

MALACHI COMMENTARY

The name "Malachi" means "My messenger." This prophet is mentioned by name only here in Scripture, but his principles are referenced many times and by virtually every writer in the New Testament. He was the last writing prophet, while John the Baptist could be considered a later preaching prophet of the old covenant era. Cyrus had decreed (538 B.C.) that Jews might return home. Ezra had returned about 80 years later, followed by Nehemiah around 445 B.C. Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah had stirred the spirits of the repatriated Jews in matters spiritual and practical. Malachi would follow these, finding the same spiritual problems they had faced. As God's prophet, he could not be silent at the knowledge of these wrongs, so he cried out against their sins. He likely prophesied between 450 and 430 B.C. The ills were social, marital, and liturgical. People were mistreating the weak, intermarrying with foreigners, and mocking the permanence of marriage by divorce. Religious leaders were faring no better in their obedience to Yahweh - Malachi told them they might as well shut the Temple doors as to continue their service in the way they were doing it! The priests were charged with leading the people in paths of stumbling, when they should have been teaching them the ways of God in truth. For the manifold wrongs of priests and people, God would bring trouble upon Israel. While Malachi does speak much of God's judgment on their sins, he closes his book with a hint of Messianic hope, promising to send the prophet Elijah before the Messiah comes, to turn people's hearts back to where they should be. Few portions of Scripture set man and his God in more stark contrast to each other. The impudence of the sinner in the face of God's condescending to help him is clear. The stubbornness of man trying the patience of God is set forth. May we see our great God here, and rather than just seeing the sin of Israel, let us be wise to find conviction of our own wrongs against God and man. Here let us find the grace of God extended to this race of sinners, and let us be glad!

CHAPTER 1

The message of Malachi would indicate that he was a contemporary of Nehemiah, having prophesied in the middle of last half of the fifth century B.C. All this was about a hundred years after the Persian monarch Cyrus gave permission for Jews to return to their homeland. For those who think that there are ten lost tribes because the northern kingdom never returned from its Assyrian captivity, Malachi addresses his messages to "Israel," not just Judah. There are striking parallels with the present generation of Israelis, Jews either born in the land (Sabras), or having returned to the land from the diaspora, the scattering of Jews among other lands and peoples. Times were hard in Malachi's day, and they are difficult today. Many enemies beset them round about, then and now. Those in the land seemed to be largely secular in their outlook, with little concern for the things of God. Social conditions were deplorable in Israel, with men caring nothing for the poor and other helpless ones.

YAHWEH LOVES ISRAEL, THOUGH THEY DO NOT HONOR HIM **DEBATE ABOUT YAHWEH'S LOVE**

1) Malachi falls into line with other prophets who attribute their writings to Yahweh - *"The oracle of the word of the LORD..."* He is nothing more than a spokesman for the God of heaven and earth. The word "oracle" most often gives a sense of foreboding, on occasion being translated "burden" in some versions of Scripture. Malachi does not wish to set the people of Israel at ease, but he rather puts them on notice that Yahweh has something serious to say to them - a warning of sorts.

2), 3) God declares His love to Israel, though it should have been obvious to them. In love He

called them to be His special people; in love He grew them in the iron furnace of Egypt, and He brought them out of there in that same love. In love He gave the Mosaic law and preserved them through the wilderness wanderings. Yet they question His love. He further declares that in love He chose them over Esau, Jacob's elder brother, the firstborn. Both of Isaac's sons were imperfect and guilt of sin, but Jacob had a passion for spiritual blessing, while Esau was a "profane" man. The land belonging to Israel was special in God's eyes and heart, but Esau's habitation was not. Some who know not much about the Scripture will paint the "God of the Old Testament" as a vengeful judging, warlike Deity, as contrasted (by the same folks) to the God of love in the New Testament. Understand this, Yahweh has been ever a God of love, and He loves His chosen people.

