

Outline of the Book of Malachi

“For I, Jehovah, change not” Malachi 3:6

Prophet and Date of Writing:

Nothing is known about the prophet Malachi. The date of the epistle is difficult to assess. One may consider the sinful and deluded mindset of the people and conclude that it was written around the time of Jeremiah (627 to 584 BC). Other considerations would be that Malachi mentions a “governor” at chapter 1:8 and the people’s problems with intermarrying foreigners who worshipped other gods at chapter 2:11. Furthermore, Malachi mentions God withholding blessings from His people due to their sin at chapter 3:10ff. Said factors may cause us to conclude that the letter was written somewhere around the time of Nehemiah (i.e., 435 BC or so).

Theme of Malachi

The theme of the book of Malachi seems to be found at chapter 3:6 where the prophet writes, “*For I, Jehovah, change not.*” Though the people changed God’s ordinances regarding sacrificing (Malachi 1:13-14) and giving of tithes (Malachi 3:8-10) God did not change. God’s laws remain a true constant in all eternity (Rom. 3:3-4; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17). Malachi therefore admonishes the people to, “*Remember ye the law of Moses*” (Malachi 4:4).

Content of Malachi

Malachi exposes the people’s sin. A large part of the book is devoted to manifesting the people’s state of delusion. Nine examples are delivered that reveal the people’s hardened hearts. God had given commandments, and they had taken the liberty to adjust those commands to fit their lives. When people change law to fit their pleasures, they will inevitably invent new ways. Malachi records the extent of the people’s apostasy at chapter 3:5, charging them with sorcery, adultery, false swearers, oppressing laborers, widows, and the fatherless. Said selfishness has no time nor need for being hospitable to strangers. The prophet sums up the people’s sin with the statement, “*and they fear me not*” (Malachi 3:5).

Due to Israel’s lack of fear, God withholds His blessings from them (Malachi 3:10). The rebellious people do not understand why God would do this since they are attempting to serve Him. They thereby conclude that it is “*vain to serve God*” (Malachi 3:13-14). They see no profit in serving God because all their efforts are only partial services. They only partially do what God wants in their sacrifices (Malachi 1:13-14) and tithes (Malachi 3:8ff). When they perform this partial service to God and do not receive His blessings (Malachi 3:9ff), they become discouraged and conclude that God does not love them (Malachi 1:2). Truly their worship and service to God was done in ignorance to His prescribed ways (cf. Acts 17:23).

The source of the people’s apostasy can be traced back to the priests of their day. The priests had the responsibility to teach and uphold God’s laws (Lev. 10:8-11; Deut. 33:8-10). Malachi identifies the priests as God’s messengers responsible for knowing and turning the erring back to God’s ways (Malachi 2:6-7). Rather than performing this duty, the current priests were guilty of causing many people to stumble in sin (Malachi 2:8). Malachi delivers words of hope for the erring and misguided people. Though the current messengers are corrupt, God will send another messenger, John the baptist, who shall prepare the way for righteousness and turn the heart of the people from hardened sinners to obedient loving servants (cf. Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6; Matt. 17:10-13).

Practical Application of Malachi

The Lord’s response to the erring people is, “*I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand*” (Malachi 1:10). The people vainly offered an abbreviation of God’s sacrificial system (Malachi 1:7-8, 13-14) and tithes (Malachi 3:8ff). God’s blessings would thereby continue to be

withheld (Malachi 3:11-12) until the people repented from a heart of sorrow (Malachi 3:7). Eternal heartaches could be avoided by mankind if only they would look to God's perfect law of liberty and respect it. Men of all ages have tried their hands at changing God's laws to fit their pleasure (cf. II Thess. 2:4). The very existence of denominational bodies is present day proof. Some believe they can worship God using various change agents and the Lord will accept their religious efforts. The lesson of Malachi is that God does not change (Malachi 3:6). Those who change God's laws, even in the name of religion, will be subject to His eternal curse (Malachi 4:6). Malachi writes to the erring people saying, "*Bring ye the whole tithe*" as opposed to their partial service (Malachi 3:10). Two suggestions for acceptable worship may be gained from Malachi. First, cast off all erring teachers (cf. Malachi 2:1-9; II Pet. 2:1ff). Secondly, let us all serve God with our wholehearted service today that He may be well pleased (cf. Malachi 3:10; Matt. 22:37).

