

Messenger!

A Journey Through the Burden of Malachi

Malachi 4:5&6

16- The Curse of Fatherlessness and the Rise of the Second Forerunner

December 15, 2019

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5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

To the Glory of God

Now this is the sixteenth and final Sermon on what the Prophet Malachi called his "Burden". And you will remember that, as we began this "journey" through this magnificent Book, I told you that the fifty-five verses of this short Book contain some of the only nouns and verbs and pronouns and adverbs and adjectives and prepositional phrases on the face of the earth that can lay claim to being "Inspired". And that means that God the Holy Spirit invisibly "carried along" this Prophet in the *same way* that wind "carries along" a sailboat across the water. And that mysterious Process resulted in every Word of this Book to be "Divine Truth". And that makes the Book of Malachi to be both "Inerrant" and "Infallible", and therefore, it is both the "Word" of God and the "Voice" of God in the earth today.

Now verses five and six are not only how Malachi's own Ministry ended, but these two verses, that contain an amazing Promise from a God, Who cannot lie, is also how the Old Testament itself ended with the Promise that God was going to send Elijah the Prophet BEFORE He sends the Messiah.

And I want you to pay close attention to several things that Malachi wrote here in ancient Hebrew. First, Malachi said that Elijah would come BEFORE something that he called:

... the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

And we saw last time that the "Day of the Lord" is characterized here by this Prophet as being two things:

1. Great
2. Terrible

So, the "Day of the Lord", which can be understood as the Time of the "Coming", or the "Revealing", of the long-awaited Messiah is "Great". And the word "Great" doesn't necessarily mean "Good" or something that is "Wonderful". Rather this word comes from a Hebrew word [*gadowl* Strong's#1419] that means: *large, important, and something that is monumental*. So, Malachi is telling us that the Time when Messiah comes will be very important and very monumental.

And that tells me that when the Messiah comes, *everything* changes. *Nothing* will remain the same. The "Day of the Lord" will be "Great". It will be "Large". The Coming of the Messiah will be "very Important". And the Revealing of the Messiah will be "Something that is Monumental".

Now, everybody who went to sleep the day before the Messiah came, and who worked as a tanner, or as a carpenter, or as a farmer, or as a shepherd, or as a housewife, or as a tax collector, or as a Roman soldier, woke up the next morning in the very *same* occupation they held. So, *that* didn't change. People were born and people died the Day of the Coming of the Messiah. *That* didn't change. People got sick, and some people made money, while others lost money. So, life, from that standpoint, stayed the same.

But how Man related to God changed, *radically*. For example, from the Coming of the Messiah, until this very day, it is no longer enough for sinners to say, "*I believe in God*". No, with the "Day of the Lord", Salvation became clear, and full, and final. And so, now, Salvation *requires* that a sinner believe in Jesus, *personally*, and in His finished Work. Salvation also *requires* that we believe certain essential

things about Jesus: that He was both God and Man, that He was born of a virgin, that He lived a sinless life, and died a vicarious Death, and literally and physically rose from the dead three days later, and bodily ascended on High.

And so, animal sacrifices today are an abomination. Keeping the Law of God, *as a means to earn Salvation*, is an abomination. Keeping Sabbath and the various Feasts and being strict about the Dietary and Ceremonial portions of the Law, *as a means to earn Favor with God*, is an abomination. *That* changed.

Since the "Day of the Lord", guilty rebels are forgiven and made Righteous by Grace *alone*, through Faith *alone*, in the finished Work of Jesus Christ *alone*. So, lost people are saved by what they *believe*, by what they *trust in*, and in what they *confess*, and NOT by keeping the Law. *That* changed. And so, Worship of the one, true, and living God changed. We no longer worship God in the Temple in Jerusalem. We now worship God *in Spirit* and *in Truth*, wherever we are, anywhere in the world. *That* changed. Because with the "Day of the Lord", Salvation came into its fullness. And so, shadows, and symbols, and types were no longer sufficient.