4), 5) Malachi makes it clear again that the land of Esau may be brought back from its ruins, but He will tear them down again. The reason is their wickedness, at which Yahweh is angry. The Psalmist said in 7:11, "...*God is angry with the wicked every day.*" Jacob's descendants have enjoyed God's blessings, while those of his brother Esau have been on the outside looking in. So, when Israel says, "*How have you loved us?*" they do despite to the heart of God. Malachi asserts that the Jews will see God's favor of them over the Edomites with their own eyes. That ought to prompt them to regale Yahweh's greatness even beyond their own borders. How great is the contrast between "the wicked country" and "the Holy Land." O, Israel, you must know that God loves you immeasurably!

DESPISING YAHWEH'S NAME

6) Illustrating from earthly relations, God, the Father and Master of Israel, challenges them for their lack of giving Him the honor that He is due. Every son or servant worthy of the names will give honor to their father or master. So, Yahweh says, "*Where is My honor, sons, and My fear, servants?*" Failure to receive respect is a big topic in our modern American culture, people often complaining about being "disrespected." Furthermore, Yahweh declares that the priests, the people's *liaisons* with God, had despised God's name. They challenge Him again, asking, "*How have we despised your name?*"

7) The dialogue continues - the cycle of accusation and defense - Israel being unwilling to own her sin. God responds through Malachi, "*You have despised me by defiling my altar with polluted food.*" The picture was of a sacrifice being God's food, eaten by the fire of the altar. Another question and answer follows, showing God's holy requirements and Israel's reluctance to admit they had met the standard.

8) The dialogue switches to monologue; God takes the floor and speaks, uninterrupted. God had made it clear through Moses that sacrificial animals were to be defect-free, so said the Law of Moses - Deuteronomy 15:21, "*And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.*" He required man's best, a picture of the coming Lamb of God, without blemish or spot. Their offerings of blind and crippled animals to God would not be acceptable to an earthly authority invited to a dinner; why then would they be so bold as to offer them to the Ruler of heaven and earth as sacrifices?!

9) God seems to have Malachi using a little satire, having his tongue in his cheek. He shows the people asking the priests (also involved in the corrupt worship practices) to offer the types of sacrifices they are offering from the hands that are unclean, and just see if God will accept them - No! If an earthly governor would turn up his nose at less than the best, how much more should we bring to God the very finest of offerings!

10) What a statement follows! God says that it would be just as well if the doors of the Temple were shut and the sacrificial fires not lit. "You might as well go ahead and shut the temple operation down as to offer the sacrifices you currently bring." Very much like Cain in Genesis 4,

their offerings are unacceptable in part because they themselves are unacceptable. Like offer-**er**, like offer-**ing**. Some folks might suggest that poor worship is better than none at all, but this seems to challenge that notion. We must fulfill God's requirements for us in God's way and according to God's timing. The old gospel song says, "Give of your **best** to the Master..."

DIFFERENCE IN WORSHIP BY THE NATIONS AND ISRAEL

11) In A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed the Temple, effectively "closing its doors" for generations to come. Now there sits on that very spot a shrine in honor of a non-existent deity, Allah. Malachi rebukes the sons of Jacob by favorably comparing the (yet future) worship of the (Gentile) nations to their own present miserable efforts, rejected completely by God. When Messiah reigns over all the earth from David's throne in Jerusalem, the nations will come up and bring tribute, honor, and offerings to the King (Jesus). Compare Isaiah 49:5-7; Daniel 7:27; Zephaniah 3:8-11; and Zechariah 14:9,16. As Isaac Watts' great hymn says, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run..."

12) Malachi repeats the charge of the polluting of the altar and profaning the Lord's name. While the formerly outcast (Gentile) nations will glorify the name of the LORD, the generation of Jews contemporary with Malachi were profaning it. Polluted hearts lead to contemptible rituals, and that was where the problem of worship was with the Jews. Samuel had told Saul generations earlier (1 Samuel 15:22), "*To obey is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.*" Right worship will naturally follow when our hearts are right.

