

SERMONS  
ON  
MALACHI

BY  
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## Malachi KJV

### Chapter 1

**1:1** The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

**1:2** I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

**1:3** And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

## Malachi Commentary

Sermon One

Chapter One

“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi”—Mal. 1:1.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He prophesied about 400 years before the time of Christ. There was a period of silence after his message went forth until the new order of things, introduced by John the Baptist and brought about by the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah and Malachi are among the prophets, who make use of the phrase, “the burden of the Word of the Lord.” It means a load, something that weighs us down, or something lifted up. It occurs in connection with judgment. Now the message of grace is not a burden. It is a delight to speak of God’s love, goodness and grace; but to speak of the wrath, or the judgments of God is a burden on the heart of His messenger. We are loath to speak of the terrors of the Lord, because they are so terrible, and yet so sure. I have heard men preach about hell and damnation as if they were glad that men would be lost because of their sins. An elderly minister said to a younger minister, Before you speak on the judgments of God, fill up on the love of God by reading the Word, and be steeped in prayer, fragrant with the mercy and goodness of God.

Malachi means “messenger of Jah, or my messenger.” He was the messenger of Jah. The two opening chapters are somewhat like the first chapter of Isaiah. They are addressed to Israel, setting forth their pitiful, disobedient condition. They are a fitting picture of Christendom today; and the Lord has some Malachis who are speaking forth His truth. They are His messengers, declaring the grace and goodness of God and also warning people against the judgments that are sure to come upon all the world.

### God’s Feelings Expressed

God says thru the Prophet, “I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob”—V. 2. He proves that He loved Jacob and hated Esau by adding, “I laid his (Esau’s) mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness”—V. 3. He has no reference here to Jacob and Esau as individuals, but their posterities. The house of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, were God’s people. He chose Abraham with whom He made a covenant. He renewed that covenant to Isaac and then to Jacob. Hence, He loved them because of His own sovereign choice and covenant. He had not thus chosen

Esau. In that sense He hated Esau. Comp. <sup>1</sup>Matt. 10:37 with <sup>2</sup>Luke 14:26. And this is Paul's interpretation in <sup>3</sup>Rom. 9:10-13. A further word as to why God made this statement. He loved Jacob and hated Esau because when Malachi wrote this, they had both shown forth their characters—Esau of the old creation, the flesh; and Jacob of the New Creation, the Spirit.

That divine choice is full of significance. God has always had a people upon earth, whom He chose for Himself. They are a new creation. He does not choose individuals arbitrarily against their will, but “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” People have to believe the truth; for it is not the will of God that any should perish, but rather that all should turn to Him and live. If any among the descendants of Esau believed the word as it came to Israel, they were considered proselites to the faith and were accepted. Thus Gentiles came into the household of faith under the old covenant; for instance, Ruth, who was not an Israelite, and the harlot Rahab. But God here is teaching us a spiritual lesson. Jacob and his family stand for a spiritual house, a new creation; but Esau and his family stand for the flesh, the old creation.

#### The Flesh Shall Not Prevail

Edom (Esau's land) said, “We will return and build the desolate places”—V. 4 But the Lord said, “They shall build; but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever”—V. 4. Jehovah is against the flesh. When Israel came up out of Egypt and were on their way to Palestine and sought to pass by peaceably, the Edomites persecuted them; but the Lord remembered their persecutions and dealt with them accordingly. Nobody can persecute God's people without suffering for it. “Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord”—Rom. 12:19. He overrules the persecution for the good of the saints. He may use other folks to chastise His own people; but afterwards, He punishes the instrument of chastisement. He also makes His foes to acknowledge Him. He said to Edom, “And your eyes shall see and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel”—V. 5.

God loved Israel. Therefore, tho' He chastised them because they were

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10:37 “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

<sup>2</sup> Luke 14:26 “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

<sup>3</sup> Romans 9:10-13 “And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

**1:4** Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

**1:5** And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

disobedient and unfaithful; yet His eyes were always on them, and a remnant will believe, and He will bring them back into the land of promise. God will fulfill His Word. The fellow that says there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, does not know his Bible. We are at liberty to draw many lessons from God's dealings with Israel and apply them to the Church; but God says one thing to Israel and He has one purpose for them; He has another purpose for the Church and says other things to the church. Paul's epistles (except Hebrews), for instance, were written to the Church, and most everything in them, except the 9th, 10th and 11th chapters of Romans, were concerning the Church.

#### Reverence Expected

"A Son honoureth his father and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"—V. 6. Here God speaks to them as their father. This is unusual. The Fatherhood of God was generally unknown under the old covenant. The words (Isa. 63:16 and 64:8)—"Thou art our Father," are prophetic. Israel will address the Lord thus in the near future. When our Lord Jesus shall reign as King of kings, the Jews will call Him, "the everlasting Father"—Isa. 9:6. Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven"—Matt. 6:9. He introduced the Fatherhood of God. The Son had to come and be revealed to men as God's Son before they could understand their sonship toward God and His Fatherhood toward them. That is why it was postponed. You see the Scriptures bring to us a constant unfolding of the truth. There is a time for certain phases of truth, and they are depending on portions of truth that have come forth before. 400 years before His Son is to appear, Jehovah intimates that they do not honor Him as such; for He had treated them as His dear children. And they should have revered Him as their Master, or Lord.