Chapter 1

I. God's Love for Israel (1:1-5):

- A. "*The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness*" (1:1-3).
1. The word "*burden*" is equated to an oracle or a proclamation of divine revelation (cf. Nahum 1:1; Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1). Malachi is delivering divine revelation to Israel. The prophet gives the **first of nine incidents** where God makes an observation about the people yet they have a total different view of themselves. It reminds us of a study of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah had exposed the peoples sins yet they considered themselves innocent (Jer. 2:35) and wise (Jer. 8:8). Those deluded in sin will never see the need for repentance and forgiveness.
 2. Many of God's people did not understand that the Lord chastens those whom he loves that they may repent of sinful deeds (cf. Rev. 3:19). The Lord had withheld the rain, caused crops to fail, and brought the sword and pestilence upon the people (cf. Amos 4:6-12; Hag. 1:7-11; Zech. 8:9-13; 10:1; 14:17). These divine acts against the people should have moved them to repentance and right living; however, many did not see that God's grace is conditioned upon man's obedience. Their conclusion, "*Wherein hast thou loved us?*" They considered the curses of their existence as a sign that God did not care for them (see study # 1; The Lord Loves those whom He Chastens).
 3. The Lord reminds the people of his initial choice of Jacob (Israel) over Esau (Edom) (Gen. 25:21ff). God raised up two nations to show the world how His sovereign choices work (Rom. 9:6ff) (see study # 2; The Sovereignty of God). Consider Paul statement to the Romans in relationship to God's sovereign choice of who the seed promise would continue through. Paul said, "*And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac – for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*" (Romans 9:10-13).
 - a. Not only did Sarah have a son by promise (i.e., Isaac), but also Rebecca had a son of promise (Jacob). Rebecca had both Jacob and Esau in her womb (twins). Who would continue the promise (the seed of the Messiah)? God tells us that He made the sovereign choice of Jacob (vs. 11). This choice was made before the two (Jacob and Esau) were out of their mother's womb, "*before they did good or evil.*" Before they did any works! The point is, God made the choice, which indicates His control and sovereignty. Esau, the older, would serve the younger (Jacob) (vs. 12). This is a quote from Gen. 25:23. A contrast is thereby examined between physical and spiritual Israel.
 - b. Keep in mind here that God's choosing Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau was not a matter of their individual salvation. Paul is simply indicating that God has the right to make choices as to whom His Son (Jesus) would ultimately come.

- c. Further more, God as creator, has the right to love and hate those whom he chooses. He chose to love Jacob and hate Esau, however, this had nothing to do with the salvation of each. Again, the promise of the coming Messiah is under view. A choice had to be made as to whom and God made it.
 - d. The word “*hate*” (as used in Romans 9:13 is *miseo* or *emisesa*) = “to be hated... an object of hate” (LS 514), “to regard with ill will... to detest, abhor... to regard with less affection, love less, esteem less” (Moulton 270). Here is a true picture of God’s foreknowledge and foreordination. Why did God hate Esau? God hated Esau for what he represented; i.e., sin (cf. Heb. 12:15-17). Esau (the Edomites) stands in metonymy to wickedness throughout the OT and thereby abhorred by God (cf. Isa. 34:8ff; Jer. 49:7ff; Ezek. 25:12ff; Obad. 1:21). God knew this about Esau before he was even born.
 - e. At this point, Paul uses Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as those who represent people of “*promise*” and then he uses Esau to represent those who live in sin being abhorred by God. God’s “*purpose according to election*” is that all would be saved (cf. II Pet. 3:9). Those who meet God’s purpose are the “*called*” (cf. Rom. 8:30; 9:11) and thereby children of “*promise*.” We clearly see then that those who are obedient to the call of God’s gospel message are the ones of promise (like Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac).
- B. *“Whereas Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus saith Jehovah of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down; and men shall call them The border of wickedness, and the people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Jehovah be magnified beyond the border of Israel”* (1:4-5).
- 1. Edom, and all those who set their face against Jehovah God, would be brought down off their high horse of pride (cf. Jer. 49:7-22). As a sick man continues to check the clock throughout the night, anxiously awaiting the end of his illness, so Edom would be as they sought for counsel from Jehovah’s watchmen (cf. Isa. 21:11-12). There would be, however, no relief for the pride-stricken people of Edom. World empire after empire would continue to press them (i.e., Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, Grecians and then the Romans), and eventually they were non-existent (Mal. 1:2-4).
 - 2. “The archeological evidence also indicates the downfall of Edom by the end of the 6th century. Nomadic tribes infiltrated Edom, and it lost the power to control and profit from the trade between Arabia and the Mediterranean coast and Egypt. In the 5th century, an Arabian tribe, the Nabateans, forced their way into Edom and replaced the Edomites, many of whom went westward to southern Judea (later to become Idumea; cf. I Macc. 5:3, 65), while others were absorbed into the newcomers. By 312 B. C. the area around Petra also was inhabited by the Nabateans” (ISBE, V. 2, pp. 20).

