Supplemental Notes:

Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai & Malachi

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Habakkuk


Zephaniah


Haggai

God’s Challenge to the People. Ezekiel’s 430 Years.

Malachi 1:1 - 5

Introduction. Lost 10 Tribes Myth. The Remnant.

Malachi 1:6 - 14

Call to Be Authentic (in our profession, gifts, service).

Malachi 2

A Call to Love God Totally. A Call to Be Faithful.

Malachi 3

His Coming. God is Faithful. Giving.

Malachi 4

The Day of the Lord. Elijah. The Two Witnesses.

Introduction

His name means “to embrace.” Records his own experience of soul with God.

Main theme (like Ps 37, 49, 73, Job, et al.) is the affliction of the godly and the prosperity of the ungodly. Why do bad things happen to good people? [Considered a “theodicy”: a defense of God’s goodness and omnipotence in view of evil.]

Last of the “minor” prophets to preach in Judah before the Babylonian captivity. [Three sieges, et al.]

[NT quotes: Acts 13:40-41 (Hab 1:5); Phil 4:4, 10-19 (Hab 3:17-19); and Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38 (Hab 2:4).]

Probably lived about the 12th or 13th year of the reign of Josiah. Probably written about 609 B.C., during the reign of Jehoiakim.

Dark, troubling times. Babylon formed an axis with the Medes to overthrow the Assyrians; would continue to rise under the generalship (and later Kingship) of Nebuchadnezzar.

Probably a priest? (“my stringed instruments...” 3:19) before he was called as a prophet. As was also Jeremiah, and at about the same time.

Habakkuk’s book is not being initiated by God into the ministry, but rather he is initiating a dialogue with God about the ministry. He’s the initiator and God is the responder.

At the beginning of his ministry, he saw the revival in the days of King Josiah. (Daniel, et al. also.)

King Josiah

One of the better kings of Judah: Began to reign at age 8; sought the Lord at age 16 (2 Chr 34:3). At 26, he ordered the temple to be remodeled; a copy of the law was found by Hilkiah the priest in a corner (not another copy
The Burden

1] The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

Burden, *massah*, a load to be lifted; heavy judgments.

2] O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save!

“cry” = actually, *shavah*, “scream.”

[Do you ever feel that way?]


3] Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention.

I look around this nation and all I see is violence and contention. Why aren’t you doing something about this, Lord? Sounds like our own nightly News Broadcasts, doesn’t it? The most violent city in the world is now Washington DC... Also, Waco Massacre; Randy Weaver at Ruby Creek, Vince Foster, et al.

4] Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

“slacked” = paralyzed; chilled.

Unrighteous judges; law set at nought. Life and property were insecure. The wicked knew how to pervert the judicial process.

Habakkuk wonders: “Lord, why don’t you judge your people?” [See Jer 22:3, 13-17; also Jer 12:1; 20:8; and Job 19:7.] He starts out wrestling with God and ends up worshiping Him.

After the death of Josiah (in a battle with Pharaoh Necco of Egypt on the plain of Megiddo in 609 B.C.), disillusionment with the reform set in and Judah reverted to its former ways. Jeremiah and Ezekiel describe this period in detail.

The reign of Josiah (640-609 B.C.) had allowed the people to enjoy a greater degree of prosperity than had been possible in previous years. Ignoring the spiritual dimensions, they thought the new era would last indefinitely. The realities that faced them, however, could not have been anticipated by either the political liberals or the religiously minded conservatives.

The power of Assyria had collapsed. Political supremacy belonged to Egypt. Strong political ties, however, had been established with the emerging kingdom of Babylon. As a vassal of Egypt and a friend of Babylon, there seemed to be no serious threat to prosperity on the horizon.

The leaders and the people had ignored the spiritual reasons for their material prosperity.

Alexis de Tocqueville remarked: “America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.”

Now, the rich exploit the poor. Greed and avarice characterize the times. Perversions of all kinds are openly promoted and protected by law. Real power is increasingly concentrated among an elite few...

So Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah were on the scene—calling the people to true spirituality.

After Josiah came Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.), an evil king. (Between was Jehoahaz, who only lasted three months). His reign was characterized by injustice and bloodshed. He burned an initial scroll by Jeremiah; Jeremiah then prophesied an even bleaker future for Judah (Jer 36:29).

Habakkuk wonders: “Lord, why don’t you judge your people?” [See Jer 22:3, 13-17; also Jer 12:1; 20:8; and Job 19:7.] He starts out wrestling with God and ends up worshiping Him.
Average capital offender, before he is executed, will spend 22 years in legal procedures at a cost of $1.8 million!

Suicide rate among police is 4X greater than that of society in general. Out of every 1,000 violent crimes committed in this country, only 2.4 criminals are brought to justice.

Most of our social changes brought about by court decision, not laws we voted on: bussing, affirmative action, elevation and promotion of sexual perversion, etc.

If an organism—or a country—cannot deal with its infections quickly and effectively, it will die of infection.

So, in Jerusalem, too, they could not deal with justice and equity fairly, quickly, and simply.

5] Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for [I] will work a work in your days, [which] ye will not believe, though it be told [you].

[Paul quotes in his great sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:41.]

Don’t count God out. Stand back and watch.

Probably at this time Babylon was still friendly (2 Kgs 20:12-19). [Aren’t we doing the same thing? Hezekiah didn’t advance them cash, however...]

Three sieges follow, during Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah...

Isa 55:8-9; Phil 4:7 He bypasses our puny understanding...

Habakkuk seems to imply, “Try me”...

6] For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, [that] bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places [that are] not theirs.

Chaldeans were inhabitants of Babylonia, of Semitic origin from Kesed, son of Nahor, brother of Abraham (Gen 22:22).

In 626 B.C. Nabopolassar came to the throne. In 606 B.C., his son, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necco in the Battle of Carchemish...and established the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Daniel 2.

7] They [are] terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

8] Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle [that] hasteth to eat.

9] They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up [as] the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

10] And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

[heap dust: exploit bulwarks to capture walled cities...]

11] Then shall [his] mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, [imputing] this his power unto his god.

Classic passage for the characteristics of the Chaldeans (as Isaiah 5:26-30 is for the Assyrians). God is already preparing the Chaldeans to be His rod of punishment...

Fulfillment of Moses’ warning in Deut 28:49. The purpose of the invaders is to perpetrate violence in the land. This was Israel’s sin (vv2 & 3) and it will be her punishment.

[v11: Dan4:16, 30-34?] “For one to make his own strength his god is to commit suicide of the soul.” (Feinberg).

12] [Art] thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

13] [Thou art] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, [and] holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth [the man that is] more righteous than he?

14] And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?

15] They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16] Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion [is] fat, and their meat plenteous.

17] Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

Now Habakkuk is really struggling! “God, you can’t be serious! You can’t use them! They are even worse than we are...”
Yet he knows the nature of the covenant-keeping God who will not allow His people to be wiped out. [cf. The Magog Invasion; Ezek 36, 38, et al.]

Notice how he deals with his questions in Chapter 2.

**Habakkuk 2**

**The Answer**

1) I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

Not a literal tower, but an attitude of mind.

Prophets are compared to watchmen: Isa 21:8, 11; Jer 6:17; Ezek 3:17; 33:23.

**Key components:**

1) **Determination.** He didn’t say, maybe next week; when it’s convenient; when I can find time... Jer 29:13.

2) **Isolation.** Away from all distractions: radio, TV, telephone. We often can’t hear the voice of God because so many other voices are constantly ringing in our ears... a quiet time, a quiet place, a quiet heart...

3) **Expectation:** “I will see what the Lord will say to me” not might, hope, wish, but will...

Heb 11:6 There are many ways to please God, but none apart from faith.

[Are you really serious about Him? Do you seek the Lord with pencil and paper in hand? Does an executive secretary enter her boss’s office without a steno pad in her hand?]

2) And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make [it] plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

Habakkuk, you’re ready to do business; take a memo...

Two interpretations:

a) Easily read by a runner-by; be clear in your life. [Do you have a clear sense of vision?]

b) Be plain so others can run with it.

Both are applicable.

3) For the vision [is] yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Be patient. Don’t panic.

God has set a bound to all which displeases Him.

**The Just Shall Live By Faith**

4) Behold, his soul [which] is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Two groups:

Those whose soul is lifted up;
The just who live by faith.

Whose soul is not upright? The Babylonian’s. Pride leads to death because it will not receive by faith the grace of God.

Look at their leader, Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan 4, 7 years....) Prov 16:18.

The Talmud declares that all 613 precepts given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai are here summarized.

The Just shall live by Faith Rom 1:17
The Just shall live by Faith Gal 3:11
The Just shall live by Faith Heb 10:38 (just before Heb 11!)

**The Just:** 06662 tsaddiyq {tsad-deek’}

AV - righteous 162, just 42, righteous man 1, lawful 1; 206.

1) just, lawful, righteous: 1a) just, righteous (in government) 1b) just, right (in one’s cause) 1c) just, righteous (in conduct and character) 1d) righteous (as justified and vindicated by God) 1e) right, correct, lawful.
Instinctively, he cried out to the patron saint of coal miners, whose name he had heard invoked during his childhood, “Saint Anne! Save me from the lightening. If you save me I will become a monk.” Shortly thereafter the storm stopped.

Being a man of his word, Martin withdrew from law school and entered an Augustinian monastery where he applied himself so diligently that he obtained a Doctorate of Theology within a few years.

But the more he studied, the more troubled his heart became; for although he was becoming an expert in theology, he lacked peace personally. The question he repeatedly wrote in his diary was: “How can a man find favor with God?”

In search of such peace, Martin devoted himself to an exceedingly pious lifestyle. He would fast for ten to fifteen days at a time. When temperatures dropped below freezing, he slept outside ... of the thoughts and motives that he knew were not right. (These were typical practices of the medieval church...)

He went to confession so many times a day that finally the abbot said, “Martin, either go out and commit a sin worth confessing or stop coming here so often.”

Finally, in 1509, Martin decided to make a pilgrimage to Rome in hope of finding the elusive peace for which he longed. He set out on foot and crossed the Alps. On his descent, he almost died of a high fever before making his way to a monastery at the foot of the mountains there the Brothers nursed him back to health.

While there, a wise monk approached him and said, “You need to read the Book of Habakkuk.” And so Martin did just that. He read Habakkuk.

Good suggestion. Habakkuk was a struggler just like Martin. Like today: If God is good, why does He allow suffering? If there really is a devil, why doesn’t God just obliterate him? We throw out questions, then plunge into our personal pursuits—and wonder why we don’t get answers.

One verse captured Martin’s imagination: Hab 2:4. The just shall live by faith. He couldn’t get it out of his mind.
Having recovered sufficiently to continue his journey to Rome, he went to the Church of St. John’s Lateran, a typical cathedral of that day. There is a staircase there that is said to be from Pilate’s judgment hall. The existing stairs are four parts: the special inner two are said to have been transported there miraculously from Jerusalem. The outer two are ordinary. The inner steps are not walked on. Here pilgrims mount painfully on their knees, a step at a time, saying prayers as they go. The pope had promised an indulgence to all who would undergo this rite.

As Martin repeated his prayers on the Lateran staircase, Hab. 2:4 suddenly came into his mind: the just shall live by faith.

He ceased his prayers, returned to the University of Wittenberg, went on to explore the revolutionary idea of “justification by faith,” and ultimately nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church, and started the movement known today as the Reformation—the single most important event in modern history.¹

His name, of course, was Martin Luther.

The leadership didn’t like the implications of his views and ultimately, at the Diet (council) of Worms (a town) they excommunicated him as a heretic.

He went on to write commentaries that are classics today; hymns like, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”; and translated the entire Bible into German, a classic which remains the literary masterpiece in the Germanic tongue.

Rom 1:15-17.

Notes:

1. Manuscript by his son, D. Paul Luther, preserved in the library at Rudolstadt, quoted by F.W. Boreham in A Bunch of Everlastings or Texts That Made History, Judson Press, Philadelphia, 1920, p. 20. Also, see Courson, p. 33-38.

Five-Fold Woe

Now follows a five-fold woe upon the wicked Chaldean oppressor. Presented symmetrically in 5 stanzas or strophes of 3 verses each.

Proud Ambition (2:5-8)

5] Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, [he is] a proud man, neither keepeth at home, whoenlargeth his desire as hell, and [is] as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

Trust me: they will never be satisfied. Nothing satisfies: prominence, position, power, people... God-thirst drives us.

Wine:

Nahum makes it clear that Assyria fell through drunkenness; Amos tells us that the fall of the northern kingdom was caused by drunkenness; now Habakkuk tells us that Babylon will fall through drunkenness. Cf. Dan 5!

[Rome also. How about the U.S.....]

6] Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth [that which is] not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

[To him that ladeth himself with think clay”? rather, “and maketh himself rich with loans.”]

7] Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

8] Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men’s blood, and [for] the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

In search of satisfaction, the Babylonians would only experience retribution; the people they devoured would soon devour them. (cf Gal 5:15)

Covetousness (2:9-11)

9] Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

10] Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned [against] thy soul.
We become like the gods we worship... Ps 135:18.

There are three steps (re: Judges; Isaiah...) to the downfall of a nation:

1) Spiritual apostasy;
2) Immorality;
3) Political anarchy.

The primary problem never was political anarchy. ...or even immorality. It all begins with spiritual apostasy: turning away from the true and living God.

20] But the Lord [is] in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

He is saying, “I know what I am doing. I’m on the throne. Pipe down. Trust me.”

Habakkuk 3

The Prayer

The psalm of Chapter 3 is viewed as the most magnificent Hebrew poetry.

[“selah”: v 3, 9, 13.]

1] A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

Shigionoth: (found, in the singular in Ps 7 also.) Uncertain musical term.
Kind of music which accompanied the song; implies great excitement; a triumphal style.