But then Malachi also said that the "Day of the Lord" will also be "Terrible". And that was translated from a Hebrew word [*yare* Strong's# 3372] that means: *fearful, dreadful, and something that elicits great reverence*. And so, we can't actually say that the "Day of the Lord" is "Bad" any more than we can say that it is Good. The "Day of the Lord" will be "fearful" as well as "important". It will be "dreadful" as well as "monumental". It will elicit great "reverence" as well as tremendous "transformation".

Now, one of the interesting aspects of the concept of the "Day of the Lord" is that there is going to be *two* of them. There are *two, separate* "Comings", two separate "Revealings", two separate Events that will classify as the "Day of the Lord". In other words, the Messiah will come to this earth *twice*: *once* as a Baby in a manger, born of a virgin, Whose Ministry will be to "seek and to save that which is lost". But there will also be a *second* "Day of the Lord", a *second* Appearing of the Christ, the "Anointed One"; this time as the conquering Warrior/King that the Old Testament Scriptures foretold. And that is why the New Testament records the phrase, the "Day of the Lord", four different times referring to *another* Event *besides* the first Coming.

So, the *first* time the Messiah appears, it will be as the "Suffering Servant", the "Man of Sorrows", and the Redeemer. The *second* time Christ will come as a King, as a Judge, and as the fulfillment of the Age of Redemption. The *first* time Messiah instituted Forgiveness and Mercy, *without* Condemnation to those who believe. The *second* time Christ will administer Justice and Judgment, *without* Mercy to those who continue to rebel. The *first* time Messiah justifies the ungodly; the *second* time Christ judges the unrighteous. The *first* time, Messiah offers Salvation to all who will repent and believe; the *second* time, Christ will damn all unbelief and all impenitence. The *first* time, Messiah walked through the streets weeping over disbelief; the *second* time, Christ will ride a white horse and rule the world with a rod of iron. The *first* time, Messiah would melt the hardest heart with His Love and Compassion; the *second* time, Christ's Eyes will burn like flames of fire as He judges and makes war. The *first* time, Messiah's Feet were worn and blistered from walking to all who were chosen; the *second* time, Christ will put His Heel on satan's head and crush him.

But what we have to understand is that Malachi (like many of the Old Testament Prophets) prophesied about *both* "Comings", *both* "Days of the Lord". Of the *first* "Day of the Lord", Malachi said:

Malachi 3:1-4

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

... because the *first* Coming of the Messiah is all about Mercy and Grace and Forgiveness and Salvation. But of the *second* "Day of the Lord", Malachi said:

Malachi 4:1-3

For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them

ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the Lord of hosts.

... because, the *second* Coming is all about Judgment and Justice.

Now the *first* "Day of the Lord" was approximately 2024 years ago.¹ And the *second* "Day" will be at some point in our future, at a time appointed only by the Father. So, we are now about 24 years into the third millennia of the "Church Age", which is that long, *extended* period of time between the *first* and *second* "Day of the Lord". So, there will be two *different* times that are *both* called the "Day of the Lord", and *both* of them will be "Great" in some sense, and *both* of them will be "Terrible" in *another* sense.

And, like the *first* one, the time just before the *second* "Coming of the Lord" is filled with apostasy, heresy, compromise, and worldliness among those who say they are saved. It seems that it truly is darkest just before the Dawn. Here, on the very Eve of the second Coming of Jesus to this earth, the Church, for the most part, is engaged in seeing who can throw out more Divine Truth as fast as possible. The modern church is typified by a single testimony, "weary of well-doing". The Bible is boring to most people, and much of modern Evangelicalism is filled with worldly, and even sinful Entertainment, rather than God's people pursuing Holiness.