#### Against the Priests

"O priests, that despise my name"—V. 6. God's chief complaint here is against His representatives. Chap. 2 opens with the same charge. In the seven letters in Rev. 2 and 3, the charges, or commendations are first of all to the angels, or pastors; for they represent the Lord to the people. "And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"—V. 6. Six times in this little chapter we have the "name" mentioned, referring to the Lord; twice in this 6th verse. How sad it is when the leaders despise the Lord's name. "And ye say, wherein have we despised thy name?" The Lord answers, "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible"—V. 7. Notice also in the 12th verse, "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, the table of the Lord is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible." God held the kings, or shepherds, and priests responsible for the spiritual condition of the people; for they were His messengers to the people. The kings were to rule as shepherds or caretakers,

**1:6** A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then *I be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if *I be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

**1:7** Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible.

**1:8** And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

**1:9** And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

**1:10** Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought*? neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

over Israel, and the priests were to bear the people on their hearts to God. They were intercessors. Both kings and priests were types of Jesus Christ. When He was here, He fulfilled the prophetic office for three years. Later, He began the priestly office, which He is still fulfilling. He intercedes for His followers and bears them on His heart to the Father.

As the Lord had a controversy with the priests in Malachi's time, so he has a controversy with the ministers today. The seven letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3) indicate His view of Christendom thru-out this past 1900 years. The letters are all addressed to the angels, or messengers, i.e., the pastors, because He holds them responsible for the condition of their congregations. Only two out of the seven are found without blame; viz., Smyrna and Philadelphia. A small minority of ministers are walking in the light and will of the Lord. Hence, He arraigns the priests today for permitting error, and for not giving their flocks the whole Truth. No marvel that He removes the candlestick, that is, those saints who have the light and walk in it, and leave the unfaithful shepherds with those who are lifeless and formal, heady and worldly minded. This explains why there are come-outers today. Some may come out with a wrong spirit, not being led out by the Lord. That is unfortunate. But when He leads people out, they gather together in His name and that name they honor. They learn His Word, yield to its power, walk in the Spirit and glorify God in a practical, every day life.

God charged the priests that they despised His name, and offered polluted bread upon the altar. They said also, "The table of the Lord is contemptible; the table of the Lord is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even His meat is contemptible. What a weariness is it!" (*"The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it!" KJV*)—V. 12, 13 R.V. And they "snuffed at it." That is the way many people treat the pure Word of God now, call evil good, and good evil. It wearies them to hear the Truth. They prefer light entertainment. Not only the Catholic priests, but Protestant priests also are to blame for this perverted appetite. They mix a little truth with much error. As Israel's priests offered blind, lame and sick animals in sacrifice to God, they were denying that Christ was that perfect holy Lamb of sacrifice, and saying He was lame and sick; Christ is misrepresented to the people. He is not proclaimed as a complete Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, a gracious Savior, able to save to the uttermost and heal all who come to Him in simple faith.

No marvel if hungry sheep hunt better pasture. They cannot be blamed if they jump over the fence because they smell the sweet clover of the truth elsewhere. Now and then someone writes like this—"What do you think about it? A few of us are disappointed and discouraged; for the meeting is dead. There is no spiritual life, nor power, nor food. Is it right for us to assemble by

ourselves elsewhere and worship the Lord?" Yes, we say, it is right. Doubtless the Candlestick Examiner is again removing the light-bearers to themselves. They long for liberty to pray in the Spirit and witness for Jesus. They yearn to know the Scriptures and the power of God. The Holy Spirit is grieved with the dearth in the regular meeting, and is leading the thirsty ones out into the green pastures and by the still waters of peace, plenty and refreshing. In clarion tones, the Lord is saying, "Come out of her (Babylon), my people and be not partaker of her sins" ("*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins*" KJV)—Rev. 18:4. Wherever Babylon is, come out. "Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, saith the Lord, and will be a Father unto you and ye shall be my people" ("*be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*"—2 Cor. 6:17-18 KJV).

"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 heathen, saith the Lord of hosts"—V. 11. God will have His name honoured, magnified and glorified. The name of Christ is above every name and deserves our respect. If we deny the virgin birth and the meritorious death of Jesus Christ, we are despising the name of Jesus. We are saying that the table of the Lord is polluted and the meat is contemptible. That is what men are saying today. They do not believe in the Deity of Christ; and of course they deny the merit of His blood. They say that it is no better than the blood in the veins of anybody else. But blood untainted by sin, flowed through the veins of the Son of God, and was poured out for us. Happy are the people that believe this and declare it. Cursed are the people that deny it and decry it. They defame the name of Jesus and the curse of God will rest upon them forever.

"Ye said also, behold, what a weariness is it? and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand saith the Lord?"—V. 13. Men snuff at the only sacrifice that has brought salvation to lost souls, and say, it is a weariness. To them reality is a weariness. As the Sister prayed so happily and freely in the Spirit, my heart rejoiced in the reality of realities. I said, How real is reality: it is the real truth of God. It satisfies our hearts and the heart of God also. Thus we honour His name. We treat God as our Father and fear Christ as our Master. We hold Him as our Lord and Head. That gladdens the heart of the Son of God. Thus we fulfill the Scriptures to the uttermost and are able to walk in the light. Of course the will of God is wrought in us and by us. When we pray, God hears us. When we preach the Truth, it goes home to hearts. It convicts the careless and indifferent and strengthens the weak. Yes, they say, It is tiresome to listen to the folks who pray so long and

**1:11** 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 heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

**1:12** But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* polluted; and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible.

**1:13** Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!* and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

**1:14** But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name *is* dreadful among the heathen.

loud and testify so boisterously and shout the high praises of God. Well, it is a weariness to us to listen to the fellow that is dry, cold and intellectual, precise, legal and lifeless. When we are filled with the Truth of God in our minds and hearts and are partakers of the life, spirit and faith of the Lord, our very flesh recoils from that which is carnal, worldly, cold and intellectual and fleshly.