2] O Lord, I have heard thy speech, [and] was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Lit.: “Let your work live.” We talk of showers of blessing; rather showers of mercy! Portia in the Merchant of Venice (Act IV, Scene 1):

The quality of mercy is not strain’d
It dropeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blesst.
Some view this passage historically: the descent of God from Mt. Sinai when the law was given; the wandering through Midian, through Teman, over the mountains, and through the Red Sea on their way to the promised land.

Others suggest that it’s prophetic of Jesus Christ: Teman is Edom; Cf Isa 63. Bozra, stained with blood; then moving north to Jerusalem...

Some also imply that the effects of one of the Mars’ near passbys is in view.. [Patten, Hatch, Steinhauer model, do see our briefing The Signs in the Heavens for an in-depth discussion.]

Result:
reminded of the past;
revealing of the future;
to be renewed in the present.

Review what God has done for you in the past;
Anticipate what He will do for you in the future;
and you will have peace in the present.

Earlier: Lord, do something. Now, I tremble at what you will do...

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. But what does that mean for those left behind?

Rejoice in the Lord

Habakkuk not only heard a sermon from God, he now has a vision of God.

The Program of God

3] God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.
4] And [his] brightness was as the light; he had horns [coming] out of his hand: and there [was] the hiding of his power.
5] Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.
6] He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

[Moses, vv7-10?]

7] I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: [and] the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

[Cushan is Ethiopia. Campaign as Pharaoh’s son? Acts 7:22?]

8] Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? [was] thy wrath against the rivers? [was] thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses [and] thy chariots of salvation?
9] Thy bow was made quite naked, [according] to the oaths of the tribes, [even thy] word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
10] The mountains saw thee, [and] they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, [and] lifted up his hands on high.

[Joshua, vv11-15?]


[Miracle at Gibeon, Josh 10:12.]

12] Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.
13] Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, [even] for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.
14] Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing [was] as to devour the poor secretly.
15] Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, [through] the heap of great waters.

Habakkuk not only heard a sermon from God, he now has a vision of God.

16] When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

[250x335]Earlier: Lord, do something. Now, I tremble at what you will do...

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. But what does that mean for those left behind?

17] Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither [shall] fruit [be] in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and [there shall be] no herd in the stalls:

Even though my country will be devastated, the markets will crash, my house will be burned and looted, and there is blood in the streets...

Rejoice in the Lord

18] Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

rejoice = “to jump up and down.”
joy = “to spin around.”
1 Thess 1:9 “In everything give thanks” in, not for...

(I rejoice in the Lord, not the problem...)

19] The Lord God [is] my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ [feet], and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

He was in the valley in Chapter 1;
He was in the tower in Chapter 2;
He is now on the mountain top in Chapter 3.

Jonah ministered to the Assyrians. Habakkuk to the Babylonians.

Jonah ran from God when he heard what God was going to do. Habakkuk ran to God wondering what God would do.

Jonah saw the salvation of God to the Gentiles. Habakkuk saw the sovereignty of God through the Gentiles.

Jonah’s story ends in foolishness as he worries about the gourd. Habakkuk’s story ends in faith as he trusts God.

Jonah had to learn inside a fish. Habakkuk learned in the high tower.

Where to you want to learn your lessons about faith?

Are there always storms? Is there seaweed wrapped around your head? Do you feel cramped, always in the dark?

Are you inside a fish or in the tower?

The hour is later on God’s clock than any one of us realizes. Prophecy should be studied—not as an idle curiosity—but to ascertain the will of God now for each of our lives, and to enable us to move into the center of that place of blessing (Hab 1:5).

* * *

Zephaniah

Introduction

Zephaniah means “Whom the Lord hides (or protects).” He was born during the latter part of the reign of Manasseh (686-642 B.C.; 2 Kgs 21:16).

Day of the Lord

“The Day of the Lord” occurs seven times in this book.

Judgement would begin with God’s people, Israel (Isa 2:5-3:26; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1). It would begin with a battle cry (Ezek 30:2, 3; Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15) as the Lord summoned His enemies to prepare for battle (Isa 13:3-5). It would be a day of darkness (Ezek 30:3) and fire (Zeph 1:18; Mal 4:1) and of cataclysmic events (Isa 34:4) when the earth would tremble (Joel 2:1-11).

Babylon (Isa 13:1, 6, 9), Egypt (Jer 46:10-11), Edom (Obad 1, 15), and other nations (Joel 2:31; 3:14; Obad 14) would be laid waste as God intervened to punish sin that had come to a climax.

It would all begin with the Tribulation period, “The time of Jacob’s Trouble” (Jer 30:7; Isa 24:20-21; 26:20-21; 34:1-3; Joel 1:15; 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:14-18; in the NT: Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:5-7; 19:1, 2) and would embrace the entire Millennium. It was spoke of as a “day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12), a “day of judgment” (2 Pet 2:9), and a “day of wrath” (Rev 6:17).

There are 1,845 references to Christ’s rule on the earth in the Old Testament. A total of 17 OT books give prominence to the event.

Of 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming. It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books (excepting three that are single-chapter letters to private individuals and Galatians).

For every prophecy relating to His first coming, there are eight treating His Second Coming.

Still, most people assume that the future is but a linear extrapolation of the present; life will just go on. But the Bible says otherwise.
One of the problems (in many of the Old Testament prophecies) is the juxtaposition of the immediate and far horizons (e.g., Daniel 11, before and after verse 36, et al).

**Zephaniah 1**

1] The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

Zephaniah identifies himself better than any of the other minor prophets—four generations, the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah and thus of royal blood.

He was the swan song of the Davidic kingdom and he is credited with giving impetus to the revival during the reign of Josiah, the happiest in Judah’s experience.

**Josiah**

Josiah came to the throne at the age of 8. Religious idolatry was rampant because his father, Amon, had reverted to Manasseh’s (55 years of) earlier evil practices. Josiah had God-fearing advisors and at the age of 16 “he began to seek after the God of David his father” (2 Chr 34:3). At the age of 20 he began to cleanse Jerusalem and the land of the idolatry his father and grandfather had brought into the land (2 Chr 34:3-7).

[Some scholars (Feinber, Tatford, Ironside, Keil) place Zephaniah’s ministry after Josiah’s reforms, however.]

Although Judah enjoyed a period of political stability during the reign of Josiah, there was relatively little calm anywhere else.

**Assyria**

In 721 B.C., under Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) Assyria overran the Northern Kingdom and deported them throughout their empire (2 Kgs 17). Residents of the upper classes of people in Babylonia and Syria were then settled in the cities of Samaria. (This manner of mixing peoples had been instituted by Tiglath-pileser III as a means of minimizing the chances of rebellion among the subjugated peoples (2 Kgs 17:24). These merged peoples became the Samaritans of the later years. (John 4:9, etc.)

Sargon had scarcely completed the overthrow of Israel when he was faced with the rebellion in Babylonia. No sooner had this been put down when he became entangled in campaigns in Asia Minor and Urartu (ancient Armenia). When he died, he was followed on the throne successively by Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.), Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.), and Ashurbanipal (669-633 B.C.).

Sennecharib likewise became involved in suppressing revolts as far west as Cilicia, where he captured the city of Tarsus in 698 B.C. He was murdered by his sons.

Esarhaddon succeeded him, and was faced with considerable opposition from peoples to the north: the Cimmerians and Scythians. (See The Magog Invasion for further background on these peoples.) In the course of time, however, and ultimately succeeded in his invasions of Egypt.

Ashurbanipal, his successor, relentlessly subjugated Egypt. Upon his death, the might of Assyria began to wane and his successors could do little to quell the forces against them. In 614 B.C. the Babylonians, aided by the Medes, overthrew the Assyrian capital of Asshur and in 612 B.C. Nineveh suffered a similar fate.

When Assyria began to decline in the face of the emergence of the Babylonians, Egypt fought two major battles against the Babylonians at Carchemish (modern Jerablus). They were nominally victorious in the first encounter (during which Josiah was tragically killed, 2 Kgs 23:29-30; 2 Chr 35:20-27; Jer 46) but were severely beaten by Nebuchadnezzarion 606 B.C., establishing Babylonian supremacy in the region.

It was the invasion by the Babylonians that Zephaniah predicted in the forthcoming passages (1:10-17; 2:4-7, et al)

**God Judges**

2] I will utterly consume all [things] from off the land, saith the Lord.

Utterly *scrape* the land.
3] I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord.

Zephaniah blends the near and far prophetic views together. The immediate judgment of Judah prefigures a far greater worldwide time of trouble (Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21; Rev 8:1-20:3) to come upon Israel and the nations of the world (Jer 30:5-7; Joel 3:2-17). This would all be preparatory to Israel’s final restoration and kingdom blessing (Jer 30:8-9; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Zeph 3:14-20; Hag 2:20-23; Zech 8:20-21; 14:16-21; Mal 4:1-4; Acts 1:6; Rom 11:25-36; Rev 20:4-6).

4] I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, [and] the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

Judgment begins with the “household of God” (1 Pet 4:17).

Cherem means “black priests.”

Churches no longer influence the development of national character. In our culture, there is no longer any connection between character and destiny.

Gibbon (a non-Christian historian) concluded that there were 5 reasons for the decline and fall of Rome:

1) The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home as the basis of society;
2) Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses;
3) The mad craze for pleasure; sports and entertainments (ever more violent);
4) The building of great armaments, even though the enemy was within;
5) The decay of religion, fading into mere form, losing power to guide the people.

“Chermarims” means “black priests.”

5] And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship [and] that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham;

Host of heaven (Baalim, astral deities): the sun, moon, stars... Mars...(See our Briefing Package on the Signs in the Heavens, or our Commentary on Joshua for further study.)

Baal (Mars) was the son of El, in the Canaanite pantheon, the god of war. His sister-consort was Anath.

Malcham is the name of Molech, the god of the Ammonites. Sacrifice of children in Hinom Valley...while they still professed Temple worship. [We sacrifice children in the Holy of holies: “ye are the temple of God.”]

6] And them that are turned back from the Lord; and [those] that have not sought the Lord, nor enquired for him.

Two groups: those who had known the truth and departed; and those indifferent. [Ecumenical strategies are abhorrent to a jealous God, who puts His Word even above His name (Ps 138:2).]

It is easy to lose sight of the fact that God’s people had been blessed above all other nations. It was their base ingratitude to Him that finally brings down His wrath.

Any form of greed or covetousness is regarded by God as idolatry (Col 3:5). We become like the gods we worship (Ps 135:18).

7] Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord [is] at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

“Day of the Lord”: first mention in this book. It will begin when the Church leaves this Earth. (Here, there is no definite article; this is but a precursor.)

Guests, “called ones” = ? (2:3?)

8] And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.

Zedekiah’s children killed, his eyes put out... 2 Kgs 24-25. [Jer 32:4; Ez 12:13]

9] In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.

“Leap on the threshold” = of a scared building (1 Sam 5:4, 5; Ezeks 9:3; 10:4; 46:2; 47:1). Viewed superstitiously as the abode of demons, thus a place of particular danger. In Roman times, found its expression in carrying a bride across the threshold, etc.
10] And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, [that there shall be] the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

“Fish gate” = Damascus Gate.

11] Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

Maktesh = mortar. A depression where the marketplace was situated; “cheesemakers’ valley”?

12] And it shall come to pass at that time, [that] I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.

After grapes are squeezed, wine is allowed to stand in a vat so the accumulation of sediment can settle to the bottom. If it stands too long, it becomes thick and syrupy and unpalatable. The people of Jerusalem is compared to the “dregs” proverbially “settles on their lees” (Jer 48:11) illustrating their stagnancy and inability to have moved in time.

[ Spiritual indifference in our day? ]

13] Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit [them]; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

[vv14-18 goes beyond the local, prefiguring, invasion]

14] The great day of the Lord [is] near, [it is] near, and hasteth greatly, [even] the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

The Great Tribulation is yet future.

In Zephaniah’s day, after Josiah ruled, there never arose another good king. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedediah: every one corrupt.

“cry bitterly”: the concept of the Wailing Wall would come into existence.

15] That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

Feinberg: “wasteness and desolation”—sho’ah and umesho’ah—similar sounds convey the monotony of destruction. Distress, desolation, and darkness...

16] A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

“A day of the trumpet”...sound the alarm...

17] And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

18] 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 shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Zephaniah 2

God not only judges His own people, but also the nations. He is gracious, and not willing that any should perish. He sends out a final call before judgment.

1] Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

It is not that He does not love them; it is because of their shameless sin.

2] Before the decree bring forth, [before] the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger come upon you.

Note the tone of urgency here. Repentance before the judgment comes, before it’s too late.

3] Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.

The danger among believers today:

a pride of race;
a pride of face;
a pride of grace.

Paul said he had nothing to glory in. If he had none, then certainly we have none!
The Cherethites were a people (of Hamitic descent) who came from the island of Crete (Amos 9:7), migrants who came to be known as Philistines (which means “migration.”)

6] And the sea coast shall be dwellings [and] cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.
7] And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

You can visit the beaches and apartments at Ashkelon and see this. (However, they may yet be driven from this area before the final fulfillment.)

Now he turns to the east:

Judgment of Moab and Ammon

8] I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified [themselves] against their border.
9] Therefore [as] I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, [even] the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.


Their land, which for centuries had been noted for its fertility, would become a desolate waste.

The Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, one of the poorest countries in existence. [The recent treaty between Israel and Jordan may be setting the stage for Dan 11:41.]

10] This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified [themselves] against the people of the Lord of hosts.

Pride, against the Jew.
11] The Lord [will be] terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and [men] shall worship him, every one from his place, [even] all the isles of the heathen.