But that was *exactly* the condition Malachi faced in his day. But instead of joining in with the compromisers, this Prophet stood tall and loudly, and without any apology, prophesied the word of the Lord:

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Now the people of the modern church are certainly *not* sacrificing diseased animals like they did back in Malachi's day (**Malachi 1:8;13**); after all, we're not barbarians. No, but six out of ten men in the modern

¹ Assuming that Jesus was born around 4BC

church, who lay claim to be saved, are *regularly* engaged in Pornography. The estimate² is that at least two out of 100 women in the modern church have had an Abortion *since the time they say they were born again*. And church men, *who regularly engage in Adultery*, have either *pressured* their pregnant girl-friend into having an Abortion, or helped to *pay* for it, *all the while publicly campaigning against it*. So, it seems that Hypocrisy is still the sport of choice among those who say that Jesus is their Savior.

And there are many other similarities between those who say they are "God's people" today and the days of Malachi. For example, preaching to attract a crowd, whether you want to call that, "Pragmatism" or "Entertainment", or just plain old fashion "Cowardice", is certainly going on today, as much or more than it was back then (**Malachi 2:7&8**). Divorce is rampant among those who say they know that God "hates it" (**Malachi 2:16**); Christians marrying unbelievers is at an all-time high (**Malachi 2:11**); not fulfilling Vows, or Covenants, or Promises, or Contracts (**Malachi 2:14**) is as prevalent as ever.

But I see all this Sin and Compromise a little different than most. I don't see this as a total defeat. I see all this spiritual Darkness and this "Great Falling Away"³ as simply bringing about what Malachi said in **Malachi 3:16-4:3**:

Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the Lord of hosts.

² *The Barna Group Survey*; 2012; page 321

³ Charles Spurgeon called this the "Downgrade Controversy"; and it was the Cause of his removal from the Pastorate.

... in other words, God is sovereignly *using* the Sin and the Compromise and the Worldliness of many to bring about a very powerful Awakening in others. And *both* of these are happening at the same time. So, as many are descending into the Abyss and Satan is closing their eyes, others are rising into the Heavens and God is opening their eyes. As many are compromising and losing their "first-Love", others are *refusing* to compromise and they are falling in Love with Jesus, all the more! So, there is a "rising" and a "falling" going on at the same time.

But we must understand that God is not worried about His Church. Jesus Himself has promised to "build His Church". And He has further promised that the very Gates of Hades itself will never "prevail" against the Church He is building! The Reality is that, while those who have never experienced the Miracle of the New Birth may well be a part of the "visible church" on the earth, they have *never* been a part of Christ's "invisible, true Church". And so, the Church that Jesus is building, and the Church, over which Jesus is Head, is **ONLY** made up of truly regenerate souls who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and who love not their lives unto the death. So, while the modern, visible church needs a lot of work, the invisible, true Church of the First-Born is in very good and solid shape, and they are eagerly awaiting the second Coming of their Lord!

Now I told you last time, that most theologians think that it is very possible that the Prophecy of Malachi here in the last two verses of the Old Testament have a *dual* Meaning, and a *two-fold* Fulfillment. The *first* fulfillment was with the man that we know now as "John the Baptist." And the Angel and Jesus Himself said as much. The Angel told Zacharias:

Luke 1:13-17

Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."**

... while Jesus said:

Matthew 11:14

And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

... and ...

Matthew 17:11b&12

... "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

But, if the "Day of the Lord" has two *different* Fulfillments, it stands to reason that the Prophecy of Elijah, *as the Forerunner*, will *also* have *two* different Fulfillments. If the Coming of the "Messiah", or the "Anointed One", or the "Christ", has two *different* Fulfillments, then the one who will come *before* the Lord and prepare a people *for* the Lord will *also* have two *different* Fulfillments.

So, if "John the Baptist" is the *first* Fulfillment, who is the *second*? Many brave souls have wandered into this arena and have posited that the *second* manifestation of the Elijah/Forerunner will be one of the "two Witnesses" of **The Revelation 11**. But the Reality is that Issues like this remain in God's Own secret Decrees and He has chosen NOT to reveal them to us.