Finally, notice verse 14—“But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” Some priests brought animals that were corrupt. There was some defect in them and they knew it; and they offered them to God. He also knew it, and could not accept them. That is the kind of a redeemer that some priests recommend to the people; not the Redeemer, who is symbolized, or typified by those pure offerings of bullocks, or sheep, or goats, or pigeons under the old covenant. Christ was a pure offering. God was well pleased with His Son because He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and knew no sin” (“*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens... who knew no sin*”—*Hebrews 7:26 & 2 Cor. 5:21 KJV*). He was absolutely without blemish. God accepted Him. The kind of teaching that some people give makes out Christ a minister of sin. They make it appear that He is not that pure, clean, holy offering that God accepted, hence, the curse rests upon them.

Happy is the people who honour; the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and give Him the place that God has given Him. Happy are the people that enjoy such a Gospel and offer it to others. God’s blessing is bound to rest upon all such. And God has such a people in these closing days, who are walking in the light and seeking only His will. Sometimes they are scattered. There are individuals, who are not known to anybody; but they are known unto the Lord. Known unto the Lord are all His saints, and He is making up His jewels, as we read on Sunday from this same book. He is gathering them together.

Sermon Two

Chapter Two

Chapter 2

2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment *is* for you.

2:2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay *it* to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay *it* to heart.

2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, *even* the dung of your solemn feasts; and *one* shall take you away with it.

“And now, O ye priests; this commandment is for you”—Verse 1. As stated in the first sermon, God’s complaint is first and chiefly against the priests. The same is true today. The priests, or ministers stand before the people for the Lord. They are His representatives, His servants, His messengers. By choosing the ministry of the Gospel, they assume those relationships. Therefore, God has a right to expect of them good conduct and faithful service; and the people have a right to expect good spiritual food and tender care from them. This chapter is freighted with valuable lessons concerning God’s ministers. The chapter falls naturally into five parts, each containing seven significant segments. These segments are double in a number of cases. The close language student would term much of this chapter poetic.

1. A Divine Threat

“If ye will not hearken, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart”—V. 2.

Consider who uttered these words—“the Lord of hosts.” This lends weight and solemnity to them. This title of God occurs eight times in the first chapter, six times in the second and twenty-four times in the entire book. The name, Lord, is Jehovah in the Revised Version. The whole phrase is Jehovah of hosts. He who speaks herein has just dominion over all created intelligent beings—over angels, good and bad, in heaven; over disembodied spirits in heaven and under the earth and over all mankind. In a very special sense, He is LORD of His own people, His spiritual hosts.

God demands a hearing ear and attentive heart. Such an attitude commands His favor and kindness. His chief claim upon us is, “to give glory unto His name.” Men, carnal men, wicked men get plenty of undeserved praise. Our God gets very little. Oh, let us give Him all the glory due to His precious name. The LORD of hosts deserves it, hence, He requires it: for every good and perfect boon cometh down from Him. Neglecting these attitudes toward Jehovah, incurs a curse, even upon our blessings. Israel murmured, and God gave them flesh to eat till it stuck between their teeth, fulfilling this word—“I have cursed them already”—V. 2.

“Behold I will corrupt your seed”—V. 3. The margin says, “Reprove your seed;” because their offspring followed in their steps. This is the fourth segment. The fifth is still worse—“and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts”—V. 3. The shame and reproach which enveloped



**2:4** And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

**2:5** My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him *for* the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

those priests for their conduct before God was as if their faces were covered with refuse. Study the disgraceful conduct of Eli's sons and their deserved end—1 Sam. 2 and 4. "And one shall take you away with it"—V. 3. Thus was the "remnant of the house of Jeroboam" taken away—1 Kgs. 14:10. Finally, "and ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts"—V. 4. God gives ample proof that His Word is His Word and not man's puny word. He had chosen Levi and covenanted that his offspring should be the priestly line; and He demonstrated it beyond contradiction. The unyielding sons of Levi, or Aaron, learned that to their deep sorrow and shame. Jehovah in every age sovereignly chose and equipped certain persons to know and declare His will, and make others to know it. He does the same today. Those who refuse and oppose them suffer for it.

## 2. Real Priests

"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"—V. 5, R. V. This refers to the day the golden calf was made. God was displeased greatly and judged Israel. Moses exclaimed, "Who is on the Lord's side?"—Ex. 32:26. "And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses"—Ex. 32:28. They "gathered themselves together unto him"—Ex. 32:26. Thus Levi earned the priesthood. See <sup>1</sup>Ex. 32:19-29. Verses 5 to 7 of our lesson chapter set forth seven important facts about true, acceptable priests of God. They contain excellent lessons for us, who are ministers today; for the character and qualifications of prophets and priests under both covenants are practically the same.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 32:19-29 "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strawed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? *let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day."

“Life and peace” were the two main planks of that covenant. Reference is made to the words said to Phinehas (<sup>1</sup>Num. 25:12) and to <sup>2</sup>Ezek. 34:25 and 37:26. Life is omitted in them; only peace is named. But we must bear in mind that as the Aaronic priesthood was only typical, so was also the covenant. The anti-typical covenant was made between the Father and His Son Jesus. Therefore, we read, that He was made a priest, “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life”—Heb. 7:16. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” His priesthood is eternal, the guarantee of our eternal salvation. Let the reader look up the three citations named above! God accept it as divine. The same facts are true of women whom Jehovah may choose and send forth as His ministers. will yet fulfill His covenant to Israel to the uttermost.