II. Israel’s Acts Illustrate a spirit of Ungratefulness (1:6-14):

- A. *“A son honors his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? Saith Jehovah of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. and ye say, wherein have we despised thy name?”* (1:6).
- 1. The Lord reasons with Israel. The Law punished ungrateful sons and daughters who did not show honor and reverential fear toward their fathers (cf. Ex. 20:12; 21:15). Servants logically honored and feared their masters for their well being. The Lord’s question is, “where is my honor and fear?” God was considered Israel’s father Hos. 11:1 yet Israel was insubordinate by “*despising*” (to regard with extreme dislike and hostility / count as worthless) His name. We may recall that God’s rejection of Esau and Edom was due to their view of God and His promises as worthless; i.e., Esau “*despised*” his birthright (cf. Gen. 25:34). Rather than being a people who honored and feared Jehovah they had become like Esau and despised God (see study # 3; Children’s Responsibilities to the Parent).
 - 2. Here is the **second of nine statements** that illustrate the people’s state of mental delusion. They exclaim, “*Wherein have we despised thy name?*” Due to the people’s minds being so far removed from God they did not know that their actions were illustrating a spirit of hatred and hostility toward God (cf. Hos. 4:6). Jeremiah had said that the people of God had become “*sottish*” (i.e., deluded as though intoxicated) (Jer. 4:22). While being overtaken by Babylon

the people, in a spirit of mental delusion, asks, ‘why are these things happening to us?’ (cf. Jer. 13:22; 16:10). While Israel considered themselves innocent (Jer. 2:35) and wise (Jer. 8:8) God said they were rebellious (Jer. 6:16) and lacked fear (Jer. 5:22-24). Man can so far remove himself from God’s laws that he may honestly believe things are religiously ok in his life while that same law reveals him a condemned sinner (see study # 4; The Deluded Sinner).

- B.** *“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah is contemptible. And when ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! And when ye offer the lame and sick, it is no evil! Present it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee? Or will he accept thy person? Saith Jehovah of hosts”* (1:7-8).
1. The **third statement** illustrating their sinful delusion. A people who have little knowledge of law and even smaller faith in it are hard to reason with. The people want to know how they have shown to God that they do not honor and fear him. Jehovah responds by telling them that their bread upon the altar was polluted (i.e., the sacrifices that they made upon the altar of burnt offering) (see Lev. 22). The priest were offering blind, lame, and sick animals and saying that there was nothing wrong with this. Their unlawful sacrifices were to be justified (i.e., contemptible) in that God was not showing them love.
 2. The Lord asks the contemptuous priests, “Will the governor accept such offerings?” To offer such worthless sacrifices to the governor of the people would be an insult. God; however, did not really matter to them.
- C.** *“And now, I pray you, entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he accept any of your persons? Saith Jehovah of hosts. Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand”* (1:9-10).
1. Would God accept an offering to Him that was not according to His will? Some believe that any service directed at Jehovah God is acceptable to Him because it is done in the name of religion. When God’s word reveals it to be polluted they are offended. Worship that does not take into consideration the will of God is contemptuous and unacceptable (cf. Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-24). Not only is the worship service unacceptable but the persons performing the ceremony are rejected! God has no pleasure in such people (see study # 5; Faulty Worship).
 2. The Lord, through Malachi, calls upon at least one person to shut the doors of the temple to the altars and to stop the kindling of vain fire upon the altar of burnt offering.
- D.** *“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye profane it, in that ye say, The table of Jehovah is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even its food, is contemptible”* (1:11-12).
1. The Lord proclaims a future day when the Gentiles, through a faith in Jesus Christ, would offer up acceptable spiritual sacrifices unto Jehovah God. Said words ought to move Israel to jealousy that they may fear, honor, and obey the laws of God.
 2. Again we find the people doing contemptible things in relation to their worship. What caused the people to believe they could offer unlawful sacrifices upon the altar? It seems that their lack of knowledge lead to a lack of fear and reverence toward God (cf. Hos. 4:6). They came to the point that their own ideas took precedence over the laws of God.
- E.** *“Ye say also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye bring the offering: should I accept this at your hand? Saith Jehovah. But cursed be the deceiver, who hath in his flock a male, and vows, and sacrifices unto the Lord a blemished thing; for I am a great King, saith Jehovah of hosts, and my name is terrible among the Gentiles”* (1:13-14).
1. The **fourth statement** of Israel that depicts their deluded mind is revealed. Israel had grown weary or tired of God’s ordinances regarding sacrificing. Their view was that God’s laws were tedious. The priests and people thereby snuffed at God’s ordinances and offered things that would not put them out as much (such as sick, lame, and blemished sacrifices).
 2. The people’s new found sacrificial formulas affronted the Law of Jehovah God. God would not accept such worship. Rather than accepting and blessing the people in their new found ways of