They will be judged for their pride and arrogance (Isa 16:6), gross immorality, idolatry (1 Kings 11:7), and psychopathic inhumanity (2 Kings 3:26-27).

Rom 1:21-23.

Judgment of Ethiopia

12] Ye Ethiopians also, ye [shall be] slain by my sword.

The descendants of Cush (Gen 10:6), including eastern Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, etc. Ethiopia had been a great nation—even ruling Egypt (720-654 B.C.). At times threatened the well-being of Judah (2 Kings 19:9; 2 Chron 14:9-13; cf. Isa 37:9). She is to be ravaged by war (“sword”).

(Also, see 3:10.)

Now, to the south. The judgment is worldwide. Then, to the north:

Judgment of Nineveh

13] And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, [and] dry like a wilderness.

Assyria had been dominant for centuries. Zephaniah’s prophecies were in advance of the Medo-Babylonian attacks.

Nineveh (Gen 10:11) is one of the oldest cities in the world. In Zephaniah’s day it was deemed impregnable. Xenophon, the ancient Greek historian, reported that its walls stood 100 ft. high, and 50 ft. thick. They were surrounded by a moat 150 ft wide, and protected by 1200 towers.

Diodorus Siculus refers to a legend that stated that the city would not be taken until the river became its enemy (cf. Nah 1:8; 2:6; 3:13, 15). History records that when the Medes and Babylonians attacked Nineveh, there was a sudden rise in the level of the Tigris River. Water began to soften the sun-dried bricks, a section of the wall collapsed, causing a breach in the defenses and the once-proud city was soon overrun and destroyed.

14] And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; [their] voiceshall sing in the windows; desolation [shall be] in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

Their buildings are to be torn down.

15] This [is] the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I [am], and [there is] none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, [and] wag his hand.

When Alexander the Great marched his armies up the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Nineveh had been so completely covered that they were unaware that beneath their feet lay the once mighty city of Nimrod (Gen 10:8-11).

The modern city of Mosul is across the Tigris River from the site of old Nineveh, which is still a desolation.

The precision of these prophecies are startling preview of the overthrow of the world’s nations in the end times.

As we see in the Book of Habbakuk, God moves in a way that the prophet never suspected. So it will be in our day. God has judged the nations in the past, and He will judge them in the future. America, too, is ripe.

Zephaniah 3

God Returns to Focus on Jerusalem

1] Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

They had the Temple. Privilege creates responsibility. [Where does that put us?]

Pollution is on the inside: pornography is the garbage of the ungodly. Obscenity and violence are the garbage of the world’s entertainment.

Immorality arises whenever people are treated like things and things are valued as if they were people.
Paul’s verdict in Romans 3:16: “Destruction and misery are in their ways.”

2] She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.

God had sent judgment: 185,000 Assyrians outside their walls scared the daylights out of them (2 Kings 18 -19.) God relieved them, but they “received not correction.”

How about America? Riots, fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes—yet we continue in our arrogance (and our debts), flaunting our sin and denying the God of our heritage...

3] Her princes within her [are] roaring lions; her judges [are] evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

Insatiable greed, devouring all in ravenous appetites, leaving nothing till the morning.

4] Her prophets [are] light [and] treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

By their lives they brought disrespect upon the Temple, the sanctuary of God. You do violence to the law when it is not interpreted accurately, or even left untaught. These were the theological liberals of their day.

How many pastors really know the Word of God? How many resort to psychology rather than the sufficiency of Christ?

5] The just Lord [is] in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

What ever happened to shame? There always has been immorality—but it had the sensitivity to remain hidden, not publicly condoned.

“Broadmindedness” is a synonym for condoning sin. It was the social acceptance of homosexuality that brought down Sodom and Gomorrah.

Verses 6 - 8 present a picture of the Great Tribulation, the great Day of the Lord, Armageddon, etc.

6] I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.

When studying the glory that was Rome, it is easy to see why they were confident that it would live forever. Yet when you view the ancient ruins, and the stones worn by chariot wheels, it is hard to imagine the great cities of yesterday. What about New York or Los Angeles?

7] I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, [and] corrupted all their doings.

The warnings of judgment seem to have little effect.

8] Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination [is] to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, [even] all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

The Planet Earth is moving toward a definite appointment with a jealous God (Ps 2; Rev 16:13-16).

The first part of this chapter is almost frightening to read: dark forebodings and ominous rumblings. Now we turn from darkness to the brightness of blessings.

The Blessing

9] For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.

Language that is pure? (free of blasphemies, etc.) Or pure Hebrew? True today... Kingdom age language? (Cf. Zech 14:9; Isa 2:2-3; Zech 8:20-23; Joel 2:28-32; Hab 2:14.)

10] From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, [even] the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

[Some believe that the Ark of the Covenant is hidden in Ethiopia.. Menelik I switching a replica with the real one in the days of Solomon, etc. I happen to doubt it: 2 Chr 35:3. Do see our briefing Mystery of the Lost Ark for a full discussion.]
The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, [even] the Lord, [is] in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil anymore.

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: [and to] Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee [is] mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

mighty” = gibbor, valiant warrior

“who saves” = yoshia, who saves, who’s victorious

as Boaz, ’ish gibbor hayil, the mighty man of valor, who redeemed the land back to Naomi and took a Gentile bride in his acts of redemption. (See Romance of Redemption, gleanings from Ruth.)

Zephaniah is called the prophet of love because of this verse.

In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

God’s judgment comes on shameless immorality. God’s own can never reach a place where they are satisfied in sin. If you can live in sin and be happy—you can be sure that you are not a child of God. The prodigal son was never happy in the pigpen. (He was absent from his place of blessing—but he never lost his sonship!)

“...no more be haughty...” The meek shall inherit the earth.

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.

The three Babylonian deportations left the poor, afflicted, and crippled in Jerusalem. God is pledged to take care of the poor...

The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make [them] afraid.

Employing the metaphor of a shepherd with his sheep.

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Falashas (come from the same root as Philistine: means “migrant,” or “stranger.”) The return of the Ethiopian Jews in 1991 made history. In 36 hours, 14,000 Jews were flown to Israel. Some of the rows of 10 seats had 18 people crammed into them. In the 1995 edition of the Guiness Book of Records, indicates that on May 24, 1991, a 747 carried 1,086 on just one flight, and landed with two more than they started with: two babies were born enroute, making a total of 1,088! [David Allen Lewis, Can Israel Survive in a Hostile World?, p. 240.]

(Some take “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia” in Isa 18 to refer to the United States. A specious stretch, but could apply.)

I will gather [them that are] sorrowful for the solemn assembly, [who] are of thee, [to whom] the reproach of it [was] a burden.

Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

At that time will I bring you [again], even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

Unger highlights a seven-fold description. The millennial kingdom will be:

1) An era of supreme and exhilarating joy (3:14);
2) An era when the Lord’s judgments against Israel will have been removed (3:15a);
3) Favored with the personal presence of the Lord (3:15b);
4) A time when Israel will not experience evil or fear (3:15c-17a);
5) A time when the Lord will rejoice over Israel as the special object of His love (3:17b);
6) Represent the gathering together of the saved remnant (3:18);
7) Preceded by the Lord’s judgment of Israel’s oppressors and the exaltation of the saved remnant (3:19-20).


Haggai

Introduction

Post-exile history: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Post-exile prophets: Haggai; Zecharaiah (2 months later); Malachi (100 yrs later).


Name: (Hag means “festival”) = “my festival.”

Style: practical. Work is the measure of life cf. 1 Cor 15:58; Hag 1:8, 14.

(Contrast to his contemporary, Zecharaiah, visionary)

Haggai 1

1:1-11: A Challenge to the People

508 B.C. was significant enough for God to send a prophet to deal with it and to record what happened in the Word of God.

Sixteen years earlier, the Persian emperor, Cyrus, had issued a decree permitting the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (cf. Ezra 1:2-4). About 50,000 returned under the newly appointed governor of Judah, Zerubbabel (also called Shesbazzar) and Joshua, the high priest.

(Only 49,897: 42,360, plus 7,337 servants and 200 singers.)

They cleared the temple court of rubble and replaced the altar of burnt offerings on its base, thus allowing the daily sacrifices to begin. In the spring of the next year the foundations of the temple had been laid. Then the troubles began. Neighboring tribes—especially the Samaritans—were hostile. Cyrus died in battle, and his successor Cambyses [also called Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6)] was pressured to stop the work.

When the work ceased, the people returned to their private affairs, and gradually became accustomed to worshipping among the ruins of the once-great temple. The desire to rebuild died out and they became reconciled to remaining the secular occupants in an impoverished land.

The sending of the prophet Haggai to challenge the people to rebuild led to a significant turning point in their history.

The audience was the remnant. (They were not unbelievers.)

The were the right people, living in the right place, wanting to do the right work, and for the right reasons.

But their priorities were not right. They were caught up in their own pursuits. They were living for themselves rather than for God’s glory.

[Isn’t that us?]

The Word of the Lord by Haggai

1] In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, {by: Heb. by the hand of}{governor: or, captain}

Darius Hystaspes began his reign in 521 B.C. Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24) had begun; Gentile calendar used.

Zerubbabel = “sown in Babylon”; grandson of Jehoiachin (1 Chr 3:16-19); appointed by Cyrus to be governor of Judah.

Joshua was son of Josedech, the high priest at the time of the Babylonian invasion (1 Chr 6:15).

2] Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.
Opposition of Samaritans was intense. They stopped work and rationalized it as God’s will.

“...it’s not the Lord’s will” = excuses. (The Lord changes His mind a lot...?)

“This people”: the Lord is displeased.

Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

3] [Is it] time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house [lie] waste?

“Cieled houses” = beautifully paneled. Their homes were elegant; but no Temple has been built. They had put their own homes before God’s house.

Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. [Consider...: Heb. Set your heart on your ways. 2X in ch 1; 3X in ch 2.]

[Most important stewardship: not money, family, etc.: your heart!]


Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages [to put it] into a bag with holes. [with holes: Heb. pierced through]

God’s Command

8] Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

Command of three things:
1) Go up to the mountain
2) bring the wood
3) build the house.

Life is not “complicated” if you put God first. God favors work. No easy (“miracle”) shortcut to success (in anything). The Holy Spirit never blesses laziness.

Approach: Mind. Heart. Will. (See The Way of Agape for an in-depth study.)

This is the day of spectator sports, and spectator Christians.

Ye looked for much, and, lo, [it came] to little; and when ye brought [it] home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that [is] waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. {blow...: or, blow it away}

They had zeal only for their own interests. God caused the drought; and their lack of success. America: Hasn’t He sent floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, riots in the streets—you name it—to get our attention?

Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed [from] her fruit.


And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon [that] which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Famine in the Scriptures is often an instrument of God’s wrath (2 Kgs8:1; Ps 105:16). The Torah foretold such visitations for disobedience (Lev 26:19-20; Deut 28:23-24).

He told Israel He was responsible. They had neglected Him.

Matthew 6:33. Money can be spiritual. It is simply means to be applied. Your home can be spiritual. It can be as sacred as your church.
1:12-15 The Response to the Challenge

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.

The results of Haggai’s message:

They
(1) obeyed God. 1 Sam 15:22.
(2) feared God. Prov 9:10; 1 John 1:7.

William Gladstone, the famous British statesman, was asked what was the mark of a great statesman. His reply: “A statesman is a man who knows the direction God is moving for the next 50 years.” We don’t have men who know God at all—let alone where He is heading in the next 50 minutes.

Then spake Haggai the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message unto the people, saying, I [am] with you, saith the Lord.

Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

[“I will be with you...for that’s who I AM.”]

And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.

Shealtiel = “asking of God in prayer.”

The leaders had their own sleeves rolled up. Leadership + action.

In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

23 days since verse 1.
And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

(These words are repeated directly to Zerubbabel in vv 21,22.)

The Ionian Greeks had been subjected to the rule of the Persians under Cyrus about 540 B.C. In 501 B.C., about 20 years after the date of Haggai’s prophecy, they rebelled against Persia, bringing on a Persian invasion of Greece about a decade later. Darius, the king at this time, led a great army but was defeated at Marathon in 490 B.C. Darius’ successor Xerxes marshaled an even larger army (1.8 million men) and the largest army ever seen. But in 480 B.C. the Greeks scattered the Persian navy and defeated the Persian army at both Thermopylae and Plataea. A year later the reassembled Persian navy was again defeated. As the Persian Empire began a gradual collapse, Alexander the Great led the Greek armies over the Bosporous against Persia and defeated the Persian armies at Granicus in 334 B.C., Issus in 332 B.C., and Arabela in 331 B.C. After Alexander’s death, the Greek empire broke up and was eventually replaced by Roman rule of the Mediterranean countries.

The overthrow of the Persians by the Greeks; the rise of Alexander; etc., certainly involved a shaking of the nations during the subsequent period.

However, the book of Hebrews applies Haggai’s words to the shaking at God’s final judgment (Heb 12:26,27). Note, “Once more...”


“The desired of all nations” =? Many interpretations. Feminine singular subject with a plural verb. Some (Thomas V. Moore, et al.) regard this as the “wealth” of the heathen, which seems to be confirmed with the “gold and silver” in v.8.

Others believe it is the chosen, the elect, out of all nations.

Earliest Christian, and Jewish traditions ascribe this to refer to the Messiah. The grammar is not an objection since in Hebrew an abstract noun is often placed for the concrete, and sometimes the verb agrees with the second of the two nouns. [Feinberg, p.244]

“The glory of this house will be greater...”
Then said Haggai, If [one that is] unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

Important principle: Holiness cannot be communicated by contact. Unholiness can be communicated by contact (cf. Num 5:2,3; 9:6-10; 19:11-22).

