

Outlines for Country Preachers by a Country Preacher
Sermon Outlines by Milburn Cockrell

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

THE BOOK:

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. It is also the last of the Minor Prophets, and it is called “The Seal of the Prophets.” The Book of Malachi completes the Old Testament and prepares the way for the New Testament. It has four chapters in English and three in Hebrew.

THE AUTHOR:

“Malachi” means “my messenger” in Hebrew (3:1). The Greek version renders 1:1 “By the hand of his messenger” but uses the title, *Malachias*. Malachi is an abbreviated form of Malakiyah—“the messenger of Jehovah.” He was the last prophet in the Old Testament. Little is known of his personal lineage or history. The message to be conveyed is much more important than the messenger.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING:

The temple was finished and had been in operation for some time (1:7-10;3:8). A Persian governor was over Jerusalem, called Pehah (1:8). This governor took dues, but Nehemiah did not (Neh. 5:14-15). Malachi prophesied shortly after the day of Nehemiah. He saw Nehemiah’s problems greatly increase: the marrying of heathen women (2:11; Neh. 13:23) and the failure of the people to bring their tithes (3:8-10; Neh. 13:10-14). It was written from Jerusalem somewhere between 420-400 B.C. The formalism and scepticism of Malachi’s day developed into a full harvest in the Pharisees and Sadducees in Christ’s day.

STYLE:

In form it is a continuous discourse unusually bold in attacking the corrupt priesthood (1:6-2:9). Malachi lived and wrote in the silver age of the Hebrew language, and he has been called “the Socrates of the prophets.” He likes a simple form of composition with a deep meaning. He develops his subject in the following order: First, he briefly states his thesis; then he states the skeptical objection with which he supposes it may be met; and lastly, he triumphantly refutes the objection.

PURPOSE:

Malachi rebukes the sins of the people and priests, calls them to repentance, and promises future blessings.

CONTENTS:

The book opens with a brief introduction (1:1-4). Then the book has three main sections: (1) The impiety and profanity of the priests, 1:6-2:9; (2) Heathen marriages of the priests and people, 2:10-16; (3) The day of the Lord, 2:17-4:4.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Note how the people refused to face their sins (1:2,6,7; 2:17; 3:7,8,13). Observe the duties of priests (2:8), and God’s words about divorce (2:14-16). The two advents of Christ are seen (3:1; 4:2,5-6). There is a contrast between the majority who resisted Jehovah (3:13-15) and the minority who served God (3:16-17).

Chapter One

I. INTRODUCTIONS TO THE PROPHECY.

1. The nature of the prophecy—"The burden" Hebrew *masa* meaning "burden, load, or thing lifted up."
 - (1) This is a heavy vision full of toil and weight. It would lay heavy on the heart of the prophet.
 - (2) The same word is used to describe the prophecies of Naham (1:1), Habakkuk (1:1), and Zechariah (9:1; 12:1).
 - (3) Malachi would not delight in bringing this prophecy.
2. The source of the prophecy—"the word of the Lord."
 - (1) "Word" Heb. *dabar*—"word, matter, or thing." "Of the Lord" Heb. Yahweh—Jehovah, the eternal God.
 - (2) This prophecy involves all the eternal God wishes to tell the people of Israel.
 - (3) It is a message sent by the Lord and carried by the prophet to the people.
 - (4) This is not the word of man, but of God, a part of the inspired Scripture.
3. The address of the prophecy—"to Israel."
 - (1) This includes both the northern and southern kingdoms.
 - (2) Representatives of all 12 tribes had returned to the land, and thus the entire nation is addressed.
4. The agent of the prophecy—"by Malachi."
 - (1) Literally "by the hand of Malachi." Malachi was the instrument the Lord used to convey His message to Israel.
 - (2) Malachi prophesied after the temple was rebuilt and after it has been in service for some time (1:6; 3:10).
 - (3) Nehemiah and Malachi addressed the same problems:
 - A. The divorcing of Jewish wives and marrying heathen women (2:11; Neh. 13:23).
 - B. The failure of the people to bring their gifts to the temple (3:8-10; Neh. 13:10-14).
 - (4) Malachi preached near 433-425, maybe as late as 400 B.C.
 - (5) After Malachi's time the voice of a prophet was not heard in the land of Israel for 400 years—called "the four hundred silent years."
 - (6) Nothing is known of Malachi's personal lineage or history. He was a Hebrew prophet.

II. JEHOVAH'S FIRST COMPLAINT AGAINST THE PEOPLE (1:2-5).

1. God's declaration of love disputed by the people (v. 2).

(1) "I have loved you, saith the Lord."

A. The Lord had shown His love for Israel by electing them to be His people (Deut. 7:7-8), and by His treatment of them during the whole course of their history.

B. Unchanging was His love regardless of the perversity of their ways. He had given them the oracles of God and a place in which to worship the true God.

C. Jehovah had just brought them out of Babylonian captivity and restored them to their land.

(2) "Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?"

A. They doubted God's love and faithfulness.

per- B. They had some blessings, but they thought things should be better. They looked for temporal prosperity as proof of His love.

3:7- C. This is the first of 8 times in this book where the people question God's affirmations (1:6-7; 2:14,17; 8,13).

men D. God's love is the source of every blessing. He made one to differ from another. The destruction of and the advantages of nations result from His sovereign goodness.

(3) "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob."

A. God's love is not dispensed according to any merit in us. God is sovereign in His love.

B. God's love cannot always be seen in our outward condition.

C. God refutes their charge by the different fates of the twin brothers. How miserable was the fate of the Edomites! How comparatively fortunate the condition of the Israelites.

(Rom. D. Jacob is viewed chiefly in his national capacity as Israel. Paul used Jacob as a type of all the elect 9:13).

E. Esau is viewed as the Edomite nation. Paul uses him as a type of the reprobate (Rom. 9:13).

F. These two twins had the same father and mother—were in the womb together—equally Abraham's descendants, but (Rom. 9:1-13; Gen. 25:23).

G. A principle of election runs throughout the Bible, showing that God is sovereign in bestowing privileges and Divine blessings.

H. The choice of God is the fruit of His love. The love of God is entirely free from all motives and conditions in His people, being before they did any good or evil.

2. God's hatred of Esau (v. 3).

(1) The love and hate here is not related to emotions; they are related to will—God's sovereign will.

(2) Armenians seek to twist the plain sense here.

A. "I have preferred Jacob to Esau."

B. "I have loved Esau less than Jacob."

C. Some say Esau was hated because God foresaw his unworthiness, and Jacob was loved because God foresaw his piety.

(3) This was true of Esau and his posterity.

(4) "And laid his mountain and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

five A. Probably a reference to the conquest of Edom by the Babylonians who invaded Edom in 581 B.C., years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

B. The Israelites repopulated and cultivated their land. They rebuilt their temple and capital.

C. The land of Edom never recovered from the Babylonians. It was still a scene of desolation and ruin (Isa. 34:6,11).

D. "Dragons" in Hebrew is *tanot* which means "howlers, jackals."

E. By contrasting the condition of Israel and Edom we learn Jehovah is supreme over all nations.

F. God had judged the enemies of Israel (Ps. 137:7). There is a difference between Jacob and Esau.

3. Building without God (v. 4).

(1) The condition of ruin—"we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places."