Why were life and peace given? “That he might fear; and he feared me and stood in awe of my name”—V. 5, R. V. Every true priest did as here stated; but Jesus revered the name of His Father in a sense and degree beyond all others. He showed no pity to the flesh and recognized no natural ties. Let us ministers be provoked to deep awe and reverence by those Old Testament priests and by the unflinching loyalty of Christ. Let us take Christ in us to stand in awe of His name and of the Father’s name. “The law of truth was in His mouth”—V. 6. Of course “iniquity was not found in his lips”—V. 6. It is called “the Lord’s law” in Ex. 13:9. We are apt always to regard the law as hard, cold and stern. It simply means the rule, or will of God. If our hearts are full of divine love and our minds full of divine truth, iniquity will not be found in our lips either. As Paul admonished, we should be imitators of him as he imitated Christ, to whom the above verse ultimately refers.

“He walked with me in peace and equity”—V. 6. What a testimony! A true priest, or minister enjoys the covenant of peace to the full. Jesus did nothing apart from His Father; neither should we. Even Enoch walked with God and had this testimony that he pleased God. Why may not we, who have Christ in us, our life and strength? Let us, God’s servants, persistently say and believe that “it is no longer I that live; but Christ liveth in me, etc.” (*“nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” KJV*) (Gal. 2:20) and it is “Christ speaking in me,” not weak toward others, but mighty in them—<sup>3</sup>2 Cor. 13:3. Then we too shall walk and please Him. Then the following also will

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 25:12 “Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:”

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 34:25 & 37:26 “And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods...Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.”

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:3 “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.”

**2:6** The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

**2:7** For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

be true of us. “And did turn many away from iniquity”—Mal. 2:6. Our testimony and teaching will be effectual. We will bear fruit to God’s glory and results will follow our ministries. The same Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus to go about doing good and healing the oppressed, will enable us to do the same mighty works.

“For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge; and they should seek the law at his mouth”—V. 7. Such was the instruction given to the priests and people at the beginning, as declared in <sup>1</sup>Deut. 17:9. Ezra was a fine example of a true priest; “for he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (“*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.*” *KJV*)—Ezra 7:10. The ministry of the priests, including Ezra, in Nehemiah’s day, is praise-worthy. “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly (or with interpretation) and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading”—Neh. 8:8. Preachers should ponder this verse and imitate those sons of Aaron. Paul admonished Timothy, and thus admonishes all of us ministers, saying, “Preach the Word; study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (“*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”—*2 Tim. 2:15 KJV*) (lit. holding a straight course in the truth). Complaint comes to us continually from the pens and lips of God’s people, that the shepherds do not instruct them in the Scriptures. They entertain the people with catchy stories and eloquent statements. What a pity! What a shame! Our blessed Lord set before us an example which we should seek earnestly to heed. Twice we read in Matthew, that He went about teaching and preaching and healing all manner of sickness—<sup>2</sup>Matt. 4:23 and 9:35. And He expects no less of us today. Happy and successful they who follow in His steps.

“For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts”—V. 7. The Lord had definitely chosen Aaron and his sons to be His messengers. No one else could fill the priest’s office. If he attempted to do so, he suffered for it. King Saul lost his kingdom because he forced himself to offer a burnt-offering, when he thought Samuel was not keeping his promise—I Sam. 13. Many men choose the Gospel ministry as an avocation, but are egregious failures, for God has not sent them. They may continue therein; but they do not minister God’s Word.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 17:9 “And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment:”

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:23, 9:35 “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people...And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”

They lecture, make religious speeches, get a following, but prove to be false prophets. One who is really chosen by the Lord, brings the Lord's message. He does not need credentials from men to advertise him. "A man's gift maketh room for him"—Prov. 18:16. God credentials him and causes people to give heed to his message.

### 3. Unfaithful Priests

Verses 8 to 10 record seven pitiful facts concerning half-hearted and selfish priests. God said to them, First, "Ye are departed out of the way"—V. 8. They knew God's way and will, and were responsible for walking in it; for He would have enabled them to do so, if they had chosen His will. Second, as a result of departure, they "caused many to stumble at the law"—V. 8. It is a very solemn fact, that everyone of us exerts an influence over others. Especially is this true of people in an official place. If we go right, others will go right. If we go wrong, others will go wrong. Third, they "corrupted the covenant of Levi." A minister's misconduct makes it appear that the truth is evil. It misrepresents the Lord. Peter's compromise with legality, because he feared the Jews, made it appear that Christ was the minister of sin—<sup>1</sup>Gal. 2:17. To stand against the truth is to give God the lie.

Fourth, the Lord exposes such. "Therefore, have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people"—V. 9. Let no minister think that he can continue in his own self-devised way and get by. God will show him up. The spiritual will surely discover his departure from the truth. The full meaning of the departure of the priests from the way is stated in the fifth point. They were "partial in the law"—V. 9. The margin says, They lifted up the face against the law, which expresses the will of God. And no one can step out of God's way into his own way without going against God's will. It is for the people's safety, the Lord exposes self-seeking leaders and blows up their religious works. Sixth, priests, who start in their own way, go from bad to worse. They deal treacherously with their fellows, even with their brethren. How can they? "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" (V. 10) the true saint inquires. We are members of the same family. "We be brethren" (Gen. 13:8), said Abraham to Lot. Rather than mistreat his nephew, or have strife, he suggested a peaceable separation. Seventh, what a sad climax is God's verdict of the priests' departure from the right way. He calls it, "Profaning the covenant of the fathers" (V. 10), the covenant which the Lord made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Profanation against that covenant was against God's Son Jesus Christ, who is the very core and ultimate object thereof. Today, departure into one's own way, ends finally in, fearful defeat and shame, if not in modernism.

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 2:17 "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid."

