

Messenger!

A Journey Through the Prophecy of Malachi

Malachi 1:1

1 Introduction to Malachi, the Prophet and the Book

June 16, 2019

Malachi 1:1

The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.

To the Glory of God

Now, beginning today, we are going to go on a “journey” through the Old Testament **Book of Malachi**. We just finished traveling through the Epistle of **1 Peter**, and, if the Lord is pleased, after we finish looking at the Prophet **Malachi**, we will go “verse by verse” through **2 Peter**.

Now even though I have never preached through **Malachi** before, there are *some* similarities with this Book and all the other Books we have gone through. First and foremost, **Malachi**, like every other Book in the Bible, is *primarily* about Jesus. Jesus Christ is the *center-piece* of this Book, even as He is the center-piece of *every* Book of the Bible. So, *whatever else* you take away from our time in this Book, you should take away that Jesus is God, and that Faith and Hope and Trust in Who Jesus *is*, and in what He *said*, and in what He *did*, brings Salvation to unworthy rebels.

Now the way we will go through **Malachi** is also going to be the *same* as it has been with all the other Books. Malachi is one of only 66 Books that can make the claim that it is “inspired”. And that means that God the Holy Spirit invisibly “moved along” this Prophet in the *same way* that wind “moves along” a sailboat across the water. And this mysterious process resulted in every Word of this Book to be “Divine Truth”. It is both the “Word” of God and the “Voice” of God. And that means that it is important for us to know and understand.

And so, each week, as we journey further and further into this magnificent Book, I will ask and answer three Questions about every single verse:

1. What does that verse actually *say*?
2. What does it *mean* by what it says?
3. How can we be *obedient* to it in the 21st Century?

Now in order to answer what each verse of **Malachi** says, we will have to go to the original Hebrew language, because **Malachi** was not written in English. And so, we will incorporate not only the Hebrew *language* itself, but also the *grammar* of that language, and the correct *context* of how that verse relates to all the other verses which will help us to uncover the *one single correct meaning* of every single verse of **Malachi**.

In order to answer the Question of what each verse *means* by what it says we will have to incorporate the correct *doctrinal* and *theological* Truth from both the Old and New Covenants that will help us to uncover the Divine Truth that is taught in every verse.

But in order for us to find out how those of us who live in the 21st Century can be *obedient* to what **Malachi** teaches, we will have to examine several different *applications*. Because, while there is only one correct *meaning* of every verse of the Bible, there can literally be *many* different *applications* of that one verse. So, it is going to be a fascinating "journey".

Now **Malachi** is one of twelve Old Testament Books that are called the "*minor* Prophets"¹. And they are "*minor*" *not* because they are *unimportant*, but simply because they aren't very large. For example, there are only fifty-five verses in **Malachi**.

Now the editors of the 1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia* implied that Malachi prophesied *after* the time of both Haggai and Zechariah. And they came to that conclusion based on what Malachi *himself* wrote in three different verses:

Malachi 1:10

¹ The other "minor Prophets" are: **Hosea; Joel; Amos; Obadiah; Jonah; Micah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Haggai; and Zechariah**

Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on My altar!* I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.

Malachi 3:1

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.

... which *seems* to suggest that the Temple in Jerusalem had already been rebuilt at the time that Malachi received the Word of the Lord.

Now some scholars have suggested that this Book was written *anonymously* because the name "Malachi" actually means: "*My Messenger*" or "*The Lord's Messenger*", which could simply be a *title* rather than a proper name. These people also point out that Malachi's name was *not* written anywhere else in the entire Old Testament, and there is very little information about the man himself.

Others say that Ezra may have written this Book. But their argument ignores the fact that all the other prophetic Books historically identified the writer in the "introductory heading" of the Book itself, just like this one does. And that fact alone suggests that "Malachi" was indeed the name of the *last* Old Testament Prophet in Israel. And even though they aren't inspired, ancient Jewish rabbinical writings identify Malachi as a member of the "Great Synagogue" who was used by God to collect and assemble and preserve the Scriptures after the Jews came back from their Babylonian Captivity. Now please read **Malachi 1:8** with me:

But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts.

