

Ophthalmological Orthodoxy – Malachi 3:13-18

I. Introduction:

- A. One day, as the Lord Jesus came into the community of Bethsaida, a blind man was led up to Him by friends.
1. Together they plead with the Lord for an ophthalmological miracle. You can read of this in **Mark 8:22-26**.
 2. Jesus listened to the request, and then He led the man out of town.
 3. The man was not from Bethsaida.
 - a. We don't know how far he had come seeking help.
 - b. He may have even been a foreigner.
 4. Of course, the Lord could have spoken the man's eyesight back into existence, or he could have done any number of other things.
 5. But in this case He spit on the man's eyes and then put His hands on him, probably turning him around, asking what he saw.
 6. I don't know if the man had ever enjoyed any sight, or if his answer came only with the warped perspective of a blind man, but he said, *"I see men as trees, walking."*
 7. Then after putting his hands over the man's eyes, Jesus removed them and told him to look up.
 8. He did so, and this time he found that his eye-sight was 20/20; he could see everything clearly.
 9. *"And (Jesus) sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town."*
- B. Why wasn't the man's sight perfect the first time? What is the Lord trying to tell us? What is the lesson?
1. Is it, not to expect instant perfection and the removal of all our problems at the time of our salvation?
 2. Is it that we have responsibilities to go along with the Lord's grace?
 3. Is it something else? I don't know.

II. I'd like to use that bit of miraculous history to highlight what I see here in Malachi.

- A. No one knows for sure about the spiritual condition of that blind man.
1. I would like to say that he was, or he became, a child of the King; saved by God's sovereign grace.
 2. We also don't know the true spiritual condition of the priests in Malachi's day.
 - a. They may have been involved in the stout talk against the Lord.
 - b. Or the earlier quote could have been that of the general population.
 3. Either way, many were saying, *"God is not being just; He is not a good governor."*
 4. Some were saying, *"It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?"*
 5. They thought that the wicked and proud seemed to be better off in the world than those who love and serve Jehovah.
- B. May I suggest that the people of Israel were at the point of seeing men as walking trees?
1. They saw the prosperity of the wicked and the poverty of the righteous; things which could not be denied.
 2. But they were looking through eyes that were half blind.
 3. Their sight was severely myopic: near-sighted. They couldn't see beyond the end of their noses.
 4. Not only couldn't they see the reason for such things, they couldn't see the conclusion either.
- C. I believe that **verse 16** implies a day of judgment; a time not too many days from where we are at the moment.
1. *"A book of remembrance was written before (the LORD) for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."*
 2. Last week, I referred to three scriptures, two in regard to the wicked, and one dealing with the righteous.
 - a. **Daniel 7:** *"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before (the Lord): thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."*
 - b. **Revelation 20:12:** *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."*
 3. There is coming a series of judgments: judgment of nations, of God's people and of wicked individuals.

4. And in each case those judgments will be based on facts; records will be available; books will be opened.
5. *"And the dead shall be judged out of those things which (are) written in the books, according to their works."*

D. Verse 17 is perhaps even more precise and specific.

1. God will soon *"make up his jewels,"* sparing them *"as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."*
2. There is a jewelry day coming.
3. *"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

E. I Corinthians 15, among other scriptures, tells us that God's jewels will be changed – they will be glorified.

1. The righteous shall be placed into their eternal settings.
2. *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*
 - a. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*
 - b. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*
 - c. *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."*

F. I believe that at our resurrection we shall be glorified.

1. And included in that glorification, God's saints will be given infinitely greater clarity than we have today.
2. The curse will be lifted from our minds as well as our bodies.
3. Of course, we won't be granted omniscience; we won't know everything.
4. And I assume that we will be learning new things throughout eternity.
5. But maybe we will know, or perhaps we will begin to learn things about the past.
6. It will be as if the Lord Jesus will remove His thumbs from our spiritual eyes, and whereas today we are seeing men walking as trees, at that point we will see with spiritual 20/20 vision.

