

## MALACHI

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Malachi as we continue our study through the Word of God and we finish this book this evening as well as concluding our study through the Old Testament, which took us some eight years!

Now we don't know much about this prophet of God except that his ministry was some time after the Temple was rebuilt, putting him with the other post exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, probably some 100 years after Zechariah.

And names were important back then, they spoke to the situations that they were in many times and here we see that the name "**Malachi**" means "My messenger" and he was the last messenger of God, the last prophet of God until John the Baptist came on the scene. God was silent for some 400 years until He raised up John the Baptist and that silence was then broken.

And John the Baptist broke that silence by saying, "**. . . 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'**" Matthew 3:2. In fact, the book of Malachi closes with the promise of Elijah coming to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah and John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, preparing the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ! And we will look at this promise more as we finish the book this evening.

Last time we began looking at a series of seven questions that the children of Israel were asking God. And as you look at the questions that they were asking, it shows how much they doubted God's love for them and they were discouraged and that is what sin will do in our lives. These seven questions here in Malachi that the children of Israel are asking the Lord are as follows and keep in mind that we covered the first four in chapters 1 and 2 of Malachi and tonight we will cover the last 3. Here are the questions that they were asking:

In what way have You loved us? (Malachi 1:2)  
 In what way have we despised Your name? (Malachi 1:6)  
 In what way have we defiled You? (Malachi 1:7)  
 In what way have we wearied Him? (Malachi 2:17)  
 In what way shall we return? (Malachi 3:7)  
 In what way have we robbed You? (Malachi 3:8)  
 In what way have we spoken against You? (Malachi 3:13)

And God answers each of those questions, probably not in a way they wanted but it is what they needed to hear so they could turn back to the Lord, rest in Him and His promises to them. And for us, may our hearts be open and may we be teachable in these things.

Now remember as we concluded our study last time, we read in Malachi 2:17, **“You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of justice?’”**

Did you see that question that they asked the Lord, what they ended that verse with, **“Where is the God of justice?”** Others were getting away with evil, maybe they too were getting away with evil and they thought that God accepted their actions or that He couldn’t do anything about what they were doing.

So we can say that Malachi chapter 2 concluded with the thought ***“Where is the Judge?”*** In saying that I think we can safely say that Malachi chapter 3 is going to open up with the thought, ***“Here comes the Judge!”*** You see, the Lord is coming and I don’t think that is exactly what they wanted because they had become comfortable in their sin!

Does that sound like today? It absolutely does! People are not interested in the Lord’s return but make no mistake about it, the Judge is coming and we look forward to that day!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Malachi chapter 3 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**MALACHI 3****VERSE 1**

1. Remember how at the end of Malachi chapter 2 Israel was complaining because to them the Lord was rewarding the wicked and they did not see justice coming forth, even though they themselves were living in sin.

And what we see here is that the Lord is telling them that He will set things right, the Judge of the whole earth is coming, but before He comes His messenger will come first!

This, of course, is speaking of the Lord's First Coming. And prior to His ministry beginning, a messenger would come on the scene to prepare the way for the Messiah, to prepare the people for His coming. Now we don't have to guess who this is speaking of because we see very clearly in the New Testament that this is speaking of John the Baptist.

In Mark 1:1-8 we are told, **“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.”’ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, ‘There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”**

Also, remember when the angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias and told him that he and his wife will have a child, even though they were well advanced in years. And this son would be called John. In Luke 1:13-17 we are told, **“But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘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.’”**

And in Matthew 11:14 Jesus said this regarding John the Baptist, **“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.”** Thus, John the Baptist was a type of Elijah, preparing the way for the first coming of Jesus. He came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. Then, in the Lord’s second coming, Elijah will come and He will prepare the hearts of the people for the return of Jesus, and we will see that as we conclude this book this evening.

2. One other point before we move on and that deals with Jesus coming to the Temple suddenly, when no one expected it.

We see the first time that this occurred was when Jesus was brought to the Temple by His parents to be dedicated. And there in the Temple was Simeon who was **“waiting for the Consolation of Israel.”** (Luke 2:25)

We read of this in Luke 2:25-33 where we are told, **“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: ‘Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.”**

Also, in Luke 2:26-38 we see Anna, a prophetess who was there in the Temple serving the Lord and she too recognized Jesus as the One who would bring redemption to Israel!