Dirty water will discolor clean water; not the opposite. Measles is communicated by contact. The absence of measles is not. Ceremony cannot cleanse a sinner.]

Lev 22:4-6. Mt 7:16. You cannot run with the wrong crowd and stay clean. If we could see ourselves we could not stand ourselves. (Jer 17:9; Mt 15:18-20).

Lady Macbeth, walking in her sleep, rubbing her hand and exclaiming: “Out, damned spot! out, I say!...Here’s the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.” How true.

Nor the heart. (Acts 8:21; Eph 6:6; Heb 10:22.)

Then answered Haggai, and said, So [is] this people, and so [is] this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so [is] every work of their hands; and that which they offer there [is] unclean.

Their unclean hearts made their service for God unclean. This is the reason that an unsaved person can do nothing that is acceptable to God.

And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord:

Since those [days] were, when [one] came to an heap of twenty [measures], there were [but] ten: when [one] came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty [vessels] out of the press, there were [but] twenty.

I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye [turned] not to me, saith the Lord.

Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth [month, even] from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider [it].

Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless [you].

(Ex 29:37; Lev 6:18, 27,29; 7:6; 22:4-6; Ezek 44:19; Mt 23:19.)

Then again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth [day] of the month, saying,

(Two messages the same day? A day later to be celebrated as Chanukkah.)

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

“Throne” is singular, not plural. One supreme rule over the earth, permitted of God, but who will be replaced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (Rev 11:15)

In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

“...that day” not this day.

“Signet”: an authentication of royalty. Zerubbabel, son of a Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

[Temple completed 4 years later (Ezra 5:1). They viewed it as meager. God viewed it as great (Mt 12:6).

* * *

Appendix:

Ezekiel’s “430 Years”

Ezekiel 4:1-8: 430 years of judgment predicted. 430 - 70 years captivity = 360 unaccounted for?

Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28: Multiply by seven. 360 x 7 = 2520 years.
360-day years:
Genesis 7:24, 8:3, 4, etc.;
Revelation: 42 months; 3 1/2 years; 1260 days; being equivalent, etc.

2520 years\_\_{360} = 907,200 days.
2483 years\_\_{365} = 906,295 days, + ?

**What About Leap Years?**

The Julian year is 11 minutes 10.46 seconds longer than the mean solar year. Therefore the Julian calendar contains 3 leap years too many every 4 centuries. An error of 11 days occurred as of 1752 A.D. and was corrected by the Gregorian reform which declared September 3 to be September 14, 1752, and reckoning 1700, 1800, and 1900 as common years and 2000 as a leap year.

Dividing 2483 by 4 = 621, with 18 too many (3 excess every 4 centuries); 11 have already been corrected for by the Gregorian reform: 18 - 11 = 7; 621 - 7 = 614.

2483 years\_\_{365} = 906,295 days
plus, for leap years 614 days
9 months 270 days
21 days 21 days
2520 years\_\_{360} = 907,200 days

Don’t confuse the “Servitude of the Nation” with the “Desolations of Jerusalem.” The “Desolations of Jerusalem” was punishment for not yielding to the “servitude”: Jeremiah 27:6, 8, 11; 38:17-21. Cf. Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel9:2.

Both the “Servitude of the Nation” and the “Desolations of Jerusalem” were predicted to last 70 years, but these were 360-day years:

70 years\_\_{360} = 25,200 days = 69 years\_\_{365} less 2 days.

**Servitude of the Nation**

606 B.C. + 69 years = 537 B.C. If July 23, 537 B.C. was the release from the Servitude of the Nation, then:

- \( -537 \text{y} 7 \text{m} 23 \text{d} \)
- \( 2483 \text{y} 9 \text{m} 21 \text{d} \)
- 1948 5 14

which is **May 14, 1948**. It was on this date that David Ben Gurion declared on international radio, and using Ezekiel as his authority, the reestablishment of Israel as the new Jewish homeland.

**Desolations of Jerusalem**

587 B.C. + 69 years = 518 B.C. If August 16, 518 B.C. was the completion of the Desolations of Jerusalem, then:

- \( -518 \text{y} 8 \text{m} 16 \text{d} \)
- \( 2483 \text{y} 9 \text{m} 21 \text{d} \)
- 1967 6 7

which is **June 7, 1967**. As a result of the “Six Day War”, Israel regained control of the Old City of Jerusalem, for the first time since the time of Christ. Cf. Luke 21:24.

A stretch, but interesting.

* * *

Prayer issues:
Right people
Right place
Right time
Right reasons

Help us with our priorities.
Malachi

Introduction

Malachi means “my messengers.”

Despite many other scholastic conjectures, he was probably a person with this proper name. [Contrary to the Septuagint and Targumim.] The tradition of some of the ancient sources is that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young.

[The Targum of Jonathan (after “Malachi,” this targum adds, “who otherwise is called the scribe Ezra.”), Jerome, and Rabbi Rashi (1040-1105) understood Malachi as a title for Ezra the Scribe. Pseudo Epiphanius and other church fathers (Dorotheus, Ephraem Syrus, Hesychius, and Isidorus Hisp, statements as cited by John M.P. Smith, Book of Malachi, p. 10) linked Malachi with a town of Sopha or Sophira in Zebulun (Epiphanius, vitae prophetarum, as cited by Smith, from Nestle’s Marginalien, p. 28f.)]

Placement: Last book of the Old Testament. [Doesn’t “complete” OT. John the Baptist does (Lk 16:16; Mt 11:13).]

Background, Setting

The Temple was rebuilt; priestly worship carried on; people had fallen into spiritual decline, an their attitudes developed later into the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Like today...)

  Insensible to the love of God displayed toward them;
  Unaware of the enormity of their departure from the will and the way of the Lord;
  Lacked reverence for Him.

[Compare America and the Church today...]

Malachi ministered in the fifth century B.C., about 100 years after Cyrus had issued the decree in 538 B.C. which permitted Jews to return from exile to Judah. The destruction of Edom (re: Mal 1:3-5) was affected by the Nabatean Arabs who totally drove out the Edomites between 550 and 400 B.C., setting up their own Idumean state in its place.

In response to the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, the repatriated Jews had rebuilt the temple, completing it in 515 B.C. Houses had been reconstructed. Most likely in Malachi’s day the wall of Jerusalem was being rebuilt or had been completed (by Nehemiah’s crew). Nehemiah, whose activity in Judah began in 445 B.C., focused his reform efforts on ending intermarriage (Neh. 10:28-30), restoring the practices of honest tithing (10:32, 38-39) and of proper ritual (10:33-37), and ending exploitation of the poor (5:1-13).

Israel’s Enigma

In their minds, the postexilic era was supposed to be different: the land was to rebound with miraculous fruitfulness (Ezek 34:26-30); the population would swell (Isa 54:1-3); the nation was to rise to a glorious reign of a new David (Jer 23:5-6); and all nations were to come and serve them (Isa 49:22-23).

The realities of life were just the opposite. The land languished under drought (Mal 3:10), the population remained a fraction of what it had been, and the nation continued under the political dominion of Persia (nachpechah, Aramaic for “governor”, Mal. 1:8, was a Persian title, also used in Ezra 5:3, 6, 14; 6:6-7, 13; Dan. 3:2-3, 27; 6:7).

Thus, the book may be placed in the reign of Xerxes I (486-464 B.C.), when the Persians were experiencing their first stinging defeats by Greek armies. At this time, Judah was a vassal state of the Persians, living under a non-Davidic governor appointed by the Persians, and may have been searching the international conflicts of the time for signs of divine intervention.

Harvests were poor and subject to locust damage (Mal 3:11). Most hearts were indifferent or resentful toward God. Both the priests and the people were violating the stipulations of the Mosaic Law regarding sacrifices, tithes, and offerings. The people’s hope in God’s covenant promises had dimmed, as evidenced by their

  (a) intermarriages with pagans,
  (b) divorces, and
  (c) general moral ambivalence.

Parallel to America today: Biblical promises seem remote, resulting in neglect, disobedience.
Sins of Israel that provoked Nehemiah were the same as stirred up Malachi:

1) The defilement of the priesthood; (Mal 1:6-2:9 vs Neh 13:7-9);
2) Disregard of the Sabbath (Mal 2:8-9; 4:4 vs. Neh 13:15-22);
3) Foreign marriages, with divorce of the Israelite wives; (Mal 2:11-15 vs. Neh 13:23-27);
4) Neglect of tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8-10 vs Neh 13:10-14);
5) Oppression of the poor (Mal 3:5 vs Neh 5:1-13).

Malachi will present a triple rebuttal:

1) Their suffering was linked to their sins, from the top on down.
2) God’s love was in evidence if they would abandon their pity-party and compare their lot with the Edomites.
3) The third response was that the Day of YHWH was coming (3:16-4:6).

There is a purpose that runs through all of history. That purpose will be realized when this age has been overtaken by the last days.

Style

Malachi’s style differs from that of the other writing prophets. Rather than making direct proclamations, Malachi used a dialectical or disputational style. In this style he introduced each of his six messages by a charge or command addressed to the people. Malachi then characterized the people as questioning five of the six charges (each one except the third one), then he offered proof that each charge was correct. This style was an appropriate way to confront the apathetic Israelites. Dialectic style which became very popular in later Judaism.

Another theme also left its imprint on later ages, that describing the “messenger” (identified in 4:5 as Elijah) who would prepare the way for the Lord on the Day of Judgment (Mark 1:2; Matt. 11:10, 14; 17:10-13; Luke 1:17; John 1:21, 25.)

Key, pivotal, statements:

“I have loved you.” (Mal 1:2)
“I the Lord change not.” (Mal 3:6)
The remnant who returned from Babylon is represented as the nation (Mal 1:1, et al). Our Lord is said to have offered Himself to the nation, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:5-6). Other tribes than Judah are mentioned specifically in the NT as being represented in the land (Mt 4:13, 15; Lk 2:36; Acts 4:36; Phil 3:5; “the twelve tribes” Acts 26:7; Jas 1:1).

(For a more detailed discussion, see our Expositional Commentary on Joshua, Volume 2, The Twelve Tribes.)


What a way to begin! Opens with a declaration of God’s love. (Cf. Deut 10:15; 33:3; Amos 3:2)

Love = Heb. ‘ahab: (in ancient Hebrew pictographs).

Topical Insert:

Hebrew Pictographs

Frank Seekins and Danny Ben-Gigi, Head of the Hebrew Department in Arizona State University, shared a provocative discovery that not only enriches one’s understanding of the Bible, but also proves to be a remarkable teaching aid in learning Hebrew.

Ideograms are forms of writing where pictures are combined to form a concept that describes the intended word, such as those found in Chinese or ancient Egyptian writings. The discovery of ancient Hebrew pictographs highlights the fact that the letters themselves carry basic conceptual values and ideas.

Pre-Babylonian Hebrew

Moses and David wrote in Hebrew letters that were vastly different than the ones used today. The squared-off form of letters presently used emerged during the Babylonian exile. These were easier to write, but distanced from the original pictographs used previously.

Pre-Babylonian Hebrew letters were not only phonemes (phonetic to yield the sound of the spoken language), they were also semenes (basic elements of meaning).

Fortunately, the ancient script was never fully lost. The Samaritans, who never went into exile, still use it for their Scriptures today. A list of the letters is shown on the next page.

An Example

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Alef, currently written ה, but in Pre-Babylonian times was written as כ, or ל, intended to represent an ox, and thus symbolizing “strength,” “first” or “leader.” That seems straight forward enough.

When this letter was later written, as it is today, only the sounds remain; the picture concept was lost.

The next letter in the Hebrew alphabet is Beth, which you may recognize from such Hebrew words as Beth Lehem (the house of bread) or Beth El (the house of God). Beth, originally written as ב, means a house and symbolizes the family or that which is inside. (You can easily see how it was eventually turned to become our “b.”)

Knowing these simple letter-pictures, we can now explore our first Hebrew word. Remember, Hebrew goes from right to left. Our first word will be Ab, written originally as bath.

This word means (A) the leader of (b) the house or family: Father. You may recognize its familiar form as Abba. These ancient letters yield the meaning of the word as portrayed in Scripture and from God’s view of what it should be. But there’s more.

Another letter is named Hey, originally written as י, representing a man with hands lifted up, or as ה, an open window. The letter symbolizes “behold” or “revealed.”

If the letter (ה) is place in the middle (the heart) of a word, it portrays the heart revealed. The Hebrew word Ahav (ה) comes from the word-
Pre-Babylonian Hebrew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Literal Meaning</th>
<th>Ancient</th>
<th>Modern Sound</th>
<th>Symbolic Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alef</td>
<td>ox, bull</td>
<td>א (vowel)</td>
<td>strength, leader, first</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth</td>
<td>tent, house</td>
<td>ב, ו</td>
<td>household, in, into</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gimmel</td>
<td>camel</td>
<td>ג</td>
<td>pride, to lift up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalet</td>
<td>door</td>
<td>ד, ת</td>
<td>pathway, to enter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hey</td>
<td>window, fence</td>
<td>ה</td>
<td>&quot;the&quot;, to reveal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vav</td>
<td>nail</td>
<td>ו</td>
<td>&quot;and&quot;, to add, to secure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayin</td>
<td>weapon</td>
<td>ז</td>
<td>cut, to cut off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chet</td>
<td>fence, hedge, a chamber</td>
<td>ח</td>
<td>private, to separate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tet</td>
<td>to twist around, a snake</td>
<td>ט</td>
<td>to surround</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yood</td>
<td>hand, closed hand</td>
<td>י</td>
<td>a deed, work, to make</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaf</td>
<td>arm, wing, open hand</td>
<td>ק</td>
<td>to cover, allow, personal strength</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamed</td>
<td>cattle goad, staff</td>
<td>ל</td>
<td>prod, go toward, the tongue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mem</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>מ</td>
<td>massive, overpowering, chaos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>fish (moving)</td>
<td>נ</td>
<td>activity, life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samech</td>
<td>a prop</td>
<td>ס</td>
<td>support, twist slowly, turn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayin</td>
<td>eye</td>
<td>ע</td>
<td>to see, know, experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pey</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>פ</td>
<td>to speak, a word, to open</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzadik</td>
<td>fish-hook</td>
<td>צ</td>
<td>harvest, desire, need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koof</td>
<td>back of the head</td>
<td>ק</td>
<td>behind, the last, the least</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reysh</td>
<td>head</td>
<td>ר</td>
<td>person, the head, the highest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheen</td>
<td>teeth</td>
<td>ש</td>
<td>to consume, to destroy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tav</td>
<td>a sign, a cross</td>
<td>ת</td>
<td>a covenant, to seal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

picture אֶלֶף which is the heart of the father revealed, which is the Hebrew word, Love (!)