There is reason to believe that the "Governor" to whom Malachi refers here references a time in Israel's history when the Persian Empire was still very dominant, and when Nehemiah had left Jerusalem and went to Babylon to be with King Artaxerxes during the celebration of the 32nd year anniversary of his reign (**Nehemiah 13:6**). This information means that Malachi prophesied during the latter part of the 6th Century BC.

Now one of the reasons that people think that Ezra actually wrote this Book, and one of the reasons why some even suggest that this **Book of Malachi** actually should be included in the **Book of Nehemiah**, is because of the *similarities* between the focus of Malachi's Ministry and that of both Ezra and Nehemiah. For example, in **Malachi 4:4**, the Prophet was deeply concerned about people not keeping the Law of Moses. And that is very similar to what Ezra taught (**Ezra 7:14, 25&26**), and what Nehemiah taught (**Nehemiah 8:18**).

All three men also shared concern about Jews marrying Gentiles (**Malachi 2:11-15; Ezra 9&10; Nehemiah 13:23-27**), and the "non-payment" of the Tithe (**Malachi 3:8-10; Nehemiah 13:10-14**).

But when we examine this Book carefully, we see that what Malachi *himself* wrote dates his Prophecy during the late Fifth Century B.C., probably during Nehemiah's return to Persia (**Nehemiah 5:14; 13:6**). Another way to date this Book comes from what Malachi himself wrote in **Malachi 1:7-10**- that says:

You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.' But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts. But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.

... which seems to suggest that animal sacrifices were up and running, and were being made at the "second Temple". And, according to **Ezra 6:13-15**, the "second Temple" was finished in 516 B.C.

Now at the time that Malachi was being used by God, only a few years had come and gone since the Jews had returned from their Captivity. And yet, most of the priests had already forgotten *why* they had gone into Captivity in the first place, and they had become *increasingly* complacent and corrupt. And in **Malachi 1:6a**, the Prophet cries out against that apathy when he said:

A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name....

In **Malachi 2:9**, the Prophet also lifted up his voice at how Israel had grown "worldly" and "weary of well-doing". And one of the *symptoms* of this "worldliness" was that the Priests had ceased to teach God's Truth in all its glorious fullness:

So, I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.

Now the phrase "**partiality in the instruction**" here refers to the Priests teaching what the people *wanted* to hear rather than what they *needed* to hear. And the result of this was that the other nations of the world had grown to despise Israel.

And this is *always* a problem and one that even the visible Church of our day battles against. Anytime this present, evil world becomes *more* attractive to the believer than Jesus, the individual no longer has an appetite for Divine Truth. And what that happens, the individual will care little or nothing about things that God has graciously provided to *keep* us saved and strong in the Lord, like Prayer or Bible Study or times of godly Fellowship. And their mentality is that there is just so much to do out in the world that is so fun and that brings such joy for them to "waste their time" in the Presence of the Lord.

But when the majority of God's people no longer delight themselves in the Lord, when those who say that Jesus is the "Treasure of the Universe" prove, by their worldly lives, that things that have been made and things that are passing away are infinitely *more* important to them, then the lost, pagan world begins to *despise* the Church and the lost lose any respect for the Church that they had.

Now one thing that characterized *all* of God's Prophets in the Old Testament, as well as all of Jesus' Apostles in the New, was in the way that people, who said they loved God, *acted* among unbelievers, *especially* in the day- to-day, routine, normal function of their individual lives. Here is what the Prophet said about that in **Malachi 3:5**:

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi taught that it matters what the *disposition of our heart* is toward those in our land who are the *weakest* and *most vulnerable*, and those who are *incapable* of helping themselves. And a "*godly Disposition*" will *always* manifest itself in Mercy, in how we see and in how we treat those who are the weakest among us. And Nehemiah agreed with that in **Nehemiah 5:1-13**. And, if anything, the infinitely superior New Testament *advanced* that Truth when James said:

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF**," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "**DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY**," also said, "**DO NOT COMMIT MURDER**." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit**

murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the* law of liberty. For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "**AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,**" and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.²

Now what is interesting is that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. to rebuild the wall, and returned to Persia in 433 B.C. He later returned to Israel (around 424 B.C.) to deal with the very *same* sins that Malachi described (**Nehemiah 13:6**). And this fact tells us that God the Holy Spirit "moved along" the Prophet Malachi to utter the Word of the Lord during the period of Nehemiah's *absence*, almost a century *after* both Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy.

