



±

EQUIPPING CHURCH LEADERS
• EAST AFRICA •

MALACHI

by

Jonathan M. Menn

B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974

J.D., Cornell Law School, 1977

M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2007

Equipping Church Leaders East Africa, Inc.

714 S. Summit St., Appleton, WI 54914

+1-920-2846841 (mobile and WhatsApp)

jonathanmenn@yahoo.com

www.eclea.net

2026

Malachi was the last prophet of OT Israel. The book of Malachi is the last book of the OT. Malachi was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah. The book was written after the temple and the city of Jerusalem had been rebuilt following the exile in Babylon, probably in the period 450-430 BC. Malachi is one of the so-called “Minor Prophets.” The name Malachi means “my messenger.” The book falls into two main parts: chapters 1 and 2 describe the sin and apostasy of Israel; chapters 3 and 4 point to the judgment that will come upon sinners and the blessing reserved for those who repent. Certain statements in the book point forward to the New Covenant era and the final judgment, and chapters 3 and 4 also contain prophecies fulfilled by John the Baptist and by Jesus. There are considerable similarities between the offenses rebuked by Malachi and those rebuked by Ezra and Nehemiah. These include dishonesty of the priesthood, marriage to idolaters, exploitation of the underprivileged, and failure to pay tithes. The prophecy as a whole describes abuses that Nehemiah sought to correct.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. <u>Introduction</u>	2
A. <i>Author and date</i>	2
B. <i>Background and themes</i>	2
C. <i>Structure and outline</i>	2
II. <u>Commentary on Malachi</u>	3
A. <i>God’s love for his people (1:1-5)</i>	3
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	4
B. <i>God requires true worship (1:6–2:9)</i>	5
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	9
C. <i>The people have dealt treacherously in the area of marriage (2:10–16)</i>	9
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	11
D. <i>The Lord will come to purify and to judge (2:17—3:6)</i>	11
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	14
E. <i>The people have disobeyed the Lord with respect to their money (3:7-12)</i>	14
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	17
F. <i>God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked and will judge (3:13—4:6)</i>	18
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22
THE AUTHOR	24

I. Introduction

A. Author and date

Malachi means “my messenger.” Other than the meaning of his name, nothing is known about the life of Malachi, except that he was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC. At the time Malachi was written, Judah apparently did not have a governor of its own, but was ruled from Samaria. There was friction between the Samaritans and the Jews during the reign of king Artaxerxes I (464-423 BC) (see **Ezra 4**). Relations were also strained between the Jews and the neighboring Edomites (see **Mal 1:3-4**). The book was written after the temple had been rebuilt and the city of Jerusalem was being rebuilt following the exile in Babylon, probably in the period 450-430 BC.¹ The temple had been rebuilt in 516 BC and the OT priesthood and sacrificial system had been reinstituted. Jerusalem rebuilt under Nehemiah beginning in 445 BC. The content of Malachi discusses the priests, temple system, and Jerusalem. Considerable similarities between the offenses rebuked by Malachi and those rebuked by Ezra and Nehemiah also show the contemporary nature of Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah, including mixed marriages (**Ezra 9-10; Neh 10:30; 13:23-27; Mal 2:11**), corrupt priests (**Neh 13:4-9; Mal 1:6—2:9**), and financial abuses (**Neh 13:10-13; Mal 3:5-10**).

B. Background and themes

The OT prophets had spoken of a renewal of the covenant, the restoration of the people to the land, and the rebuilding of the temple and the priesthood. Particularly, after the exile, the prophets spoke of a new exodus, a new people of God, a new covenant, a new Zion, a new presence of God, the “Day of the Lord,” and a messianic kingdom of peace. However, following Israel’s return to the land, these promises were only partially fulfilled. Willem VanGemeren states, “God had not ‘shaken’ the nations and the messianic kingdom had not yet been established. The Lord had not blessed the people as he had promised. The era of fulfillment had turned into a period of waiting. While waiting, some had exchanged their beliefs for the fast life (3:5, 15), while others were cynical about the value of organized religion. A minority remained faithful regardless how bad the times were (3:16). God raised up Malachi to address the problems of cynicism, formalism, unfaithfulness, and questions about the benefits of godliness.” (VanGemeren 1989: 704)

Malachi defends God’s love, honor, faithfulness, and justice. He also emphasizes people’s responsibility and perseverance, even when it appears that God does not respond. In many ways, Malachi acts as a brief summary of the OT and points to the completion of God’s plan in the NT. Thus, the book deals with: (1) The choosing of Israel by God (**1:2; 2:4-6**); (2) Israel’s transgression against God (**1:6-8, 10, 12—2:3; 2:8-14, 17; 3:7-9, 13-15**); (3) the coming of the Messiah and his forerunner (**3:1; 4:2, 5-6**); (4) a foreshadow of the new, true Israel, i.e., the church (**1:11-14**); and (5) God’s coming judgment (**3:2-5; 4:1**).