Another example is the word Torah תּוֹרָה. The last letter (on the left) is the Hey. The other three are the Tav (a cross), the Vav (a nail), and the Resh (a head of a man). Wow!

This article was excerpted from Personal UPDATE, of May 1995, pages 11-13. For more information contact: Frank Seekings, Living Word Pictures, 3346 E. Charter Oak, Phoenix AZ, 85032.

* * *

[Used 32X of God’s love in the OT] God’s love is unconditional (Deut 7:7-8) It is (always) undeserved. God’s choice was by undeserved love (Deut 7:7, 10:18; Hos 11:1; Rom 9:13).

It is intimately personal. (Moses finds this amazing: Deut 10:14,15). As a father taking his son by the arms to teach him to walk (Hos 11:1-3); God draws His people with cords, but not ordinary ropes: cords of love (Hos 11:4)

As the love between husband and wife (Eph 3:22f).

Is willing to forgive the most (because love is willing to look beyond, and to pay the price for, the worst of faults), yet is a love that condones the least (because that love, while continuing to forgive, never ceases coaxing, urging, wishing, and hoping for the best in the other partner).

God is most generous in offering us pardon and acceptance while it still maintains the high and holy standard of His righteousness to which He calls us. Rather than giving up on and tending to condone our sins and failures to meet His high standards, He faithfully continues to love us without making excuses for our failures or lowering the standard to meet us where we are.

It is precisely in this tension of forgiving the most and condoning the least that we can understand the uniqueness of God’s love.

Israel was called to reciprocate in kind. Yet, notice the scoffing skepticism: the hard times had caused them to veer toward pragmatic atheism.
The root of all Israel’s sins was her unawareness of God’s love and her own sin.

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

The problem with this verse isn’t why God hated Esau! But why he loved Jacob! [Griffith Thomas]

Many see the word hate in a comparative sense as an antonymic pair (Gen 29:30-31; Deut 21:15, 15; Prov 13:24; Matt 6:24; Luke 14:26 with Matt 10:37).

However, the apostle quotes this (Rom. 9:13), and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca concerning her twins (Gen. 25:23), The elder shall serve the younger, to illustrate the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in dispensing his favors. Jacob was chosen before he was born (Cf. Gen 25:23 vs Rom 9:11). The statement in Rom 9:13 is quoted from this prophecy and not from Genesis. Although born as twins, the hatred of Esau had been well deserved after the continued opposition to God through the centuries. He had no heart for God nor God’s people.

This is pointing to God’s election-love.

But there is also God’s justice-love.

When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army, the country of Edom was, among the rest, laid in ruins, and became a habitation for the dragons of the wilderness, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, Isa. 34:6, 11. The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem’s overthrow (Ps. 137:7), and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And, though Edom’s ruins were last, yet they were lasting, and the desolation perpetual; and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise all things come alike.

Against Israel God was a little displeased (Zech 1:15), but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are the people of his curse, Isa. 34:5.

4] Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts. They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.
Edom’s wasting of his heritage made it a place for the jackals of the wilderness. Every attempt to rebuild will meet with defeat.

Jacob’s cities are laid waste, but they are rebuilt; Edom’s are laid waste, and never rebuilt. The sufferings of the righteous will have an end and will end well; all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be endless and remediless, as Edom’s desolations. Observe here,

1. The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, “It is true, we are impoverished; it is the common chance, and there is no remedy; but we will return and build the desolate places; we are resolved we will” (not so much as asking God leave); “we will whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God’s curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom (Isa. 34:10), From generation to generation it shall lie waste.” They build presumptuously, as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God (1 K. 16:34), and it shall speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences to think to make their part good against God himself, and to build, and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, though God has said that they shall be impoverished. But see,

2. The dashing of these hopes and the disappointment of them: They say, We will build; but what says the Lord of hosts? For we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs; and he says,

First, Their attempts shall be baffled: They shall build, but I will throw down. Note, Those that walk contrary to God will find that He will walk contrary to them; for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered? [When the Jews had rejected Christ and His gospel they became as Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them; for when, in the time of the emperor Adrian, they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise.]

Secondly, They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin. All that see them shall call them the border of wickedness, a sinful nation, incurably so, and therefore the people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever. Since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired.

The Nabatean Arabs (550 -400 B.C.) ransacked Edom leaving only pockets of refuges in the Negeb desert (1 Macc 5:25). It was these same Nabateans who set up the country of Idumea (4:29; Mark 3:8) with its capital in Hebron and one of its great cities, built into the cliffs, named Petra. [When was the last time you saw an Edomite?]

The judgment of God against Edom should also warn not only skeptical Jacob but also the present day church in America. Edom was known as “the wicked country” (Mal 1:4). America is called “the Great Satan.”

Cf. Dan 11:41.

(Many scholars believe Petra will be a refuge for the remnant in the final siege of Jerusalem. For the possible prophetic significance of this location in the end-times, see our briefing, The Next Holocaust: the Refuge in Edom.)

5] And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from (beyond) the border of Israel.

Traditional View

God is to be magnified beyond Israel alone (Cf. Psalm 35:27 and 40:16, 17).

God’s love—in its graciousness and in its judgments—exceeds traditional national, political, geographic, or cultural boundaries. It would go beyond them, even as God had promised Abraham when he was first called (Gen 12:1-3). [This “blessing” was called “gospel” by Paul in Gal 3:8].

All mankind has been offered salvation through Jacob.

We must be careful not to doubt that love just because we may be in some affliction like the struggling remnant in Malachi’s day.

Eschatological View: Prophetic Significance:

Modern Jordan appears to escape the rule of the Coming World Leader (Dan 11:41). Many scholars believe Petra will be a refuge for the remnant in the final siege of Jerusalem.
The Remnant

Confidential Briefing (Matt 24:15): flee into (which?) mountains... These are the “non-many” of Dan 9:27, the “escaped” ones of Isa 10:20-23; 28:22; also Isa 4:2, 37:31-32; Joel 2:32; and Obad 17.

God protects them (Isa 41:8-16) and provides for them (Isa 41:17-20).

Referred to in Rev 12:6 & 14. Isa 33:13-16 reaffirms the provisions of Isa 41 and 68:8-16, and indicates that it will be in the mountains, amid “the munitions of rocks” and easy to defend.

Micah 2:12 pinpoints Bozrah, which was located in the region of Mount Seir, located on the western side of Edom in southern Jordan.

Bozrah means sheepfold. An ancient sheepfold had a narrow entrance so that the shepherd could count his sheep, and, once inside, he could guard a single entrance to contain them. (Cf. “I am the door” John 10). It appears that Sela, now Petra, fits the description, shaped like an ancient sheepfold, with a narrow passageway (the “Siq”) opening up to a spacious city surrounded by cliffs.

Daniel 11:41 indicates an interesting exception to the rule of the Antichrist:

He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, [even] Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

It would appear that this is then the likely place for the remnant to flee to. It is also interesting that this area, Jordan, is the subject of a recent treaty with Israel...

The world army, from Armageddon, pursues the remnant which has fled to the mountains of Edom in Jordan. (Jer 49:13-14; Micah 2:12). Bozrah to Megiddo = 176 miles; 1600 furlongs (Rev 14:20).

At the Second Coming, Christ rescues the remnant who have taken refuge in Petra in Edom (Isa 63:1-4; Rev 19:13; Isa 34:5-6, 8). In a most dramatic way, the Lord will, indeed, be “magnified beyond the borders of Israel.” (For the possible prophetic significance of this location in the end-times, see our briefing, The Next Holocaust: the Refuge in Edom.)

Applications

The people of God were insensitive to God’s blessings. Are we?

They were unaware of their departure from Him. In the Lord’s 7 Letters to the 7 churches (Rev 2 & 3), each one is surprised by their report card! Thus, they had a lack of reverence for Him.

Cf. The Declaration of Independence: “All men created equal...”, “...endowed by their creator with inalienable rights...” From Him, not by men. The Globalists must first deny Him before they can remove our freedoms.

Malachi is about the love of God. This precedes other issues. [The Way of Agape is a prelude to Be Ye Transformed...]

God is a person. (vs. Allah; or “the Force”, or the pantheism of the New Agers. John 3:16.)

Is America analogous to Israel? Or the Edomites?

A Call to Be Authentic

“Sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny.”

G.D. Boardman

...yet today there seems to be little apparent linkage between character, and destiny...

It is becoming increasingly fashionable to charge the government, the media, politicians, and others as being false, insincere, hypocritical, and generally untrustworthy.

What about ourselves? Do we also have a credibility gap? Have we heeded the divine call to an authenticity that rises above the current fashions, slogans, or eddies of our day? We have abandoned the God who loves us!

Authentic in Our Profession

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

Quotes a proverbial saying:
Sons (generally) honor their father;
Servants (generally) fear their master.

Since you openly profess that God is your “Father” and “Lord,” where is your honor and fear? (Fear: >100X. Deut 10:12) How could their words and the deeds be so far separated?

Their lack of dedication was an outright despising:
of His very being and person (Ex 23:20, 21; Deut 28:58);
of His doctrine (Ps 22:22; John 17:6);
of His authority (Matt 7:22; Mark 9:39; Acts 4:7);
and of His attributes.

[What about sons who do not honor their father... Ten Commandments...
Prophetic: children no longer honor their parents?]  

“Wherein...?” “Who? us? Where’s the proof?” They will resort to this protest of innocence 7X in this book.

[“Priests”? v.14 expands this passage to all believers]

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

Pollution was in Two Ways

1) Offeror: Polluted men and women cannot offer pure sacrifices to God while they simultaneously reject His lordship and fail to glorify and enjoy Him. He looks at the heart first.

“Put yourself in the offering plate first and then deposit your offering for God.”

Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:3-4: the Hebrew strongly emphasizes the giver rather than the offering:

“Cain, he, he also, he brought” and
“Abel, he, he also, he brought”

Four Elements: Proper name, personal pronoun, an adverb, and the verb with the personal pronominal ending on it.

There is a type of profanity that goes beyond cursing and swearing. (The common language is little more than a lack of vocabulary!)

[Cf. Cyrano de Bergerac—or the modernized version as Roxanne—is a classic example.]

The nation is also described as profaning His Name in Ezekiel 36:19ff.

2) Gifts also can be polluted in that they were blemished and not the choicest that could be given.

“Bread” is a metonym for “food,” etc. (Lev 21:6,8,17,22; 22:25; Num 28:2). Here refers to animal sacrifices (as in Lev 21:6, 8, 17). (Note “blind,” “lame,” “sick,” in v.8.)

Note they acknowledge: “Wherein have we polluted thee?” They knew what they did was ultimately directed against God Himself.

The sin of ingratitude.

“The Table of the Lord” (Altar: Ps 23:5; Eze 44:16) “is contemptible.” Same word is used of the Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrating the altar in 165 B.C. (Dan 11:21).

[The Lord’s Table today...?]

Be Authentic in our Gifts

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

They gave—but they gave leftovers.

Blemished offerings forbidden (Exod 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3, 10; 22:18-25; Num 6:14; 19:2; Deut 15:21; 17:1; Eze 45:23). They were willing to modify God’s requirements and laws by their own “circumstances.”

[Every atoning sacrifice in the OT was designed to anticipate and depict the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. A blemished substitute was
direct insult to the gift of redemption it pointed to. It was an act of sacrilege and blasphemy.

How was this allowed? By a discount religion, fostered by those who were responding their analysis of the popular marketplace.

Malachi’s reference to a Persian governor (governor, was a Persian title, also used in Ezra 5:3, 6, 14; 6:6-7, 13; Dan. 3:2-3, 27; 6:7). This shows that the book was written after 538 B.C. Most scholars agree that the Book of Malachi was written around 450-430 B.C., for these reasons:

1) Malachi’s rebuke of the priests’ malpractice in the temple shows that the temple had been rebuilt and the priesthood reestablished.

2) The moral and spiritual conditions Malachi addressed were similar to those encountered by Ezra, who returned in 458, and Nehemiah, who returned in 444. These included:
   • Intermarriages with Gentiles (2:10-11; cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-28);
   • Neglect in paying the tithes (3:8-10, vs Neh 13:10-14);
   • Disregard for the Sabbath (2:8-9; 4:4 vs Neh 13:15-22);
   • Corruption of the priesthood (1:6-9 vs Neh 13:7-9);
   • Oppression of the poor (Mal. 3:5; cf. Neh. 5:1-13).

Either Malachi was addressing the same generation that Ezra and Nehemiah spoke to, or Malachi spoke to a later generation some time after Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s corrections.

The ultimate audacity (chutzpah)!

“Offer it to thy governor”; Irony, rather than a serious suggestion. Try paying your taxes with blemished animals... [We “tithe” over 50% to our government.]