A. These are the words of the Idumeans or the posterity of Esau.

B. Their country, cities, and houses had been plundered of all valuable things. Sin brings misery and ruin.

C. We will rebuild in defiance of God's curse (Isa. 34:10) Like Hiel built Jericho (I Kings 16:34).

and D. "We will return"—to our kingdom and associations. Men cling to creeds, societies, and institutions, not to God.

E. "And build." Here is pride presumption, and opposition to God.

(2) God will overthrow their efforts—"They shall build, but I will throw down."

A. Providence pulls down as well as builds up (Eccl. 3:3; Isa. 14:27; 43: 13).

B. God will crush their efforts. The firmest foundations, the most fortified walls of sin, will not stand before God.

C. Edom never recovered its power. It became a prey of the Persians, the Nabatheans, the Jews, the Macedonians, and the Romans. Finally the Mohammedan's conquest brought their utter ruin.

D. Men today are trying to build their homes, schools, businesses, nations, and even churches without God. Their ruin is certain (Ps. 127:1).

(3) A sinful nation is a defeated nation—"They shall call them, The border of wickedness" (Prov. 14:34).

(4) Their wickedness would not cease and their desolations would never be repaired—"the LORD hath indignation for ever" (Isa. 34:5; Job 12:14).

4. Israel would be made to see that God loved them (v. 5).

(1) "Your eyes shall see"—Jacob's descendents shall see the proofs of God's love and of His hatred of the Edomites.

(2) The Israelites would say, "The LORD be magnified from the border of Israel." God will make His greatness known to His people and others.

(3). Edom is the border of wickedness. The Lord will show His power and love over the border of Israel.

III. THE SINS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF ISRAEL (1:6-10).

1. The law of nature was violated (v. 6).

(1) A father is to be honored (Ex. 20:12) and Jehovah had been a Father to Israel (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; Jer. 31:9; Mal. 2:10).

(2) A master, like a father (Heb. 12:9), is to be honored and obeyed.

(3) God is to be honored in the heart and life, by words and deeds, and with our substance (Prov. 3:9).

(4) Often honor and fear of God is lacking in His own people, not to mention the unsaved.

(5) The priests despised the name of God—"O priest, that despise my name." They despised His person, His Word, and His ordinances.

(6) Rather than confess their sins, they ask for evidence of their guilt—"Wherein have we despised thy name?" They were so cold and callous they were unconscious that they had shown contempt of God.

2. The law of God was violated (v. 7).

(1) "Polluted bread"—some say this is the shewbread or the meat offering (Lev. 24:5-7; Ex. 29:40-42).

(2) The sacrifices in general were sometimes called "bread" (Lev. 3:11,16; 21:6,8,17; 22:25). The shewbread is never said to be offered.

(3) It was polluted because it was not offered in due accordance with the ceremonial law (Deut. 15:21; Neh. 5:14-15).

(4) The priests despised the altar by fancying that anything was good enough for an offer to the Lord.

(5) "Table of the Lord"—the altar is called a table (Ezek. 41:22). In a sense at the altar the priests and people feasted upon the sacrifices in token of fellowship.

(6) Today many preachers pollute the Lord's Supper by omitting it or using grape juice. Some practice "open communion" allowing the unsaved to come.

(7) You can engage in Scriptural ordinances in an orthodox manner with a heterodox heart!

3. The law of common civility was disregarded (v. 8).

- (1) What an insult to offer God what a mortal would not accept!
 - (2) The law said the victims must be perfect (Lev. 22:19-25). They typified a perfect Christ.
 - (3) They saw no wrong in violating the law of God. They had become so familiar with constant dereliction of duty.
 - (4) “Governor” (Heb. *pechah*) denotes “a ruler set over a providence by a Persian king.” To offer such to the governor would be an insult.
 - (5) Some make this governor Zerubbabel (Hag. 1:1). Some offer to God and the church things they would not offer to their governor.
 - (6) They looked upon God as a worthless nothing. Many today have a cheapskate religion. A religion that cost you nothing is worth nothing!
 - (7) The people and the priests were guilty of profanity and sacrilege.
 - A. Sacrilege can be breaking into the church and stealing from God.
 - B. Sacrilege is also in offering to God something which cost us nothing because we think God is worth nothing (II Sam. 24:24).
 - (8) God always values the offering by what it cost the person who bring it (Mark 12:41-44). God measures the gift by its cost to the giver!
4. An ironical call to repentance and prayer (v. 9).
 - (1) Come and ask God’s favor upon these polluted sacrifices. Will God accept them?
 - (2) “This hath been by your means”—implying that it was from the priests that the evil custom of offering blemished animals proceeded.
 - (3) Will God respect your prayers who are so vile?
 5. The offerings of the priests were mercenary in spirit (v. 10).
 - (1) They would neither kindle a fire on the altar nor shut the door of the temple without pay.
 - (2) They had no thought of God, only for themselves. The service of God had degenerated into the slavery of a selfish interest.
 - (3) Do we serve God for hope of future reward?
 - (4) God did not regard their persons nor their offerings.
 - (5) No worship at all is better than pretence in worship. Vain worship!
 6. A prediction of the future glory of God’s name (v. II).
 - (1) “For, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same” —from east to west.
 - (2) Jehovah did not need the impious priests nor their maimed sacrifices. His majesty would be acknowl-

edged worldwide.

(3) This was in one sense fulfilled in the church age when many became Christians and formed Gentile churches (I Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:15-16; Rev. 5:8). See also John 4:21,23. The Lord's Supper commemorates the sacrifice of Christ.

(4) The Hebrew is more forcibly rendered: "In every place incense is burned, oblation made unto my Name, and indeed a pure oblation."

(5) The final fulfillment is literal and points to the millennium when the entire world will worship by the Jewish sacrificial system (Zech. 14:16-18).

(6) No one will then bring the blind, the lame, and the sick (Ps. 113:3).

(7) Isaac Watts wrote: "Jesus shall reign wherever the sun...Does his successive journeys run...His kingdom spread from shore to shore...Till moons shall wax and wane no more...To Him shall endless prayer be made...And endless praises crown His head...His name like sweet perfume shall rise ...With every morning sacrifice."

7. The priest had profaned and polluted the altar of the Lord (v. 12).

(1) There is a contrast between the profanity of the priests with the piety of the Gentile nations.

(2) The food and meat of the altar are the victims offered thereon. The priests had made both contemptible.

8. Man's estimation of God's service (v. 13).

(1) The priests made two complaints—

A. God's service was burdensome—"Behold, what a weariness is it." What should have been a pleasure was a toil.

a. God requires willing service—a serving with love.

b. The Sabbath to some is a loss of time. Money given to God is wasted (Mark 14:3-5).

c. Some want a short sermon so they can go home and do what really excites them.

d. Note the order—profanity, sacrilege, greed, and then weariness.

B. God's service was despised—"Ye have snuffed at it." Think it is a trifle to blow away with your breath.

(2) "An offering"—the meat offering.

(3) To bring a polluted offering is blasphemy. It will not be accepted of the Lord.

9. The curse of corrupt offerings (v. 14).

(1) Some offered a female victim on pretence that they had no male in their flock. Or maybe it was a blemished offering.

