

A portrait of a bearded man, likely a scholar or theologian, wearing a dark, heavy robe. He is holding a large, unrolled scroll with Latin text. The background is a textured, aged parchment or paper. The title 'Bible Commentary The Book of Malachi' is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the image.

*Bible Commentary
The Book of Malachi*

Dr. Oliver L. Johnson Jr.

Commentary

The book of Malachi

History of Malachi: The title is derived from the prophecy's author, Malachi, with this last work in the Minor Prophets, God closes the Old Testament canon historically and prophetically and this book closes out the Old Testament.

Malachi has been called the Socrates of the prophets because he uses a style specialist in rhetoric call dialectic, "investigation through discussion and reasoning." The dialectic form used in the prophecy became a popular teaching style in later Judaism. The prophecy is a testimony to the graciousness of God in condescending to answer man's foolish and childish statements.

Only 50,000 exiles had returned to Judah from Babylon (538-536 B.C.). The temple had been rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.) and the sacrificial system renewed. Ezra had returned in 458 B.C. After being back in the land of Palestine for only a century, the ritual of the Jews' religious routine led to hard heartedness toward God's great love for them and to widespread departure from His law by both people and priest. We know from Malachi 1:7 and 3:10 that not only had the temple been finished in Malachi's day, but it had been in use for some time, and sin was corrupting the worship that took place in it. Furthermore, the book of Malachi must have been written after Nehemiah's first arrival in Jerusalem in the thirty second year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, in 444 B.C., probably after the walls had been rebuilt around the city, for Malachi addresses the same sins noted in Nehemiah: the divorcing of Jewish wives and marrying heathen women (cf. 3:8-10 with Nehemiah 13:10-14.)

Nehemiah was recalled to the Persian court in 433 B.C., after being governor for 12 years and another governor, who seems to have been a Persian governor, was placed over Palestine (cf. 13:6). Most likely, Malachi was written just before Nehemiah's second return to Jerusalem or during his presence there. Malachi ministered in support of Nehemiah's ministry, just as Haggai and Zechariah had ministered in support of Ezra and Zerubbabel nearly a hundred years earlier. The prophecy was probably written sometime between 433 and 425. B.C.

Malachi was almost an unknown, except for this book that he penned. He used the expression "Ye say" instead of "Thus saith the Lord". His book shows us a picture of the

degradation in the land at the closing of the Old Testament. He, also, gives hope for the future in Messiah. He speaks out against the priesthood, as well as against these ungrateful people of God. He prophesied about the time of Nehemiah.

The purpose of Malachi is to deliver stern rebukes to the people and priests, to call them to repentance, and to promise future blessing. His theme is God's love for Israel in spite of the sins of the priests and people. The Lord repeatedly referred to His covenant with Israel reminding them, for His opening words, of the unfaithfulness to His love/marriage relationship with them. God's love for His people pervades the book. Many wonder what is meant by God's marriage to Israel? Let's go to the book of Isaiah and says, "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called." (Isaiah 54:5). However, as we learned in the book of Hosea, that marriage was broken and God divorced the nation of Israel. However, that marriage relationship will be reestablished after the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ when the New Jerusalem will come down to earth and God will again marry Israel rendering again Israel as his own.

Malachi set forth his prophecy in the form of a dispute, employing the question and answer method. The Lord's accusations against His people were frequently met by cynical questions from the people. At other times, the prophet presented himself as God's advocate in a lawsuit, posing rhetorical questions to the people based on their defiant criticisms.

I think it important to note that after the closing of the book of Malachi, there were 400 years of silence. There was not reading, no signing, no preaching and no writing for heaven was silent. God had got disgusted with the depravity of man and it looked like He had decided that He wasn't going to talk to him anymore. However, because He loved man so much, He would open up the New Testament with John the Baptist a forerunner to Jesus who proclaim His coming and was considered the greatest prophet of all and is considered the last of the Old Testament Prophets. (Ref. Matthew 11:11).

The book of Malachi is considered an oracle, which is regarded as highly authoritative and wise group of influential pronouncements. That said, let's get into this wonderful book.

Malachi 1:2-5

The Lord's Love for

2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob **3** but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." **4** If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'" **5** Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!"

