

Biblical Notes — Malachi 3:1

1 – “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.

הַגָּגִי שְׁלֹם מִלְאָכִי וּפְתָאֲרָה לְפָנַי וּפְתָאֲרָה יְבוֹא אֱלֹהֵי־יִקְלוֹ הָאֲדֹנָי | אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים וּמִלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים הִנֵּה־בָא אִמָּר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

“The point of this objection is that if the temple is built before Christ's return from heaven then another other than Christ must build it. However, Zech. 6:12 states, "Behold, the man whose name is The BRANCH, he shall build the temple of Yahweh", clearly shows that the temple IS to be built by the Messiah. In addition, several passages of scripture, particularly Zech. 14:2, "will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle•" and "In that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel ... every wall shall fall to the ground." (Ezek.38:19-20), show that Jerusalem is to be captured by the Northern Invader and severely damaged in the events that follow. It is manifest that under these conditions the temple, if built prior to Christ's return, would also be damaged and in need of rebuilding. Indeed Dan. 11:44-45 speaks of Russia establishing its military headquarters for their campaign in Jerusalem. How much more appropriate that the temple should be built at such a time as that spoken of by Zech. 14:11, 'There shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.'

But what of Mai. 3:1, the root of the objection? We must consider the context of the statement. Firstly, this passage is quoted by Christ of John the Baptist in Matt. 11:10. However John was not the complete fulfillment of Malachi, for the result of the work was to be acceptable offerings being presented by Judah and Jerusalem that did not follow the advent of John or of Jesus Christ. There were to be then two applications of the prophecy. The first, a typical fulfillment in Christ's first advent. the second its complete fulfillment. Christ's return. On both occasions Christ returns to the temple of the ecclesia (Eph. 2:19-22). On the first occasion the Israel ecclesial temple was found wanting and rejected him (John 1:11). That the prophet is referring to the temple of the ecclesia is confirmed by the following verses which describe the temple to be purified, as the sons of Levi (vv2-4).

Following the work of Elijah (Mai. 4:5-6) whose work John Pre adowed (Luke 1:17; John 1:21), Israel will be cleansed as Malachi states of Christ's second coming (Mark 9:12). Compare the similarity of the words of Malachi with those of Zech. 13:9, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Yahweh is my God". But this is at the time of Russia's invasion of the land and of Jerusalem's captivity (Zech. 14:1-3) out of which will come national deliverance. Only then can the literal temple be built; when the saints are partakers of the divine nature, Israel are purified and the nations subject to Christ's rule from Jerusalem. We may well ask of ourselves, however, as the temple of the ecclesia today is built upon the Apostles' labours, whether we "shall abide the day of his coming?"

—— Henry Sulley, A Handbook Of Answers To Objections To 'The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy'. (Alphega Productions, Melbourne, Australia, 1976), 4-5.