(2) In some emergency some vowed an offering and then paid it by presenting a blemished offering (Lev. 3:1,6).

- (3) God curses a man who pretends one thing while doing another. God cannot be deceived and will not be mocked!
- (4) “I am a great King”—King of the whole world.
- A. God deserves honor and reverence suitable to His dignity and greatness.
 - B. How unreasonable for a man to reflect upon his majesty by offering inferior when he could offer superior service!
- (5) God’s universal dominion demands loyal obedience—“My name is dreadful among the heathen.” He

Chapter Two

I. FOR THE NEGLECT OF THEIR DUTIES THE PRIESTS ARE THREATENED WITH PUNISHMENT (2:1-4).

1. Jehovah's commandment to the priests (v. 1).
 - (1) The threat is called a commandment because God ordains it and imposes its execution.
 - (2) The threat is seen in verses 2-3.
2. Their persons and blessings would be cursed (v. 2).
 - (1) "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart."
 - A. They would not take care of worship nor teach the people knowledge.
 - B. The great end of life is to glorify God.
 - C. It is a great sin to despise the Word of God and the name of God.
 - (2) Spiritual reformation involves hearing the Word of God and giving glory to God.
 - (3) Their own persons were cursed—"I will even send a curse upon you." This was a reversal of the original promise for obedience (Deut. 28-29).
 - (4) Their blessings were cursed—"I will curse your blessings."
 - A. God does not say, I will send you curses instead of blessings, but I will make the blessings themselves a curse.
 - B. Blessings can be cursed. David prayed that God would curse the blessings of His enemies (Ps. 69:22).
 - C. The priests would get limited tithes and disease from eating sick beasts offered in sacrifice.
3. The content of the curse (v. 3).
 - (1) Temporal blessings would be cursed—"I will corrupt your seed"—cause your crops to fail.
 - (2) The Hebrew can be rendered also "arm," meaning He would curse the arm by neutralizing the official duties performed at the altar. This meaning is best as the face is next mentioned.
 - (3) "Spread dung upon your face."
 - A. Dung upon the face is an expression of the greatest contempt.
 - B. They despised the Lord, so they would be repaid in ignominy and shame.
 - C. Dung was to be burned outside the camp (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 16:27).
 - D. "Your solemn feasts"—yours, not mine. They were not honoring God by these blemished sacrifices.

(4) “One shall take you away with it”—be treated as cow manure (I Kings 14: 10).

4. God would bring this curse to pass (v. 4).

(1) God made a covenant with the tribe of Levi to perform the function of the priesthood (Num. 1:49-50; 3:12; 25:12-13; Ex. 28:1).

(2) It is called a covenant because, while conferring certain privileges, it involved certain duties.

(3) The priests were warned they would be punished for disobedience.

(4) To let sin go unpunished would be unworthy of God. The Lord always threatens before punishing.

II. THE CHARACTER OF TRUE PRIESTS (2:5-9).

1. God’s covenant with Levi (v. 5).

(1) “My covenant was with him of life and peace” (Num. 25:12; Deut. 33:8-11). Some say “life and peace” means “regeneration and salvation.”

(2) “I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me.” When Israel worshipped the golden calf the Levites remained true (Ex. 32:25-29; Ps. 106: 30-31). See also Num. 25:1-15.

(3) The Septuagint has: “I gave him the fear of me.” God gave him certain blessings on condition that he feared, reverend, worshipped, and obeyed the Lord.

(4) God’s gifts were life and peace; Levi’s part was fear of God.

(5) In the case of Phinehas the covenant stood firm and was duly carried out.

(6) Here is an excellent type of the covenant between the Father and Christ (Ps. 89:3,28,34; Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3).

A. It was a covenant of life made in behalf of the persons ordained to eternal life (John 17:2).

B. It was a covenant of peace because the scheme of peace and reconciliation were drawn up in it and agreed on. Christ was appointed to be the Peacemaker.

C. This covenant was with Christ for eternity as the Head and Representative of His people (Isa. 54:10).

D. Christ was obedient to the covenant, showing His great fear and reverence of God (Heb. 5:17).

E. Those who receive the blessings of the covenant fear God and have a zeal for His cause. If God gives life and peace, He expects we should fear before Him (Jer. 32:38-40).

2. The qualities of an ideal priest (vv. 6-7).

(1) The early priests were honorable men (v. 6).

A. The prophet looks backward to the fidelity and zeal of Phinehas, which should have been copied by his successors.

B. It is the ideal priest whom the prophet has in mind, the archetype to which every true priest will seek to conformed. Christ was the ideal priest.

- C. He is incorruptible in doctrine—"The law of truth was in his mouth."
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- a. He is a walking Bible, a man mighty in the Scriptures (I Cor. 4:1-2). He conceals no truth how-unpleasant (Tit. 2:7-8).
- b. Truth is a law, and it has a commanding power.
- c. It is not a question of following some favorite preacher, or cleaving to a particular line of doctrines, but giving forth the entire Bible that really counts.
- D. He will not pervert or hold back the truth—"iniquity was not found in his lips."
- a. He was not a liar nor interested only in himself.
- b. He did not handle the Word of God deceitfully (II Cor. 2:17; 4:1-2; II Tim. 2:15).
- c. We are not to please men but Christ in our preaching (Jer. 23:28-29; Gal. 1:10; I Thess. 2:3-5).
- d. He who declares the whole counsel is free from the blood of all men.
- E. He is devout in life—"he walked with me in peace and equity" (See II Sam. 2:30).
- a. Ministers must be consistent in their conduct—in the home (I Tim. 3:2-5), the church (I Pet. 5:3) and in the world (I Tim. 3:7).
- b. Consistency harmonizes conduct. Holiness, like the law of gravitation, should regulate every motion of life.
- c. Men judge the minister's practice more than his preaching.
- d. He who undertakes to reprove the world, must be one whom the world cannot reprove.
- F. He is successful in labors—"and did turn many away from iniquity."
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- a. God only can turn men from iniquity, yet He uses true ministers as instruments in this work 12:3).
- b. The minister who turns men from iniquity are those who preach sound doctrine and live consistent lives.
- c. God promises success to faithfulness. We must not set sovereignty in opposition to the faithfulness of God.
- ness
- d. Aim to convert sinners from the error of their way (Jas. 5:19-20).
- e. One lady said of Robert McCheyne of Dundee, "He seemed as though he were almost dying to have you converted" (I Tim. 4:12-16; Jer. 23:21-22; 25:4-5).
- (2) The priest is God's messenger (v. 7).
- A. He has spiritual intelligence—"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge." Arabic and Syriac versions read: "For the lips of the priest drop knowledge."
- a. If he must keep, he must get knowledge (Tit. 1:9).