Esau was the father of a nation called the Edomites who were paganistic in their beliefs. The Edomites were continuously pestering and warring with the nation of Israel and when the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to Babylonian captivity, the Edomites could be seen on the hilltops yelling and cheering the Babylonian army "destroy it destroy it, tear it to its foundation" and Psalm 137:7 says, "O LORD, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. "Destroy it!" they yelled. "Level it to the ground!" God had prophesized the destruction of Edom. He said:

"Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them," therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword. "I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance," declares the Lord GOD" Ezekiel 25:12-14. To this day, the nation of Edom has disappeared from this earth. Therefore, God's promise to Israel has been fulfilled.

God also said: "Will I not on that day," declares the LORD, "Destroy wise men from Edom and understanding from the mountain of Esau?" Obadiah 1:8. God knew before Rebekah had both Esau and Jacob that Esau would be the father of a nation that was paganistic and worshipped idols.

Let's look at verse 2-3 again: "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet

I have loved Jacob **3** but Esau I have hated.” Abraham had a child with his handmaid and that child was Ishmael. He had another child with Sara and that child was Isaac; Isaac inherited the promise; Ishmael did not even though he was the firstborn of Abraham. Esau was firstborn of Isaac, but before Jacob and Esau were born God said the elder shall serve the younger; let’s look at Genesis 25:23, And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” At no time during Esau’s life, did he ever serve the younger son Jacob as an individual, but as a nation yes. The selection of Jacob over Esau was a program of God through election and had nothing to do with works.

Now, in continuing to look at verse 2 and 3 Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Let’s cross reference this with Luke 14:26, “If any man come to me, and hate **not** his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” First of all, God did not hate Esau in the same relationship that we hate something. Jesus is not telling people to literally hate their family, but what God was saying concerning hating Esau was “in comparison of my love to Jacob, I hate Esau; Jesus is saying, in comparison to loving me, hate your family; in other words, our love towards Jesus should be so strong, that our love for our family would look like hate; it doesn’t match the same kind of love.

Also in God’s statement of loving Jacob and hating Esau, it doesn’t say he has saved Jacob and predestinated Esau to hell. Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated looks directly on their descendants; let’s look at the second clause of verse 3 and the rest of verses 4-5, again “And laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. 4 Whereas Edom (Esau’s descendants) 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 forever.” In the book of Obadiah God said, “17 But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. 18 The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it.

There will be no survivors from the house of Esau." The LORD has spoken. **To drive the point home in the destruction of Edom, we need to go to Ezekiel 35 and says:**

Prophecy Against Mount Seir

1 The word of the LORD came to me: **2** "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, **3** and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. **4** I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation, and you shall know that I am the LORD. **5** Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment, **6** therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you. **7** I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation, and I will cut off from it all who come and go. **8** And I will fill its mountains with the slain. On your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall. **9** I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD. **10** "Because you said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them'--although the LORD was there-- **11** therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you. **12** And you shall know that I am the LORD. "I have heard all the revilings that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are laid desolate; they are given us to devour.' **13** And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it. **14** Thus says the Lord GOD: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. **15** As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Mt. Seir was a portion of mountainous land that was inhabited by the Edomites. But, why did the Lord have indignation towards the Edomites (Esau's descendants)? It was because they had been forever persecuting the Jews and God in His foreknowledge, knew that was going to happen. The Lord goes on to say in vs. 5 "And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel." Therefore, the whole thing of "Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated" deals with nations and not people. God chose Jacob to be the father of the nation of Israel because God knew Jacob would be a better leader for Israel. God chose Esau to be the leader of the nation of Edomites and he blessed him, but they fell from grace and are no longer representative of a nation that we see today but they will rise up in the future.

Now there is a term called antitype which means something that is foreshadowed by a type or symbol, as in the nation of Edom that occurs in the future, in this case at the second coming of Christ. Obadiah 21 says, “**21** Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the Lord's. The mountains of Esau are Mt. Seir in the land of Edom (we said that). Are you beginning to see how God would judge Edom in the future as a nation? But the questions many ask is where did the Edomites go? God has destroyed them as a nation; but they are living among the rich nations of today. Let’s go to the book of Genesis and says:

“But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." **36** And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" **37** Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" **38** And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me--me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. **39** Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. **40** By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck” (Genesis 27:35-40).