**2:8** But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

**2:9** Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

**2:10** Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

What a warning to the servants of the Lord. Let us take it deeply to heart and flee from the first and smallest intimations of self-will and the faintest desires of going in our own way. Let us shun the ways of supposedly wise men and women, who appear to have fabulous success. Young ministers especially need to be wary of Satan's snares. Paul recognized the traps that trip them, some of which he named in 1 Tim. 6. He said concerning them, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (*"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."*—1 Tim. 6:11 KJV). Then later (2 Tim. 2:22), he exhorted, saying, "Flee also youthful lusts." Doubtless he meant the lusts for an easier place, a ministry with less persecution, popular, promising and on a larger scale. Others have great success. Why not I? Persons with strong will, strong personality, self-conceit and great ambitions are easily trapped by the enemy here. Many young fellows seemingly are making it go today; but in God's sight, they are on the rocks of spiritual defeat. Let us profit by the failures of others.

### Sermon Three

"Judah hath dealt treacherously and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem"—Chap. 2:11. Judah's failure is briefly described in verses 11 to 13. This portion also falls into seven segments. Judah's chief error is expressed in the first statement—She "hath dealt treacherously." We saw that this was one of the last complaints laid against the priests. Now the whole tribe is accused of the same wicked conduct. Five times this charge is mentioned in this chapter. Treachery means deceit, trickery, unfaithfulness to a trust, the breaking of an alliance. How sad that God's people thus mistreat one another; but it is sure to follow a self-chosen path if the old man is not judged. The Lord's estimate of that conduct is expressed in calling it "an abomination," that is, an impure, detestable vice.

"For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which He loved"—V. 11. The priests had profaned the covenant of the fathers. This charge goes further back; for God's holiness preceded His covenant and gave birth to it. It is a very serious thing to tamper with and belie the holiness of Jehovah. We are exhorted to praise the beauty of holiness and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. God's throne is a throne of holiness and He has sworn by His holiness. We, who believe, are partakers of His holiness, having been created in righteousness and true holiness; and we are to bring forth fruit unto holiness (the sanctification), without which no man shall see the Lord—<sup>1</sup>Heb. 13:15.

"And hath married the daughter of a strange god"—V. 11. Ezra 9

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name."

**2:11** Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

records a painful description of that transgression. “The holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of the lands” (*“the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands”—Ezra 9:2 KJV*). The princes and rulers were chief in that trespass. They engaged in the abominations of the heathen. Ezra’s loyal heart was deeply grieved and heavy. In his fervent prayer, he exclaimed, “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.” (Ezra 9:6). “Should we again break thy commandments and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? Wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant?” (*“Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?—Ezra 9:14 KJV*). Here is where Paul found his burning material for 2 Cor. 6:14-18—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” etc. Many Saints never learn the experimental care of God and His fatherly love and fellowship; they never become sons of God in experience because they mix with the world, which He pronounces “unbelievers, unrighteousness, darkness, infidelity and idolatry.”

“The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this”—V. 12. Yes, if we do not cut ourselves away from worldly alliances, we will be cut off from fellowship with the Father and from His protection and service. Even tho’ one be “master and scholar,” there is no escape; for God cannot condone such mixture. Sometimes in testimony and preaching, men think to pull the wool over other people’s eyes and make them believe that they have the victory; but spiritual listeners discern the emptiness and want of reality in them. Such men are severed by God’s providences from the faithful flock; for He determines to keep His house clean. The clause, “him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts” (V. 12) is explained in Neh. 13. The Lord cannot accept the worship and service of ministers who continue in unholy and unscriptural associations. An assembly cannot put up with their ministry and go on faithfully with God. Therefore, He raises up a Nehemiah, who thrusts them out by the Word of God, which is living and energetic.

“And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, etc.” (V. 13) have I done? What harm is there in that? Oh, do you want to put me under law? You are not my boss. If children impudently address their parents after that fashion, generally they slap them in the face and send them away with a severer chastisement; but the Lord in mercy replies to his impudent servants and gives them an opportunity to repent and mend their ways.

**2:12** The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

**2:13** And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand.

**2:14** Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

**2:15** And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

The question, “wherefore?” refers to the scathing divine threat in verses 12 and 13. Why would God cut off such priests? Here is the plain answer—“Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth”—V. 14. Four arguments are given here against unfaithful treatment of a man against his wife. She is his companion; for he chose her to be such. He ought therefore to treat her. Have you observed how pious some leaders act? They have a faculty of crying and whining. They seem very religious, make loud and long prayers, squeeze out pious tears and sobs and fool the people. But God knows the life and the heart. He cannot endorse, nor bless apologetical speeches and prayers. They court sympathy and sometimes get it from the fleshly minded, but not from the spiritual. Neither the Lord, nor His faithful flock can receive such service, or worship.

#### Five Questions Answered

“Yet ye say, Wherefore?” The remaining four verses of chapter 2 record and answer to the three selfish and unfair questions propounded by unfaithful priests. God answers by asking two other questions, and explains. Is it not strange that people can insult the Lord, walk in the flesh, follow their own lusts, then when chastised and corrected for it, inquire of Him why He punishes them? They even say, “Wherein have we wearied Him? or where is the God of judgment?”—V. 17. I have heard them say, Well, what as his companion. She is the wife of his covenant; that is, he made overtures and promises to her. He promised to be faithful to his companion, and would allow no other lover to come between. That is man’s side. But there are two items on God’s side. “And did not He make one?” (V. 15) Yes, did not the Lord create Adam and Eve, two persons, and join them together as one? “And what God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (*“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”—Mark 10:9 KJV*). If a Christian man has chosen a lady to be his wife, believing that God has joined them, he should not deal treacherously toward her. If she misconducts herself and leaves him, then he is free—1 Cor. 7. And Jehovah “had the residue (or excellency) of the Spirit” (V. 15), with which he was ready to anoint the priest and enable him to do God’s will. Divinely-appointed priests, or ministers, are also divinely equipped. “As thy day, so thy strength shall be” (*“as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”—Deut. 33:25 KJV*), saith the Lord. He has always met His servants, if they were honest and wholehearted toward Him and sought only His glory. He is no different today; hence, He has some true, unselfish servants now. To everyone who cries out to Him in faith, He gives the excellency of the Spirit.