G. *"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."*

1. I would like to think that many of our questions will be answered in that day.
 - a. Why did I have to suffer so much during my 52nd year on earth?
 - b. What happened to the gift I gave to that homeless man back in January 2022?
 - c. Lord, I don't understand why you didn't take my life in that accident, but instead I was crippled with pain for twenty years.
2. I don't know whether or not we will have all our questions answered.
3. It is possible that the blessings of God will be so wonderful we'll have no desire to think back upon our three score and ten years of trials and tribulations upon earth.
4. Does *"and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"* mean more than dabbing a Heavenly tissue?
5. Might it mean He'll remove even the thought of those tears, let alone their cause?
6. Sometimes it is enjoyable to speculate on various things about Heaven.

H. Something about which I am reasonable sure is that after our judgment we will witness the judgment of the wicked.

1. We will witness those who have said in this life, *"It is vain to serve God,"* clearly see their mistake.
2. Those who have said, *"We call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered"* will be ashamed of their former attitude.
3. Some day all the saints together shall see that they who tempt God will not be delivered.
4. In that day the scales will be lifted from our eyes, and we will clearly discern the great difference between the saved and the lost.

III. There *IS* a difference between the righteous and the wicked.

- A. Everyone begins at the same point; we are all the children of fallen Adam, totally corrupted by sin & the curse.
1. But the righteous are those whom the Lord has redeemed, declaring them to be holy in His sight.
 2. The righteous are righteous because they have been covered with the perfect righteousness of Christ.
 3. The wicked on the other hand have simply been left in their original sinful condition.
 4. They were born dead in trespasses and sins, and they have spent their years living in that condition.
 5. Not knowing the blessings of righteousness, they are satisfied, if not delighted, in tempting God with their sinful lives.
 6. As Christ tells us, *“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”*
 7. In other words, the greatest difference between the righteous and the wicked is still awaiting them.
 8. It is the difference between heaven and hell – the glory of God and the lake of fire.
 9. **Psalm 58:** *“The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.”*
- B. I suppose that I could stop at this point with perfectly good conclusion, but there is a coda on this hymn.
1. Not only is **a future difference** between the righteous and the wicked suggested here.
 2. But there is a declaration about their **current difference**.
 3. *“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”*
- C. As I just said, we all come into this world as sinners; we are all depraved and wicked at heart.
1. And God’s grace is the only reason some are righteous in His sight; they are justified by His grace.
 2. Some are declared righteous, when, of course, they do not deserve that title.
 3. But this scripture goes on to describe those **righteous** souls as **people who SERVE God**.
 4. And the **wicked** are those **who do NOT serve Him**.
 5. *“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”*
- D. This demands the following questions: What is it to actually serve God?
1. Can someone accidentally serve God?
 2. Does someone who made a profession of faith in the Crucified One, but who never does anything for the Lord’s glorification, have any right to be called *“righteous?”*
- E. Of course, the service of God can take on many forms.
1. It is not always easy to see righteousness, because clever sinners can dress themselves in religious robes and pretend to be godly.
 2. And then too, one man’s service for God may not appear to be exactly like the service of another.
 3. There are certain guidelines and practices by which one person might judge another, but that is not my purpose this evening.
- F. The ultimate question has to be: does the Lord call you one of His righteous?
1. Does the Lord see **in YOUR life** a certain degree of love and faithfulness towards Him?
 2. Does the omniscient God see any hatred toward sin or any desire for Him?
 3. God’s word describes **the righteous soul** by saying he is one who **serves God**.
 4. It says that **wicked souls do not** actively **seek or serve** Him from the heart.
- G. Are you sure that you are one of the Lord’s jewels?
1. Are you anxiously awaiting that perfect and eternal setting into which He will make up his jewels?
 2. Or are you still a citizen of this world, condemned to experience the fate of this world which is described in the next chapter?