We see where Jacob the trickster has taken the birthright of Esau and Isaac now makes a prophecy. What is the fatness of the earth; the rich nations i.e. the U. S. the European nations and some Arab nations. Verse 40 said, “by the sword shalt thou live” in today’s term that’s guns, bombs and more guns. Who loves their guns more than any other nation on earth? The Islamic nations; war and fighting goes on over their all the time. The verse goes on to say “thou shalt have dominion and break his yoke from off thy neck” meaning a country or countries will become more powerful than the U.S. and its allies and those countries will be Russia and several Islamic nations that will be representative of Edom in the war of Armageddon. Right now, there is a yoke on many of the Islamic countries for we will not let them have nuclear weapons because their goal is the extermination of Israel because from their point of view Israel occupies a land that does not belong to them. If we look back on Obadiah 21, we see that after the nations that represent Esau come against Israel and are defeated, the kingdom shall indeed be the Lord’s.

Malachi 1:6-14

6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' **7** By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. **8** When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. **9** And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. **10** Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. **11** For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. **12** But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. **13** But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. **14** Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

We may each charge upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Our relation to God, as our Father and Master, strongly obliges us to fear and honour him. But they were so scornful that they derided reproof. Sinners ruin themselves by trying to baffle their convictions. Those who live in careless neglect of holy ordinances, who attend on them without reverence, and go from them under no concern, in effect say, "the

table of the Lord is contemptible.” They despised God's name in what they did. An example of the aforementioned thought lies in a person who says they believe in God, but never attend worship service, prayer is not part of their routine nor do they live their lives in a Christian manner; they live a worldly life. Now, not attending church will not cause a believing Christian to lose their salvation as long as they believe in Christ; are repentant of their sins and stay true to their faith, but faith is made strongest in the company of other Christians.

In verse 8 it is evident that these priests did not understand the meaning of the sacrifices, as shadowing forth the unblemished Lamb of God; they begrudged the experience, thinking all was thrown away which did not turn to their profit begrudgingly bringing forth blinded animals instead of bring their best as He had outlined in Exodus 12:5. If we worship God ignorantly, and without understanding, we bring the blind for sacrifice; if we do it carelessly, if we are cold, dull, and dead in it, we bring the sick; if we rest in the bodily exercise, and do not make heart-work of it, we bring the lame; and if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the torn. Is not this evil? Is it not this a great affront to God, and a great wrong and injury to our own souls?

In verses 9-10 God ask the priest another question that if they want His favor to shine upon them, then why do they offer their lame offerings; will He accept anyone who comes before the alter who bring such worthless gifts to Him? God goes on to rebuke the mercenary spirit of the priests, who would not even shut the temple door nor kindle the altar fire unless they were paid for it; or else it means that, though all the officers of the temple were compensated for their most trivial services, yet they were remiss in attending to their duties, and neglected the law of sacrifices.

In verse 11 God makes a declaration that His name will be known from the ends of the earth from sunrise to sunset. Concerning the comment regarding incense, Scriptures are clear that the fragrant fumes that ascended from the incense **represented the prayers** of godly people, those in covenant relationship with Jehovah. A psalm attributed to David petitioned the Lord: “Let my prayer be set forth as incense before you” (Psalm 141:2).

Observe that when Zachariah (John the Baptist father) was executing his office as priest, he entered into the temple to burn incense. Not without significance is the fact that “the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense” (Luke 1:9-10). The book of Revelation unquestionably indicates that “incense” is symbolic of “the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4).

In verses 13-14 God continues His chastisement of the people for bringing their stolen animals, those that were lame and sick before the altar as a sacrifice to him of which He thought deplorable. These people knew what the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy said in regards to what kind of offering to bring God. “But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God” (Deut. 15:21). These people knew what they were doing and were in disobedience to God’s holy ordinances. It is like the church when taking communion play around and act silly during this event thereby showing God that they are not serious in doing what He told us to do in regards to Communion.

God even goes so far to tell these priests that if they continued to bring these types of animals, not only will He not accept their offering, but He would curse them. We need to remember at this juncture that it was the responsibility of the priests to take sacrifices from the people and burn it upon the altar with prayer and thanksgiving.

Malachi 2:1-9

The Lord Rebukes the Priests

1 "And now, O priests, this command is for you. **2** If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. **3** Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. **4** So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. **5** My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. **6** True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. **7** For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. **8** But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, **9** and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."