Not only that, but when Jesus began His earthly ministry He entered the Temple driving out the money changers, those who were making a profit off of God in the house of God.

And we read of this in John 2:13-17, **“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, ‘Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!’ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’”**

He did come suddenly to the Temple you might say and caught many off guard because they were not looking for the Messiah. I wonder today how many are not looking for the Messiah's return?

3. As we read on we are going to see Malachi jump from the Lord's First Coming to His Second Coming where He will judge this earth with a righteous judgment! *"Where is the Judge?"* Well, they were going to find out, *"Here comes the Judge!"*

#### VERSES 2-5

1. When God created the Heavens and the Earth everything was very good, even man! But then sin entered the world through Adam and things were not good anymore. So from Genesis chapter 3, from when sin entered this world, on through the Old Testament and the New Testament we see God's ultimate purpose, to cleanse society of their sin, to change the hearts of people.

Sin separates man from God and Jesus came to pay in full the penalty for man's sins. Thus, when the Lord returns the land will be purged of wickedness, no man will be able to stand in his own righteousness, and only those who make it through the refiner's fire, only those who have been cleansed as white as snow by the blood of Jesus, will enter into the Kingdom Age!

2. And remember in our previous study of Malachi, how the priesthood was corrupted and they despised the name of the Lord? In His Second Coming the Lord will cleanse the priesthood, the ones who conspired against Him in His First Coming and put Him to death.

It is as Peter says in I Peter 4:17, “**For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?**” To whom much is given, much is required and they, as we, are accountable for our actions!

3. As you read verse 4 you get a glimpse into the future by looking at the past. What I mean by that is the Lord looks back at the past when He established the nation of Israel. There was a beautiful relationship. The Tabernacle was set-up in the middle of the camp and their tents opened to see the Tabernacle as the Shekinah glory rose over it. God was the focus of their life.

In fact, if you were to look down upon the camp of Israel from above, the way they set-up the camp, it would be in the shape of a cross with God in the middle, in the Holy of Holies. What a way to start the day, focused on the Lord and as the day ends, you close it with the Lord.

But they had moved away from that kind of relationship with God and it was more mechanical. God wanted their hearts, He wanted an intimate relationship with them once again. And in the end the hearts of the people will return to the Lord, but those middle years were and still are very shaky. You see, they got use to the Lord, there was no real awe at His presence. Their service unto the Lord became nothing more than empty rituals, but God is saying one day that joy, that awe of God will return!

4. Now as you read verse 5 you get a list of the things that God is going to judge. Now think about this for a minute, God is speaking to the Jewish people, His people here. And when you read through that list of evil activities you may wonder how in the world they got that far away from God? How could they sink so low?

We don't have to guess how this happened because God tells us. He says "**Because they do not fear Me.**" Their actions reflected their relationship with God, or should I say non-relationship with God. And in the end, God says that He will judge them. May we be careful in our walk, that we don't lose that fear of God, because if we do, we too will sink low like Israel did.

5. As you look at how sin is tolerated in the church today, are we any different than Israel? No we are not. When God saves us He saves us out of our sins. We don't continue doing those things that He saved us from and yet, many still do without any fear of the Lord!

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 6:9-11, "**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**"

Did you see that? "**And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.**"

This is what God has done in our lives, He has set us free from sin, thus, don't go back to the bondage of sin. Not that we are perfect, we are not. But sin should not be a pattern of our life!



Spurgeon sums it up like this, “If any of you, my hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means: you are seeking a fire which will test you, and consume much which has been dear to you. We are not to expect Christ to come and save us in our sins, he will come and save us from our sins; therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Savior, remember that you take him as the purger and the purifier, for it is from sin that he saves us.”

#### VERSES 6-7

1. I don't know about you, but I am so thankful that the *LORD* tells us, “**For I am the LORD, I do not change.**” Can you imagine if He did! I would be consumed and so would you and for that matter so would Israel!

This is such a powerful and encouraging promise to Israel. You see, they deserved death but because of God's love, His promise to them, He will not destroy them but restore them!