worship God's curses such people. To offer God a blemished animal while an unblemished one was available was unacceptable. God's people were to learn that blessings and grace are always tied to obedience.

Chapter 2

I. Jehovah's Judgment against the Priesthood (2:1-9):

- A. *"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith Jehovah of hosts, then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart"* (2:1-2).
1. To bring glory to the name of Jehovah God one must obey His laws (cf. Jn. 15:5ff). The priests who would not hear and lay to heart (i.e., obey) God's laws was to be cursed. The blessings that God intended for his priests and people shall become a curse. God intended to save the people from the consequences of their sins through His beloved Son; however, those who reject God and His laws have nothing but condemnation awaiting.
 2. Notice the conditions of God's gracious blessings. The little word "*if*" indicates that God's curses and blessings are dependant upon how one lays to heart God's laws (see study # 6; A History of the workings of God's Gracious Gifts).
- B. *"Behold, I will rebuke your seed, and will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your feasts; and ye shall be taken away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant may be with Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts"* (2:3-4).
1. Notice that the Lord refers to the worship as "*your feasts*" as oppose to His own. Amos had said that such worship pleased the worshipper only rather than God (cf. Amos 4:4-5) (see study # 5). With strong language that indicates great displeasure the Lord proclaims that He will spread the dung of their sacrifices in their face. With such uncleanness the priests were to be taken out of the camp.
 2. God had set the descendants of Levi aside as priests to fulfill the duties of the tabernacle and temple yet they were not fulfilling this agreement.
- C. *"My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him that he might fear; and he feared me, and stood in awe of my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity"* (2:5-6).
1. The Lord's covenant with Levi was in part the priesthood (through the sons of Aaron). These men would take care of the temple and offer the people's sacrifices unto Jehovah. In return, they received the portion of food through heave offerings and tithes. God's gracious gifts of the priesthood, sustenance, and set aside property was so that these priests may "*fear and stand in awe of my name.*"
 2. Through time the godly priests had the "*law of truth in his mouth*" and they walked according to God's laws. The priests had, in times pasts, practiced justice and turned many away from their sinfulness. What has happened to these men now? What caused them to view God's ordinances as wearisome? Again, Hosea tells us that they forgot God through a neglect of study (Hos. 4:6ff).
- D. *"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts. But ye are turned aside out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble in the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have had respect of persons in the law"* (2:7-9).
1. We find throughout the word of God that the priests were responsible for knowing and teaching God's people the law as His messengers (cf. Lev. 10:8-11; Deut. 33:8-10). God's priests had now found His ways wearisome and consequently caused many to stumble in error due to their

half hearted approach to service. Said service was a breach of the covenant God made with them to provide for them as they taught truth and took care of the sanctuary.

2. The priests had “*respect of persons*” in their judgment of cases (i.e., they perverted justice) and they did not keep the laws of God.
3. The chief cause of a people who have digressed from the Lord’s commandments is the teachers. Elders and preachers today who will not uphold the whole council of God cause many to stumble in sin. Said men are often supported of the gospel and thereby receive God’s blessings (cf. I Cor. 9:14). We may rest assured; however, that when such blessings are taken without doing the proper works that God’s anger is kindled (see study # 7; Preachers and their Work).