Now when you read this Book, you come away with the Reality that, back then, God was very concerned with how the people of the nation of Israel *acted* as well as what they *believed*. And as the Old Covenant was replaced by the New, Jesus spoke to the various churches in the first three Chapters of the **Book of the Revelation** this very same Truth:

² James 2

More than anything else, the way we speak reveals the condition of our heart.
And more than anything else, the way we act proves what we believe.
And so, “Right Believing” produces “Right Living”

Now, *initially*, there were only about 50,000 Jewish exiles who returned to Judah from Babylon (538–536 B.C.). The Temple in Jerusalem had been rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.), and the animal sacrificial system had been renewed with great zeal. Ezra himself had returned to Israel in 458 B.C., followed by Nehemiah in 445 B.C. And so, *initially*, there was great Humility at what God had done, and great Rejoicing at God’s Goodness to forgive them and bring them back.

But after being back in the Promised Land for only a century, the Commands of God, that were birthed in genuine Love for God and that produced great degrees of biblical Holiness, descended into nothing but a pitiful “*form of godliness*”, and “*man-made rituals*”, and “*lifeless ceremonies*”. And the Truth of the Glory of an utterly majestic God became nothing more than a “religious routine” that led to hard-heartedness and apathy toward God. And that hardening of the heart eventually led to widespread *abandonment* of God’s Law by both the people and the priest.

But it was at that very moment of blackness and horror that the Grace of God shined the best. So, even as people had wholesale left off serving God, God was, nevertheless, faithful to raise up this obscure Prophet, named Malachi. And as a mighty “Messenger”, *heralding* the Divine Call to Repentance and Holiness, Malachi rebuked and condemned these abuses *forcefully* and *authoritatively* indicting the people and calling them all back to God.

So, too, in our day, as we see an almost wholesale *collapse* of any pursuit of Holiness by those who lay claim to be saved, as we see venerable Denominations become confused about fundamental Truth like Who God is, and Who Jesus is, and How lost people are saved, and what Biblical Christianity looks like, as they fall like dominos. As we see more and more people become confused about what godly Manhood and Womanhood is, what Human Sexuality is all about, what Marriage is, and what Children are for; when we see a confused Culture that reels in horror at praying in public, while they slaughter babies by the millions and revel in outright blasphemy.

And as we live in all this, there are times that, we, too, are tempted to *underestimate* God's Determination to save all of His elect, we tend to *minimize* God's unquenchable Zeal to build His Church and to preserve a people for Himself on the earth, so that when He comes back, the Church of Jesus will be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and Jesus will present such a Church to Himself as the crowning Achievement of His Grace!

But there are seasons where, we, too, become tempted to think that, maybe, the *breathtaking* Victories of the Gospel might all be behind us, with the men we admire and hold dear and read about. And that the future for us is rather bleak and dismal.

But I tell you, on the Authority of God's Word, that it is at this very moment of weakness and compromise and apathy that God will raise up 7,000 obscure, unknown, unpopular Messengers who will believe the Bible, and who will receive a *unique* Anointing and Unction to thunder God's Truth, unashamedly and without hesitation. And Jesus will be glorified in them.

I will tell you that it is almost beyond belief that so many people pick *now*, the very moment when we are at the very *threshold* of the Second Coming of the King of the Universe, to grow weary of "well-doing", and to "take their hand off the plow and look back", and to "indulge themselves in every worldly endeavor that human intellect and technology can devise". But since that is true, it will also be *now*, at the very cusp of Eternity, that God will be faithful to stand up a mighty Army of believers, who will love God fervently, and who will not be silent, and who will not compromise, and who will be faithful, and fruitful, and busy in the Work of the Lord, and who will hate the garment that is even spotted by the flesh. And when Jesus bursts the clouds of Glory and comes back, He WILL find Faith on the earth.