We too, like Israel, deserve death for our sin, but in Christ God has given to each of us life! What a glorious promise. Jesus said in John 5:24 “**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**”

And the *LORD* does not change, we have been adopted into the family of God through Jesus and those papers will *NEVER* be torn up! How can I be so sure? Because, as we have read, as the *LORD* tells us, “**For I am the LORD, I do not change.**”

2. Now think of this precious love that God has for His people, all He has shown them, given them, provided for them and still they would not listen, they would not obey, just as their fathers did. They did not learn the lessons but continued in the footsteps of their fathers, their rebellion against God.

And God does not consume them but He still calls out to them to return to Him. What love, what patience, what longsuffering! God wants to restore people if they would only listen and return. And in the end they pretended not to know what evils they were doing. They had traveled down a wicked path and now they could not find their way back! Or maybe they could, maybe they just didn't want to go down that path back to God.

We see this in II Chronicles chapter 14 as King Asa is faced with a problem, the Ethiopians gathered their forces of 1 million men plus 300 chariots. Asa's army consisted of only 580,000, that was all Asa was able to put together. They were highly outnumbered.

And in II Chronicles 14:11 we are told, "**And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, 'LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!'**" What a great thing to do, give it to God and you then are not outnumbered. And in this battle God gave the Southern Kingdom of Judah a great victory. They should have never won that battle and they would not have won if they trusted in their might, but they trusted in the Lord and He delivered them!

Then, as Asa and his men were returning home from this great victory, some interesting words were spoken by a prophet of God. We are told in II Chronicles 15:1-2 what was said, **“Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: ‘Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.’”**

Why in the world would this prophet of God say such a thing. In fact, it was really a very silly thing to say. I mean really, of course Asa was going to trust in God, look how the Lord gave him this great victory! One thing to learn is this. When God speaks, no matter how silly it may sound, we need to listen, for He does know what He is talking about! No matter how strong we may feel in regards to handling situations, that we have control, we have victory, if God is warning, you ***NEED TO LISTEN!***

So what happened to Asa? Well, later on in his life, Asa was tested again and this time by the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But instead of coming to the Lord, trusting in Him, he trusted in man and made a deal with his enemy, Ben-Hadad, King of Syria to help him in this situation.

And the plan worked great, they obtained the victory, and yet, in II Chronicles 16:7-19 we are told, **“And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: ‘Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.’ Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.”**

God warned him and he did not listen and yet he got the victory and he also got a chastening from the Lord. And as this prophet spoke forth these words from God, Asa didn't like what the prophet said this time and tried to silence him. And that is never a good thing. When God speaks you need to listen and you need to obey and he may have heard these words but they did not cause him to repent and return to the Lord but to try to silence God by putting this prophet in prison.

There are consequences for not listening to the Lord, for not following him and we see that here with Asa. At the end of his life we tragically read what happened to Asa. We are told in II Chronicles 16:12-13, **“And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians. So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign.”** His walk with God was diseased and it finally killed him! May we pay attention to the lessons that God is showing us in our lives so our walk with the Lord is not hindered. Stay close to the Lord and obey His Words!

3. In Malachi 3:7 we see the fifth question that they presented to the Lord, **“In what way shall we return?”** And God is going to show them how to return to Him and it is interesting because He tells them it is in their giving. Now don't be afraid here, I am not going into the prosperity gospel, I don't need a jet to fly around in, Manitowoc is not that big. But as you will see, I think the idea here is the heart and if your heart is not right with God, then it will be seen in your actions. And keep in mind that the fifth and sixth question will be answered together.

And let me say this. To return to God means you were going in the wrong direction and you need to turn around and turn to God. That is what repenting is all about. It is admitting your sins and following Jesus and a life that is following God will manifest the nature of God! In other words, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”**

Galatians 5:16.

VERSES 8-12

1. Both questions are answered here. But here is the sixth question, “**In what way have we robbed You?**” This does not seem right, does it? How can a man rob the *LORD*? First of all, you have to understand that *EVERYTHING* belongs to the Lord, even our tithes and offerings but it is not limited to that. No, *EVERYTHING*! In Psalm 24:1 we are told, “**The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.**”

Also, in Psalm 50:10-11 we are told, “**For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine.**”

So we need to understand that everything we have is the Lord’s and He has given it to us to use for His glory, not ours! God wants us to manage what He has given to us wisely and He wants us to give back to Him.