[“Render unto Caesar...” Whose image is this... Yet, Whose image do we bear? God’s! (Gen 1:26, 27; 9:6)]

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

There is no reason for us, either, to persist in doubts of God’s love (Cf. Last session on vv.1-5); which hinder His ability to demonstrate His love fully. It is our indifference, carelessness, and half-heartedness that blocks our privileged position, too.

Our Lord judges a gift by what the gift costs the offeror who placed it on the altar, not by its intrinsic worth. (Cf. Widow’s mite, Mark 12:42, 43; Luke 21:1-4.)

Be Authentic in our Service

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

ASV: “Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle (fire on) mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”

NIV: “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am no pleased with you,” says the Lord Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands.”

So distasteful were the profane sacrifices permitted by the priests that Malachi now makes the outrageous suggestion: lock the double doors of the Temple Court and block all access to the altar of God! No worship at all is better than the perpetuation of cold, negligent, worthless worship.

[Cf. The church of Laodicea, Rev 3:15, 16.] Can you imagine a church with a large sign over it: “Closed. Scandalous. A sure sign of a decadent society.”

The chapter opened with the declaration that “I have loved you.” In the letter to Laodicea, even though Jesus is on the outside, His offer is open to each individual who is the exception (Rev 3:20).

It is better to have no sacrifices than vain ones.

This type of profanity is worse than simply careless or tasteless speech... [Symptom of vacuous vocabulary!]

...pretended orthodoxy doesn’t cover polluted gifts, services, ...lives... hearts.
Many experience a emptiness, a vapidity, in blandness—Christian belief without object, purpose or goal. A perfunctory, dull, empty routine, with paltry gifts and futile uncompleted commitments. It is like an inoculation: a mild injection to make one immune to the real thing.

A Burst of Good News to Break the Dirge

11] For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.

God is not powerless to rescue His holy name! Notice that the focus is His Name (2X in this verse.)

“rising...going down” = extremities of the earth (Ps 103:12; Zech 8:7). [4 other times similar terminology is used to depict the universality of God’s reign (Ps 50:1; 113:3; Isa 45:6; 59:19.)] This is a confirmation of the hint given in 1:5: “Beyond the border of Israel.”

His universal Lordship should not have surprised Malachi’s listeners in 400 B.C..

Had not they been told that in Abraham’s seed “all the nations of the earth would be blessed.?” (Gen 12:3).

Had not God not purposed to bless “all the ends of the earth?” (Ps 67).


This, too, was a bombshell: In contrast to the odious pretense currently in Israel, the mere heathen would be offering sacrifices pleasing to God!

The offerings, however, are not of this present age. This is not a prophecy of either the mass of the Roman Church nor of the communion of the Protestants. This relates to the millennial era. Offerings will be present then (Ezek 40 - 48).

[Millennial offerings? All were but a memorial to the Cross: OT in advance; Millennium in commemoration...]

Israel has a destiny which will be fulfilled “when the fulness of the Gentiles come in” (Rom 11:25).


This text carries us from Malachi’s day to the Messianic age (Isa 11:10; 66:20; Zeph 2:11; Zech 9:10).

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

“But ye...” Reproof of v.7 repeated. The error of the priests was to tolerate substandard items on behalf of God. Do you demand high standards when God’s work is involved?

Be Authentic!

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

Wearisome and burdensome, since their hearts were not in it. They snorted and sniffed at it: treated it with utmost contempt.

Boredom? Weariness? Dull routine? Drudgery and burden? Has this led to contempt?

Their blemished offerings was not because of poverty but because of greed. It was the offeror, not just the offering, that was polluted.

Are you a steward of God’s resources? Do you demand a high standard? Or do you accept substandard performance on behalf of your King? How about our private life? What is your “table grace” like? How do you begin your day? Or end it? Are you authentic?

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

The curse is pronounced upon the deceiver who thinks he can vow—in such cases the best was promised to God—a proper sacrifice, and then fulfill the vow with an unsuitable animal. Such were an insult to the majesty of God.
Prayer

Make me genuine and cleanse my polluted attitude, heart, and will. Make me your clean vessel so that not only what I say and bring to you, but also what I am, do, and believe may reflect a prior work of grace in my life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Malachi 2
A Call to Love God Totally

Love for God’s glory

1] And now, O ye priests, this commandment [is] for you.

Still dealing with the priests, and the character of their offerings. (Not their value—that will come later.)

Five great offerings of Leviticus: each pointed to Jesus Christ. Each was to represent the Coming One: holy, undefiled, separate, perfect, without blemish. “The volume of the book is written of me” (Ps 40:8).

God’s specifications each have (at least one) purpose. Perhaps that’s why Moses was so severely chastised for not specifically following God’s instructions for the water from the rock (1 Cor 10:4) the second time: the two events would have modeled the 1st (Ex 17:6) and 2nd (Num 20:8-12) Comings. (He is not smitten the second time!)

[All believers are priests in this age. Malachi’s warnings directed to the priests is for us. You and I must guard against misrepresenting God.]

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

The chief end of the priests—as it is of us as Christians today—is to glorify God.

Glory = denotes all of the weight, gravity, of God’s presence; the presence that defined His importance and the respect He was owed.

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They were actually attempting to swindle God! Do you? God means what He says and says what He means. He expects us to do the same. God does not want us telling Him something unless we mean it. (God never calls a real believer a hypocrite.)

[If the standards of Ananias and Sapphira were applied to us, many of us wouldn’t still be here! (Acts 5:1-5)]

Someone asked Mahatma Ghandi, the famed leader of India, “What is the biggest obstacle to Christianity in India?” “Christians,” was his considered reply.

Do our lives reflect the name, reputation, characteristics, and majesty our King? Read Ps 129 and Isa 40, and then see if our lives authentically reflect Him!

Here is the model of excellence, reality, and authenticity to which men and women are being challenged. To the degree to which we grasp the greatness of the person, character, and attributes of God—His Name—to that degree will our own inadequacies, falseness, and diluted worship take on credibility, substance, acceptance and posture. We, too, need to take up Malachi’s call to be authentic.

We can sit through a three-hour entertainment, and yet get restless in a one-hour sermon? We get uncomfortable in a quarter hour overrun in a Bible study, and yet rejoice when a sporting event goes into extra innings or periods?

Do our sacrifices reflect our estimation of His Majesty? Are we being authentic? Can we continue to claim our status as His Sons? Do we render to Him the honor that is due?

It is not God, but we who need to be credible. We must become more real and authentic in our profession, our gifts, and our service.

His supreme love has provided heaven’s richest treasure: the Messiah and King of Israel, our Redeemer of men.

How do we become authentic? Diligent study and a commitment to personal application. See also, Be Ye Transformed; cf. Jer 9:23-24.

* * *
Name = (appears for the 6th time in these first 16 verses of this book) the summation of all that He was in His person, attributes, reputation, doctrine, and ethical teaching. [Cf. Zond. Pict. Enc., IV:360-366.]

God’s name had been disgraced and made to appear shabby and despised by the way the priests had professed their faith, offered their gifts, entered into their service of God, and thought about the time they had invested for Him. “A form of godliness,” without its power (2 Tim 3:5). Their works denied their words (Titus 1:16).

The curse of Deut. 27:15-26 and 28:15-68. “I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings” almost a quotation of Deut 28:20; together with Lev 26 offered the alternative prospects of blessing or judgment. All gifts, goods, production—even the promise of these (Num 6:24-26)—would fall under God’s judgment. (As OT benediction, Num 6:24-26).

3X the text mentions the curse for disobedience and unbelief. God’s name is serious business, and nothing pollutes it more than the misconduct of those whose business it is to honor it. [Is America already in this position?]

3] Behold, I will corrupt (rebuke?) your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung of your solemn feasts; and [one] shall take you away with it.

The “seed” (or descendants) is more likely the produce of the ground rather than one’s offspring, though either view is acceptable (Cf. Deut 28:18-19, 21, 23-24). To rebuke the seed is to stop its growth.

The maw was the assigned portion of the priests (Deut 18:3), but the dung in the maw would be cast upon their faces, and they would have to taken away as an abhorrent thing. He’s “rubbing their noses in it.” Even more dreadful is that they would be removed from His presence, along with the dung, entrails, et al. (Lev 8:7; 16:27).

Love for God’s Word

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

The phrase “then you shall know [that I am the LORD]” regularly occurs in texts where the judgment of God is used as a lever to help men and women face up to the challenge that God has set before them. (e.g.,

the experience of Pharaoh in Ex 7:10; 9:14, 29-30; 10:2; 14:2, 18; of others in Ezek 15:7; 33:29, et al.)

God’s judgment would come if the priests would not respond to His call to change. [How about us?]

[“sons of Levi” (3:3). Denotatively, the priesthood descended from a narrower family within the tribe of Levi: the “sons of Aaron” (Lev 8:1-4) or, later, the “sons of Zadok” (Ezek 44:15). Malachi deliberately uses the broader term “Levi” to include all who served around the Temple, not just at the altar.]

Need not be limited to Phinehas (cf. Num 25:12-13), who was stirred to action by the evil done by the Simeonite Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi. While the entire congregation was assembled in repentance before God, Zimri and Cozbi walked brazenly across the encampment to commit fornication in the name of religious prostitution and worship of the dead (Num 25:6-8; Ps 106:28-31). Phinehas “stood up and intervened” (Ps 106:30) being “zealous with My zeal” (Num 25:11).

Also, at Sinai, being faithful in spite of the sin of Israel with the golden calf (Ex 32:25-29; Deut 33:8-11).

How different were the priests of Malachi’s day:

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

God’s covenant with Levi included “life and peace,” God’s gifts to obedient persons. Deuteronomy and Proverbs taught that these blessings were the result of a total commitment to the commandments of God (e.g., Deut 4:40; 6:2; 30:15-30; Prov 3:1,2; 4:10, 22; 6:23).

Blessings of peace withheld from them because they denied Him their obedience.

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

The real task of the servant of God: he boldly expounds the Law of God as it is found in His Word—all of it—whether or not it is popular or relevant. Faithful proclamation of God’s Word will “turn many to righteousness” (Dan 12:3).
When we do not seek first God’s glory and totally love and respond to His Word, then our culture is in desperate trouble.

A Call to Be Faithful

Loyalty to the God of the Covenant

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

“Father” that is intended here is not Abraham (as some scholars have suggested, including Jerome and Calvin) but YHWH, the father of Israel, the One who created her (Isa 43:1). We do not find God referring to any individual Israelite as His son—only the corporate body of the nation as His son (Ex 4:22).

[Adam was called the son of God—made in His image. After the fall, Adam begat a son in his own likeness—the likeness of his own fallen nature. We suffer from that same genetic defect.]

Loyalty to the People of God

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

“Deal treacherously” = Heb. צָרָשׁ, related to the word צָרֵש, “garment..” It is interesting how this word is linked to a “cover-up” of sin(s). [Note: distinctions between Judah (tribe), Israel (nation), and Jerusalem (capital).]

Every form of the people’s sins was an act of treachery against the whole body—as well as against God.

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“a daughter..”: a worshiper is regarded in Scripture as a child to a father (Jer 2:27).
The Law of Moses had called them to be separate (Ex 19:5; Lev 20:24, 26; Deut 7:1-4.) This was a safeguard against importing idolatry into Israel. (Cf. Balaam’s counsel, Num 25:1-3; 31:16; Ahab and Jezebel, the Daughter of Ethbaal, king of Zidonians, 1 Kgs 16:31). Mixed marriages had been clearly forbidden in Ex 34:11-16; Deut 7:3; 1 Kgs 11:1-2.

These mixed marriages were also mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9:1-6; 10:1-4, 18-19; Neh 10:30; 13:23-27). Nehemiah, finding that Tobiah, an Ammonite, an enemy of God, since his daughter married the son of the high priest, was living in a “father-in-law apartment” in the temple, threw him out, furniture and all and ran him out of town! Politeness and tact was sacrificed for purity! He was just as rough with those who had intermarried with pagans of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab (Neh 13:25).

Israel had thus profaned herself. Ezra likewise brought such charges (Ezra 9:1-3).

Paul also warned against being “unequally yoked” (2 Cor 6:15-16). [cf. Mt 10:34-40] The tragedy of a Christian son marrying a non-Christian wife... Tensions and worse. What will the children learn in such a household?]

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

The true child of God will not continue to live in sin. The prodigal son could not endure the pigpen (Luke 15:18). [He never lost his sonship, however!]

Loyalty to the Partner of Our Marriage

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

“And this is another thing you do...” “Covered” figuratively—only priests had actual access to the altar.

Hypocrisy is a barrier to service. Their sacrifices were not accepted. They were blocked by the tears of their abandoned wives (14b).

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

Many ministers and teachers are intimidated to the point of silence on issues regarding the sexual practices of single people, the extramarital “affairs” of believers and unbelievers, and divorce.

God was a witness to a legally contracted marriage where God was called to witness the covenant. (Marriage is indeed a covenant: Prov 2:17; Ezek 16:8; et al.)

Solomon similarly enjoined couples to “rejoice in the wife of your youth” (Prov 5:15-21).

One Puritan commentator summarizes:

She whom you thus wronged was the companion of those earlier and brighter days, when in the bloom of her young beauty she left her father’s house and shared your early struggles, and rejoiced in your later success; who walked arm in arm with you along the pilgrimage of life, cheering you in its trials by her gentle ministry; and now, when the bloom of her youth has faded and the friends of her youth have gone, when her father and mother whom she left for you are in the grave, then you cruelly cast her off as a worn-out, worthless thing, and insult her holiest affections by putting an idolater and a heathen in her place.


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

Most difficult verse in the book; problem to both Jewish and Christian interpreters. (One alternate rendering: “And not... wives, if he had anything of the Spirit of God. Fine, but it does not go smoothly with the remainder of the passage.)
Polygamy and divorce are not conducive to nurturing children in the fear of God. Broken families are a cancer gnawing at the vitals of our nation.