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- b. If one has no definite gospel to preach, for which he is willing to contend, to suffer, and, if needs be die, he had better hold his peace (II Sam. 18:22; Jer. 23:21).
- B. He must give spiritual instructions—"and they should seek the law at his mouth."
- a. The priest was the appointed interpreter of the law (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 17:9-10; 24:8; Ezra 7:10; Hag. 2:11-12).
 - b. The burden of his message is not, "Thus I think," but "Thus saith the Lord" (Acts 10:33; Rev. 2:7; 28:19-20).
 - c. We are to be a "scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:52) lest we should misread or misunderstand our message.
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- C. He has a spiritual office—"for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."
- a. He feels his responsibility and walks worthy of his high vocation. Spiritual work requires spiritual character (Gal. 6:1).
 - b. Newton said, "None but He who made the world can make a minister of the gospel."
 - c. The preacher is to be God's mouth to the people. It is an honor to be one of God's messengers.
3. The characteristics of false priests (vv. 8-9).
- (1) They neglect their duty—"Ye have not kept my ways."
 - A. They had departed from the high ideal set forth in verses 6-7.
 - B. The way in which God would have them to walk they had not walked. They had swerved from the right.
 - C. Instead of helping men accept the truth they had given men a prejudice against the truth by their immorality.
 - D. A skeptical age is the result of formal and heartless religious teachers of a previous generation.
 - (2) They led the people astray—"ye have caused many to stumble at the law."
 - A. By their example and teaching they had caused many to err from obedience to the law.
 - B. It is a terrible thing to cause others to fall (Matt. 23:13; Rom. 9:32-33; 14:13; Isa. 57:14).
 - C. Moral instructions have no weight nor influence when not supported by good examples.
 - D. Ministers by an inconsistent life and theological jargon cause people to stumble at Divine things.
 - (3) They had perverted the truth—"ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi."
 - A. They broke their part of the covenant; therefore, the Lord held Himself no longer bound to bless with life and peace.
 - B. They did not pay God due reverence and were disobedient to His laws. Thus the Lord withheld the blessings promised to Levi.
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C. These wicked priests had perverted the end of their office that was sacred and spiritual and made it subservient to the sensual and secular (Ezek. 34:2-3; Isa. 56:11). They had lost life and peace.

D. False ministers tamper with the Word of God—use it for material gain—support some favorite prejudice—use it to put forth their religious programs, etc.

E. How far is conventional theology from being the theology of the Bible!

(4) They were cursed in their work—“I also made you contemptible and base before all the people.”

(I A. Their misconduct tended to make them so in the eyes of the people, yet God had a hand in this also (Sam. 2:17).

B. They had dishonored God (Mal. 1:12); now He dishonors them. Sin is a reproach to any people, especially ministers.

C. The most despicable man on earth is a profane, wicked, scandalous preacher! Careless and unprincipled preachers will be held in contempt by the mass of the people.

D. Ministers who seek popularity and material gain become contemptible to intelligent souls.

E. How tragic when the salt of the pulpit has lost its savor, and it is being trodden underfoot with contempt!

(5) They engaged in half obedience—“have been partial in the law.”

A. Better rendered “have had respect of persons in the law” (II Chron. 19:7; Micah 3:11).

B. God has a respect to all His commandments, and so should we. Woe to those who misinterpret and misapply even the least commandment (Matt. 5:19).

C. Ministers must not be respecters of persons in doctrine nor discipline (I Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:1-9).

D. Preachers must have special qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-7) and receive greater judgment (Jas. 3:1).

III. UNLAWFUL MARRIAGES REPROVED (2:10-12).

1. The Jews were of one ancestry (v. 10).

(1) God was the Father and Creator of Israel in a very special sense (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 51:2; 63:16). They all came from Abraham.

(2) God made a covenant with them which forbade mixed marriages (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12-13; I Kings 11:1-2).

(3) In the sense of creation, Adam is the father of all living (Acts 17:26, 28), and all mankind are brothers and sisters in this sense, but not in a spiritual sense.

(4) All Israelites were brothers and sisters. By sinning against one another they offended their common Father and broke the family compact.

(5) “Deal treacherously every man against his brother” by perverting judgment, having respect of persons, and marrying strange wives.

(6) “Profaning the covenant of our fathers.”

- A. This covenant was their national charter.
- B. “Their fathers” denotes its antiquity and authority.
- C. They had lived in disobedience to the commandments of the God of their fathers.

2. Unholy marriages (v. 11).

(1) The Jews were to remain separated from heathen nations around them in matters of marriage and other things. Often they married outside of their nation and religion. These idolatrous connections profaned the name of Jehovah.

(2) “Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and Jerusalem.” They had committed the sin of mixed marriages with idolaters.

(3) “For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved.”

- A. Heathen women had entered into the nation itself, the community beloved by God.
- B. It is a terrible thing for those who profess holiness to the Lord to profane themselves by yoking up with unbelievers.

(4) “The daughter of a strange God.”

A. A woman who adhered to a foreign deity (Jer. 2:27). Israelites were called “sons of Jehovah” (Deut. 14:1; Prov. 14:26).

B. The rabbis said: “He that marries a heathen woman is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol.”

C. Every woman not truly devoted to Christ is a daughter of a strange god, under the influence of the god of this world.

D. Don’t marry a woman who embraces a false and erroneous system of religion.

E. The results of unholy marriages is—

- a. domestic unhappiness.
- b. a divided household.
- c. ill-trained children—generations of evil doers.
- d. neglect of true religion
- e. two conflicting religions breeds atheists.
- f. an evil marriage can be the devil’s chain to bind the soul to everlasting wretchedness and misery.

3. Mixed marriages will be punished whether teacher or pupil (v. 12).

(1) The transgressor shall be deprived of his position as one of the covenant people and shall leave no one to maintain his name and family.

- (2) He will be cut off from Israel and from Jerusalem and not be written among the living there.
- (3) The master and the scholar or the teacher and the taught. Blind leaders have blind followers (Matt. 15:14).
- (4) The priest that marries a strange wife shall not be able to atone for his sins by atonement. He shall be cut off from the temple (Ezra 10:18; Neh. 13:28).

IV. UNLAWFUL DIVORCES CONDEMNED (2:13-16).

1. The affliction of the cast off Jewish wives (v. 13).

- (1) These first wives with broken hearts complained to God for justice. Those who are wronged may obtain redress before God's throne. He hears the cry of the helpless.
- (2) Their tears had covered God's altar. He was moved by their crying and had no regard for the offerings the men brought to Him.
- (3) To marry strange wives they had to divorce their first wives. This evil is God's second accusation against them.
- (4) Such things hinders proper worship (I Pet. 3:7).

2. The men thought divorce was no great sin (v. 14).

- (1) "Yet ye say, Wherefore?" They had the gall to ask God what was wrong with such a practice. Why were their offerings not accepted?
- (2) Malachi answers: Your first marriage was made before God: "Because the Lord hath been witness."
 - A. God instituted marriage (Gen. 2:24), and He is a witness to the marriage covenant (Gen. 31:50).
 - B. God witnessed the pledges of fidelity and the many violation some are guilty of.
 - C. God is a witness to our covenants and our covenant breaches,
- (3) This was such an evil act because—
 - A. She is thy wife—bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh—the nearest to you of all relations you have in this world (Matt. 19:6).
 - B. She is the wife of thy youth—your first choice with whom you have long lived (Prov. 2:17; 5:15-20; 1:8). Don't hate the darling of your youth.
 - C. She is thy companion—shared in your joys and griefs—in whose company you must delight—God appointed her to be your helpmeet.
 - D. She is the wife of thy covenant.
 - a. if she continues faithful, you cannot justly be loosed from her—a covenant of life (Matt. 5:32; Mark 10:11-12; I Cor. 7:10-11).
 - b. there is an oath of God between you which is not to be taken lightly.
 - c. even heathens regarded marriage as a sacred act and guarded it by solemn sanctions.