13), 14) The people did not obey the law in their dealings with one another, showing their hearts were not right with the Lawgiver God. As they had cheated (NIV), deceived (KJV), swindled (NASB) each other in business, so now they promise to bring God the appropriate unblemished male sacrifice from the flock, but when offering time comes, they show up with a blemished animal. Yahweh is a great King, and He deserves the best His people have to offer, but just as they did in Saul's day, they only sacrificed to Him what they did not wish to keep for themselves. How could they expect God to receive such sacrifices from their hands? They and we ought to, I say again, "Give of your best to the Master." Anything less is unacceptable. He is Lord, and we are to serve Him as He directs, not as we wish.

CHAPTER 2

Abraham's covenant from God was unconditional, to be fulfilled by God regardless of man's obedience. The key phrase in Genesis 12:1-3 is God saying, "I will." The Mosaic Law was a conditional covenant, the foreword to it being in Exodus 19:5, "If you will obey..." In this chapter the prophet charges first the priests and then the people with violating God's covenant. For that disobedience they are already receiving difficulty from the chastening hand of Yahweh.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF LEADERSHIP

THE REJECTION OF THE CURRENT PRIESTS

1), 2) Chapter one marked a clear failure of the priests in their duties in representing men before God. They seemed to have been complicit in the offering of unacceptable sacrifices to the Lord. They could **and should** have rejected the blind and lame animals brought to them, requiring the so-called "worshippers" to bring the best they had to offer to the Lord. So, God singles them out and has the prophet deliver a message directly to them, and them alone. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 had a long list of the ways in which God would curse His people if they chose to disobey Him. Here He tells the priests that they better listen, and they better honor His name, or else. The "or else" was that God would curse their blessings, perhaps meaning that the things (blessings)

people brought to them for ministering would be cursed. It could also mean that the blessings they pronounced upon people (as in Numbers 6:22 ff) would actually turn into curses, like Balaam's curse turned into a blessing.

3) Yahweh of Sabaoth, the Lord of Armies, had promised in the Torah (Exodus 20:5 and others) that the consequences of sin would sometimes cross generational lines. Malachi's words from the Lord here echo the sentiments through Moses there. The language about dung being spread on the faces of the offenders is likely figurative, and it tells of signal dishonor to those who have signally dishonored God and His Word. This is an illustration of the old principle, "like sin, like consequences." As the excrement of the sacrifices was removed, so would the priests be removed from Temple service!

4) So often in Scripture it is declared that God's actions will result in men's knowledge of Him - Ezekiel was famous for this (about 80 times in his prophecy we encounter phrases like "*you shall know*" or "*they shall know*"). The result of the chastening of the priests for their poor performance in their office is that men will see the purification of the office that exists because of God's covenant with Levi. This tribal, inherited role is no less important than if God had called them each as individuals into priestly service.

THE REVERENCE BY THE FORMER PRIESTS

5) Yahweh's covenant with Levi (again, the priestly tribe) provided life and peace. Those two Hebrew words, "*chai* and *shalom*," are familiar even to us Gentiles. The Hebrew toast, *la chaim*, means "to life." Anyone ever seeing the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" knows that. Of course, *shalom* is a Hebrew greeting suggesting that people should meet in peace. Yahweh gave life and peace to Levi, and in a sense, to Israel through Levi. The people then had a strong reverential respect for Yahweh that we call "the fear of God." A glimpse of Him in life strikes us with awe!

6) In addition to the later prophets, the priests from after the Exodus were instructors from God's Word. The word "instruction" here is the Hebrew word "Torah," so often used to describe the Law of Moses. When God's Word is taught and learned, His people can walk in peace and uprightness, and many others will turn to the Lord! In their best days, the descendants of Levi walked with their God and then gave to God's people true instruction, helping many turn from sin to righteousness.