I know, this is not an easy one because we see all the abuses that goes on in giving to the Lord. And we will talk a little about this because that is what these verses are all about. And my prayer is that you would understand what God desires so you do not rob God of what is His and you will be blessed in your giving.

2. Now here’s the thing. A person not walking with God will always try to justify his actions! Instead of giving to God they were keeping it for their own pleasure, their own enjoyment when the reality was, it was all God’s in the first place as I have said and He was only asking for 1/10th in return or 10%. He tells them you have robbed Me in the giving of your tithes and offerings. This is not speculation; God is very clear here what their problem was. And since they were not walking with God, their giving was not in line with God as well.

Let me give you an example to show you what I mean in terms of giving and the blessings that come. During the days of King Hezekiah, he was the King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, there was a revival you might say.

It all begin with the Word of God being read and applied to their lives. You see, many would say that we don't see that in the life of Hezekiah but I would disagree. As you look at the things he did you will see that they were based upon the Word of God, which tells me he knew the Word of God and lived the Word of God.

Now listen to what happened as the people returned to the Lord. In II Chronicles 31:10 we are told, **“And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, ‘Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance.’”**

The people whose hearts were in line with the Lord were giving more than enough for the work of God and they had to stop the people from giving because they just had too much! No guilt trip to get the people to give more, no threat of shutting down this ministry or that if the money does no come in. They gave out of love for the Lord and the work continued on!

Now let me say this and think about how you would feel. Imagine someone breaking into the church and they steal \$10,000 from the safe in the church. And no we don't have a safe with \$10,000 in it! How would you feel if someone though did that?

I am sure you would be very upset; I would be upset. Now let's apply that to these verses. The Lord is telling the children of Israel that they are robbing Him and no one really seems to care, they don't see this as a robbery at all. And what about you, how do you feel about your giving? I think we see in these verses a challenge from God in regards to our giving.

In fact, listen to this challenge by God in Malachi 3:10, **“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.”**

This is the only area that God challenges us to prove Him in - our giving! You see, you can't out give God. Now please, don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that God is like a stock market investment or some kind of lottery.

But God does want to bless us and it is not always with money. And God is saying to Israel that if you honor Him with your giving you will be so blessed that surrounding nations will stand up and take notice of what God is doing.

Now for us today, how much should we give? Some say 10%, but if you look at what Israel actually gave to the Lord in tithes, it was over 23%! Then what are we to give?

I like what Paul says in II Corinthians 9:6-7, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

Give joyfully to the Lord whatever you desire and you will be blessed. But, if you give sparingly, you will also get little in return. God does not want us to give to Him because we are being forced to give to Him. He does not want us to give to Him grudgingly or angrily. And the idea is that we really don't want to give but I don't want to look like a cheapskate so I will give. That is not accepted before God. And don't give because someone is forcing you by saying, “If you don't give this ministry will come to an end.” Maybe the ministry needs to end!



And maybe you are thinking I am making too much in regards to giving, but let me share with you what one writer had to say about this. He wrote,

How would the people return? In this case, it would be through giving. Why? Giving is not God's way of raising money. It's His way of raising kids. You see, because we're sinners, each of us has the tendency to be selfish, small, greedy, and material. But God is a giver (John 3:16) and He wants His children to be like Him.

In the Bible, there are over four hundred fifty verses on faith and over five hundred fifty verses on prayer. But there are over 2,100 verses on giving. One of every ten verses in the New Testament deals with giving, money, or possessions. Of the thirty-eight parables Jesus taught, sixteen deal directly with giving, money, or possession. Why is the Lord so emphatic about this? Because Jesus said that wherever a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also (Luke 12:34). He wants us to give to Him - not because He needs our money but because He wants our heart.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary,  
Old Testament, Volume 2, p. 927

### VERSES 13-15

1. Here is the seventh question that they bring before the Lord, "**What have we spoken against You?**" They didn't see the error of their way, in what they were saying and how God was not happy in the words they spoke about Him.