II. Judah’s treachery against the Wife of their Youth (2:10-17):

- A. *“Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of Jehovah which he loves, and hath married the daughter of a foreign god”* (2:10-11)
1. To take a foreign woman to wife who worshipped other deities was to provide one’s brethren with the opportunity to sin. Nehemiah warned of the opportunistic nature of sinning by means of wedding foreign women who worshipped foreign deities (cf. Neh. 13:23ff).
 2. Apparently Judah had not only wedded these foreign women but had participated in acts of idolatry with their wives. Said activities are recognized as “*profaning the holiness of Jehovah.*” God’s people were to be separate from the world of sinful doers.
- B. *“Jehovah will cut off, to the man that doeth this, him that waketh and him that answers, out of the tents of Jacob, and him that offers an offering unto Jehovah of hosts”* (2:12).
1. The man that would take a foreign wife who worships another deity is to be cut off from the people of God.
 2. The man who offers an offering to God while maintaining a wife that practices idolatry shall be cut off.
- C. *“And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, insomuch that he regards not the offering any more, neither receives it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant”* (2:13-14).
1. The men who divorced their wives for foreign women of idolatry were responsible for their tears upon the altar. Their hearts were broken because their husbands had left them after years of faithfulness to each other.
 2. The **fifth statement** regarding Israel’s deluded state of mind is recorded. The men guilty of adultery asks, “*Wherefore*” does God not receive our offerings unto Him? The foolishness and destitute of character is revealed in such a question. God had witnessed the vows or covenant that was made between the man and wife and He now witnesses the putting asunder of that covenant agreement. These men have dealt “*treacherously*” with their companion that should have been for life.
 3. There is not much of anything recorded about Jewish wedding process. Apparently the two entered into a covenant agreement (cf. Ezek. 16:8) in which God (here at Malachi 2:14) and man (cf. Ruth 4:10ff) served as witnesses. The covenant meant that the two were joined together for life (cf. Matt. 19:3ff) (see study # 8; Bible Marriage).
- D. *“And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth”* (2:15).
1. The alternate reading in the margin of the ASV Bible reads, “*And not one hath done so who had a residue of the Spirit. Or what? Is there one that sees a godly seed?*”
 2. The idea seems to be that any man who has the “*Spirit*” of God; i.e., being led by the Word of God, would never do such a treacherous deed to the wife of his youth.

- E. *“For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covers his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously”* (2:16).
1. What has man put away by joining himself to a foreign woman who worships other deities? The man has put away his first wife that he entered into a covenant agreement with to remain hers for life (i.e., till death only part us / cf. Gen. 2:21-25; I Cor. 7:39). Both God and man had witnessed the marriage yet now one is being *“put away.”* Why does God hate the *“putting away?”* The answer is clear. To put away a mate before death is to divide something that was never intended to be divided. When two are joined in marriage an inseparable bond is formed. The two married people are now one rather than two (Eph. 5:31).
 2. Please note that this does not contradict Deuteronomy 24:1ff due to the fact that God had always viewed marriage as permanent. Jesus proves this to us when answering the Pharisees question at Matthew 19:3ff (see study # 8).
 3. When one violates the marriage covenant it indicates a heart that is soiled with sin; i.e., he *“covers his garments with violence”* (cf. Zech. 3:4). Such a state shall cause a man to loose his spirit in sin (i.e., take heed to your spirit).
- F. *“Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and he delights in them; or where is the God of justice?”* (2:17).
1. The **sixth statement** that illustrates the people’s delusion. The *“words”* of the people were foolishness and manifested in their unlawful practices. Said unlawful actions wearied Jehovah. Even at this the people protests saying, *“Wherein have we wearied him?”*
 2. The Lord reveals that they have perverted justice by protecting the evil doers and at the same time calling God’s justice into question because of their being tongue lashed by Malachi.