7) What a challenge was given to the priests and also given to today's spokesmen for Yahweh. This precious commodity, the Scripture, is a stewardship to be handled wisely and faithfully. There is a sense in which we are "guardians" of the truth! And there was an additional challenge to the people. It was that they should seek truth from the mouth of God's messenger. The word "messenger" here is the Hebrew word for "angel." As one called to teach and to preach God's Word, I suddenly feel a renewed sense of awe for that privilege and stewardship. O, how I want to be "found faithful!"

THE REBUKE FROM THE LORD FOR THE FAILURE OF THE PRIESTS

8) Yahweh now rebukes the priests for failing in their duties to God and to man. The Lord had made a covenant with Aaron's progeny, the priests, and they had at times been faithful to speak the truth and to teach people the ways of God. But this generation of priests had broken that covenant, and they had by their wrong teaching caused God's people to stumble along the way. Their great privilege brought great responsibility. Their great failure would bring great judgment. Much is required of those to whom much is given (Luke 12:48).

9) According to the law (Numbers 18:32) the priests could have died for their wrongs, but Yahweh let them live to suffer another fate. He would cause them to be humiliated before the people.

“Humiliation” is how one feels about being brought low before the eyes of others. “Despised” is how people feel about someone when they know something really fiendish about them. The priests would experience both humiliation and despise. Perhaps it would have been better for God to execute the sentence of death on them than to let them live in disgrace!

THE RESULTS OF VIOLATING GOD’S FAMILY GUIDELINES

10) This statement seems to extend beyond the priests for a moment, touching perhaps the entire nation. Two rhetorical questions point up why there should be unity among the people of Israel. Don’t we all have the same father (perhaps meaning Abraham, but more likely referring to God)? Didn’t one God create the whole nation? Since we share this Fatherhood-relation and Creator-relation, on what basis then do we deal treacherously with each other? In so doing we profane God’s covenant with us!

11), 12) The southern kingdom (Judah) and its leaders (in Jerusalem) had as a whole broken faith with Yahweh. God had set apart the people, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple (sanctuary) unto Himself. They were intended to be a people separate from other peoples, but they had done a detestable thing, profaning the holy! The kings were known for making alliances with surrounding peoples by marrying a princess from among them. These women often held to other gods, and like Jezebel, would defile the land with the detestable worship of their false gods. God had forbidden this practice in Deuteronomy 7:3,4, stating the result of hearts being turned away from the true God. One who committed this atrocity would be cut off (killed, or left out of the reckoning of families in Israel). His bringing hypocritical offerings to God would not “buy Him off,” as God cannot be bribed like men can.

13) Malachi brings another charge from Yahweh against His chosen people. He sets forth how very serious is the problem by telling of its extreme consequences. They are this: people are crying so much over a problem that they flood God’s altar with tears. What is the problem? God seems to be displeased with their offerings and prayers, neither receiving nor rewarding them for their worship.

14) With faked sincerity they seek the reason for God’s displeasure. The prophet is quick to answer; the problem is their light treatment of their marriage vows. One would think he was addressing 21st century America! A covenant was made, a vow was taken that should have sealed the union of the marriage. God witnessed that vow, and now He witnesses against those who break it! This is serious!

15) The actions of Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon might be set forth to defend their marital indiscretions. The first father had a son by Hagar. Jacob sired children by four women. David and Solomon exceeded them both in multiplying wives. So they might argue, but the argument is no good - the last three just plain sinned in their actions, and Abraham was trying to fulfil God’s plan of a godly seed (though we understand that Hagar and Ishmael were not the channel of that blessing, but rather Sarah and Isaac). There are no acceptable excuses for violating marriage vows!

16) God says He “despises divorce” (see the NASB rendering of this verse’s opening statement). His original intent was for marriage to last until death, and He has not changed His mind. Ruth 3:9 and Ezekiel 16:8 show that the covering is a symbol for marriage. Divorce is a “wrong covering,” and the divine Lawgiver forbids it. If you are married, stay married to your present spouse. If you are single, only marry one to whom you want to be wed for life - that’s God’s plan.