But I would *suggest* that we don't overlook the Church itself. And for good reason:

- There was no Church established until *after* John the Baptist was martyred.
- Every saved soul today is a member of the invisible, true Church.
- God no longer uses individual people as He did under the Old Covenant. Everything that God does in the earth today is done in, by, and through the Church.
- The Church prepares people to meet Jesus.

... but, perhaps most importantly, is that *part* of the Purpose of Jesus' second Coming is to gift the Church to Himself, as recorded in **Ephesians 5:25-27**:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

So, Jesus is NOT coming back for all the “para-church Ministries” that exist today. And while many of these Organizations do good and needed Work, NONE of them constitutes Jesus’ Church. So, Jesus is coming back ONLY for His Church, His “Bride” by *position* and His “Body” by *Redemption*.

So, there are no “Lone Rangers” in the Lord’s Service today, no “spiritual Mercenaries” operating on their own accord in the world. There is not a single saved soul since the Resurrection that is *exempt* from being a part of Christ’s Church. And for anyone to suggest that saved people can operate *independently* of the Church is contrary to everything in the New Testament. God moves in the earth today *exclusively* through His Body, the Church. And every single saved person, who is in right standing with their Savior, is under glad submission and is accountable to another group of saved and fallible men in the Church called “Elders”.

So, with the exception of God literally using an Old Testament Prophet, anyone called and chosen to be a “Forerunner” or an “Elijah type” who would precede a *second* Coming of the Christ would, by default, then *have* to be a part of Jesus’ Church. And that means that this individual would also be under submission to, and be accountable to, a Board of Elders, or he would be a rebel.

Now I mentioned last time that thinking about the “Day of the Lord” is not done much anymore. We are literally bombarded with new and exciting information about the “Nation of Israel”, and the “Mark of the Beast”, and the identity of the “Anti-Christ” on an almost daily basis. But we don’t hear a lot of talk about Jesus, or what Jesus is expecting when He gets here, or what Jesus is coming back for, or what Jesus will actually do when He comes.

I would remind all of us that the last Book of the Bible is NOT the “Revelation of the Great Whore”, or the “Revelation of a reconstituted Roman Empire”, or the “Revelation of the two Witnesses”, but the

“Revelation of Jesus Christ”. So, like every other biblical Book, **The Revelation** is about Jesus. And yet not much time is spent anymore talking or praying or singing or even thinking about Jesus. There are lots and lots of Teachings and Books and Tapes and Seminars about what Jesus can do for us, and all about physical Healing, and how to be blessed, and how to get more out of this life, and how to make this life better, but the Bible says that the Forerunner will prepare people to meet Jesus. The Forerunner will prepare people to worship Jesus in the manner He deserves.

And that neglect has to do, *primarily*, with the amazing Prosperity and Freedom that we enjoy in this country, along with real, bad Teaching. You see, most believers, who are alive today, as well as the overwhelming majority of believers all throughout history, didn't have a very nice or easy life. And the overwhelming majority of believers around the world today *routinely* suffer. And they suffer Persecution that most of us simply can't imagine. There is reason to believe that, since the Resurrection, more believers have been martyred in the last half of the 20th and first half of the 21st Centuries than in all the time before. So, even though the world is advancing *technologically*, and *medically*, and in the areas of Democracy, the world is, in many ways, *more* barbaric, and *more* cruel, and *more* hostile toward Christianity and the Church than ever before.

And so, the Promise of a better life “over there” is only attractive to people who have no hope of ever having a better life “down here”. And that leaves out most modern Americans. Things like “Heaven” and “Paradise” and “being with the Lord in a glorified body” are NOT *normally* talked about, or prayed for, or imagined, or sung about, or longed for with people who can have almost everything we can imagine as a normal course of our daily lives.