What is said here of the covenant of priesthood, is true of the covenant of grace made with all believers, as spiritual priests. Let's go to 2 Peter 2:9 and says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Now that's talking about you and me. If we take the Word of the Lord and twist it, make it what we want it to say verses what the Lord says, then His curse will be upon us.

As believers when we accept Christ we enter into a covenant of life and peace; it assures all believers of all joy, both in this world and in that to come. It is an honour to God's servants to be employed as his messengers. Notice I said all joy; when you have joy in your heart of knowing Jesus Christ, no man can take that away from you!

The priest's lips should not keep knowledge from his people, but these kept it for them. The people were all concerned about knowing the will of the Lord. We must not only consult the written word, but desire instruction and advice from God's messengers,

in the affairs of our souls. Ministers must exert themselves to the utmost for the conversion of sinners. Those ministers, and those only, are likely to turn men from sin, who preach sound doctrine, and live holy lives according to the Scripture. Many departed from this way; thus they misled the people. Those who walk with God in peace and righteousness, and turn others from sin, honour God; he will honour them, while those who despise him will not be esteemed nor will they have any part in eternity with Him.

Notice in verse 3 where God says He will spread dung on their face: “and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts”. This is talking about the dung of their beasts, which were slain for sacrifice at their solemn feasts: so this word is used for a beast offered for sacrifice at a festival, Ref. Psalm 118:27. The sense is, that their sacrifices and solemn feasts were so far from being acceptable to God, that He would reject both them and their persons, and would cast the very dung of the creatures brought for sacrifice into their faces, and spread it over them: a phrase expressive of the utmost contempt of them, and of exposing them to the greatest shame and confusion for their sins.

In verses 4-5 God talks about a convenient relationship with Levi and in order to understand the covenant of Levi we must go to the book of Deut. And says, “At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today.” (Deut 10:8). For us the covenant of Levi is the Word of God, but in Old Testament times the tribe of Levi of which Aaron was the first priest, was responsible for ensuring that the people were ministered to and the sacrificial system carried out according to the instructions of the Lord. God said He walked with Levi meaning the priest listened to God as He talked to them and there was peace and harmony between God and His priests in the beginning of the sacrificial system, but as we see now, these priests are lazy, disobedient, and told the people what they wanted to hear and not what they needed to hear. Some even sought bribes from those who bought sacrifices that were not up to standard accepting them anyway for a certain amount of money.

We see that in some churches where preachers preach to itchy ears preaching only biblical passages that sound good and makes people feel good instead of preaching the whole bible and adhering to biblical principles outlined in the bible.

Malachi 2:10-17

Judah Profaned the Covenant

10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? **11** Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. **12** May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts! **13** And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. **14** But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. **15** Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. **16** "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

Corrupt practices are the fruit of corrupt principles; and he who is false to his God, will not be true to his fellow man. In contempt of the marriage covenant, which God instituted, the Jews put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for strange wives. They made the lives of the wives of their youth bitter; yet, in the sight of others, they pretend to be tender and loving. Consider she is thy wife; thy own; the nearest relation thou hast in the world. The wife is to be looked on as a servant, but as a companion to the husband; a helpmeet. She does not walk behind him, but beside him; she is not his doormat, but a doorway; she is not the man's slave, but a loving partner that worships both in her heart and with her husband. There is an oath of God between them, which is not to be trifled with. Man and wife should continue to their lives', in holy love

and peace. Did not God make one, one Eve for one Adam? Yet God could have made another Eve. Wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was that the children might be made a seed to serve him. Husbands and wives must live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a godly seed.

However to the shame of man the sanctity of marriage that God ordained has been defiled through the marriage of same sex partners, which is still an abomination before God. As we will see in Malachi 3 God says He does not change except where He so states in the bible. He has not changed His mind about homosexuality nor about marriage being between a man and a woman. Therefore, God has allowed these people who want to marry the same sex to have a reprobate mind meaning He has allowed them to think what they are doing is fine. But, in the last days, they will pay a terrible price for catering to that fleshly desire.

