

Lesson XII.

PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH December 17, 1905

Malachi 3 : 1-12. Study chapters 3, 4—Memory Verses, 8-10.

Golden Text—I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.—Malachi 3 : 1.

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope :

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver : and he shall purify the sons of Le'vi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Ju'dah and Jeru'salem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment ; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from

his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. 6. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Ja'cob are not consumed.

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return ?

8 Will a man rob God ? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee ? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse : for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground ; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

THE LESSON RETOLD

In spite of all that the Lord had done for His people, there were those who, instead of offering their best to Him in return, dishonored His worship by presenting at the sacrifices of His house lame and sick animals, unwholesome bread, and such things as were imperfect and unfit for use. Others refused to perform the slightest service in the temple without pay, grudging every penny of the money required to support the services, while some among the Jews even married heathen wives.

In the midst of these and other abuses,

God sent a warning to His people by the prophet Malachi, who, with Ezra and Nehemiah, tried to put down the evil and sin of this time. For many years the Jews had been looking forward to the coming of the promised Messiah, and in his prophecy Malachi made a picture of the long-looked-for Saviour coming suddenly to His temple as a great king, with a messenger running before Him to prepare His way.

"When this Saviour shall come," said the prophet, "it shall be to cleanse and purify His people, not to punish them."