And as you read this you can easily see how messed up their thinking was. They saw their religious activity as honoring to God. And yet God didn't bless them. They spoke harshly against God for not blessing them and as they looked at the prosperity of the wicked, they came to the conclusion that it doesn't pay to serve God! **WOW!**

Because they saw no benefit in serving the King of kings and Lord of lords, they did their own thing and they spoke of God in a detestable way! How can they reach that point in their life with God? Because they took their eyes off the Lord and they focused on what their earthly eyes could see and it messed them up. God was blessing them, but not in the way that they wanted!

Asaph, in Psalm 73 had this same problem as he got his eyes off of God and upon the things of this world, the prosperity of the wicked. And he said, as he too came to a conclusion about all of this, **“Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.”** Psalm 73:13-14. That is where they were at and maybe some of you are at that point in your walk with the Lord. “What’s the use, nothing good happens and I look at those who reject God and everything seems to be going well for them!”

You need to resolve that problem of yours as Asaph did. How did Asaph resolve this conflict? He tells us, **“When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me— Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.”** Psalm 73:16-17.

It was not until he was back in fellowship with God that he saw things clearly. He saw the fate of the wicked as opposed to those who serve the Lord and it was out of all that he is once again able to share the Lord with others! It is difficult to do when your eyes are not upon Him.

Our perspective can be lost as we stay away from church, as we stay away from the Word of God and we stay away from the people of God. We lose the proper perspective of things. “But pastor Joe, you don’t know what I am going through, it is not easy and I don’t see an end in sight. So really, what is the use if I serve God?”

Listen to what God has to say! Paul tells us in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”**

Our focus needs to be on the eternal, not these bodies that are going back to the dust of the earth and these possessions that will disappear faster than the warrantee is up! We need to look to glory. Even Jesus looked beyond the pain and suffering of the cross and so must we!

And think about all that the Lord has done for us! You may say, “What is that? What has He done for me?” You were dead in your trespasses and sins and God has reached down and pulled you out of the mire of sin you were in. You could not get out of it on your own but God pulled you out and set your feet upon the Rock, not the quicksand of this world! And you are blessed with every spiritual blessing you can imagine in Christ. You will spend eternity with Him because there is a place reserved for you in heaven that no one can take away!

Keep your eyes focused on the Lord according to His Word and the fruit of your lips, the praise that will flow from your life will be continual for all that God has given to you!

VERSES 16-18

1. Now think about how discouraged they were as they were serving God and they felt it wasn't worth their trouble. Remember what Malachi 3:14-15 said, **“You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.’”**

God is showing them that it is not a vain thing, an empty thing to serve Him, to worship Him. There is coming a day of judgment for the wicked and a day of blessings for the righteous. And keep in mind that the only righteousness that God will accept is the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith, ***PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS!***

Also, remember that I said that to get a correct perspective on things we need to go into the house of God, church. We need to read the Word of God. And we need to be in fellowship of other believers.

We see here that those troubled people of God **“spoke to one another”** and were encouraged in the Lord! How wonderful that is, the fellowship of the brethren. We also see in verse 16 the meditation upon the Lord or we might say that they meditated upon the Word of God and God spoke to them. And where did they gather? Many times they fellowshiped in the house of God! All are important, even today!

2. We are also told that for the righteous, for all those who are in Christ, God is writing a book about us! Don't make it a short story but a book filled with the love of God expressed in actions, fruit that is born in our lives.

I don't know anyone who wants to write a book about me, for my life is not that interesting, except the Lord, He wants to write a book about me and about you! What an honor it is to serve the Lord, may we not forget that. May we have that reverential fear of Him, giving Him the glory due His name!

3. Now in Malachi 3:17 it speaks of making them jewels and I think the idea here is that God is speaking of the nation of Israel, making them His special treasure, His jewels once again. He will spare them and restore them, they will not see His judgment. And for us, we are His today, we are His special treasure, and we are spared from the wrath of God!

4. Malachi 3:18 closes with the idea of being able to discern between good and evil, the righteous and the wicked and yet today, many are not able to do that. Why is that? Because when you are living in sin you can't discern between good and evil because your light has dimmed so low you can't see.

