

## The Closing Messages

Notes of an address on Malachi 4: 1-6; Revelation 22: 8-21.

F. B. Hole

(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 34, 1942-4, page 243.)

There is always something peculiarly arresting in last words, and I have just read, firstly, the last words which God gave through the Old Testament prophets, and secondly the last words which have come to us in the closing prophetic message of the New Testament.

Malachi prophesied over four centuries before Christ came, and then followed a period of silence on the part of heaven. We today are living in a long period which has been spoken of as the Silence of God. Men are mightily perplexed because God seems to have retired into His heaven, and shut the brazen gates. The world is being convulsed and yet there does not seem to be any utterance from the Divine lips. Heaven has been silent, but for a very good reason. God has spoken in His Son and fully offered all He has to say in the way of grace. The only thing that remains is for God to speak in His wrath, and vex the nations in His sore displeasure. Unconverted people blame God and ask, Why does He not do something? But if He did, they would be overwhelmed in condemnation. Having said all He has to say in grace, He is silent until He speaks again in judgment.

In the Old Testament we have the record of how God raised up Moses and the prophets and through them formulated His holy demands upon men, and upon Israel in particular. In the New we have the revelation of grace and salvation in Christ. The contrast between the closing messages of the one and the other is very instructive and helpful.

Yet, while there are striking contrasts, we notice that certain things mark them both. For instance, the coming of the Lord is mentioned in both. In the Old, He is the Sun of righteousness; in the New, the bright Morning Star. When He arises as the Sun, it will be with healing in His wings. Many people today are emphatic on the healing power of sunlight, and I dare say they are right. When Jesus comes in His glory He will bring healing for the godly and those who fear His Name, as stated in verse 2. For the ungodly, as stated in verse 1, that day will burn as an oven. As you know, there are regions, such as Mesopotamia, where the sun can beat down with terrible heat, and the temperature sometimes rise to 120 degrees in the shade. So when Jesus comes as the Sun of righteousness it will be a burning oven for the wicked, who will be as stubble, though it will be healing for His saints. God will draw the line in that day between those that fear His Name and those that fear Him not. The coming of the Lord is equally spoken of in Revelation 22, though from a different aspect, and the line of demarcation between the godly and the ungodly is just as clearly drawn, particularly in verse 11.

Another thing that characterizes both endings is this: very great emphasis is laid upon the Word of God. In Malachi it is seen in verse 4. "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments." There were those that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name, and that spoke often one to the other, and these were the people upon whom the Lord set His eye. Here are the last words of instruction for these godly folk, left now for 400 years until the Day-spring from on high should visit them. Says the prophet, Remember the law given through Moses in all its parts, without omitting any details, and not some of it only: remember too it is for all Israel, and, therefore, for everyone who is of Israel. His message if summarized might read, **All the Word of God for all the people of God.**

These godly folk might have been tempted to think that the law had changed somewhat with the

times. Their nation had been carried into captivity and they were grandchildren or great-grandchildren of those who came back in detachments under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah and other leaders whom God raised up. There they were, a comparatively broken and humble people in the land. They might easily have said, We hardly need to be concerned about **all** the law. Surely we need not bother our heads about this or that. We can slacken things a little bit there, and tighten up a little bit here. The prophet says, No! Remember the original word God gave you in all its details. It is all for you. It gives you light and guidance as to the mind of God even if the mass of your nation is still in the lands of their captivity.

I think I can see an analogy between our position today and that of these people. Truly there have been immense changes in the world since the days of the Apostles but the New Testament has not changed. There is still all the Word of God for all the saints of God. There is no presumption in each of us saying, I am one of the saints of God, therefore, it is for me. Shall we slacken a little here, or tighten a little there? We shall suffer spiritually if we do, since it is not for us to tamper with the Word of God. You may depend upon it that God who gave the original revelation and instructions through the Apostles, knew all about the history of the church as it would develop in the next twenty centuries. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14: 37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Hence they stand for all of us today.

