

Hebrews 2:14-18 – Jesus has broken Satan's power to bring fear of death

Living as God's children is freedom from the fear of death

14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

"Children" – those who have accepted the sacrifice Christ made, and thereby have become sons (or daughters) of God.

"Break... the power of death" – in becoming man and suffering an undeserved death the Son broke the power of the devil to bind us with fears, especially those rooted in fear of death.

"Held in slavery" – Satan, a "murderer from the beginning", John 8:44, does have power to harm people to some extent, Mark 5:2-5; Luke 13:16, and to incite people into sin that leads to death, Romans 6:16 and 23. However, Jesus' defeat of Satan frees us to know God's ultimate rule over all life and death.

• **For further study**, see Deut. 32:39; Job 2:6; Psalm 90:3 and 139:16; Rev. 1:18

IN PRACTICE The third picture of the old order changing takes us to the place which is the pivot point of the change – the Cross, Jesus' place of self-sacrifice. It is the place where He gasped, "It is finished!" and the power of Satan to control us with fear, and the kind of fear that is rooted in death and oblivion in particular, was broken. Of course fear still exists – it is an appropriate and even helpful emotional response at times – but knowing the truth that the devil's power is curtailed enables us to say 'No!' to fears that come knocking at 3am or any other time. To live free from nagging fears and other bondages, is to experience the rule and order of God which is our foretaste of the kingdom. Jesus did it. We exercise it!

QUESTION *We know that the Cross was about victory. Jesus went there as a human, like Adam, but a second, sinless Adam. How does knowing this enable us to pray confidently?*

PRAYER Father, I praise you again for Jesus and the new kingdom order that we can participate in, with new life in Him. Help me to be willing to be refined and purified – and in my thoughts, words and actions, to be with You, embracing the new order and rule of Your kingdom. Amen.

TLW05 The Bible version is the 2011 revision of the New International Version © Biblica, a completely new translation in 1978

16 For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham's descendants.

"Abraham's descendants" – heirs to God's promises to Abraham by faith i.e. all believers.

17 For this reason He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.

"Merciful... high priest" – Jesus' role as our merciful and faithful High Priest, ending the need for an order of priesthood on earth. This is explained in detail in Hebrews 4:14-10:25.

18 Because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

"He is able to help" – Jesus took divine retribution on Himself, for us, and was fully human in His experiencing this suffering. Similarly, He knows about trials and temptations as one who has 'been there' like us. This high priest "has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet... did not sin", Hebrews 4:15.

The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, February 3, 2019 with commentary notes

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **February 3** in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme: **The old order changes, the new covenant comes in Jesus**

Malachi 3:1-5 – The Lord comes to purify and renew His people

Luke 2:22-40 – Prophetic words over Jesus on His presentation at the Temple

Hebrews 2:14-18 – Jesus' sacrifice has broken the power of death

Also: Psalm 71:1-6

Malachi 3:1-5 – The Lord comes to purify and renew His people

He calls time on the immoral and unjust; even the most spiritual will be refined

1 "I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

"My messenger" – a play on the name Mal'aki, 'My messenger'. Here, the herald of the Messiah, Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27.

"Messenger of the covenant" – although the focus is on the one who prepares the way for the Lord, the Lord Himself is the "messenger of the covenant, whom you desire" – and sent by Yahweh, the Lord Almighty.

"Prepare the way" – quoting Isaiah's repeated picture of a roadway being levelled for the procession of a king, Isaiah 40:3; 57:14; 62:10. Applied here to obstructions to the renewing of God's people.

2 But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

"Who can stand" – alluding to the requirement of clean hands, pure heart and unwavering loyalty, Ps. 24:3-5. It is judgment, or vigorous cleaning with strong alkali soap and beating with sticks. This is like

the Lord's discipline of His children, Hebrews 12:7-11.

3-4 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, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

"Purify the Levites" – stands for those giving a spiritual lead, who will be refined like precious metal in a smelting furnace.

5 "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud labourers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear Me," says the LORD Almighty.

"Sorcerers" – gained control of people through divination, occult magic and witchcraft.

"Oppress widows" – Moses' covenant emphasised social justice to those on the edge of society.

• **For further study**, see Exodus 22:22; 23:6; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 24:17; 26:12-13; 27:19.