Just ask any person who has traveled down a path of sin, ask them how low they got before they looked up and God lighted their path once again, He restored them. Sin is a deadly poison that will destroy your life if you let it! And Satan wants to rip you off, prevent you from the blessings that God has for you, and so many times we listen to his voice instead of the voice of God and we miss out on what God has for us. May we be in tune with God, close to Him so that the enemy can't get us off course!

But I think the idea here, like I said, is to discern between the righteous and the wicked. That is a problem today. We have people like Glenn Beck, who is a Mormon and many Christians are partnering with him. We have people who deny the blood atonement and Christians are partnering with them.

Why is this such a problem today? Because we want to be liked, because we don't take the Word of God seriously when God says that we are to come out from them, not go in with them. And to ignore this or sweep it under the carpet does not eliminate the problem of this dirt, it needs to be removed and the way you do that is you expose it and you cut your ties with it!

#### **MALACHI 4**

##### **VERSE 1**

1. Remember that the righteous were discouraged as they saw the prosperity, the seeming blessings of the wicked. But here we again see that there is coming a day of judgment for the wicked, they are not going to get away with anything. God looks at eternity and we look at the here and now and we lose sight of what God is doing. Thus, once again, be in God's Word, be in church, be in fellowship with other believers so you don't lose sight.
2. Here we see that those who have rejected Christ, they will be burned in the fire of His wrath and cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for eternity! They will be cut off from the Kingdom Age. Not a pretty picture, nor is it intended to be!

In Zephaniah we are told, **“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land. . . . ‘Therefore wait for Me,’ says the LORD, ‘Until the day I rise up for plunder; my determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all my fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.’”** Zephaniah 1:18, 3:8. The Lion from the tribe of Judah is coming back in judgment!

You see, in that coming day the wicked will have no hope of shooting up again to life. As long as a root remains there is hope, but hope is gone for these because the judgment of eternity is final. A very humbling thought regarding the wicked – today is the day of salvation, don’t pass it up!

### VERSES 2-3

1. What about the righteous? What about those who have come to the faith through Jesus Christ? We are told that when Jesus returns He will come with healing for this land, a restoration to the way it was in the Garden of Eden. Man will be restored and live through the Millennial Reign. What a day that will be.

It is as Paul said in Romans 8:21-23, **“because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”** Not only will man be restored, but all of creation!

2. Let me ask you a question before we move on. Do you believe in the Scriptures, literally what they are saying? I am sure all of us would say we do, but do we really? Let me show you what I mean in regards to believing by faith the impossible.

In Matthew chapter 9, as Jesus is walking to the home of Jairus because his daughter had just died and he came to Jesus to come and bring her back to him, we see Jesus encounter this woman in need.

This poor woman had this issue of blood for 12 years. Now we may think that is a terrible condition to have but this was more than just a physical issue. Yes, she was physically weak, drained, no energy, but there is another aspect to this that many miss.

According to the Bible a woman who had an issue of blood was considered unclean, (Leviticus 15:19-30). That meant no one could come in contact with her. No one could touch her all those years! No one could embrace her. She could not go to the Temple. She could not come in contact with anyone! Imagine if she had a husband, children, no hugs, no embraces, nothing for 12 years. She was an outcast!

And she tried to rectify the problem on her own. She spent all of her resources seeking medical attention without success. How lonely, how depressing, how hopeless! She had come to the end of herself and all that is left is Jesus. But there is still a big problem. To get to Him she would have to go through the crowd of people, and if anyone found out, she would be in trouble for anyone she touched would be unclean. But she was willing to risk it all to touch Jesus! Again, what faith!



As this woman sees Jesus she bends down, hoping no one will notice, no one will see, and she touches the hem of His garment. Now some feel that she did not know what she was doing and just wanted to touch Jesus to be healed. Think about that for a minute. If you don't want to be seen, why would you bend down and touch His garment, you would just reach out and touch Him and keep on moving. I think she knew exactly what she was doing!