Now I turn to the passage in Revelation. Let me point out that again the Word of the Lord is greatly emphasized. In verse 7 we have, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." No doubt primarily the book of Revelation, but equally one cannot doubt it was God's design that Revelation should stand as the conclusion to the New Testament, and, therefore, that pronouncement applies secondarily to all Scripture, the New Testament in particular.

What sayings they are! What wonderful unfoldings! Not as previously God formulating His law, testing us by it and bringing home to us thereby our sinfulness and need, but sayings which reveal what He has made known and accomplished in Christ — the Second Man and Last Adam. The first man fell in a garden of delights when everything was to his advantage. The Second stood in a wilderness, and in the face of every disadvantage. Then in the sayings of this book God unfolds the glorious consequences that flow from the triumph of Christ.

Blessed are we if we **keep**. How do we keep? Only by obeying, by putting into practice. We may store things mentally, and some of us do keep a crowd of things in our heads, yet we do not really have anything until we have used it in a practical and experimental way. A striking little verse has told us,

"For we must give, if we would keep

That good thing from above.

Ceasing to give, we cease to have;

Such is the law of love. "

I may borrow those words, making a slight alteration, thus,

For we must **use**, if we would keep

That good thing from above;

Ceasing to **use**, we cease to have;

Such is the law of love.

Truly then, as the Lord Himself said; " Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11: 28).

But verse 7 is not the only allusion to the Word of God in this chapter. The Book and its words of prophecy are spoken of again in verses 10 and 18, and in verse 19 they are twice referred to. So in all we have it five times. How careful God is of His very words, and what emphasis is laid upon their integrity and power.

But, in addition to this great emphasis, we get a beautiful presentation of the Lord Jesus Himself, who is coming. A figure is used, as in Malachi. There He was the Sun of righteousness, rising in splendour here He is the bright Morning Star, the harbinger of the coming day. Still in verse 16 He presents Himself not only figuratively but also personally as "I Jesus," and this makes a special appeal to our hearts. He is still all that the figures indicate, but the reality is Jesus Himself. It is remarkable that in Malachi we do get Moses and Elijah mentioned in the last chapter along with the Sun of Righteousness, and again these two men were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. There Peter made the mistake, as you will remember, of putting them almost on a level with His Master. They were only servants, who pursued their course for God, each in his day and generation; but Jesus was One who had stepped out of eternity to be there. No name can stand beside His.

In Revelation we have come to the end of the story. Moses and Elijah have disappeared. Peter and Paul and all the great names of every epoch have disappeared, and there remains — "I Jesus." He stands before us in all His excellent beauty and glory. He is the coming One, and he is coming quickly. Perhaps we have understood this word a little too much as referring to time and centuries whereas its primary meaning here may be that of swiftness — no gradual unfolding when He comes but swift as the flash of lightning! When He comes all will be brought to a triumphant conclusion.

When the whole church of God is introduced by Him into the glory of the Father, every eye will be on the One who has brought them there. We shall have nothing to boast in; for see what failure has marred our earthly pathways. All the inhabitants of heaven will turn their eyes upon Jesus and say, He has done it! Not one of them is lost. Everyone in his place, and everyone brought home to glory according to the Father's purpose. Wonderful, ten thousand times wonderful is JESUS! So while we wait for Him we would surely say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The better rendering of the last verse is, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints." The last word of Malachi is "curse," but there is no curse as we close Revelation. The curse of the Old Testament is supplanted by the grace of the New. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will of course be with all the saints and never fail, since it is absolute grace that takes us all to glory. But that grace also is to be consciously realized by us.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be with us all as we travel on to His coming through the present scenes of toil and trouble, strife and desert life; resting upon our spirits, forming our characters, moulding our thoughts, entering our hearts, and coming into expression in our lives. The whole church of God needs it. Every little gathering of the Lord's people needs it. The saints of God — you and I and all the rest of us — greatly need it. Blessed be God! it rests upon us, and is available for us in every conceivable emergency.

Oh! may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in this fashion, indeed be with all the saints. Amen.