Joel

- (4) “Against whom thou hast dealt treacherously.” By divorcing her in order to take another because they hated their first wife.
- (5) Married people should often call to mind their marriage vows and review them with all seriousness—
make a conscience effort of performing what they promised.
3. One man and one woman is God’s plan from the very beginning of human history (v. 15).
- (1) Malachi now gives some reasons why man and wife should not divorce. See here the oneness of marriage.
- (2) God made only one couple—Adam and Eve. If Adam had divorced Eve there would have been no other woman for Adam to marry (Matt. 19:4-6). From Adam to Moses there was no divorce.
- (3) “Yet had he the residue of the spirit.” God made Adam and Eve both a living soul. He could have made one man and a harem, but He did not.
- (4) “That he might seek a godly seed”—a seed of God (so the word is). A seed that would serve God and give honor and glory to Him.
- (5) Children are to be born in holy matrimony which is the ordinance of God.
- (6) The raising up of a godly seed is one of the reasons the marriage bed must be kept undefiled (I Cor. 7:13-14). They should be children of the marriage covenant.
- (7) “Therefore take heed to your spirit.” If we regulate our spirits we regulate our actions. Or, does he mean the Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:11)?
- (8) “And let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.” The putting away of a wife unlawfully is a treacherous act that God will punish.
- (9) Though these wives had been divorced God did not recognize the divorce.
4. God hates unscriptural divorces (v. 16).
- (1) “He hateth putting away.” The Lord did not approve of it from the beginning, and it is hateful to Him (Matt. 19:8).
- (2) This is another reason not to divorce your wife.
- A. A separation of a man and his wife, a divorce, is abhorrent to God.
- B. God hates divorce because sin causes divorce. The verse does not say that God hates all divorced persons.
- (3) Wonder what God thinks of America that leads the world in divorce—one out of three marriages end in
di-orce.
- (4) “For one covereth violence with his garment.”
- A. Some say this refers to the custom of the bridegroom in espousals casting his garment over her who was betrothed to him (Ruth 3:9).
- B. The meaning would be cast your skirt over iniquity and betroth violence to yourselves for a bride.

- C. Others say that he who divorces his wife shows himself to all beholders as an iniquitous man.
 - a. iniquity attaches itself to him plainly, encircling and enfolding him—the clothing of iniquity is the mark of the foul soul within.
 - b. this is opposed to the garment the meek wear (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) and the white robed saints (Rev. 7:14).
 - c. dress reflects the inward part of a man (Zech. 3:4; Isa. 64:5; Rev. 3:4; Prov. 7:10).
 - d. Shakespeare said: “The soul of this man is in his clothes.” “The apparel oft proclaims the man.”
- 5. God will no longer put up with such conduct (v. 17).
 - (1) God is said to be weary of their formal worship and blasphemous words.
 - (2) God is patient with our infirmities, but weary with our sins (Isa. 7:15; 43:23-24).
 - (3) God hears the words of men. Every syllable enters His ears. He understands our thoughts afar off (Ezek. 11:5).
 - (4) Skeptical words are offensive to God. Today they speak against God in their families, their clubs, their public places, their schools and colleges, and in the work place.
 - (5) God is holy and hates sin (Hab. 1:13; Ps. 5:4).
 - (6) They had perverted views of God’s character: “Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord” (Isa. 5:20).
 - A. Because God prospers the wicked they think He approve of their sins and delights in the sinner.
 - B. This problem is answered in Ps. 35:34-40 and 73. This is a perplexing fact to the righteous (Jer. 12:1-2).
 - (7) They had perverted views of God’s providence: “Where is the God of judgment.”
 - A. God has no concern for men at all, and if He does He favors the wicked over the righteous.
 - B. Because God does not immediately punish the wicked men say He will never punish (Eccl. 8:11).
 - C. “We have been often told God will judge sin. Where is His judgment? He has forsaken the earth and takes no notice of what is said and done by men on earth.”
 - D. “We dare Him to do His worst if He is a God of judgment.”
 - (8) There were scoffers before the Messiah’s first coming; there will be the same before He comes a second time (II Pet. 3:3-4).
 - (9) The Judge is coming soon (Jas. 5:7-9).

Chapter Three

I. THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH (3:1-5).

1. John the Baptist and the Messenger of the covenant (v. 1).

(1) "Behold, I will send my messenger." This is the same person as in Isa.40:1-3. He is none other than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; John 1:6).

A. John would be an angel or messenger, not by nature, but by office. He is being sent in answer to the question in the last verse of chapter two: "Where is the God of judgment?"

B. These are the words of Christ, and they prove Christ existed before John. Here is seen the deity of Christ.

C. "Behold" is prefixed to call attention to this important event. He is God's Malachi (as the prophet's name means "messenger" or "angel").

D. John held his commission from Heaven, not of men.

(2) "And he will prepare the way before me."

A. He will preach repentance and reformation, and thus remove the obstacle of sin which stood between God and His people.

B. John prepared the material out of which Christ founded His church (Luke 1:17; Matt. 16:18).

C. There is an allusion to kings sending persons before them when on a journey to give notice of their coming.

(3) "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."

Isa. A. As to His person He is "the Lord" (Heb. *HaAdon*), or Jehovah as in (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Josh. 3:11,13; 1:24; 3:1). The article marks that it is Jehovah.

B. This is none other than the Son of God and the promised Messiah.

Isa. C. "To his temple"—the temple in Jerusalem lately rebuilt by Zerubbabel, though enlarged and beautified by Herod—the second temple (Luke 2:22).

D. It is called "his temple" because it is devoted to His service and worship. This proves that Christ is God.

E. Note Matt. 21:12-16.

ness F. The Messiah would come suddenly after the appearing of John the Baptist. The Sun of Righteousness would come shortly after the morning star!

(4) "Even the messenger of the covenant" or "Angel of the covenant."

18:1- A. The angel of His presence (Isa. 63:9), also the Angel of Jehovah. He appeared to Abraham (Gen. 2,17,33), to Jacob (Gen. 31:11; 48:15-16), to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:2-6). He went before Israel