17) As we read the words of Malachi, we see God and man in conversation. It doesn’t take long to see how God may be frustrated with the illogical and perverse thinking of the crown of His creation. Jesus often expressed a weariness at the dullness of His disciples. When the prophet charges that the people have worn God out with their words, they impudently ask, “How?”

Centuries earlier, God had pronounced woe (through Isaiah - 5:20) upon those who call good "evil," and evil "good." Now His people accuse Him of that very wrong! How can they be so bold as to assert that the God Who is absolutely just in His character could mete out anything less than justice to men!?

CHAPTER 3

Chapter three of Malachi has a strong New Testament connection - it speaks 400 years beforehand of the coming of Messiah and the coming of His forerunner, the herald, John the Baptist. These prophecies are not just information for the future; they are motivations for the present. Because the Holy One is coming to them, the people of Israel need to live holy lives. So much wrong is being done by God's people, and they must turn from that wrong in repentance. Sorcery, adultery, mistreatment of the vulnerable, robbing God by withholding tithes - the list is longer than even these. Malachi has a hard task, pointing out men's sins to them, calling them to repent.

I WILL JUDGE, YOU MUST RETURN

THE WARNING OF GOD - I WILL RETURN

1) Two men are spoken of here. The first is John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. His faithful preaching of the message of repentance will prepare men's hearts for Christ's arrival. Then comes Jesus - the long-awaited but somehow unexpected Messiah of Israel. The condition of the nation cries out for Him, but the nation also rejects Him when He comes. The law (covenant) had in many ways foretold His coming. God sent John, then Jesus, Who says He in turn sends us - "So send I you." How are you doing at what He sent you to do?

2) Two rhetorical questions challenge the thinking of Malachi's hearers (and his readers). "*Who can endure when He comes? Who can stand?*" Psalm 24:3 asked a couple of similar questions, but they also pointed to Jesus in the purity of His life. Here Malachi charges that few, if any, of his peers had the purity that could stand in the presence of Jesus. And no man can stand in the day of judgment in his own righteousness - we must have the imputed righteousness of Christ to stand before Him. Dear Friend, do you have that righteousness today?

3), 4) God's prophet makes it clear that the religious leaders of his day were not serving so as to please the Lord. But this One (Jesus) would, and He would cleanse the Levites from their sins so that they might be like refined gold and silver. He had clearly charged (in 2:8) that Levi's descendants had corrupted their father's covenant and had caused the people to stumble! Either Malachi remembered better spiritual days, or he had heard of times past when the descendants of Levi were men of God, making offerings in righteousness. These old times were acceptable to the Lord, and the future under Messiah would be also, but Malachi's challenge was to the present generation. This was God's last message to Israel for four hundred years. Sadly, we have no reason to believe that they took it to heart and changed the ways that were displeasing to the Lord. We must apply these principles to our own lives, not just observe the wrongs of Malachi's contemporaries. What will **we** do in our day? Will **we** repent and change **our** behavior from sin to righteousness so that **we** may please Him?

5) How thrilling must have been the sound of Malachi's words from God, "*The Lord will come to His Temple!*" But His arrival brings with it some not-so-thrilling judgment. He will testify against seven law-prohibited behaviors, summarized in the seventh as to their root - they "*do not fear Me.*" The list of those whom God will "put on trial" begins with "**sorcerers**" - these who engage in occult practices are never mentioned in a positive light in Scripture. "**Adulterers**" violate the seventh commandment and attack the basic unit of social structure - the family. "**Perjurers**" do

not tell the truth, often swearing to a lie. Those who **“defraud laborers of their wages”** are as good as stealing their time in uncompensated work! It doesn't take much of a man to **“oppress widows and orphans.”** These weakest of members in a society have no protection, and they are easy prey to the unscrupulous. To **“deprive the foreigner... of justice”** is another evidence of sinful depravity in the hearts even of God's chosen people! Also made clear is that they have lost their sense of reverence for God and His law. They had asked (2:17), *“Where is the God of Justice?”* Well, here He is, and He will judge them!