But Malachi tells us that the Coming of the Lord, *both His first and second Coming*, will be both “Great” and “Terrible”. And there are other Passages that give us insight into what that will look like. For example, the Apostle Peter gave us insight into the *second* Coming of Jesus when he said this in **2 Peter 3:10**:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Just try to imagine what *that* will be like! And even though many writers, like Hal Lindsey⁴, would like us to believe that Peter was referring to some sort of man-made nuclear holocaust, those of us who actually study the Bible know that God has no need for the weapons of human war. God is well-able to sovereignly destroy whatever He made without any help from humans, just ask the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah! Another example of how “Great” and “Terrible” the Day of the Lord will be was given about 1,000 years before Jesus was born by the writer of **Psalm 91:1** that says:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

... so, as God's people dwell or abide in Jesus, we will be so close to God that it is likened to us being in His “Shadow”. Now look at how safe and secure we are when we abide in Jesus from verses 2-4:

I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

... and this Safety and Security really pays off when God brings Destruction to the earth, and when He comes back and judges those who are NOT saved as recorded in verses 5-16:

You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day; Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side And ten thousand at your right hand, *But* it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes And see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made the Lord, my refuge, *Even* the Most High, your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, Nor will any plague come near your tent. For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and

⁴ Lindsey is the author of, “*The Late, Great Planet Earth*” which was one of the best sellers of the 1970’s and is still used today as the groundwork model of modern Eschatology. He is one of the most widely read proponents of Dispensational Premillennialism.

cobra, The young lion and the serpent you will trample down. Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him *securely* on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him And let him see My salvation.

Now many of you will recognize that a portion of this **Psalm** was used by satan to tempt Jesus as recorded in **Matthew 4**. But the fact that satan used this **Psalm** in connection to Jesus shows us that he understood that the writer of this Psalm was ONLY referring to Issues relating to Jesus. And that just strengthens my argument.

But there is one other aspect that we need to explore concerning this Prophecy by Malachi. Look again at what he said:

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

Now I want to finalize our “journey” this morning by focusing on the Curse that Malachi promises will come, unless Elijah comes.

He (Elijah) will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

So, the reason that this Forerunner/Elijah type will restore the hearts of the Fathers to the Children and the Children to the Fathers is so that God will NOT have to come and smite the earth with a Curse. Now last time I told you that many scholars think that the phrase, “Restore the hearts of the Children to the Fathers” has to do with re-uniting wayward Children to the “Fathers of the Faith”. In other words, this has to do with getting a new generation (Children) to know, and to understand, and to love, and to obey the Teachings of the Bible that were written down by the men God used to produce the Scriptures.

And that may well be true. But if that were the correct interpretation of that phrase, you would be hard pressed to explain what the *other* phrase means when Malachi said:

He (the Forerunner) will restore the hearts of the Fathers to the Children.

... if the *first* phrase has to do with causing a new generation to know and obey the Bible, then this *second* phrase would mean.... what? That the Fathers need to know and obey the Children? I think not. So, I think we should simply not try to use "theological gymnastics" and just use the obvious and simple reading:

God wants to restore the hearts of real, natural Children
to their real, natural Fathers.

... and that would mean that the Curse would be the *absence* of Fathers and a *division* between Fathers and Children. And so, I would suggest to you that this Divine Curse that is connected to both the *first* and *second* Coming of the Messiah and the Christ is the "Curse of Fatherlessness". And that would also mean that the Ministry of the Forerunner, the Ministry of the Church in preparing people to meet Jesus that will come to pass BEFORE Jesus comes back, will, *partly*, be a Ministry about restoring Fathers to their Children.

Now God began to burden my own heart about this Issue many years ago. And I have written much about it.⁵ Because I believe that we are living in the time when this Divine Curse is upon us. And so, I see the Issue of godly, biblical Manhood, the God-given Roles that Fathers and Husbands and Brothers and Sons have in this life and on this earth, as being *crucial* to the success of, not only our nation, but the Mission of the Church as well.

Our nation is reeling today underneath a "Curse of Fatherlessness." The abdication of Men in our day, of their God-ordained Roles as the Leaders of both the Home and Church, is staggering. And almost every social and spiritual malady that exists today can be traced back to the fact that there is either no Father at all, or there is no strong, godly and loving Father.