- as the Shekinah (Ex. 14:19) and delivered the law at Sinai (Acts 7:38).
- B. Christ is the Messenger or Angel of the covenant of grace (Heb. 9:15; II Sam. 23:5; Isa. 55:3).
- C. Here we see Christ's office. He will make known this covenant to His people (Matt. 26:27-28). Christ also the Surety and Mediator of the covenant.
- D. This inferior title does not detract from His glory as Jehovah, but shows His condescension and grace.
- E. In the Ethiopian language "messenger" may also mean "prince" (Dan. 9: 25).
- (5) "Whom ye delight in."
- A. The pious Jew expected and desired Christ (Luke 2:25,38). He was the Desire of all nations (Hag. 2:7).
- B. Those who seek Jesus find pleasure and delight in Him. Christ is our heart's delight and desire.
- (6) "He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."
- A. The Word of God is sure to be fulfilled.
- B. Is there not a distinction made here between the Father and the Son? Is the Father not the Sender and the Son the Sent?
2. The Messiah comes to judge (v. 2).
- (1) Malachi blends together the first and second advents of Christ.
- (2) His coming and rejection by the majority of the nation resulted in its destruction in A. D. 70 (John 9:39; Matt. 10:34).
- (3) "A refiner's fire" which separates precious metal from the dross.
- (4) "Like fuller's soap" or "fuller's herb" as the Septuagint renders it. A washing herb used to take out spots. Probably the ashes of some plant yielding a lye, like carbonate of soda.
- (5) The process of separating the godly from the ungodly started at His first advent (Matt. 3:10-12; Luke 2:35), has been going on every since, and will continue until the final separation (Ezek. 20:33-38).
- (6) The results of the final refining is seen in other places (Zech. 13:8-9; Isa. 9:25-27).
3. The Priests will be punished for their sins (v. 3).
- (1) "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."
- A. He makes sure the fire does not get too hot. He will put no more on His people than they can bear.
- B. Fire normally destroys but His brings out only the best. He wants all the dross removed until He sees His own image reflected (Rom. 8:29) in the glowing mass (Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 48:10; Heb. 12:10; I Pet. 1:6-7).
- C. When the dross is taken from the gold of the Christian, he will for ever be delivered from the furnace

D. The purer the gold, the hotter the fire now; the whiter the garment, the harder the washing.

E. Christ purifies a people in this age (Matt. 3:11; Tit. 2:12). He purifies the church by His Word (Eph. 5:25).

(2) "He shall purify the sons of Levi." The priests, who should have been leaders in righteousness (2:7), had been prime leaders in sin (1:6-2;9), shall experience the first cleansing.

(3) "They shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

A. This is the offering made by the priesthood of a restored nation in the millennium. These will be memorial in nature like the Lord's Supper is now.

B. The Lord was not pleased with their offerings in Malachi's day (1:6).

C. The holiest saints need refining, even the ministers of God's house (Ezek. 9:6; I Pet. 4:17).

God D. Till we are purified by the grace of God, we cannot do anything that will redound to the glory of (Gen. 4:4).

4. God will accept the offerings of regathered and restored Israel (v. 4).

(1) It is not necessary to spiritualize the names of "Jerusalem" and "Judah" so as to mean the church.

(2) This is the millennial worship (Ezek. 4:18-27).

(3) A cleansed priesthood will be able to minister effectively to a cleansed nation.

(4) "As in the days of old"—the days of Moses to the early days of Solomon. Maybe also in the days of Abel, Noah, and Abraham.

5. The Lord will judge the people (v. 5).

(1) They had asked, "Where is the God of judgment?" (2:7).

(2) All evil priests and people shall be judged and punished.

(3) "I will be a swift witness."

A. How terrible is that judgment where God is at once Witness and Judge.

B. God before whom all things are manifest shall be a witness against them.

(4) These sins are listed—

A. Sorcery or the occult which He condemns (Ex. 7:11; Deut. 18:10-14).

B. Adultery (2:16) which He condemns (Ex. 20:14).

C. Perjury which He condemns (Ex. 20:16; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 19:16-20; Prov. 19:5; Jer. 29:23; Zech. 8:17).

D. Oppressing the wage-earner which He condemns (Deut. 24:14-15; Jer. 22: 13; Jas. 5:4).

E. Oppressing widows and orphans which He condemns (Ex. 22:22; Deut. 24:17; Ps. 82:1-4).

Amos F. Perverting judgment (Septuagint) which He condemns (Ex. 22:21; Deut. 27:19; Ezek. 22:7,13-16; 4:12).

G. No reverence for God which was very wicked. This was the source of all their sin.

II. JEHOVAH'S THIRD DISPUTE WITH HIS SINNING PEOPLE (2:6-12).

1. The immutability of God (v. 6).

(1) "For I am the LORD" or Jehovah, a name peculiar to the Most High, the Eternal, the Maker of Heaven and Earth—the covenant name to Israel (Ex. 6:3).

(2) "I change not."

(Jas. A. Sin may triumph, judgment be delayed, but we must never infer from this that God has changed 1:17).

B. God is the same in essence and acts as ever.

C. He is as much the enemy of sin as ever He was. He has not ceased to be a God of judgment.

(3) "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

A. The unchangeableness of God and His faithfulness to His covenants with the fathers is why the Jews still exist (Rom. 11:29).

B. God has a future for Israel. It is not what they can do for Him that counts, but rather what He can do for them.

C. If it were not for God's love and covenants, they would have passed out of existence because of their many sins. Our unfaithfulness does not make God unfaithful.

D. God will chastise and correct His people, but He will not cast them off (Rom. 11:2; Jer. 33:11; Micah 7:20).

33:20- E. He calls them sons of Jacob to remind them of the covenant made with their great ancestor (Jer. 21).

F. The perseverance of the saints is guaranteed, not by our changeable love to God, but by His unchangeable love to us and His eternal purpose and promise in Christ.

2. God's declaration and invitation (v. 7).

(1) "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances and have not kept them."

to A. You live like your fathers did when they brought on themselves the Babylonian Captivity. You want follow their steps.

B. The N.T. churches have not kept God's ordinances as they should.

(2) "Return unto me, and I will return unto you."

A. Repent of your sins and I will bless you instead of bring judgment.

B. Israel's history had been one of backsliding.

(3) "But ye say, Wherein shall we return?"

A. They challenged the charge and demanded particulars.

B. What do we need to return from? What evils have we done?

C. Here is the Pharisaical spirit (1:6). They thought they were righteous and needed no repentance.

3. They were guilty of robbing God (v. 8).

(1) It is possible for a finite man to rob an infinite God! What a sin!

(2) The heathen world would not withhold from their idols the money or the things required. We may rob God of time and talents as well.

(3) "Offerings"—the first fruits, not less than 1/16 part of the corn, wine, and oil (Deut. 18:4; Neh. 13:10-12).

(4) We should never be compelled to beg from the Devil to carry on God's work.

(5) The reward of obedience cannot be given to the disobedient.

(6) The problem was threefold:

A. Not paying their tithes and offerings at all;

B. Withholding a part of them because of hard times, 3:11;

C. The Levities were not tithing to the priests.

(7) To withhold the tithe was to renounce the sovereignty of God over them.

4. The nation is cursed for robbing God (v. 9).

(1) Both people and priests were guilty.

(2) The rain was withheld and the earth did not bring forth her usual increase.

(3) By robbing God they had in truth robbed themselves of His blessings and made themselves the recipient of a curse.

5. The blessing of bringing the tithes to the storehouse (v. 10).

(1) "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse."

A. They were withholding the tithe and not bringing all to the storehouse. God is not served with partial service.

B. The storehouse in the O.T. was the temple (II Chron. 31:10-12; Neh. 10:38-39; 13:12-13). In the N.T. it is the church (I Cor. 16:1-2; I Tim. 3:15).

C. The tithes that Israel was to pay.

- (Deut. a. the tenth of the remainder of the first fruit—going to the Levites for their livelihood (Lev. 27:30-33).
b. the tenth paid by the Levites to the priests (Num. 18:26-28).
c. a second tithe paid by the congregation for the Levities and their families at the tabernacle (Deut. 12:18).
d. A third tithe every third years for the poor (Deut. 14:28-29).