Malachi prophesied to his generation that the King was coming. And today, the Church of Jesus, made up of people from ever nation and tribe and language on earth, will prophesy that very *same* Message of Preparation and Repentance. Because soon, the Lamb of God will burst the sky and come back to this earth, not as a mild Nazarene, but as a conquering Warrior! Here is what the Apostle John saw:

The Revelation 19:11-16

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

During the days when Malachi prophesied the Word of God, the believing Jews were in total defeat. After 2,000 years of God promising them great and unthinkable Joys, *none* of the glorious Promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants had been fulfilled in their *ultimate* sense. And even though there had been a few "high points" in Israel's history, with men like Joshua, David, and Josiah, that was long ago. And those Jews, who genuinely believed, were now in despair.

Surely all opportunity to receive God's Favor was now lost since less than 100 years after returning from horrific Chastisement and Captivity the nation, for the most part, had already sunk to a new depth of sin that far exceeded the former iniquities which brought on the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations in the first place. And to cap it off, the long-awaited Messiah had not appeared, *nothing* had changed, and His Coming now seemed *more distant* than ever before. *This* was the general climate when God began to move along Malachi to open his mouth and speak.

So, as God the Holy Spirit came upon Malachi, this unknown, obscure man began to write down a *dual* Prophecy that would both *condemn* Israel for their continuing sin, and, at the same time, give those, who were genuinely saved, an *unshakable* Hope that one day in the future, after God's people would be empowered and enabled to repent, and Messiah would come! And when He comes, *all* of God's Promises would be fulfilled! And so, in **Malachi 3:1**, the Prophet said:

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the

messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that as Malachi uttered these words, he thought he would see that very day. But the Ways of God are not like our ways. And this great Prophet lived on and finally died without ever seeing the fulfillment of what he had infallibly prophesied. But his lack of seeing what he spoke come to pass was not his lack alone.

History tells us that Malachi's voice was the last inspired voice for over 400 years! For 4 long Centuries, through 40 decades, as 14,600 days went by, one-by-one, the Heavens were silent. There was no Voice from Heaven, No Prophet raised up, No Sign, no Wonder, No Healing, No Miracle, No Gift, No Divine Contact, No Angelic Visitation, No Prophetic Utterance, No Revelation, No Encouragement, No Confirmation, for 400 long, hard, dark years. Truly the Heavens were brass.

So, the Rabbis began to teach that God had utterly *abandoned* Israel, and they were now on their own. Some even said that God was dead. And those few, who truly believed, had no answer to the repeated Question: "*Where is God?*" Over and over again, genuine believers would take the scroll and unroll it and read the Promises that came from Malachi's lips, hoping to find some measure of Hope, some clue as to *why* God was taking so long, and *why* He was allowing such Evil to come upon the very people of His Love.

To the Jew, as every year went by, things got progressively *worse*. In the long, hard days after Malachi's Prophecy, the pagan Roman Army had marched in and was now subjecting the chosen people of God to humiliation and ridicule that the Babylonians and the Persians and the Assyrians had only dreamed about. Insult after insult, blasphemy after blasphemy, injustice after injustice, and still the Heavens were silent. God didn't defend them. God didn't stop it. God didn't help them. Where was He?

Periodically, all during the intervening 4 Centuries, a man, or even a group of men, would rise up laying claim to be the promised Messiah and the fulfillment of Malachi's Prophecy. And for a season, they all accumulated followers. But, one by one, these men were all captured by the Romans, and they were all killed, and many of them

were publicly *humiliated* by being forced to deny their own beliefs just before being executed by the seemingly invincible Romans. And Israel sighed by reason of their task-masters. And so, almost as fast as their Hopes would rise, and they thought to themselves, "*Maybe this is the One!*", those Hopes would be dashed into a thousand pieces as Malachi's Words continued to be unfulfilled.