The prophet Malachi, whose name means “my messenger,” was clearly a contemporary of Nehemiah. He addresses several of the same issues that Nehemiah does in his writing. He was the last of the OT prophets until John Baptist.

THE WOOING OF GOD - RETURN TO ME!

6) The early verses of chapter three deal with the judgments that Messiah will execute. It is the immutability of God that keeps the people of Judah from themselves being destroyed by judgment. The God Who never changes must be true to His covenant promises to the chosen people. Jeremiah had said, *“Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed... great is your faithfulness”* (Lamentation 3:22,23). God will keep His promises to us as well (Romans 8:1).

7) This verse contains a charge, a challenge, and a question. As surely as God had not changed in His faithfulness to the Jew, so the Jew had not changed in his disobedience to God. That is a serious charge. God follows with the call to return to the God they had left. In a debating response, the Jew asked wherein he needed to return to God.

THE WICKED ROBBING GOD

8) The prophet, representing God to the people, got right to the point. One area in which they had left God and needed to return was in the area of finances. Tithing predated the law, being done by Abraham to Melchizedek and promised by Jacob to God long before God gave Moses the Law. It was incorporated into the law of Moses and showed the willingness of the people to return a portion of God's blessing to Him. The tithing of the people also helped meet the material needs of the priests and the Levites. By failing to tithe, the Jews had robbed God. Since the tithe was His and not theirs, they robbed Him by withholding it.

9) Haggai 1:6 says on this subject, *“You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”* By robbing God, the people had also robbed themselves of the blessings God has in store for the generously obedient. Such still goes on today.

10) This is very likely the most oft-quoted verse in the book; it contains timeless principles about giving to God. If the Jews would quit robbing God, there would be enough food in the Lord's house for those who ministered in spiritual things. That should be part of the human motivation. One is reminded of the New Testament principle that *“they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14). We bless ourselves when we enable our ministers to focus on the ministry because we support them financially. A result for the giver would be that God would materially bless him beyond his ability to receive it. We should not give, however, in order to get. Our true motives for generous giving should include love for and obedience to our Master.

11), 12) Ephesians 6:2 refers to the commandment to honor our parents as *“the first commandment with promise.”* That promise was for longevity of life or Israel's duration of time in the Land for obedience. Here is another command with promise, the command for Israelites to be faithful with tithes to Yahweh, with the promise of prosperity in their main industry of agriculture.

One way God would open the “*windows of heaven*” would be to hold back such “devourers” as locusts from eating their vegetation. In addition, He would make sure that their vines did “*not fail to bear.*” This certainly demonstrates God’s sovereignty over our lives, as well as His goodness to His people, especially when they are obedient. When the nations around them would observe Israel’s good fortune, they would surely call them “blessed.” Israel would be seen by all as “*a land of delight.*” What great motivations there are for obedience!

13) And so, on goes the endless debate of Israel with the charges God makes against them! He says that they have spoken hard words against Him, and they reply, “*How have we spoken against You?*” They disagree, essentially accusing Yahweh of being dishonest! We borrow Paul’s words to the Romans 3:4 here and say, “*Let God be true, but every man a liar!*” Sinful man is only able to see himself as sinful if he allows the Holy Spirit to convict him (John 16:8, “*...he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*”

14), 15) The ever-patient God answers their question. They asked, “*How have we spoken against you?*” He rewinds and plays the recording of their words for them. “First, you said that it is futile to serve Me! Then you asked, ‘What would be our reward for obeying You?’ You added that there was nothing to be gained by mourning over sin. You claim that those who are arrogant instead of meek are the ones who are really blessed. Finally, you asserted that there was prosperity in doing evil, and that those evildoers escape your notice or chastisement! Those are some of the ways you have spoken against Me, since you asked.”

