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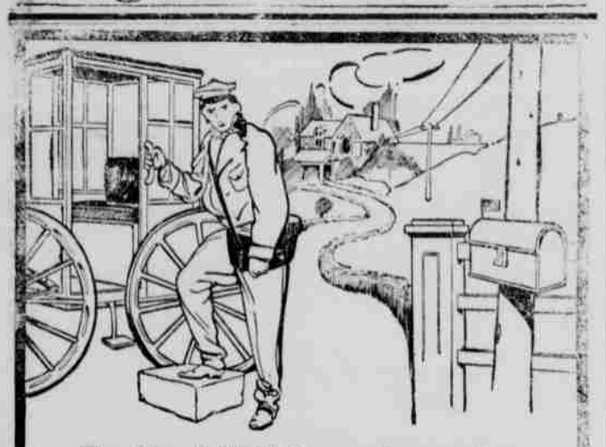

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OLD TESTAMENT TIMES — BROOKLYN TABERNACLE BIBLE STUDIES

WAITING FOR MESSIAH.

Malachi iii, 1; iv. 3—

"Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in. But who may abide the day of His coming? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."

MALACHI'S PROPHECY, the most striking features of which constitute the lesson of today, concludes the Old Testament canon. It contains not only a Divine rebuke for sin, but also a Divine promise of reward. It fits well to the time generally assigned to it—Nehemiah's period. It permitted for Israel to show thorough repentance and to institute thorough reforms. The needed reformation fits equally well to our day.

The Jews, comparing themselves with other nations, perceived that as a result of being God's people they had been held to a more strict account than other nations; so that although their nationality was superior, it was through repeated and severe chastisements. They were even questioning the profitableness of being "God's chosen people."

Jews evading place—Jeremiah.

This lesson of a future reward is brought forward by the words, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His Name. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up My jewels."

Israel—Typical and Antitypical.

The foregoing has revealed very much of all prophecies respecting Israel's favors to be fulfilled—a portion in Spiritual Israel's experiences and another portion in Natural Israel's. The faithful of the Jewish Age, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets, will surely have a great reward. When Messiah's Kingdom shall be inaugurated on the spirit plane, invisible to men, those Ancient Worthies, who were once called the Fathers, will have a very high rank of service in connection with the Kingdom in that they will be its *earthly* representatives and exponents. "Instead of Thy fathers shall be Thy children [of Messiah] whom Thou [Messiah] mayest make Princes [rulers] in all the earth."—Psalm xlv. 16.

Spiritual Israel, as history shows us, is the great Messiah for whom the Jews have so long waited. This Messiah is one that has many members—Jesus is its Head, the Church are His members. This Messiah, Jesus, and His members or Bride, constitute the spiritual Seed of Abraham, "as the stars of heaven." These must first be completed, and will be glorified in Kingdom power before the Ancient Worthies can receive their blessing on an earthly plane, and before natural Israel can be gathered to them as the nucleus of the Kingdom of God on earth to which ultimately all nations, peoples, kindred and tongues shall flow for a share in Israel's New Covenant blessings. Of the Church St. Paul says, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's Seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians iii, 29). Those are God's jewels on the spirit plane.

Messenger of the Covenant.

The Prophet Malachi clearly intimates that there might be disappointment in connection with the much longed for Messenger or Mediator of the New Covenant, in whom His people so delighted and hoped. The declaration is that His day will be a strenuous one. "Who shall stand when He appeareth?" "Who will abide the day of His coming?" The intimation is that not many will abide, not many will stand—the majority will fall.

This great Messiah, the Messenger of the New Covenant, began His refining and purifying work more than eighteen centuries ago. He followed the Divine rule, "To the Jew first." He began to refine and purify a priestly class for association with Himself in the glorious Messianic work. To the Jew first came the privilege of being the antitypical Levites. Thousands of them responded at Pentecost and subsequently, but not enough to complete the fore-ordained number of spiritual Israelites, members of the Body of Messiah.

Dawn of Jewish Age.

Since then the selecting work has been in progress for eighteen centuries. God has been calling and drawing, from all nations, and as many as respond, the great Refiner has been purifying; and if these suffer afflictions for righteousness they are sharing in the sufferings of Messiah that they may be counted worthy also of a share in His glory to follow. Soon the "elect" number will be completed; the blood of the New Covenant will be made efficacious for former and for all the families of the earth, and on that basis the Messianic Kingdom or reign of righteousness will begin.

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