**Topical insert:**

**Broken Families**

Postwar generation: 80% grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other.

1980: only 50% expect to spend their entire childhood in an intact family. An increasing number of children will experience family breakup two or even three times during childhood.

Scientific evidence demonstrates that children in disrupted families do worse than those of intact families:

- 6X more likely to be poor; 22% of one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for 7 years or more, vs. 2% of children in two-parent families.

1988 study, National Center for Health Statistics: Children of single parent families:

- 3X as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems.
- More likely to drop out of high school, get pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, be in trouble with the law.
- Also higher risk for physical or sexual abuse.
- Less likely to be successful as adults; esp. in love, and in work.
- Harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job.

Teen suicide rate has tripled; juvenile crime has increased and become more violent; school performance has continued to decline.

National policies contribute to family instability and breakup.

Divorce is the public acknowledgment of failure.

Problem since the 1960’s: after the Supreme Court outlawed mentioning God in schools.
Divorce: 10/1000; then sudden growth to (1979) 23/1000.

1974: exceeds death as leading cause of family breakup.

1990: 1/4 women had a child unmarried.

Half of all marriages now end in divorce. Remarried couples are more likely to break up than couples in first marriages (56%).

1 in 4 children in the 1990’s will eventually enter a stepfamily.

Hollywood: celebrates divorce and unwed motherhood.

Federal policy: celebrates social and sexual variance.

The “Me” Generation

Fewer than half of all adult Americans today regard the idea of sacrifice for others as a positive moral value.

The adult quest for freedom, independence, and choice in family relationships conflicts with a child’s developmental needs for stability, constancy, harmony, and permanence in family life.

Welfare dependency tends to be passed on from one generation to the next. Daughters of single parents are

- 53% more likely to marry as teenagers;
- 111% more likely to have children as teenagers;
- 164% more likely to have premarital birth;
- 92% more likely to dissolve their own marriages.

Each divorce is the death of a small civilization. It inflicts wounds that never heal. Survey after survey demonstrates that Americans are less inclined than they were a generation ago to value sexual fidelity, lifelong marriage, and parenthood as worthwhile personal goals.

The Lack of Love in America

The love of many will grow cold: The most basic form of love: the family. Heterosexuals reproduce; homosexuals recruit. Family serves as the seedbed for virtues. This is the first generation in the nation’s history to do worse psychologically, socially, and economically than its parents. (Excerpted: Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Dan Quayle was Right”, Atlantic Monthly, April 93.)

* * *

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

This verse is one of the strongest protests anywhere in Scripture against divorce.

Reference is to the old custom of putting a garment over a woman to claim her as wife (Deu 22:30; Ruth 3:9; Eze 16:8). Instead of spreading their garment to protect their wives, they covered their garment with violence toward them.

Hems

Hem, border, fringe, bottom edge of skirt or train.

In ancient Mesopotamia, “to cut off the hem” was to strip one of his personality, authority, etc. A husband could divorce his wife by cutting off the hem of her robe. A nobleman would authenticate his name on a clay tablet by pressing the hem on the clay.


David’s removal of King Saul’s hem (I Sam 24): In wilderness of En Gedi; David cut off the skirt (shuwl) of Saul’s robe. The genealogy was woven into the threads of the hem. David was conscience stricken because he had personally interrupted the lineage to the throne and symbolically taken the away the authority from the Lord’s anointed. Saul understood: I Sam 24:20.

God’s Covenant with Israel: “I spread my (shuwl) over thee...” Ezek 16:8; Ex 39:25,26.

Joseph’s Coat: [Kethoneth passim =? many colors? ...or seamless!] Brother’s envious (Gen 37:3-4).
Jesus’ Seamless Coat: Temple veil torn, signifying end of man as high priest; Jesus’ hem not torn, because He is high priest forever...Jn 19:23,24; Mt 27:51.

A Touching Situation: Lord’s hem sought for healing; Matt 14:36; Mark 6:56. Goal of the woman with issue of blood; Mt 9:20-21; Mk 5:31. Same “age” as Jairus’ daughter: 12 yrs, and a Gentile! [Type of the Church?]

Ruth & Boaz: “Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid...” Ruth 3:9. Hem = inheritance, and authority; a request to exercise his right & responsibility Jesus is our near kinsman; we request to be covered with His (shuwl) and allow Him to assume legal responsibility over us: [“train” = shuwl] Isa 6:1.

Few issues in today’s world are more revealing about moral integrity than that of maintaining our covenant with our spouse, with whom we exchanged vows in the presence of God, a witness to the ceremony.

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

Wearying God? With evil skepticism. Can one exhaust His patience?

They raised the old argument against the providence of God from the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. (cf Ps 73, Job, et al. Mal 2:17 is answered in 3:1).

We—as Israel did—forget that the blessings of God are conditioned upon faith and obedience. God will withhold these blessings if we walk in self-will.

Believer’s must maintain their loyalty to the God who created them, the body of believers to which He has joined them, and the marriage partner He has given them. Anything less than this challenges our claim that He is our Father, Lord, and Master.

Truth: God will reward us with more as He sees how we respond to that which we have (Mt 13:12).

[The charges of 2:17 will be answered in the first six verses of the next chapter...]

Prayer

Lord, Make us genuine
Cleanse our polluted attitudes, hearts, and wills
Make us your clean vessels so that
not only what we say and bring
but what we are, do and believe
...will reflect your prior work of grace in our lives...
...with the help of the Holy Spirit...

Malachi 3

Review

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

Wearying God? With evil skepticism. Can one exhaust His patience?

The preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (beginning in 520 B.C.) was now a century past, but had not resulted in any dramatic reversals of the fortunes of the struggling Judean colony.

They raised the old argument against the providence of God from the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (cf. Ps 73, Job, et al. Mal 2:17 is answered in 3:1).

We—as Israel did—forget that the blessings of God are conditioned upon faith and obedience. God will withhold these blessings if we walk in self-will.

God does not reward evildoers with good; neither does He take pleasure in them. He delighted in:
• Seeing His Law kept (Isa 56:4);
• Seeing mercy and the knowledge of God (Hos 6:6);
• Acts of justice, gracious love and humility (Mic 6:8);
• Truth in the inward parts (Ps 51:6).

Believers must maintain their loyalty to the God who created them, the body of believers to which He has joined them, and the marriage partner
He has given them. Anything less than this challenges our claim that He is our Father, Lord, and Master.

Truth: God will reward us with more as He sees how we respond to that which we have (Mt 13:12).

[The charges of 2:17 are answered in the first six verses of Chapter 3.]

* * *

**Malachi 3**

**Introduction**

The next two chapters are much better known than the previous two; they are full of prophetic disclosure concerning both the 1st and 2nd Comings of the Messiah.

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

“My messenger” is a play on the name of the prophet Malachi.

Who is the messenger? Some see two messengers: The first, who is to go before and prepare the way, is John the Baptist. Cf. Mt 11:9-10; Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27. (Also Jn 1:23, drawing on Isa 40:3-5).

John was not the final or complete fulfillment of Elijah (Rev 11; Mt 17:11; Mk 9:12; Acts 3:21).

The 2nd is “the messenger of the covenant,” Jesus Christ. This appears to refer to His 2nd coming—as a judge, establishing His kingdom on the earth. “Messenger” = “Angel” in Greek. (Cf. “Christopanes” as Angel of the Lord; Ex 23:20-23. Also, Ex 33:14,15; Judg 6:12; 13:3; Isa 63:9.)

“Lord”: (ha adon) is in the singular, preceded by the definite article: it is referring to the divine Lord(Cf. Ex 23:17; 34:23; Isa 1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33).

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**Covenants with:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covenant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>Gen 3:15</td>
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<td>Shem</td>
<td>Gen 9:27</td>
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<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Gen 12:1-3</td>
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<td>Moses</td>
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<td>Israel</td>
<td>Lev 26:9-13; Deut 4:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2 Sam 7:12-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age to come</td>
<td>Jer 31:31-34</td>
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Here, probably with the single plan of God reflected in all of them. Christ is the mediator of the old and new covenants (Heb 8:8-13; 12:24).

This was not the answer they were expecting. His justice would be observed in His preparation of the path by a forerunner:

- His Preparation 3:1a
- His Coming 3:1b-2
- His Refining Work 3:3-4
- His Judgment 3:5
- His Long-suffering 3:6

He is called Lord, it is His Temple, and He is the messenger of the covenant: This the Lord Jesus Christ.

2] But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he [is] like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap:

Cf. The Next Holocaust Briefing Package.

Judgment in view: the 2nd Coming. [2nd Coming separate from Rapture, do see From Here to Eternity Briefing Package for an in-depth study.]

“Fuller” = a person whose occupation was to clean, whiten, bleach, thicken, shrink, or dye cloth. The fuller cared for newly shorn wool or woven garments. The process but generally included washing with lye (“fuller’s soap”) and cleansing by pressure, usually the treading of feet, as the Hebrew word implies (Ex 19:10; 2 Sam. 19:24).

“Refiner’s fire”: “There is a dramatic moment when the refiner knows that all dross has gone from the silver. Peering over it, the silver suddenly becomes a liquid mirror in which the image of the refiner is reflected. Then he knows that his task is done.” [Alan Robinson, “God, the Refiner of Silver.” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 11, 1969: p. 190.]
And he shall sit [as] a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Focus of “Jacob’s trouble” is Israel. He is going to cleanse those who enter the Millennium.

Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in [his] wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger [from his right], and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

“Sorcerers”: the occult. Widespread today, and increasing. Demon worship. Drugs. Forbidden: Ex 22:18; Lev 20:27; Deut 18:14. (See our Briefing Package on Halloween for further study.)


Instead of being a witness, they were a turn-off? When Mahatma Ghandi of India was asked, “What is the biggest barrier to Christianity in India?” He responded, “Christians.” [In my own experience, comparing “Christian” business ethics to that of my previous corporate experience, I must confess I find it tragically disappointing.]

For I [am] the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

This is the key theme for the message of Malachi: God is immutable. They were not obliterated like the Edomites was because of grace. While a terror to the wicked, He is a comfort to anyone who will accept His grace.

God Is Faithful

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

The sixth of their haughty rebuttals, their affected injured innocence. [Israel had spent 70 years in Babylon and was now out. But Babylon wasn’t yet out of Israel.]

They were so far gone that they did not realize their true condition. [As today!] Cf. The Letters to Seven Churches in Rev 2 & 3 or our Briefing Package on these letters.

- Ritualism has been substituted for reality.
- Pageantry has been substituted for power.
- The aesthetic for the spiritual.
- Form for feeling.
- The vocabulary without the Spirit.

“Return to me…” OT word for Repent. Turn around. Malachi is telling it like it is. Not popular, but essential. The truth.

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

“Rob”: rob, defraud, overreach.

“Wherein...” The seventh sarcastic question. Pretending their pious, affecting a petulant ignorance.

Feinberg lists four tithes: First-fruit—not less than 1/60 of corn, wine and oil (Deut 18:4); then:

1) 1/10th of the remainder after the first-fruit were taken, going to the Levites for their livelihood (Lev 27:30-33);
2) 1/10th paid by the Levites to the priests (Num 18:26-28);
3) A 2nd 1/10th paid by the congregation for the Levites and their own families at the tabernacle (Deut 12:18);
4) another 1/10th every 3rd year for the poor (Deut 14:28-29 q.v.).

We, “under grace”, are still to give, but the basis is broader. Consider the Macedonian example: 2 Cor 8:2-5. How much to you love Christ? [How did you “budget” your gifts to your loved one during courtship?]

Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation.

[How’s this for a closing benediction: “Stop thieves!”...]

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the
There appears to be at least four reasons for the remarkable institution of the tithe:

1) It acknowledges the Creator’s rights. The Tenth of all is His.
2) It is the antidote for greed and covetousness.
3) It is a test of our faith.
4) It is the solution to every financial problem.

In fact, it would appear even more binding on us since our privileges are greater: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48).

The “Windows of Heaven”? The only other use of that peculiar phrase was the “abundant outpouring” of the Genesis Flood! (Gen 7:11,12).

Can you imagine that phrase—“the windows of heaven”—being applied to your financial situation?

God changes not. God does not vary the principles of His government. God will not be your debtor! God is saying, “Trust me.” Do you?

The Practical Aspects

A tenth of all is His. Be strict. Be careful. Be systematic. Separate His funds upon arrival: a separate box, checking account, whatever (1 Cor 16:1,2). Keep records; your “giving” only comes after the return of His tenth.

You can take it with you! They always say, “You can’t take it with you.” I believe you can! There is a strange parable of the Unrighteous Steward (Lk 16:1-13), in which he writes down his boss’ receivables in anticipation of an audit and his impending termination. Thus, he exploited his present, but temporary, circumstances to enhance his future opportunities.

Strange example. But notice that the Lord commends his shrewdness, not his ethics. I believe this suggests that there is a way to “take it with you”: you can send it on ahead!

Before traveling to a foreign country, you usually convert your domestic currency into “the coin of the realm” to which you’re traveling. If you take heaven seriously, then why not prepare for your eternity through your stewardship of your current assets?
Your Portfolio of Giving

In regards to your own program of giving, there is a rather unorthodox distribution approach you might consider.

I personally never give according to “need” alone. In fact, the more desperate the need, the more I’m suspicious. There are more “needs” than I can possibly respond to. In fact, it seems to me that there are many ministries that God would prefer to shut down, if their supporters were only more perceptive!

I tend to view my giving opportunities as a portfolio manager. A portfolio manager’s performance is measured in retrospect by the subsequent results of his investments. Why not look at your own program of spiritual stewardship the same way. I hope to invest my resources where I have a high degree of confidence that the Lord will get the return He desires.