But then, we read the words of a 1st Century medical doctor, who said:

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years. Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 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 he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN³, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁴**

There it was! The Words of Malachi! The Promise of God! The arch-angel Gabriel had been dispatched from Heaven to tell this old Priest that God had not forgotten what He had said, and the 400 year-old inspired Utterance of Malachi was now coming to pass in the life of him and his godly wife! And as the Plan of God unfolded before the

³ Malachi 4:6

⁴ Luke 1:5-17

world over the next fifteen months⁵, it became clear to all those who were already truly saved:

The promised “Messenger” of Malachi’s Prophecy was going to be “John”, “the one who baptizes”, and the “Messiah” was “Jesus”.

Now the way in which this Prophet gives his “Oracle” is through a series of “Divine Indictments” against the Jewish nation as a whole, and toward individual believers in particular. And the Indictments are served using a series of Questions and Answers. Here are a few examples:

Q: I have loved you. But you say, “*How have You loved us?*” (**Malachi 1:2**)

A: “... *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?*” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau...” (**Malachi 1:2b&3a**)

Q: A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?’ says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, ‘*How have we despised Your name?*’ (**Malachi 1:6**)

A: *You are presenting defiled food upon My altar.* (**Malachi 1:7**)

Q: ... you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand. Yet you say, ‘*For what reason?*’ (**Malachi 2:13&14**)

A: For [Because] I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel ... (**Malachi 2:16**)

Q: You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, “*How have we wearied Him?*” (**Malachi 2:17a**)

A: 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?*” (**Malachi 2:17b**)

Q: Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, “*How have we robbed You?*” (**Malachi 3:8**)

⁵ Elizabeth conceived John. And as she was six months with her baby (**Luke 1:26**)- the very same angel was sent by God to tell Mary that she was going to birth the God/Man- Jesus, the Christ (Messiah). Nine months later (six months after John had been born)- Jesus was born. So, from the time that Gabriel spoke with Zacharias and Jesus was circumcised in the Temple (7 days after His Birth) was approximately 15 months.

A: In tithes and offering... (**Malachi 3:9**)

In each case, God makes a *definitive* Statement about their Sin, and yet in every case, the people argue with God and tell God that He is *mistaken* about them. And then they acted amazed as to why God could say such terrible things about them. This Amazement reveals an *incredible* degree of Arrogance and Self-righteousness. It is a testimony about their own willful Deception about what it means to be "chosen by God". But it also serves as a sober warning to us today as the Words of Malachi teach us how *easy* it is for the human heart to operate in *direct* and *antagonistic* rebellion against God, and yet believe that it is in right standing with Him.

So, as we progress through this Book, we will look at each Divine Indictment and discuss the *context* it had within the Old Covenant, and its *application* to us today as we live under the New. Now please turn with me and read **Malachi 4:5&6:**

5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Now it is easy to see that this *part* of Malachi's Prophecy was, at least *partially*, fulfilled with the man we now call "John the Baptist". But there are some very serious Issues regarding this Prophecy that need to be considered and discussed. For example:

- ✓ Was Malachi talking *solely* about John the Baptist back in the 1st Century in regard to Jesus' *first* Coming, or may we apply this also to a *future* fulfillment by the Church before Jesus Returns?
- ✓ Will Elijah be *literally* raised from the dead (or reincarnated) at some point in the future?
- ✓ What exactly was Malachi talking about when he said, "**He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers**"?
- ✓ What is the "**Curse**" to which Malachi refers if the hearts of the Fathers and Children are not restored?

- ✓ John *specifically* and *directly* said he was *not* Elijah (**John 1:21**). How do we reconcile this?
- ✓ Why did Jesus say, “*if you are willing to accept it*” John was Elijah? (**Matthew 11:14**).

But I would like for you to notice the phrase that Malachi used in verse 5:

... the great and terrible day of the Lord

So, the “**Day**” of the Lord is considered to be both “**great**” and “**terrible**”. But what does that *mean*? Most scholars think that the “Day of the Lord” is the “Coming” of the Lord, or the “Appearing” of the Lord, or the “Revealing” of the Lord. So, Malachi says that God is coming, He is going to (at some point in Malachi’s future) be seen, or be revealed, or be manifested. Now the word “Day” is merely the “moment” or the “time”, or the precisely arranged “season”, when God will appear or be seen or come or be revealed or be manifested. So, from that we get that God is coming to the world that He created.