And the statistics are both frightening and irrefutable. The absence of godly and loving Fathers in the Home, and the absence of godly Men in the Church, is literally tearing our country apart.

➤ The unprecedented surge in violence against Women.

⁵ See: "Biblical Manhood and Womanhood"

- Fathers abandoning their Wives and Children, forcing single Mothers to grapple with being both Father and Mother.
- The Poverty and Crime that abandonment creates.
- Increase in gang participation by young men.
- An epidemic of illegitimate births.
- Dramatic rise in Divorce.
- Dramatic rise in couples never marrying.
- Explosion of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Unconscionable Abortion.
- The normalization of sexual perversity.

... all because of the Curse of Fatherlessness. And now we have a third, and even a fourth, generation of tens of millions of young boys being raised without *any* Father at all, or without a *strong, godly, and loving* Father.

But what is even *more* destructive is what I call the “feminization of Men”, and the “feminization of the Church”. You see, when Women *dominate* Men, it destroys their psyche, and rots their very soul. So, we have to understand that the very thing that Women, almost *unanimously*, say they want: “strong, godly, and loving Men” *cannot* ever come forth from “Female Domination”.

But the almost universal *abandonment* by Men to gladly assume the Role of Elder/Pastor/Teacher in the Church has precipitated the rise of unqualified Women to assume those Roles, even though the inspired and inerrant Word of the living God reserves those Ministries SOLELY for godly Men. This has caused the ungodly exchange of the “Objective, Propositional Truth of Scripture” with “personal feelings” and “personal experiences”. So, now the primary Question that is asked is, “*How do you feel?*”, rather than “*What do you think?*”

So, the Church has become weak, and susceptible to false teaching, man-made doctrines, and humanly engineered philosophies, that *cannot* forgive a single sin or save a single soul. 2,000 years ago, God the Holy Spirit “carried along” the Apostle Paul to write this in **1 Timothy 3:15b**:

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

So, consider what it means for the Church of Jesus to be those two things:

1. Pillar of the Truth
2. Support of the Truth

So, the Church is the *repository* of that Body of Teaching that was initially given by Angels (Old Testament), and was finally given through Inspiration (God Himself “carrying along” men to write) that contains all that God desired to reveal to Man about both Life and Godliness. So, to find Divine Truth, you go to the Bible. And the Bible commands you to go to Church.

But more than just a Repository, the Church is also the “Guardian” of that Body of Divine Truth. So, we are the ones who are required to examine every Teaching that is presented by Man. And if that Teaching conforms with sacred Scripture, we are to *commend* it. But if that Teaching *adds to*, or *takes away from* the correct meaning of Scripture (obtained by Scripture), then the Church has the *duty* and the *obligation* to *formally* and *officially* and *publicly* condemn that Teaching. Why? Because the job of the Church is to:

Colossians 1:28b

... present every man complete in Christ.

... and, as the Apostle said...

2 Corinthians 10:18b

... I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin.

... and ...

Ephesians 4:11&12

He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...

... to what end?

Ephesians 4:13

until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

... and what will be the Result of this?

Ephesians 4:14-16

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

.. which I would suggest to you is the same thing as preparing people to meet Jesus, which is the assignment of the Forerunner.

We must understand that Jesus did NOT go into Heaven to get ready to come back. He was ready to come back the day He left. He said He left this earth to:

John 14:2b&3

... prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

... so, Jesus left this earth to prepare. And the main function of the Forerunner is to prepare. And the Job of the Church is to prepare. And in line with that, this same Apostle gave us instruction about how we can prepare to meet Jesus. And so, Paul wrote to Titus to tell him how to get the five different groups of people in the Church (Old men, Young men, Old women, Young women, and Slaves, Servants, or Employees) ready to meet Jesus in **Titus 2:1-14:**

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their

children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. *Urge* bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

We have to understand that the Reality is that the Church of Jesus is no more spiritual or godly than the individual members. And so, by the Leadership of the Church, teaching the people of the Church these godly, practical Issues, and then holding them accountable to live up to this Standard, this is *part* of filling the Role of the second Forerunner and preparing people to meet Jesus.

