work!

- VIII. 400 years later, this same essential attitude would become the chief characteristic of the Pharisees. (see Matthew 23:3)
- IX. APPLICATION: Many professing believers today are like Israel was in those days. They present a face of "outward commitment" to the Lord but have NO true heart commitment! Their motives (known completely by God) is profit which is gained through popularity, position, financial gain, or ego satisfaction.
- X. THREE False CONCLUSIONS ABOUT GOD MADE BY JUDAH:
1. Arrogant PAGANS are blessed by God (v 15) - (cf Psalm 119:21)
 2. The Rebellious are really the ones who become prosperous and Established in society. (v 15) (cf 3:10)
 3. The wicked could escape punishment (v 15)
- XI. Judah's mistake was in their concentration upon the present state of the wicked rather than on the ultimate result of the Actions of arrogant unbelievers. (cf. Psalm 78:18; 24; Exodus 16:3; 17:2)
- XII. BUT there WAS a group in Judah whose commitment was not Masked with hypocrisy! (those who "feared the Lord" <v 16>) (see Proverbs 1:7)
- XIII. This was NOT "fear" based on feeling BUT was the result of hearing, learning, and responding to who God is from His Word. This demanded a total commitment of heart, soul and Body. But in return they who "fear the LORD" would receive wisdom from God which brought BLESSING and FAVOR.
- XIV. God concluded this chapter by revealing that He was committed to doing THREE very specific things for those who fear Him:
1. He would remember their words and their deeds; (v 16)
 2. He would treasure them forever; (v 17)
 3. He would protect them. (v 17)