Now those of us who are in the 2,000 year-old Church of Jesus, very easily understand that this is talking about Jesus. Jesus is God, manifested in human flesh. And so, Malachi is prophesying that Jesus is coming here. But we must understand that, at the moment God moved Malachi along to give him this Prophecy, this had never happened before. God had never inserted Himself into His Own Creation before. God had never taken on human flesh, and He did not live on earth with us as a Man. So, this is very radical.

And yet, I would suggest that it is a “Good” thing. For God to be here on earth “with us” (*Immanu-el*), and not *away* from us at a distance that we cannot cross, would be *very* “Good”. And yet that *isn’t* the way Malachi talks about it. He doesn’t say it would be “Good”. Malachi says that the moment when God is manifested here, the time when God is revealed, or made plain, or the moment when God comes to the earth is two things:

1. Great
2. Terrible

... but not "Good". But *why* didn't he say it would be "Good"? Why use two other words here? Periodically, all through this Book, Malachi said things like this. For example, back in **Malachi 3:1** he wrote:

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

Well, praise God! Malachi says, "**the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple**"! Well, that's a "Good" thing, right? I mean, the Lord is coming! And that should make us all happy, right? Not so fast. Look what he said next:

Malachi 3:2a

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?

Now what kind of Question is that? I thought Jesus coming was the *best news* in all the world! So, *why* is Malachi talking here like it might even be a "bad" thing? Why would I have to "endure" the coming of the Lord? Where is the celebration here? Where is the excitement? Where is the Joy and Happiness that our God is now with us? This sounds more like a Funeral than it does a Celebration. Why is Malachi acting like a "kill-joy" here? Why is he raining on our parade? Why is he dampening our enthusiasm? Look at the very next statement:

For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

So, when God comes near to us, when Christ is revealed, when Jesus is manifested, it isn't going to be a Party. There's no indication from Malachi about dancing and celebrating. No, Malachi wrote that his Prophecy is a "burden", it is *heavy*, it is *serious* and *eternal*. And Malachi says the coming of the Lord is going to be a *refining* and a *cleansing* and a *purification*! Look what he wrote next:

Malachi 3:3a

He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver ...

So, Jesus is going to *purify* His people when He comes. But *how* is Jesus going to purify us?

He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver... He will... refine them like gold and silver...

Now how are gold and silver purified? With fire. Both gold and silver are metals that come from the ground. And mixed up with the gold and silver are all kinds of impurities and dirt and wood. And so, the smelter turns up the heat so hot that the gold or the silver will literally melt, and all the impurities, including even the dirt, will be burned up.

But *why*? So, that the gold and silver will be "pure" gold and "pure" silver. And then the smelter takes the hot, melted gold and silver and pours them into a mold where the gold and silver lose their own identity and take on the shape of the mold. Then and only then can the gold and silver be useful.

So, *why* does Malachi say that God is going to turn up the heat and smelt us and burn up all the impurities?

Malachi 3:3b

... so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.

You see, God desires a "pure" people to give Him a "pure" offering. God looks glorious when a people, who were once loving darkness and who reveled in their iniquities, are so radically transformed, by what God alone has done for them, that they now find the fullness of their own Joy in humbly obeying Him. And that is *why* the only Offering that is pleasing to the Lord is an Offering that flows out from "Righteousness" or from "*glad* Obedience".

We have to remember that God is not interested in our talent or our abilities, He has the cherubim and the seraphim. He isn't impressed with our money or our possessions, God owns everything. God is *passionately* interested in the disposition of human hearts that have been captured by His Grace to the degree that they now *enjoy* His Commandments. In **John 4:23&24**, Jesus said it like this:

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

It isn't the location that determines true Worship, it is the *disposition* of the human heart. The heart of truly saved people beats to the Embrace of our King! We *thrive* on being near to our Father and elder Brother in the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit. We *delight ourselves* in pleasing Jesus Who has become our Treasure and our Refuge. And God takes great Pleasure as we walk in the Truth.