“And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed” (V. 15). Adam and Eve were made one, that sometime down the line of their offspring, a child might be born, who should be the great Benefactor of mankind. He should be “a godly seed, or a seed of God”—See margin. But they failed the Lord.

**2:16** For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

**2:17** Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where *is* the God of judgment?

Adam's immediate descendants were human only and sinful. He begat a son in his own likeness; that is, sinful. But the seed of God, the Lord Jesus, is "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb. 7:26). The marriage of every priest should be intact and never broken, because his son was a reminder of the promised seed of God, announced in <sup>1</sup>Gen. 3:15. Furthermore, the marriage relation foreshadows the union between God and His people. God is faithful to His own. He never deals treacherously with them. He might possibly have found some brighter and abler folk among the nations; for Jesus said, "The people of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (*"for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."*—Luke 16:8 KJV). But He never flirted with the nations. He loved His people and sought their comfort, happiness and usefulness. He does so yet. Praise His name! Every man who marries should be a type of Christ, the coming glorious Bridegroom. Every woman who marries should be a type of the Bride of Christ. This is the meaning of Paul's injunctions to husbands and wives in Eph. 5. Ministers especially should set the example in this respect before the saints. The God of Israel hateth putting away. He divorced Israel, because He was compelled to do so; but there will never be a divorce between Jesus and His heavenly bride.

"Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet, we say, Wherein have we wearied Him?"—V. 17. What a charge Jehovah was compelled to file against His representatives, the priests. Is it possible that men can make the Almighty God weary? Yes, His heart grows tired of His people's insincerity, unfaithfulness, unreality, lightness and falsehood. He is deeply grieved and pained. Then, what is worse, they ask the impudent question, "Wherein have we wearied Him?" (V. 17) as if they did not know. God quickly and plainly answers, stating, "When ye say, Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delighteth in them"—V. 17. In speaking thus, the priests acknowledged that some of them did wrong. And they knew very well that God abominated all kinds of wrong-doing. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well," is His injunction—Isa. 1:16, 17. He condemns calling evil good, and good evil. He delights only in faith and obedience; for He furnishes the enabling to believe and obey.

One of the most deplorable things today is lasciviousness, and treating such conduct lightly, and even teaching that God overlooks and does not hold it against us, because He knows we are weak. Paul bewailed such a state of mind. Some sinned, but failed to repent of their uncleanness, fornication and lasciviousness—<sup>2</sup>2 Cor. 12:21. Jude (v. 4) wrote of those who are "turning the

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:21 "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."



grace of our God into lasciviousness.” They take advantage of grace and abuse it. Some fanatics on eternal security teach that we may do as we please, let the natural man run riot, and God does not care. Then some enemies of divine grace, declare that we also teach such a devilish heresy. Nay, we teach a life of victory over the flesh; not only that it is possible, but the Lord requires it, because He has made ample provision for it. Paul’s Gospel shows us the way of overcoming and the Holy Spirit leads us in that way and becomes our enabling to overcome. Malachi taught this triumph over evil. Note the priests’ last query—

“Where is the God of judgment?” (V. 17) as if God were indifferent to their evil conduct. That very question wearied the Lord. Evidently such people have no conscience before God. He is not in their thoughts. They do not believe that “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”—Prov. 15:3. If they read the second and third chapters of Revelation, they have their eyes closed. Jesus as Judge is even now walking in the midst of the churches, discerning the evil and the good, condemning the one and confirming the other, threatening chastisement of the former and promising rewards to the latter. Nothing is plainer than that we shall be judged for the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad—<sup>1</sup>2 Cor. 5:10. Men expect the wicked to be judged; but 1 Pet. 4:17 declares, that “judgment must begin at the house of God.” Oh, let us heed Paul’s earnest words—“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to the reading, to the exhortation, to the doctrine” (*“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” KJV*)—1 Tim. 4:12, 13.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”

## Chapter 3

**3:1** Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

## Sermon Four

### Chapter Three

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts”—Mal. 3:1.

Two messengers are mentioned in this verse. The first, “my messenger,” refers to the incomparable John the Baptist; for the above words are quoted in <sup>1</sup>Matt. 11:10 with reference to him. Jesus there gives a great eulogy of John as His fore-runner. It requires more than a casual reading of his career in the Gospels to arrive at a worthy appreciation of him and his ministry. We ministers may learn some very deep and valuable lessons from him. The other, “the messenger of the covenant” (V. 1), refers to our adorable Lord Jesus. He is the chief Messenger. The same Heb. word “malak,” here translated “angel” in the Old Testament. See for examples <sup>2</sup>Gen. 22:15 and <sup>3</sup>Isa. 63:9. In the New Testament, the Greek word “aggelos,” or angel, is rendered “messenger” fewer than a dozen times. In both Testaments the term means messenger. The “covenant” refers to Gen. 15, where we read that “the Lord made a covenant with Abram”—Gen. 15:18. It was the covenant of grace, of which God’s Son is the leading character. He is Abraham’s seed after the flesh.

Two Hebrew words are translated “Lord” in this verse. The first one is “Adon,” in Heb., and means Master. David called Him “my Lord” in Psa. 110:1, and quoted in Matt. 22:44. He is termed “Lord and Christ” in Acts 2:36, and the “one Lord” in Eph. 4:5. He is the Head, or Master of His body, the church. This is one of the trinity of titles, which He bears in the New Testament—The Lord Jesus Christ. The other Heb. word here for “LORD” is “Adonai,” in the R. V. rendered Jehovah. Jehovah of hosts saith that the Lord, the Angel of the covenant will come.