(2) “That there may be meat in mine house.”

A. The Levites and priests were supported by the tithes and offerings brought to the storehouse (Num. 18:21; I Cor. 9:13).

B. Offerings took the form of meat (food) that was used by the priests and Levites.

(3) “Prove me now herewith...”

A. If we would have God open His treasury we must open ours.

B. “Prove me.” Put me to the test and see what I will do for you.

C. God has not changed. His promise is still good. What He has promised He is able to perform.

D. God will provide a superabundance. His blessings are limited only by our capacity for receiving them.

E. The giving of the tithe was an outward sign of obedience and subjection to God. To withhold it was highway robbery from the scriptural standpoint. It showed rejection of His sovereignty over them.

F. To rob God is to shut up the windows of Heaven!

6. God’s blessings on the tither (v. 11).

(1) The insects mentioned are probably the locust and caterpillar (Joel 1:4; 2:25).

(2) God can command and remand insects at His pleasure.

(3) The seasons and weather would be conducive to harvests at the right time.

7. In the way of obedience and as the result of the blessings of God on them, all nations would call them blessed (v. 12).

(1) This will fulfill the words of Zechariah 8:11-15.

(2) “A delightful land”—a land of good pleasures—a land in which God is well pleased (Isa. 62:4; Jer. 3:19).

III. HARD SAYINGS AGAINST GOD (3:13-15).

1. The impious murmurings of the people (v. 13).

(1) Their words had been “stout.” They came from pride and haughtiness and contempt of God (Jude 15).

(2) They spoke against God in public and cared not who heard them (Job 15:25).

- (3) They said the course of the world was not directed by a moral Governor.
- (4) The priest had propagated atheistical notions and infected the whole nation (Mal. 2:17).
- (5) They denied the charge and called on Malachi to prove it.

2. God's service had been falsified (v. 14).

- (1) "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God."

- A. He who serves God labors to no purpose, they said, and is a fool.
- B. Their formal service was a vain service (Matt. 15:8-9).
- C. Their change is contrary to Christian experience. Christians have found God's service their highest happiness and joy (Rev. 22:14).
- D. They had honored Him with their lips and not hearts—brought vain oblations—empty performances, served Him with formalities.

- (2) "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance?"

- A. God's service is not a mercenary service. They served God to get paid well.
- B. Religion is not a bargain, but affection, obedience, and gratitude to God. Legal requirement without the heart is worthless.
- C. This is an old complaint and often repeated (Job 22:15-17; 34:9).
- D. It is wrong to serve God for the sake of profit. Bunyan pictures Pliable as going on a pilgrimage for the sake of what he could get out of it.
- E. It is not possible to serve God in the spirit of a hireling.
- F. It is a sin to doubt that God rewards faithful service (Heb. 11:6; I Tim. 4:10).
- G. We must serve Christ out of pure love and let rewards come or not as they may.

- (3) "And that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?"

- A. In mourning apparel fasting and mourning over sin (Ps. 35:13-14; Job 30:28).
- B. "Before the Lord"—out of reverence and awe of Jehovah.
- C. They attributed a certain virtue to voluntary fasts, although done without the proper spirit (Isa. 58:4).

2. They questioned the justice of God (v. 15).

- (1) "And now we call the proud happy."

- A. The humble and meek are not blessed. The arrogant heathen and the free-thinkers have prosperity and happiness in this world they reasoned.
- B. This idea is against the Word of God (Ps. 119:21).

- C. We know not who is happy or sad (Prov. 21:24).
- D. Spurgeon said, "Soon the taste of honey is gone and all that is left is the sting of the bee."
- E. The proud may be happy only for a season. There is a judgment to come.

(2) "Yea, they that work wickedness are set up."

- A. The wicked are blessed with children by which their houses and families are built up they said.
- B. They said that the wicked had riches and honor—all temporal prosperity.

(3) "Yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

- A. They said the wicked are better off than we are. Instead of proving God, they tempt God and go unpunished.
- B. The wicked had provoked God by their impiety and yet escaped punishment for their sins.
- C. Many think the wicked fare the best in life—that they have all the fun.
- D. This is wrong (Prov. 13:15; Acts 9:5). Those who obey God are really happy (Ps. 16:11; Prov. 3:17).

IV. THE ELECT REMNANT (3:16-18).

1. The faithful few who feared God (v. 16).

(1) "They that feared the Lord."

- A. They feared the Lord and served Him while others did not. The fear of God is the beginning of all religion—all religious worship.
- B. This is not the fear of a cringing slave, but of a dutiful child.
- C. Fear of God was their secret spring, the hidden power of their holy lives.

(2) "Spake often one to another."

- A. In the midst of spiritual declension that surrounded them they were drawn together by their desire to obey God.
- B. This was openly, "one to another," without fear or shame.
- C. They often did it to encourage and strengthen one another.
- D. Amid the ungodliness of the times, they mutually talked about the God they feared (Ps. 66:16).

(3) "And the Lord hearkened, and heard it."

- A. God is not an idle spectator. Not a sigh nor a prayer, not a loyal word nor a feeble meeting, escape notice.
- B. He caught every syllable that fell from their lips.

His

(4) “And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord.”

- amidst
- A. The eternal mind does not need to be reminded of things by books. Great kings keep journals (Est. 2:23).
 - B. God has a book—a Scroll of Honor (Ps. 56:8; Dan. 7:10). It contains the names of those faithful amidst rampant apostasy.
 - C. Every good word that we speak about God is recorded in this book. They will be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).
 - D. Here we see God’s providence and omniscience—His ever-wakeful care, His unfailing knowledge.
 - E. “Before him” constantly as a reminder.

(5) “That thought upon his name.”

- A. The wicked do not think of God’s name.
- B. They meditated upon how they might honor the name of God.
- C. God is worth thinking about (Luke 24:15).

2. The Divine jewels (v. 17).

(1) “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts.”

- A. They are His by election, purchase, and by the voluntary surrender of themselves.
- B. Christ will lose none that the Father gave Him (John 6:39). The Lord knows them that are His.
- C. They are Christ’s to save, keep, feed, teach, lead, and glorify.

(2) “In that day when I make up my jewels.”

- A. These jewels are scattered here on earth. They are not yet in a collected state. They will be at the rapture (I Thess. 4:13-18; II Thess. 2:1) and the revelation (Matt. 24:31).
- B. This is true of the faithful in all ages. God values His elect remnant in every age and time.

(3) “And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

- His
- A. This is said in contrast with the doom of the wicked (II Pet. 2:4-6).
 - B. God will spare them because He did not spare His Son (Rom. 8:32; Ps. 103: 13,17-18).
 - C. None deserve to be spared, but we may say (Neh. 13:22). When He punishes sinners He will spare saints.
 - D. Never forget the kindness of God, and spare not yourselves in His cause.

3. The judgment day will be a day of discernment (v. 18).

(1) Then shall ye return.”

A. Some say this is the wicked in Israel who are not a part of the remnant. It is best to apply it to the remnant who have turned to the Lord and serve Him.