She is in a crowd of people, bumping into them, making them unclean, taking this big chance just so she could get close to Jesus and touch the hem of His garment. Now why did she do that? I believe she knew what the prophet Malachi said, **“But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.”** Malachi 4:2. The Hebrew word for **“wings”** can speak of the hem or edge of a garment and I believe that is how this woman saw it!

You see, Malachi is saying that the Messiah will bring healing in the hem of His garment and thus, she understood what the prophet had said and she now believes that Jesus is the Messiah and touches the hem of His garment and she is instantly healed! It was a step of faith on her part. We too, by faith, obey what the prophets and the apostles have said and there is healing in Jesus and we are instantly healed of our sins as we come and touch Him, as His blood cleanses us!

May we trust in God's Word and believe it, live it by faith as this woman did. She understood what Malachi wrote and she applied it to her life and she was healed.

VERSE 4

1. Think about this for a minute. This is the close of the Old Testament and God is going to be silent for some 400 years! And notice what the Lord is instructing them to do, “**Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.**”

We need to remember what God has told us in His Word. People say, “I don’t hear God speak to me anymore!” Hey, read the Word of God. He has spoken to us and what He has spoken of in the past is for us in the present, may we not forget that!

Now keep in mind that the Law is not bad, it is not evil, we are and the Law today points us to Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Remember what John wrote in John 1:17, “**For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**” Praise God for His grace and His truth!

And like I have said, God’s law is perfect, the problem with keeping it is that man is not perfect. But that does not mean we are to forget about it, ignore it, neglect it, not at all!

It is as Psalm 19:7-11 says, “**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.**” Thus, remember what God has said and do it, be obedient to what God has said!

VERSES 5-6

1. Elijah is coming again to prepare the way for the Lord's Second Coming. This occurs after the Church is caught up or raptured unto the Lord, meeting the Lord in the air. You can read of this in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and I Corinthians 15:51-58. It is after this that the Lord pours out His Spirit upon Israel, fulfilling the last 7-year period or the 70th week of Daniel spoken of in Daniel chapter 9, and this period of time is known as the Tribulation Period.

In Matthew chapter 17, as Peter, James and John are coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, we read beginning in verse 9, **“Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’ And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.’”** Matthew 17:9-11.

Elijah is one of the two witnesses we read of in Revelation chapter 11. The other I believe is Moses. You see, Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets. And for the first 3½ years of the 7-year Tribulation Period they will share their faith in Jesus and 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe will get saved and they in turn will evangelize, they will share Jesus! It is at the end of the first 3½ years that the Antichrist will kill these two men and their bodies will be left on the streets for 3 days.

You see, the people hated these men who stood up for righteousness and said Jesus is the only way! And when you stand up for Jesus, many times people will wish you were dead, the light you are shining is exposing their evil, just as we see with these two men. And in their death there is a party that the earth dwellers throw, but then, all of a sudden, God raises these two men up and carries them into heaven and great fear fell among the people. I guess so!

The point being is that Elijah will come again before the return of the Lord, preparing the hearts of the people to receive the Lord! You see, God's grace is so great that before He comes in judgment, He gives people another chance to turn to Him!

2. Now listen again how this book closes and how the Old Testament closes. **“Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”** Not the words you want to hear. In fact, the ancient Jews were so troubled by this that, “The Masorites, who have given us most of the copies of the Hebrew Old Testament we have . . . were so bothered by this that they repeated the next-to-the-last verse of Malachi after the last verse. Similarly, the Septuagint reverses the last two verse so the Old Testament ends, not with a curse, but with a blessing.” (Boice)

That is what the Law does, it condemns us. But listen to how the New Testament closes. In Revelation 22:21 we are told, **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”** That is grace folks and that grace is found in Jesus!

3. As I have said, we have been in the Old Testament now for some eight years, from Genesis through Malachi, and I hope it was a blessing to you, for it truly has been for me.

Next time we will enter into the New Testament and we will see that Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of. **“The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings.”** All that the Old Testaments prophets spoke of regarding His First Coming will come to pass!

But keep in mind that as Malachi finished speaking, God was silent for 400 years until John the Baptist comes on the scene to prepare the way for the Lord's First Coming. John was a type, a picture of Elijah who will come, "**Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**" And we will begin this adventure in the New Testament next time we meet.