Chapter 3

- I. **The God of Justice Comes with His Words of Instructions for those who would be Saved (3:1-6):**
- A. *“Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he comes, saith Jehovah of hosts”* (3:1).
1. The last verse of chapter 2 goes with chapter three. The Lord would show himself to be the God of justice by sending His messenger who would *“prepare the way before me.”* Jesus tells us that this messenger was John the Baptist at Matthew 11:10-14. While Malachi reveals that John the baptizer was to prepare the way for Jehovah to come Jesus refers to John’s preparatory work being for him. This conclusively illustrates the deity of Jesus Christ. The God of justice shall appear suddenly in his kingdom, the church, in these days.
 2. Notice the contrast in the messengers of chapter 2:1, 6-7 (i.e., the priests who did not practice nor teach just things and thereby turned many away from truth) and the messenger mentioned here who shall prepare the way for the coming of the ultimate just one.
- B. *“But who can abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years”* (3:2-4).
1. The God of justice will judge not only the heathen but those so called His people. Every man will be measured by the standard of God and those found filthy will be discarded as dross. The refiner’s fire and the fuller’s soap will be the Word of God and it shall either cleans or cause one to be discarded.
 2. The *“sons of Levi”* will be those who are purified by the word rather than being cast out as dross. Taking these thoughts in context there can be no doubt that Malachi speaks of the days of Christ Kingdom being established and His words cleansing those who accept them. Those

cleansed through obedience will be God's true priesthood. The apostle Peter makes this conclusion for us at I Peter 2:5ff.

3. The new messenger, Christ, shall cause the people to be enlightened and seek truth whereas the messengers of Malachi's day caused the people, through their teaching, to be deluded (see study # 9; The Effects of False Teaching).
- C. *"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 the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed"* (3:5-6).
1. The God of justice shall pronounce a condemning judgment against the sorcerers (those who practice the arts of witchcraft and seek answers to life's problems through enchantments rather than turning to God), adulterers (those who divorce their wives and take on others unlawfully), false swearers (those who break their vows / cf. Numb. 30; Zech. 5:4), cheaters of the laborers, widows, and fatherless, and those who do not exercise hospitality to the traveler.
 2. Malachi summarizes Israel's rebellious heart by the words, *"and fear not me."*
 - a. Fearing God takes into consideration two things. First, the fear of God is to be interested in gaining knowledge of His will. Solomon wrote, *"The fear of Jehovah is the chief part of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction"* (Prov. 1:7). Secondly, the fear of God takes into consideration obedience to God's word. Again, Solomon wrote, *"Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccl. 12:13).
 - b. God's people had repeatedly illustrated a heart hardened to his will and words of wisdom (cf. Jer. 5:22-24; Hos. 4:6; Rom. 3:18).
 3. Though God's people had a heart hardened as an adamant stone against His commandments there was one thing for sure and that is that God does not change. Man may cast aside the commandments of God yet they remain. God's mercy remains for the faithful and His wrath remains for the ungodly. The author of Hebrews writes, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever"* (Heb. 13:8). James said, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning"* (James 1:17) (see study # 10; The Unchanging God we Serve / The Nature of Truth).

II. God's Blessings are contingent upon man's Obedience (3:7-12):

- A. *"From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return?"* (3:7).
1. The **seventh** *"but ye say"* statement is now recorded. God establishes one fact over and over throughout His revelation to man. Those who sin against His holy word are separated and they are the ones who need to do that which is necessary to return to fellowship with God. The never changing God is not only a God of justice but one of mercy as well. He patiently awaits the sinner to return to Him through repentance and supplication.
 2. The Lord calls upon the sinners to return to him in obedience. When one humbly submits to the will of God He will certainly return unto them. Blinded by their error and hardened in their sin they exclaim, *"Wherein shall we return?"* Such an attitude displays a spirit of the fool that Solomon spoke of at Proverbs 1:7. Jeremiah said that the erring people had no shame of their sin (Jer. 6:15). While guilty of sin the considered themselves innocent (Jer. 2:35) and wise (Jer. 8:8).
- B. *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah 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"* (3:8-10).
1. The **eighth statement** that reveals the people's deluded mind. The people of God had robbed Him by not giving their tithes as the Lord had commanded (cf. Lev. 27:30ff). The inference in

the text is that they were only bringing partial tithes. The Lord admonishes them to “*bring the whole tithe.*” Every thing the people did they did in the name of spiritual service yet they had done things contrary to God’s laws. It was not acceptable to the Lord for the people to offer sacrifices of blemishes even though it was done in the name of religion (cf. Mal. 1:13-14). It was not acceptable to God for the people to offer an offering that did not measure up to the tithe even though it was a partial sacrifice on their part (Mal. 3:8). Again, it was not God that had changed but the people (see study # 11; Partial Religious Service is not Acceptable).