B. Some say this is the resurrection when the spirit or soul returns to the body

C. It may be best to apply it to Christ's coming a second time to the earth.

(2) "And discern between the righteous and the wicked..."

A. All men are righteous or wicked—sheep or goats—tares or wheat.

B. There is a solemn distinction between those who serve God and those who serve Him not.

C. There is a reward for those who serve God (Ps. 58:11).

D. Hell and Heaven are eternal distinctions.

Chapter Four

I. THE JUDGMENT ON THE WICKED AT CHRIST'S COMING TO EARTH (4:1).

1. "For, behold."

(1) "Behold" is prefixed to excite attention and the terror of the judgment.

(2) The Lord is coming to discern between the righteous and the wicked—to right the wrongs of the ages.

2. "The day cometh."

(1) It was future when the prophet wrote but certain.

(2) The day that comes is the day of the Lord. It is the day of the Great Tribulation which ends with Christ's return to earth to reign.

3. "That shall burn as an oven."

(1) The RV has "furnace" instead of "oven."

(2) This is the day of the searching power of His consuming presence when He discerns between the righteous and wicked (3:18).

(3) The "oven" is a symbol of the holiness of God which consumes all impurities—the blazing holiness of His righteousness.

(4) It represents the punishment inflicted on the wicked (Ps. 21:9; 50:3; Isa. 10:17-18; 66:15-16; Dan. 7:9-10; Matt. 3:12; II Thess. 1:8-9).

4. "And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble."

(1) Stubble in a furnace will stand a poor chance of escape.

(2) They will be unable to resist when Christ reveals His justice.

(3) That day will test every man's character and condition.

(4) God has perfect knowledge. He knows who is proud (3:15) and wicked.

5. "And the day that cometh shall burn them up...leave them neither root nor branch."

(1) "Neither root nor branch" is proverbial for utter destruction (Amos 2:9).

(2) A tree torn up by the roots has no chance to live again.

(3) There is no escape nor mitigation of punishment. The Targum has "son and nephew" instead of "root nor branch."

(4) There is no converted world when Christ comes back. The wicked must be burned (Matt. 13:40-43).

II. IT WILL BE A DAY OF DELIVERANCE TO THOSE WHO FEAR GOD (4:2-3).

1. The coming of Christ is a blessed day for the godly remnant (v.2; 3:16).

(1) The remnant fears His name and gives it the glory it is due.

(2) The coming of Christ is a stormy day to the wicked (Ps. 11:6; Amos 5:18, 20), but it is a fair day to the remnant (Gen. 19:23; Luke 21:28).

ing (3) The church waits for the Morning Star (Rev. 22:16). Israel waits for the Sun of Righteousness. The Morning Star heralds the dawn before the Sun rises.

(4) "Sun of Righteousness" is a figure representing the Messiah.

A. He is an oven to the wicked, but a sun to the righteous.

light, B. What the sun is to the natural world, Christ is to the moral and spiritual world—the source of life, health, warmth, fruitfulness, and gladness.

C. The sun is the center of the solar system bound together by the law of gravitation. In the millennium Christ will be the center of the greatest and most glorious system this world has ever known, bound together by the law of love (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:21).

D. Like the sun Christ will be the light of the world. He is the light now (John 8:12), but (John 3:19).

E. In the millennium such is not the case (Isa. 9:2; 60:19). Think of a world perpetually basking in the sunshine of Divine favor!

(5) "Arise with healing in his wings."

lief A. "Arise" denotes the appearance of Christ at His second advent. He comes suddenly (3:1), for the relief of His people.

B. The sun as wings to a bird swiftly spreads its light and heat (Ps. 139: 9; II Sam. 23:4; Ps. 84:11).

C. Christ comes to heal a sick and diseased world.

was D. When he came the first time He healed all manner of sickness and disease among the people. He the great Physician.

(6) "And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."

A. "Go forth" like a sick person healed returns to his business. The remnant shall be free and active.

B. "Go forth" denotes freedom, activity, and joy.

C. Nothing grows like a calf in the stall. This is spiritual growth and increase in a secure environment.

D. The Septuagint has "Ye shall leap as calves loosed from bonds."

2. The remnant victorious with Christ (v. 3).

(1) Presently the wicked tread us down. It shall not always be so.

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- (2) They shall become Christ's footstool (Ps. 110:1; Isa. 63:1-6; Rom. 16:20). Through Christ we are more conquerors (Rom, 8:37; Rev, 3;9),
 - (3) The triumph of the saints is owing to Christ's victory.
 - (4) The wicked burned in an oven shall be ashes under the feet of the righteous. Note Ps. 58:10 and 68:23.
 - (5) After Armageddon the armies of Antichrist shall be ashes and blood (Rev. 14:20). This is all literal.
 - (6) This is not annihilation. Rather it is the destruction of the body, not the soul.
 - (7) Like Sodom (Jude 7; II Pet. 2:9).

III. REMEMBERING THE LAW (4:4).

1. Here the last writer of the Old Testament mentions the first, Moses.
2. Malachi, the last prophet, exhorts them to remember Moses, and he preached Christ, in whom the law and the prophets are fulfilled.
3. In every age there is need of a careful study of the written Word.
4. The law here includes the enactments, legal, moral, and ceremonial.
5. To neglect is to despise and disobey God and to reject His sovereignty over us.
6. Men are apt to forget the rule of life—"Remember ye the law." Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all transgression of it.

IV. THE COMING OF ELIJAH THE PROPHET (4:5-6).

1. Elijah will come before the day of the Lord (v. 5).
 - (1) Moses is connected with Elijah here and with the day of the Lord (Matt. 17:3; Rev. 11:3-12).
 - (2) Some take this to refer to John the Baptist (Mal. 3:1; Luke 1:17; Matt. 11: 14; 17:10-13). They say the day of the Lord means the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.
 - (3) To this view many objections may be offered.
 - A. John denied he was Elijah (John 1:21).
 - B. There is no other such usage of the day of the phrase "day of the Lord."
 - C. In Mal. 3:1 John the Baptist comes before the first advent of Christ. Elijah appears before the day of judgment. John came to prepare the way of the Lord and then the Messiah came to His temple. Elijah comes to convert Israel lest the land be smitten with a curse. This is the opposite of what happened at the first coming (Matt. 10:34-36).
 - D. The Septuagint has "Elijah the Tishbite." The Jews understood it of literal Elijah.
 - (4) Elijah will return, seeing he never died. He will convert some of the 144,000 Israelites in the first half of the tribulation (Rev. 7).

- (5) Elijah is a type of the Christian ministry.
 - A. A ministry of Divine commission: "I will send Elijah." One must not go unspent (Jer. 23:32).
 - B. A ministry designed to convert lost sinners.
 - C. A ministry blessed in its results. Men are turned to God and one another. "Many" will be turned, but not all, nor even the majority.
2. The work of Elijah (v. 6).
 - (1) He will convert fathers and children, young and old, unto the Lord.
 - (2) "With a curse" is an allusion to the curse of the law (Lev. 27:29; Deut. 13:16-17; 20:16-17).
 - (3) The O.T. ends with a curse. The law had been violated in every particular and the curse was upon a disobedient people.
 - (4) This continues until the Messiah came and bore the curse (Gal. 3:13).