The clauses, “whom ye seek” and “whom ye delight in,” are significant. The first advent of the Lord Jesus is not mentioned, not even intimated. The Prophet leaps over His human birth and on over this church age to His second glorified advent. When Jesus came in lowly guise, the nation rejected Him.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 11:10 “For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 22:15 “And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,”

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 63:9 “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

They would not accept the Babe of Bethlehem, nor the despised Nazarene. They were looking for a mighty deliverer, who would at once fight their national battles and restore the kingdom to Israel. They despised the Man who aimed at the throne by the way of the cross, because, that meant their death also. They sought for and delighted in a powerful conqueror. Even today, the Jews are looking for such a one as their Messiah and King. But when He comes, they will be compelled to acknowledge the Man of Nazareth and the Victim of Calvary. He will judge and deliver Israel from the standpoint of the cross, having died in their stead and risen for their justification.

#### To Execute Judgment

The two following verses describe the nature of Jesus' coming. His severe judgment of the nations is here implied. "The day of His coming" (V. 2) is the judgment period mentioned by so many of the Old Testament prophets. It spans nearly seven years. The question is asked, "Who may abide" that day? Only those who will surrender to God; and some of them will suffer physical death because of their faith in God; but their souls will be saved. "And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap?"—V. 2. The dross of international boast, strength, pomp and pride will be consumed by the fires of divine judgment. All the devil-directed nations of the world will be the fuel of just wrath in those dark days. The Lord will not be in a hurry; "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver"—V. 3. He will kindle the purifying flame and watch over it with a jealous eye. Thru Isaiah (1:25) God said, "I will turn my hand upon thee and purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy tin." To what purpose? "That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness"—V. 3. Then Jerusalem will be a holy city and Israel a righteous nation. We saw in the previous lessons, that God's complain was chiefly against the priests. Therefore, His cleansing chastisements will be applied first to the priests, that is, the sons of Levi. When they accept the truth and its saying effects, "then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord"—V. 4.

Verse 5 indicates the Lord's unsparing attitude against those who will not accept the divine process of purification. He says, "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against false swearers and against those that oppress (mar. defraud) the hireling in his wages (and that defraud) the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger (refusing to help him) and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts." The clause, "fear not me," explains why some will be guilty of the afore-named wicked things. They will perish with unbelieving Gentiles. He is faithful and just, saying, "For I am Jehovah: I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"—V. 6 R.V. I will fulfill all my

**3:2** But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

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

**3:4** Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

**3:5** And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts

**3:6** For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

**3:7** Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

**3:8** Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

**3:9** Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.

**3:10** Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*.

covenant promises to you and concerning you. I will punish the nations which sought your destruction, and will save you from your sins and from the thralldom of the Gentiles.

#### Jacob's Penuriousness

“Even from the day of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances and have not kept them. Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?”—V. 7. The word ordinances means also statutes, or decrees. In verse 14, it is another word, which means a watch, a guard, or observation. The next three verses indicate what particular statute is meant, and in what they should return. Jehovah answers Israel's query by a significant question.

“Will a man rob God?”—V. 8. It never occurs to people that they are robbers of God. Hence, He says further, “Yet ye have robbed me”—V. 8. They could not understand, but put another query, saying, “Wherein have we robbed thee?”—V. 8. Then the Lord put His finger on the weak spot, the most touchy spot with most folk. “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Money is useful and necessary; but it is not to be loved. It is not to be hoarded up as if it were our God. It is to be distributed according to God's direction. Therefore, the Lord gave the short, but pungent answer—“In tithes and offerings”—V. 8. Ever since Jacob took advantage of his uncle Laban, his descendants have been grasping after “filthy lucre.” And the misuse of it has made it filthy. Gentile Christians have not lagged behind the Jews in this disobedience.

Mark the next scathing verse, the reflex result of withholding from God. “Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation”—V. 9. No one but God Himself can compute the great damage and loss which follows penuriousness. The first and chief loss is that of spirituality. No one can be stingy and spiritual at the same time. Liberality and spiritual fatness are twin sisters. They always abide in the same hut, or house. People grow cold, lose interest, quit testifying in power, when they withhold what belongs to the Lord. And sometime later they lose physically and financially. It is because the heart, the will is not wholly yielded to God in this matter. A controversy is on. They say, I do not believe in tithing. That belonged to the Mosaic law. I refuse to be put under bondage. I worked hard for my money. Old age is creeping on. All such is the voice of self-will, of the old creation. Oh, hear the Lord's entreaty.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house”—V. 10. When Israel observed this injunction, there never was any want among the people. Let believers in assemblies in Christ today practice this rule, not as under cold law, but as cheerfully obeying a loving Father, and see if every need will not be met. Even the poorest will be provided for, despite

**3:11** And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

**3:12** And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.

**3:13** Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

**3:14** Ye have said, *It is vain* to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

**3:15** And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.

**3:16** Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

hard times. Note Jehovah's challenge—"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"—V. 10. Five positive practical blessings are promised to the above command. 1. Provision in God's house. 2. An uncontainable blessing, material and spiritual. 3. Rebuke of devourers of fields. 4. Fruit-bearing just on time. 5. The eulogy of the nations. All these are certain to come to Israel when they turn to the Lord in the near future. God is faithful and cannot lie. But Christians may be surprised to what astonishing extent these five blessings will become facts to those who heed the fatherly voice of God. "PROVE ME," He exclaims. Oh, let no one's words be "stout against" Him. Forbid that any should say, "It is vain to keep His ordinance, or statute."