And so, look at the three Reasons that Paul gave in this Passage as to *why* the individual people of the Church should behave in this way:

1. So that the Word of God will not be dishonored (Verse 5).
2. So that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us (Verse 8).
3. So that they will adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in every respect (Verse 10).

... meaning that if the people of the Church do NOT behave this way:

1. The Word of God WILL be dishonored.
2. The Opponent WILL have much bad to say about us.
3. We will NOT verify that the Doctrines of the Bible are worth believing.

... and the result is that the Church will be weak, and the lost world will NOT see the House of God as a "spiritual Refuge" or a "Haven of Rest" or a "Habitation of Divine Truth", but as a joke and laughing stock.

God has chosen that Men, and Men alone, must solve these problems. Now it is true that, *periodically*, God has used Women to bring about Repentance, and even Revival. But God did that *primarily* to shame the Men into standing up and filling their Roles.

So, "Repentance", "Revival", and "Awakening", are all synonyms for the same Move of God the Holy Spirit on His people. And those things occur when God sovereignly *transforms* the human heart to the extent that God's people begin to love what God loves and hate what God hates. This is what it means to prepare people to meet Jesus. And it is the simple but profound definition of real, genuine Revival. It isn't about the hype or the shout or the emotional high. It is simply that God moves to unveil the eyes that have been blinded by sin and this fallen world so we can "see" the magnificence of the Glory of God, in, by, and through the Person of Jesus Christ.

And once we truly behold Jesus, Who is the Glory of God, in all His Beauty and Value and Worth and Power, God sovereignly moves on our hearts so that we genuinely love what we see. And then God sovereignly empowers us to be changed into what we see.⁶ And *that* is biblical Revival. *That* is a real Spiritual Awakening. *That* is a true Spiritual Refreshment. And *that* is preparing people to meet Jesus.

And all throughout all human history God raised up Men, sometimes a single Man, to bring about this Wonder. And 100% of the time, God used that Man to encourage other people to behold Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe, Who is worth dying for and worth living for. And that Man did all that through a *re-discovery* of the Grace of God, and a *re-discovery* of the primacy of the Scriptures.

And that is what it means to prepare people to meet Jesus. And that is the Ministry of the Forerunner. So, as the people of the Church begin to see Jesus in His Glory, they will desire several things:

- ✓ They will hunger and thirst for Righteousness.
- ✓ They will pant after God as the deer pants after the water-brooks.
- ✓ They will long to be near to Jesus and to please Him in all things.

⁶ This is the "Dynamic of Salvation" as taught by the Apostle Paul in **2Corinthians 3&4**

- ✓ They will see the Word of God as being sweeter than the honey from the comb.
- ✓ They will desire strong and godly men to lead them into more and more Divine Truth from Scripture.

... in other words, they will love what God loves, and they will hate what God hates. And they will be prepared to meet Jesus when He comes.

So, if we truly desire that Jesus would come back, if we genuinely long to be with Jesus, forever, then we will cry to God to make us people like this. And one of the main Signs that we will have that will help us know that we are actually filling the Role of a Forerunner in preparing people to meet Jesus is that God will *lift* the "Curse of Fatherlessness", and He will raise up a company of strong, godly, and loving Men.

And God will restore the hearts of these Fathers to their Children and the hearts of Children to these Fathers. And these Men will love their Wives, and *lead* them, and *protect* them, and *provide* for them, and wash them in the water of the Word. And God will raise up these Men to lead in the Church where they will faithfully thunder the Word of God. And they will both *receive* and *guard* the Truth. And then we will see Jesus come back in Power and great Glory! And then we will enter the Joy of the Lord! Thank you, Malachi. Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.