Now the English word “**Great**” that Malachi used in **Malachi 4:5** to talk about the “Day of the Lord” comes from a Hebrew word that means: *large in both extent and importance*. So, the “Day of the Lord” is “large” in both its *extent*, its *pervasiveness*, and its *importance*. So, this is “all-inclusive”. And this means that the “Day” of the Lord will effect *everything* and *everybody*. *Nobody* will escape it. *Everything* will change when the Lord suddenly appears. *Nothing* will remain the same. And this gives us indication that Malachi was not speaking solely about the nation of Israel here.

But then notice that Malachi went on to say that the “Day of the Lord” will also be “terrible”. And this English word comes from a Hebrew word that means: *something that causes fear, dread, and awe; something to reverence and to show respect toward*.

But *why* would the “Day of the Lord” be “terrible”? The Prophet says in **Malachi 3:1** that the Lord’s “appearing” is something that has been “sought after” for many, many years. So, isn’t it a “good” thing that the Lord will now come? “Yes” and “No”.

The Lord suddenly appearing in His Temple is the very *best* thing that can happen to those who are truly saved. But it is the very *worst* thing that could happen for those who are *not* truly saved. The “News” that God will come “near to us” and be “with us” is truly “Good News” to those who have gifted with Love for God. But it is the “Worst News” that a religious phony or a hypocrite could have.

So, Malachi is faithful to say that the Lord’s “appearing” is *both* “great” and “terrible”; it is “all-inclusive” and “dreadful” at the same time. It is both “something to celebrate” and “something to fear”, depending on the disposition of the heart.

And this tells us that Malachi was a true Prophet of God. He didn't speak pleasant sounding words to tickle the ears of the lost and lukewarm. No, this man thundered God's Truth without partiality and without hesitation and without fear. And that is why, like all true Prophets", he was despised by those in the priesthood.

Now other Issues that we will address in our "journey" through **Malachi** will be:

- What is behind the Statement, "**Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau**"? (**Malachi 1:1b&2a**)
- Is "tithing" still in force under the New Covenant?
- What does it mean when God says, "**For I hate Divorce**"? (**Malachi 2:16**)?
- If "John the Baptist" was the fulfillment of the "Messenger" from **Malachi 3:1**, who is Jesus? In other words, what is the *relationship* between the "**Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight**" and "**the Lord**"?
- What is causing the *pervasive* "fatherlessness" that we see today?

... so, this should be a very enlightening "journey". Please pray for me that I will "do justice" to the Word of God and exposit this amazing Book- rightly and fully.

Now in whatever time I have left, I want to get into the very first verse of Malachi's Prophecy. **Malachi 1:1** says:

The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.

Now sadly, what most people, who live in the 21st Century on the Mississippi Gulf Coast understand about the word "Oracle" is what they learned from watching the *Matrix* or some other Science-fiction movie. But in actuality, the word "*Oracle*" comes from a Hebrew word (אָרַךְ *massa*); which literally means: *a burden*; or a *load*. In fact, the King James translators wrote:

The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

... the *Hollman Christian Standard* translators wrote:

An oracle: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

... and they defined the word “Oracle” as: “a prophetic speech of a threatening or a menacing character- often against nations”.

The original Hebrew says:

מִלְאָכִי, בְּיַד, יִשְׂרָאֵל-אֵל, יְהוָה-דָּבַר מִשָּׁן

... which is *literally* translated into English as:

The burden/pronouncement (oracle) of the Word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of Malachias (Yahweh’s messenger).

But this word also means: *an utterance*. So, “oracle” has to do with an “Utterance” by God that has been written down by a priest in *response* to a Question. So, when you put all this together, you get that these fifty-five verses of **Malachi** are:

A *weighty* and *heavy* (eternally serious and important) Utterance by God, that was written down by the Prophet, Malachi, in response to a series of Questions.

... and I can’t wait to get into it with you.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.