

My Favorite Thing About MALACHI

Malachi 3:3
September 25, 2021

We have arrived at the end of the Old Testament.

We know nothing about the man, “*Malachi*” or the specific dates of his ministry. We do, however, get some clues from the text:

The use of “*governor*” instead of “*king*” in Ch. 1:8 and references to the Temple being up and running in Ch. 1:7-10; 2:11; 3:1, lead us to the conclusion that Malachi’s ministry occurred after the Babylonian exiles returned to Judea and the rebuilding of the Temple was complete - pointing to a time after 515 BC.

After the exile, wholesale idolatry never again occurred. However, that does not mean that God’s People suddenly became the holy nation He had always intended for them to be:

- They were bringing imperfect sacrifices = 1:7-8
- The priesthood was corrupt = 2:7-9
- The men of Israel were marrying non-Israelite women who worshipped idols = 2:11-12
- They were withholding their tithes and offerings = 3:8-9

If truth be told, we’ve seen this before – new group, same story.....

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About MALACHI – The Refiner and Purifier of Silver.**

Malachi 3:3 - He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness...

This verse was directed to the religious representatives in Judea, but there is no question that this visual applies to all who call themselves Jesus Followers.

Silver.....

- Is the best conductor of heat and electricity.
- Is strong, can be molded {malleable} or made into wire {ductile}, and can endure extreme temperature ranges.
- Resists corrosion, doesn’t rust and is non-perishable.
- Has a remarkable ability to destroy bad bacteria while not causing harm to healthy bacteria.
- Makes antibiotics more effective.
- Is the best reflector of light. As a result, it was used in ancient times to make mirrors.

Story:

There was a group of ladies studying the book of Malachi.

When they came to, “He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver”

They wondered how this verse reflected the character and nature of God.

One of the ladies volunteered to go interview the town silversmith

She asked the silversmith many questions but did not mention the Bible verse or the reason for her visit.

As she watched him work, she noticed that he held the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were the hottest. He explained that he did this in order to burn away all the impurities.

She thought about the verse again and then asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit in front of the fire the entire time the silver was being refined.

He answered yes. Not only did he have to sit there the entire time, but he had to keep his eye on the silver the entire time because if it was left for a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

For a moment she did not speak, but then she asked, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?”

He smiled and answered, “Oh, that part is easy – when I see my image reflected in it.”

I had quite the challenge zeroing in on the process of refining silver. There are actually several ways of doing it but the same is true for whichever process you choose.

Silver is generally found in a combined state in nature. A typical ore might contain 0.085 percent silver {a noble metal}, 0.5 percent lead, 0.5 percent copper, and 0.3 percent antimony or any other combination of what are known as **base metals – also known as sulfides**.

Because the base metals are *“difficult and rebellious”*, the ore is exposed to a very high temperature which separates the noble metal from the base metals. This occurs because noble metals and base metals do not melt at the same temperature. Lead, for instance, melts at **620.6° F**, while silver melts at **1764° F**.

Refining silver is a very precise and deliberate affair – known as **Cupellation**. It is not something you *“wing”*. You need the right space, the right material, the right tools, the right temperature and the right mold. It needs to be heated just so, cooled just long enough and dipped into water at just the right time in order to produce beautiful and reflective silver.

In order to avoid damage to the silver the refiner must watch this process carefully because silver can be damaged by a phenomenon called hot cracking. This occurs when the metal stays too hot for too long.

Every time I read our short story I am moved. Not because of the process but because of the results.

You can't get beautiful, reflective and non-perishable silver without exposing it to high temperatures that will remove all its base impurities.

You can't get a beautiful, reflective and non-perishable Christian life without exposing it to high temperatures that will remove all its base impurities = pride, selfishness, greed, lust, arrogance, meanness, etc., etc., etc.

- **Psalm 66:10** - For Thou hast tried us, O God; Thou hast refined us as silver is refined.
- **Isaiah 48:10** - Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
- **Zechariah 13:8-9** - And it will come about in all the land," declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off *and* perish; but the third will be left in it. ⁹ "And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'
- **James 1:2-4** - Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

More than anything, God wants to spend forever with us and in order for that to happen, a little refining is going to have to occur and it will take a little fire to get the job done. God uses the fires in our lives to burn away the impurities that He knows will sabotage our relationship with Him and will ultimately prevent His desired outcome. Choosing to live within the flames is never easy, but it is necessary, because we are called to be transformed into the image of Jesus.

- **2 Corinthians 3:18** - And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Some are confused and misunderstand God's motives when they go through the refiner's fire. But listen to what Peter has to say:

- **1 Peter 4:12-13** - Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.

Paul understood this process.

- **Romans 5:3-5** - but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
- **Romans 8:18** - I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

- **Philippians 3:8** - What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Interestingly, in Scripture, the refining process is voluntary. It can be chosen or rejected. Notice:

- **Jeremiah 6:26-30** - O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; Mourn as for an only son, a lamentation most bitter. For suddenly the destroyer will come upon us. ²⁷ "I have made you an assayer *and* a tester among My people, that you may know and assay their way." ²⁸ All of them are **stubbornly rebellious**, going about as a talebearer. *They are* bronze and iron; they, all of them, are corrupt. ²⁹ The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; in vain the refining goes on, but the wicked are not separated. ³⁰ They call them rejected silver, because the LORD has rejected them.

God's people said **NO** to the refining process. They chose to keep the dross rather than be transformed into the image of Jesus.

We can claim to be Christians and even have the appearance of a Christian life. We can go to church and do "*churchy*" things and still not want to be refined ---- We can refuse to let go of the dross.

It is His desire to refine us. But it is our choice whether or not we want to be refined.

- **Charles Spurgeon** – If any of you, my hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means: you are seeking a **fire** which will test you, and **consume** much which has been dear to you. We are not to expect Christ to come and save us in our sins, he will only come and save us from our sins; therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Savior, remember that you take him as the **purger** and the **purifier**, for it is from sin that he saves us.
- **Oswald Chambers {1993 MUFHH – Sept. 30}** – God can never make us wine if we object to the fingers He uses to crush us with.... If ever we are going to be made into wine, we will have to be **crushed**; you cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been **squeezed**.
- **Oswald Chambers** – Beware of looking back at what you once were, when God wants you to become someone you've never been.
- **Bruce Wilkinson {Secrets of the Vine 60}** – Are you praying for God's superabundant blessings and pleading that He will make you more like His Son? If so, then you are asking for the **shears**.

I choose the Refiner's Fire.

I choose Transformation.

I choose Him to be "*The Author and perfecter of my faith*" – Hebrews 12:2

I choose Him to hold the pen of my life's story.

How about you?

"He will sit as a refiner and purifier of Silver"