THE WRITING OF THE RECORD - GOD DOES REWARD

16) All the while Malachi is preaching, showing men their sins and calling them to repent. In the midst of the prevailing sentiment of sin in the land, there is here, as so often, a faithful remnant. These believing ones seek each other out for fellowship and worship; God attends their meeting and makes a record in heaven. Never think good goes unnoticed by our all-seeing God. I call the writer to the Hebrews (6:10) to witness, “*For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*” And if we happen not to see God’s reward for right living in this vale, recall that the best is yet to come.

17), 18) In a parable Jesus spoke of the wheat and the tares growing together until the end of the age. They may look somewhat alike, but they are vastly different in character and destiny. We today often see the wicked prosper and the godly suffer; it may seem to some that there is no difference. But the end is not yet. When the Lord Jesus comes to wrap things up, the distinction will be clear. Those who are His and have trusted and lived for Him will be spared the awful judgment that is set for the unbelievers. Let us simply be faithful in service to our God, leaving the judgment of the wicked and the rewarding of the just to His care and timing. Faith clings to Him in faithfulness even when the circumstances seem to cry out that we who serve God are on the losing side.

CHAPTER 4

The final brief chapter is about the coming “Yom Yahweh,” the day of the LORD. Four times here Malachi refers to a “day,” in the fourth one identifying it as “Yom Yahweh.” This is a yet future, eschatological period when God will manifest His power and glory both in trouble for the wicked and blessing for the righteous. It includes the Tribulation, Second Coming of Christ, judgments upon Israel and the Gentile nations, and the Millennial Reign of Jesus from David’s throne. Presently, the world cannot see Him as we can, but in that day all eyes will behold His glory, and “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the

Father” (Philippians 2:10, 11). As the poet said, “What a day, glorious day, that will be!”

THE FINAL WORDS

REAPING FOR THE WICKED

1) The coming of Christ as seen by the prophets had two contrasting characteristics - they saw a suffering Servant, and they saw a glorious Sovereign. What they missed was the gap between the two - the first and second comings of Jesus. We see the one in retrospect, the other in prospect. When He comes again, there will be a series of judgments here symbolized by fire that already has refined the gold but now consumes the stubble (1 Corinthians 3). For the unrepentant wicked there is presently Hades to hold them for the final judgment. Then they shall be cast “into the lake of fire” that was “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:14, 15).

REWARD FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

2) While Christ-rejecters will be lost, an opposite end will be for those who trust, love, and serve Him. Here comes Jesus; can you see His *talith*, or prayer-shawl, flying in the breeze, looking like wings? Was this Scripture in her mind when the lady with the issue of blood touched the hem of Christ’s garment? Was that the “healing in His wings?”

3) Today it does not always look like the righteous will triumph, but faith sees the unseen end before it comes. Trust in God clings to Him Who will make our victory manifest before all the world. The fires of judgment will have consumed the stubble of the wicked (verse 1), and then they shall be ashes beneath the feet of the righteous. God have mercy on them!

REMEMBERING THE LAW OF MOSES

4) Now he trumpets the old message of Sinai - that God blesses obedience and punishes rebellion. It was failure to keep the law of Moses that had brought about the sorrows that the nation experienced. The lawgiver is of that select fraternity whom God referred to as “my servant.” Would Malachi’s hearers now return to the law and to the God of the law - to keep His righteous statutes and judgments? This alone would bring God’s blessing upon them.

REPENTANCE IS THE NEED

5), 6) How solemn are these words! John the Baptist came preaching in the spirit and power of Elijah, as the angel had told his father, Zechariah. Some heard his words with faith, received his baptism, and followed Jesus when He came. Many think that Elijah will come back as one of the two witnesses during the Tribulation (Revelation 11), again making ready for the coming of the Messiah to establish His earthly kingdom. Again, Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son, John, will fulfill this prophecy. God has so much to unfold in our future with His glorious Son, Jesus.