IN PRACTICE This first picture of 'the old order changing' has a long reach to the Day of the Lord and Jesus' return, in glory and also in judgment. But from the start of His ministry Jesus was calling people back to the covenant and calling out their double standards. Among many interpretations for the millennial return of Jesus is one that looks like this passage in Malachi. This view sees the period between His ascension and His return as the 'end times'. We as His present disciples are charged with making Jesus, and the Way and Life and Truth of Jesus, known across the world, in preparation for His return. We, too, who are believers can expect to undergo a special refining, for us to be fit and free to make Him known, and prepare people for what is to come. The old priesthood ceased at the Resurrection; those with new life in Jesus are now charged with being a "royal priesthood", 1 Peter 2:9. However you understand the end times, it is an awesome responsibility.

QUESTION *Who are we, what are we doing here and why is the life of Jesus-centred faith so difficult at times? How does this give us a sense of God's purpose and a realistic expectation of difficulties along the way?*

Luke 2:22-40 – All-encompassing salvation in Jesus is prophesied

Those waiting for their Messiah see in Jesus a light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel

22-24 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

"When the time came" – this account shows Jesus' family, materially poor, but painstaking in faithfulness to God and keeping of the law.

25-26 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah.

"Simeon" – unknown outside this story; a spiritual man who knew the promises concerning

the Messiah, and was expecting their fulfilment.

27-28 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying:

"Moved by the Spirit" – in the OT era, the Holy Spirit came on certain people at certain times, e.g. moving Zechariah to prophesy about John, Luke 1:67-79 (the Te Deum). Here the Holy Spirit guides Simeon to the temple courts at the right time, having assured him that he will live to see the Messiah; and then gives him the prophetic and enduring words that follow.

• **For further study**, see Numbers 24:2, 1 Samuel 10:10 and 16:13.

29 "Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You may now dismiss your servant in peace.

"Dismiss" – from service on this earth. His final task completed, Simeon is ready to die peacefully – and gives us the words of the Nunc Dimittis.

30-32 For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which you have prepared in

the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

"Your salvation...a light" – parallel sayings are common in Hebrew literature (think of Psalms and Proverbs). "Salvation... in the sight of all nations" is equivalent to "light for revelation to the Gentiles".

"Glory of Israel" – the Messiah came through the Jewish nation.

33 The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about Him.

34-35 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, His mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

"A sign... spoken against" – Isaiah had predicted the coming Kingdom of God and salvation outside the nation of Israel, Isaiah 42:6-7 and 49:6. It was deeply controversial. Mary, as well as Jesus, would go through anguish.

36-37 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the

temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.

"Anna" – Greek form of Hannah, like the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1-2) and also a prophetic woman, who recognised the Messiah. Before her there were seven prophetic women recognised in Judaism.

"A widow" – her remarkable age (for the time) would be considered to bring remarkable wisdom. Widows who honoured their husbands memory by not remarrying were esteemed in Israel.

38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

"Redemption of Jerusalem" – meaning all the people of Israel, promised by God through his prophets.

• **For further study**, see Isaiah 52:3 and 62:12; Jeremiah 31:11; Hosea 13:14; Zechariah 10:8.

39-40 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on Him.

"They returned... to Nazareth" . Luke's gospel does not mention the Magi's visit, Herod's reprisal or fleeing to Egypt, Matthew 2:1-23.

IN PRACTICE This second picture of how the old order changes, takes us into a scene where deeply devout and experienced folk have been waiting in expectation for their Messiah - with a keen leading from the Holy Spirit that this is imminent. These were people deeply steeped in the old order of Judaism and the Law, yet they were excited to encounter the child who would grow up to change it - change everything they had known. The Holy Spirit used these 'traditionalists' to speak prophetic words over the child, words that would be deeply controversial and as He began to work them out 30 years later, would see him pushed out of 'their' synagogue by a mob who wanted to push him over a cliff because He spoke of good news for Gentiles also. This story reminds us of how personal devotion to God is they key to perceiving what He is doing

QUESTION *How do you respond to change - as an enthusiastic 'early adopter' or a more cautious or even resistant 'late entrant'? How do you know whether God is behind the change, or not?*