The Messenger of the Lord

17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

These people were still caring the disheartening fact that they were subjugated by the Babylonian Empire who did evil things to the Jews while they were in captivity leading to God's judgment against Babylon. That same question is still asked today in regards to God's justice on those who seem to get away with evil deeds. God says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20). When God places a woe on something means that he pulls back on their life and punishes them if not in this world, certainly in the next for judgment day is coming. To put finality to this question of why does it seem that evil people prosper or get away with their evil deeds the book of Psalms makes it clear and says, "Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! **2** For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb" (Psalm 37:1-2). Those whom we see that are rich and step on people's lives and treat others with disdain will one day fade away like the grass and die and they certainly can't take their wealth with them. Let's cross reference the statement in Psalm 37 with 1 Peter

1:24 and says, “For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:” What is a man’s glory in this instance? It might be his prestigious job title, i.e. CEO of Wal-Mart; Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, President of the United States etc. People who do evil may think they are getting away with it up here, but payback is going to come down there!

Malachi 3:1-5

1 "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the Lord of hosts. **2** "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. **3** He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord An offering in righteousness. **4** "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the Lord, As in the days of old, As in former years. **5** And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien-- Because they do not fear Me," Says the Lord of hosts.

In verse 1 who do you think the messenger that is going to prepare the way for the Messiah that has been prophesized? John the Baptist for his coming was prophesized by Isaiah and said: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God" Isaiah 40:3.

Now, verses 2-5 is talking about Christ second coming for when he first came he did not try to purify the sons of Levi, which are the priest for all that is mentioned in these verses are referring to when he stands on Mt. Zion and all the nations of the world come to Him with reverence and honor and it is on this mountain where he will judge the nations and teach others who come to worship Him.

The offering of Judah and Jerusalem (vs. 4) represents the kingdom of the Messiah as in the days of old even beginning with Abel whom the Lord was well pleased with his sacrifice of his firstborn flock and down through the times after the flood when Noah offered a blood sacrifice when the Ark came to rest and on many other occasions until the Babylonian subjugation. Again in verse 5 it is Christ talking here for it will be He who judges all men (ref. John 5:22).

At this juncture let me explain what the Lord of Hosts means: He is called Jehovah-Saboath and refers to the Lord of the heavenly armies. Who do you think that is? It is Jesus Christ for when He comes back He will bring along with the Saints (you and me)

and his heavenly army where He will do battle with the nations at Armageddon. However, only Christ will fight the battle by himself.

Malachi 3:6-18

"6 I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty. 13 "You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?' 14 "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? 15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.' "16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. 17 "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

First God makes an exclamatory statement in verse 6 where He says “I the Lord God do not change.” That is a valuable lesson for us to understand today. Yes the world has changed and accepted things that are either non-biblical or outright against Gods teachings. Yet He says I do not change meaning you (the world) may change to your

own detriment, but I do not change nor has my Word changed except where I have said so. God goes on to admonish the Jews in saying “your actions are really nothing new.” You are just like your forefathers who were stiff-necked and disobedient to my Laws and decrees. In verse 7 God says if you return to Me I will return to you with blessings. The second clause in this verse continues in the people asking how are they to return to Him (as if they didn’t already know). In verses 8-11 God goes on asking “shall a man rob God” for they were robbing him of their best when it came to tithing; they then ask Him how have we robbed you? He tells them in tithes and offerings for those lame and sick animals are not your best for I told you in Leviticus 4:32, **“If the people bring a sheep as their sin offering, it must be a female with no defects.”** As I described earlier, they were bringing to the alter the sick and lame animals as sacrifices to Him and they were in essence robbing Him, not realizing that He gave to them all that they currently have; they didn’t get all they had by themselves as many thought then and think today. All things given to man comes from God many to those who are underserving, yet he blesses the sick, the poor the lame and the unbeliever.

God goes on to describe in verses 9-11 that if they would bring their best before him, the blessings they received would be so bountiful that they won’t have room to hold all that He gives them.

Verse 15 said: “But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.” Again, **Ps 37:1-2 says,** “**Don’t worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong. For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither. Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart’s desires.**” The extremely rich live in a bubble of delusion. What do you think that means? They see a world that caters to their every whim and trust in all that they have and what they can see not realizing that what they have will not last long for the bible says “How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog--it's here a little while, then it's gone.” The rich don’t see that; they think their situation is going to last a very long time, "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' In other words if tomorrow should come and a rich person dies in

a plane crash unexpectedly and he worshipped what he had instead of God, then he or she is not going to like their living arrangements after they reopen their eyes! Ref Luke 12:20.