2. The lesson is one for the ages! God’s blessings are contingent upon man’s perfect obedience to His words. Yes, man will falter in his attempts to do so (cf. Rom. 3:23); however, the unchanging God of mercy will always be there to call the erring soul back by repentance and prayer. This was the whole message of Haggai and Zechariah to the erring people who, through a spirit of repentance, had returned to building the temple yet did not turn to God with their whole hearts. God does not want partial service! He desires our whole hearted obedience out of a heart that truly desires and loves Him (see study # 6).
- C. “*And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith Jehovah of hosts*” (3:11-12).
1. The devourer is no doubt the blasting of mildew upon the crops (Amos 4:9) and drought (Haggai 1:11). The fruit of the field would return unto the people as they obeyed the voice of God (cf. Zech. 8:12ff; 10:1). Those who refuse obedience shall ever have God’s blessings withheld (cf. Zech. 14:17).
 2. The clear message of the Minor Prophets is that God’s blessings are contingent upon man’s obedience through a heart of love and fear. When God’s people live in such a way to receive His blessings the nations shall take notice and shall desire to have what they have (cf. Zech. 8:20-23).

III. The People draw Faulty Conclusions due to Faulty Knowledge (3:13-18):

- A. “*Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are built up; yea, they tempt God, and escape*” (3:13-15).
1. The **ninth** and final statement that illustrates the people’s delusion is delivered. Lord makes his charge against the people. The people’s words have been “*stout against me.*” Once again, in a state of delusion, the people say, “*What have we spoken against thee?*” The people are so calloused in sin and hardened in heart that they do not even recognize their folly. Their day to day conversations with each other have yielded speech that reveals their harsh feelings toward God. They said strong things against God to one another.
 2. The Lord reveals their stout words against him saying that they say within their hearts that it is “*vain to serve God.*” They saw no profit in serving God because all their efforts were only partial services. They only partially did what God wanted in their sacrifices (cf. Malachi 1:13-14) and tithes (Malachi 3:8ff). When they performed this partial service to God and did not receive His blessings (Malachi 3:9ff) they became discouraged and concluded that God did not love them (Malachi 1:2) and that there is no profit in serving Him. Truly their worship and service to God was done in ignorance to His prescribed ways (cf. Acts 17:23).
 3. The people saw that the wicked prospered and were happy and thereby concluded that it was useless to serve God. Better to be good than evil (cf. Malachi 2:17).
- B. “*Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not*” (3:16-18).
1. Though the people for the most part were hardened in sin there were a few that did not share the deluded mindset of those Malachi directed his condemning words.

2. There were people (and are of all generations) who fear God and keep his commandments.

Chapter 4

I. The Nature of the Coming Kingdom of God (4 all):

- A. *“For, behold, the day comes, it burns as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings; and ye shall go forth, as gambol as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I make, saith Jehovah of hosts”* (4:1-3).
 1. The day that comes is the day of Christ kingdom and the separation of the wicked from the righteous. No unclean sinful man or woman shall be considered a part of God’s kingdom nor in fellowship with the eternal God.
 2. God’s light of the gospel message shall shine upon the righteous and they shall receive it with glad hearts and will thereby be blessed.
- B. *“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers: lest I come and smite the earth with a curse”* (4:4-6).
 1. The final OT words reveal instructions, promises, and warnings. God instructs His people to remember the *“law of Moses.”* God had always intended for the people to keep the law perfectly (cf. Gal. 3:10).
 2. Secondly, God promises His people that Elijah comes (he who prepares the way for the Christ / cf. Malachi 3:1). John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 17:10-13), as the Elijah here prophesied of, was to prepare the people’s minds to be receptive of the Christ and the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 11:13-15) and to turn their minds back to serving the Lord (Lk. 1:17). Fear and reverence for God would be his objective as opposed to the current messengers; i.e., the priests (cf. Malachi 2:1, 6-7), who led many astray.
 3. The last words of the OT are words of warning. Those who do not obey the words of God have only a curse to look to. God’s blessings will be forever withheld!