This approach results in a different perspective of alternatives. I am not as interested in a “need” as much as in indications that the Lord is in the action. What is the evidence that He is blessing what is going on?

I prefer to commit my resources into those areas in which I have been blessed, and where I am confident that He is pleased with the fruits that are being yielded. Your home fellowship should come first; and then any specific supporting ministries through whom the Spirit has blessed you.

(Man’s) Purposes for Money

1) provide for security
2) establish independence
3) create power and influence

**Man’s way** vs. **God’s Way**

Focus: power and position vs. submission

Emphasis: rights and freedom vs. personal responsibility

Desire: gain for self vs. meet needs of others

Concern: immediate fulfillment vs. lasting achievement

Yearning:
- praise of men vs. approval of God

Aspiration:
- to be served vs. to serve others

Need:
- to push ahead vs. for patience

Striving:
- to lead men vs. to follow God

Interest:
- competition vs. cooperation

Motivation:
- self-glorification vs. God’s Glory

Financial Freedom

Realizing that true prosperity comes only from God (Deut 8:18). Committing ourselves to God’s purposes for money (Mt 6:30).

God’s Four Purposes for Money

1) Provision (I Kgs 17:4)
2) Direction (I Kgs 17:7)
3) Fellowship (I Kgs 17:9)
4) Demonstration (Jas 5:17)

1) To Provide Basic Needs (Mt 6:26-30; I Tim 6:8)

- To establish daily dependence on Him (Mt 6:11).
- To deepen our love for the Lord (Col 2:10; Jn 15:5).
- To develop a spirit of gratefulness.
- To teach us to live within our means (I Tim 6:6).
- To help us enjoy our possessions (Heb 13:5).

2) To Confirm Direction (Ps 37:7)

- To build our faith and vision.
- To determine who is the lord of our life (I Tim 6:17).
- To protect us from harmful items (I Tim 6:9).
- To teach us patience (Rom 5:3; as 1:3-4).
- To concentrate on true riches (Phil 3:7-8).
3) To Give to Christians (Rom 12:3)

- To unite Christians (II Cor 8:14).
- To demonstrate the mark of a Christian (Titus 2:14; II Cor 9:8).
- To initiate spontaneous thanksgiving (II Cor 9:11).
- To multiply the potential for giving (II Cor 9:6).

4) To Illustrate God’s Power

- To cause Christians to trust Him (I Kgs 18:21-40).
- To mock the false gods of our age.
- To purify our lives and motives (Ps 66:18).
- To bring non-Christians to salvation (Acts 5:12-14).
- To glorify God (Ps 50:15).

A Call to Take Inventory

13) Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken [so much] against thee?

With the eighth impotent response, their rebuttal continues.

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

[2 sets of answers: 13-15 by skeptics; 16-18, by believing remnant]

“What good is it to serve God? It is an empty thing.” (Because their hearts were not in it.) Do you go to church to be critical? To criticize? Or to really worship? Real worship has a life to back it up (Isa 58:3-8).

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

This is their atrocious statement of precisely the opposite of what God had stated in v.10.

They thought they could tempt God and get by with it. But as Habakkuk found out in his day, God was moving and was going to judge them. If we can look behind the headlines, I believe America is also ripe for judgment.

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

These are those that “feared the Lord” (2X in this verse). A virtual synonym for righteous living (Lev 19:14; Deut 17:19; 2 Kgs 17:34). They networked.

They meditated on His name. (Cf. Isa 33:8; 53:3; Ps 144:3). God’s “name” comprises His person, His qualities, His doctrine, His ethical and moral standards—these were the things that the believers judged to be their highest and most prized possessions! The believers thought on the name of the Lord and as a consequence it was reflected in their character (Mt 6:21; Prov 23:7).

“A book of remembrance”; Throughout Scripture, there is the theme that God keeps records (Rev 3:4-5, Dan 7:10; et al.). What does your “report card” look like? Where do you stand with respect to Him?

Every time we even think on Him, it is recorded!

Psalm 56:8

He loves you so much that He can’t take His eyes off of you!
17] And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.


The Peal of Great Price: the Church. [Oysters were not kosher...]

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

The final judgment will end all verbal abuse against heaven.

* * *

In the Hebrew Bible, there is no 4th chapter of Malachi: the final 6 verses are part of the 3rd Chapter. In the final session, we’ll take up the rest which speaks of the Day of the Lord.

**Malachi 4**

Not a separate chapter in the Hebrew Bible, these verses are a part of Chapter 3.

**The Day of the Lord**

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

“The Day” = The Day of the Lord.

Unlike 3:2-3, which emphasized the purification of Israel (in particular, the Levites), this passage emphasizes the destruction of the wicked (cf. Isa 66:15; Zeph 1:18; 3:8).

So complete will be the judgment that the wicked (the arrogant and every evildoer; cf. Mal 3:15), compared to stubble, will not have a root or a branch remaining. This does not mean annihilation in the sense of cessation of existence (the wicked will be resurrected, Dan. 12:2), but rather the complete exclusion of the wicked from God’s Kingdom (cf. Mt 25:46).

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

The phrase the sun of righteousness appears only here in Scripture.


“Wings” also, a fold in garment used for storing precious things.

The figure of calves enjoying open pasture after being cooped up in a pen (stall) expresses the future satisfaction and joy of the righteous (cf. Isa 65:17-25; Hos 14:4-7; Amos 9:13-15; Zeph 3:19-20).

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

This not only indicates the finality of the judgment on the wicked, but it also brings to a sharp conclusion the answer to the cynical question asked by the unfaithful Israelites, “What do we gain by carrying out His requirements?” (3:14).

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

The verb remember is used 14 times in Deuteronomy as an exhortation to Israel concerning this covenant Law. This command can refer to: (a) mental acts of remembering or paying attention to something, or to (b) mental acts combined with appropriate external actions (in other words, recalling and obeying), or to (c) acts of reciting or repeating something verbally (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 1:241). In light of Malachi’s insistence on obedience, meaning (b) seems to be the force of this command: “Recall it to mind and do it!”

My servant Moses not only speaks of Moses’ faithfulness (Heb 3:5) but also reminds the reader that the Lord Almighty (Mal 4:3) is the same God who powerfully displayed His judgments and His salvation at the time of the Exodus. And He is the Living God who gave the Ten Commandments to the people...

At Horeb (the ancient name for Mount Sinai; Ex 3:1; Deut 5:2; Ps 106:19). He graciously accepted Moses’ role as prophetic mediator in the giving of the entire Law (Deut 5:23-31).
The people in Malachi’s time needed a renewed fear of God; they needed to repent and be faithful to God’s covenant. Such repentance would cause them to benefit from rather than suffer in the coming day of the Lord.

5] Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

The Enigma of Elijah

God promised through Malachi that the Prophet Elijah would come and minister before the day of the Lord.

Many commentators have linked this prophecy to 3:1 which speaks of a messenger who prepares the way for the Lord’s coming. However, Matthew (Mt 11:7-10) specifically states that John the Baptist was the messenger (Mal 3:1) who prepared the way for the Lord.

But should John the Baptist also be considered the fulfillment of the prophecy about Elijah? (Mal 4:5-6) Before John the Baptist was born an angel of the Lord predicted that he would minister “in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:17). This would seem to put together the two prophecies (Mal 3:1 and 4:5-6) and to see John as fulfilling both of them.

However, while he freely admitted that he was the one who prepared the way for the Lord (Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1), John expressly denied that he was Elijah (Jn 1:21-23).

Even when Jesus called John “the Elijah who was to come,” He conditioned that designation with the phrase, “if you are willing to accept it” (Mt 11:14). A solution to the problem seems to be offered in Matthew 17.

The Transfiguration

Mt 16:27-17:13 (also Mk 9:2-13; Lk 9:28-36). This chapter division in Matthew is an unfortunate break in the flow of this biblical passage. Jesus had just said that some standing with Him would not die before they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Mt 16:28). The continuing story occurred six days later when Jesus took . . . Peter, James, and John with Him up a high mountain by themselves. (Luke wrote that this event occurred “about eight days after” (Lk 9:28), which includes the beginning and ending days as well as the six days between.)

There Jesus was transfigured (“changed in form”; cf. Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18) before this inner circle of disciples (Mt 17:2). This was a revelation of Jesus’ glory. The radiance of His glory was evidenced in His face and in His garments that became as white as the light. Moses and Elijah appeared from heaven in some visible form and talked with Jesus (thus demonstrating that conscious existence follows death).

Why were Moses and Elijah, of all Old Testament people, present on this occasion?

Perhaps these two men and the disciples suggest all the categories of people who will be in Jesus’ coming kingdom. The disciples may represent individuals who will be present in physical bodies. Moses may represent saved individuals who have died or will die. Elijah might represent saved individuals who will not experience death, but will be caught up to heaven alive (1 Thess 4:17).

These three groups will be present when Christ institutes His kingdom on earth. Furthermore the Lord will be in His glory as He was at the transfiguration, and the kingdom will take place on earth, as this obviously did. The disciples were thus enjoying a foretaste of the kingdom the Lord promised (Mt 16:28).

Peter seemed to sense the significance of the event for he suggested that he erect three shelters, for Jesus, Moses (The Law), and . . . Elijah (prophets). He saw in this event the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles which looked two ways:

- **backward** to the wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years, and
- **forward** to Israel’s full enjoyment of God’s blessings when He would gather His people to the land.

Peter understood that what was taking place: he saw the kingdom, in prospect. (Paul confirms that the feasts are prophetic in Col 2:16-17.)

While Peter was still speaking, a more important voice spoke from a bright cloud that had enveloped them. This voice said, This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well-pleased. Listen to Him! This authentication of the Son of God by the voice of God (as occurred at Jesus’
baptism (Mt 3:17) carried great significance for the disciples. Years later when Peter wrote his second epistle he referred to this event (2 Pet 1:16-18).

As this small group returned from the mountain, Jesus told the three not to tell anyone what they had witnessed until after He had risen from the dead (cf. 16:20). Some people had already tried to make Jesus King by force, and if news of this event had become commonly known, perhaps others would have attempted to make Jesus King. The timing of the Triumphal Entry was critical to fulfill Dan 9:25.

Peter would later imply that they had been discussing the Second Coming (2 Pet 1:16-18?) Luke wrote that Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about His coming death (Lk 9:31).

After Elijah appeared with Christ in His transfiguration, the disciples asked about Elijah’s future coming. Jesus, speaking apparently after John’s death (cf. Mt 14:1-2), affirmed that “Elijah shall truly first come and restore all things” (Mt 17:11). This future expectation indicates that Malachi 4:5-6 was not fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist.

Israel did not accept John the Baptist as the Elijah-like restorer of all things, so another Elijah-like forerunner is yet to come before the day of the Lord.

However, Jesus went on to say, “Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him” (Mt 17:12), and the disciples understood He was talking about John the Baptist (Mt 17:13). The solution to all this seems to be that though John did not fulfill Malachi 4:5-6 (for Elijah is yet to come), Elijah was a type of John in that there is a great deal of similarity between Elijah in 4:5-6 and the messenger (John the Baptist) in 3:1.

It is difficult to determine whether the Elijah to come is Elijah himself (as possibly indicated in Mt 17:11) or someone in the spirit and power of Elijah (as John was, so that Christ referred to him as simply Elijah, Matt. 17:12).

The most likely New Testament reference to this future Elijah-like ministry is Revelation 11:1-13, which speaks of the two witnesses in the Tribulation.

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The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11

Numerous and varied interpretations have been given concerning the two witnesses. Some have suggested that they are not literal individuals. However, in view of the fact that they die and are resurrected, the implication is that they are actual people.

Also, Joshua—ostensibly a precursory model of the Book of Revelation—sends two on a mission, (vs. 12 by Moses 40 years earlier?) [Note also : always two: after resurrection; ascension; Gen 18, etc.]

1) Three were expected: John 1:20,21

| Messiah | Mal 3:1-3, 5,6 |
| Elijah | Mal 4:5,6 |
| Moses | Deut 18:15-18 |

[John the Baptist: “I am not.” Jn 1:19, 20; Mt 11:14; 17:10-11]

2) Two ministries were unfinished:

| Moses | Num 20:12; Deut 3:26-28 |
| Elijah | 1 Kgs 17:1; 19:13-16; 2 Kgs 2:11 |

3) It wasn’t necessarily Enoch:

Some have identified the two witnesses as Enoch and Elijah inasmuch as they did not die but were translated (cf. Heb. 9:27, which is a broad refutation of reincarnation and other related heresies). Heb 9:27 = general rule. “Once to die” argument: many died twice: Lazarus, Widow of Nain’s son; Jairus’ daughter, et al.

He was a Gentile: Witnesses were required to be Jewish males.

Model of rapture? Enoch believed to have been born, and translated, on the Feast of Shavuot, or Feast of Harvest, Pentecost. Will the Church follow this pattern?

4) Unique Powers, Miracles:

**Elijah:** Fire from heaven; 1 Kgs 18:37; 2Kgs 1:10, 12 (Jer 5:14); Shut heaven; 1 Kgs 17:1; (3 1/2 years! Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17) It is noteworthy that Elijah specifically stopped rain for the precise period here
The force of the warnings and appeals in Malachi’s book hinges as much on the certainty of this coming judgment as on the covenant-based offer of grace.

(The Book of Revelation renders the same expectation of judgment and repentance at the end of the New Testament (Rev 22:12-17) but with greater details about the One who will return.)

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About The Cover Design
(on the tape cassette volumes)

The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’m a, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

The Spine:

The spine includes a Menorah from the Old Testament, a Maranatha Dove suggesting the New Testament, and the Koinonia House logo at the base.

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