Malachi 3:16-18

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

Those that feared the Lord in verse 16 acknowledge that he was their Lord and God said in verse 17 that they will be his when He makes up His Jewels. What does God mean when He says, “Make up His Jewels?” When He judges the believers it will be a time of handing out treasures in the form of crowns which represent what was done in the body for the Lord and is more valuable than the richest billionaire for the rich lose their riches either through loss or death, but these jewels or crowns will last forever.

Let’s look at verse 17 a little deeper; Malachi is talking to the people in Old Testament times so how did they get saved? For the answer we need to go to the book of Revelation **Revelation 13:8** *"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

In Revelation chapter thirteen, verse eight, Jesus is referred to as, *'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.'* Since Christ went to the cross at an appointed and specific place in time (which was over 2000 years ago), some Christians are unsure just what this phrase actually means. This is understandable, as the language there is somewhat difficult. God is speaking about the 'eternal election of Grace,' which spans time. Note that God is defining those unsaved who do not have their names written in the Lamb's book of life. This 'book of Life' signifies God's record of all those who were ever born, but because of their unrepentance can have their names blotted out.

Christ being slain from the foundation of the world illustrates not only that He was foreordained to be slain, but also that the effective, or the beneficial effects of that death, is the same as if that sacrifice had been made before the creation of the world. Thus, Old Testament saints are washed clean in Christ's blood the same as we are today. In other words, the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice is not limited by time. God had already chosen who He would Save before creation, and had thus already ordained the Savior to shed His blood for them, to make this possible. Their Salvation wasn't something that could be thwarted; it was something that was as good as 'done' from the time that God ordained it. However, God did not ordain some to heaven and others to hell. That being said, since grace is a free gift to man, those who accept Jesus as their Savior will not have their names blotted out of the book of life. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels” Revelation 3:5

Verse 18 is the sheep/goat judgment where God judges the nations that were obedient to him and those that came against Israel at the battle of Armageddon. He will tell the sheep on his right to come and enjoy the fruits of life while He will tell the goat nations to depart into the lake of fire.

Malachi 4:1-3

The Great Day of the Lord

1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. **2** But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. **3** And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.

In verse 1 is talking about two separate occurrences: 1 Those individuals who take the mark of the beast during the great tribulation period will be like stubble and will be set ablaze in the lake of fire. Secondly those who did without accepting Christ as their Saviour will be like a hot oven where they will lift up their eyes in hell with a final destination to the lake of fire as well. This is not only the unbelievers, but also those who were evil i.e. the murderers, crooks, thieves etc.

We need to go to Isaiah 63 to understand verse 3: **2** Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? **3** "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing" (Isaiah 63:2-3). After Christ treads the winepress those bodies left over will indeed be ashes under our feet.

Malachi 4:4-6

4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. **5** "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. **6** And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

Here is a solemn conclusion, not only of this prophecy, but also of the Old Testament. Conscience bids us to remember the law. Though we have not prophets, yet, as long as we have Bibles, we may keep up our communion with God. Let others boast in their

proud reasoning, and call it enlightening, but let us keep near to that sacred word, through which this Son of Righteousness shines upon the souls of his people. They must keep up a believing expectation of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it.

Now, look at verse 5 and 6 carefully: When Malachi wrote his oracle, Elijah had already been taken up to heaven. Let's go to 2d Kings and says, "As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind." (2 Kings 2:11). So, how does this scripture fit? When the second part of the tribulation period begins, after a time, God will send the two witness down to earth to prophesize and the book of Revelations says, "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God^{bl} of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire." These 2 witnesses are most likely Enoch and Elijah because in Revelation 11:7 says that these two witnesses were killed; and angel of God cannot be killed nor a spirit of God. Since both Enoch and Elijah were physically taken to heaven in their natural bodies, common sense suggest that one of them is Elijah spoken of in verse 5 of our text. "And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." Rev. 11:3. They are cloth in sackcloth because it is a time of visitation and mourning coming upon the earth.

Let the believer wait with patience for his release, and cheerfully expect the great day, when Christ shall come the second time to complete our salvation. But those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who turns not to Him that smites them with a rod. None can expect to escape the curse of God's broken law, or to enjoy the happiness of his chosen and redeemed people, unless their hearts are turned from sin and the world, to Christ and holiness. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