#### Conduct of the Contrite

The two next verses are among the most precious in the entire Bible. They are true of all such believers from the beginning to the end. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another"—V. 16. They comfort and admonish one another. Experience recited helps experience and makes it excited to press on. Filial fear longs for fellowship and must have it. But the root of this fear, is that they "thought upon His name"—V. 16. Pondering the sweet and mighty name of our Lord begets fear, or love toward Him. That name is as ointment poured forth. Jesus means Savior. Lord means Master, one who tenderly takes charge of us. He is our wisdom, our strength. And do you know that a great ear is open to every testimony about the Lord? Read it.

"And the Lord hearkened and heard"—V. 16. Now these two verbs mean the same thing. Does the Holy Spirit resort to tautology? No. There is either a shade of difference, or the words are used for special emphasis. Both are true here. The Heb. "qua-shab," translated hearkened, means to give attention. The word "shamea" means to hear because deeply impressed and with profound interest. The first is illustrated in Psa. 5:2—"Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King" ("*Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King*" *KJV*). The second is illustrated in Ex. 2:24—"God heard their groaning." The Lord gives such close attention to testimonies and conversations concerning His Son that He is impressed with them and He hears them with special concern. If they are uttered for His glory and for the good of others, He has them recorded. We have a very pronounced example of this fact in Luke 24. When two men, with bleeding hearts, were traveling toward Emmaus and lamenting their great loss, a stranger appeared on the scene. He gave them the heartburn by opening to them the Scriptures. Later He disclosed Himself as their very loving Lord Jesus. Oh, it pays to speak often one to another of Him who has redeemed and saved us. It pays now to speak often of His coming. Paul exhorts us to "comfort one another with these words"—I Thess. 4:18.

Chapter Three Conclusion and Chapter Four

**3:17** And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

**3:18** Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

**Chapter 4**

**4:1** For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

**4:2** But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

**4:3** And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

“And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels”—Chap. 3:17. Over a thousand years before, it was written, that “the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance”—Deut. 32:9. And God will not forget His Word, nor His own possession in the end. He will “keep them as the apple of His eye” (“*he kept him as the apple of his eye.*”—Deut. 32:10 KJV). He says here, “I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”—Chap. 3:17. The overlapping days which close this age and introduce the next will be a time of sorrow and darkness and waste; but the Lord will arise in behalf of the remnant of Israel. Chap. 4 says, “For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch”—Chap. 4:1. The battle of Armageddon will completely overthrow the nations that will be against Israel and against the Lord. God will fight from heaven for His own people and spare them. The manner of His interference is expressed in the next verse.

“But unto you that fear any name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall” (Chap. 4:2), during the millennium. The healing power of Christ, “the Sun of righteousness,” is set over against the blistering, burning heat of the natural sun with which He will consume the wicked. He will also give them power to “tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of” (Chap. 4:3) their feet. That will be the crowning day for God’s inheritance in the earth. That day is near at hand. We will no doubt see more marked evidences of it before this year closes. Hallelujah for the hope!

But who are the “jewels” mentioned here? In the margin, they are called a “special treasure.” The Hebrew word “segullah,” here translated “jewels,” is rendered “peculiar treasure, or people” in <sup>1</sup>Ex. 19:5 and <sup>2</sup>Deut. 14:2 and 26:18 and <sup>3</sup>Ps. 135:4. In each place it refers directly to Israel. As compared with the

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 19:5 “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:”

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 14:2 “For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.”

Deuteronomy 26:18 “And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all his commandments;”

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 135:4 “For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure.”

nations, Israel is God's special, or peculiar people, even His treasure, His jewels. As a jeweler gathers his costly gems into a beautiful case to preserve them and in due time exhibit them; so the Lord will soon assemble His earthly treasure, the remnant of the Jews, into their longed-for land. 1 Pet. 2:9 is the New Testament answer to these Old Testament citations. He terms them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." The latter phrase in the margin is "a purchased people." More fully expressed, they are "a people protected, preserved, purchased and possessed by being encamped around about." It will not be long until they shall be gathered and placed in their "glorious land," whither every orthodox Jew today is gazing with yearning eyes.

#### A Final Word

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments"—Chap. 4:4. This is the last mention of the law for about four-hundred years. The next mention of it is our Lord's spiritual interpretation of the law in His sermon on the mount—Matt. 5 to 7.

"Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord"—Chap. 4:5. The ministry of John the Baptist was the fulfillment, at least in part, of this prophecy. Jesus said of him, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things: but I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist"—Matt. 11:14 and 17:11-13. Luke 1:17 explains how John was the fulfillment of Malachi's words. "And he (John) shall go before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Many suppose that Elijah will be one of the two powerful witnesses of Rev. 11. But not so. Rather, as Luke says John came, so two men will arise and prophesy in the spirit and power of Elijah and Moses. Whoever they may be, they will not be those two prophets; for Elijah was translated and Moses was raised from the dead. Both have glorified bodies, and it is impossible that they should die; but the two witnesses shall die and lay dead three and a half days in the streets of Jerusalem, then be raised and caught up to God. Will our God be short of men that He must disturb the rest and mar the glory of two faithful fellows who served their day? Nay.

The first book of the Bible begins with man in a garden and ends with him "in a coffin in Egypt." The last book of the Old Testament begins with God's love for His people and ends with the threat of "a curse" upon the earth. John the Baptist closed the Old Testament canon and opened the new. Four

**4:4** Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

**4:5** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

**4:6** 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.

hundred years of divine silence followed Malachi's unique prophecy. That silence was broken by the announcement of the births of John and Jesus. Two Js appeared. John was the last prophet of the Old Covenant, Jesus was the first and chief Prophet of the New Covenant.