VanGemeren summarizes the thrust of the book: “Malachi looked back at God’s continual mercy on the remnant from the Exile, while at the same time he looked forward to the greater demonstrations of Yahweh’s love for the [people] who make up God’s remnant. Between the two horizons, the book of Malachi challenges each generation to prepare for the Lord and seek his kingdom. . . . Yahweh expects his people to respond to his revelation, to submit to his kingdom, and to order their lives and community in preparation for the Kingdom-to-come.” (VanGemeren 1990: 210)

C. Structure and outline

The book falls into six main sections, each of which begins with a question in which Judah (the people) raises an objection against God (**1:2; 1:6; 2:10; 2:17; 3:7; 3:13**). The following verses then answer that objection. The substance of the book falls into two main parts: chapters 1 and 2 describe the sin and apostasy of Israel but also contain statements that point forward to the New Covenant era; chapters 3 and 4 point to the judgment that will come upon sinners and the blessing reserved for those who repent. Chapters 3 and 4 also contain prophecies fulfilled by John the Baptist and by Jesus.

The book may be outlined as follows:

¹ On the other hand, it is possible that Malachi slightly preceded and prepared the hearts of the people for the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah (see VanGemeren 1990: 202-3; Payne 1980: 469; Alden 1985: 703; Adamson 1970: 804).

I. God's love for his people (1:1-5)

II. God requires true worship (1:6–2:9)

- **1:6-8**—Priests are presenting defiled offerings
- **1:9-10**—Turn to the Lord for his grace
- **1:11-14**—People profane God's name by falsely obtaining defiled offerings
- **2:1-4**—The Lord will curse those who do not honor his name
- **2:5-7**—Remember God's covenant with Levi
- **2:8-9**—By corrupting God's covenant, you stumble others and are yourselves despised

III. The people have dealt treacherously in the area of marriage (2:10–16)

- **2:10-12**—People deal treacherously by taking foreign wives
- **2:13-16**—God will not accept those who deal treacherously with their wives

IV. The Lord will come to purify and to judge (2:17—3:6)

- **2:17**—The people have wearied the Lord
- **3:1-4**—God will send his messenger to purify the people
- **3:5-6**—God will also judge those who act unrighteously

V. The people have disobeyed the Lord with respect to their money (3:7-12)

- **3:7-9**—God curses those who are disobedient with respect to their money
- **3:10-12**—If the people obey the Lord with their money, God will bless them

VI. God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked and will judge (3:13—4:6)²

- **3:13-15**—The wicked are arrogant against the Lord
- **3:16-18**—Those who fear the Lord will be heard by him and spared
- **4:1-3**—At the judgment, the Lord will judge the wicked and reward the righteous
- **4:4**—Exhortation: Remember the law of Moses
- **4:5-6**—Before the judgment, God will send Elijah to restore the people

II. Commentary on Malachi³

A. God's love for his people (1:1-5)

¹ *The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.*

² *"I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." ⁴ Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." ⁵ Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"*

The phrase "*The oracle of the word of the Lord*" also occurs in **Zech 9:1; 12:1**. VanGemeren states that "oracle" is "a technical, prophetic term for a word of judgment on both the nations and on Israel/Judah" (VanGemeren 1989: 705).

In **vv. 2-3**, Malachi first notes God's love for Israel. This statement goes all the way back to **Deut 7:6-8**, *"⁶ For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you*

² Many commentators consider **4:4-6** to be an appendix or epilogue to the book, not a part of the final unit (Dorsey 1999: 322n.6; VanGemeren 1990: 204).

³ Unless otherwise noted, the New American Standard Bible (1995) will be used in this commentary.

out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

The statement “*Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau*” alludes to **Gen 25:23**, where the Lord told Rebecca that Jacob and Esau represented two nations in her womb and the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). The statement is quoted in **Rom 9:13**. The context of **Rom 9:13** has to do with God’s sovereign choice (election) of choosing the younger over the older while they were still in the womb. The statement that God “hated” Esau does not mean that God is “expressing a personal dislike, but merely stating that he had chosen Jacob’s descendants (the Israelites) rather than Esau’s descendants (the Edomites – Gen 36) for the special task of bringing blessing to all nations” (Yilpet 2006: 1093). God clearly had blessed Esau (see **Gen 33:8-11; 36:1-43**). The use of the word “hate” here is a Hebrew idiom which essentially means to love someone less in comparison to someone else (Kaiser, et al. 1996: 347-48). Thus, in **Gen 29:31, 33**, although the NASB translates that Leah was “unloved,” the Hebrew literally says that she was “hated.” **Gen 29:30** clarifies this by saying that Jacob “*loved Rachel more than Leah.*” It akin to Jesus’ statement in **Luke 14:26**, “*If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.*” Jesus is not saying that, to be his disciple, we have to emotionally despise our family members or ourselves, but we are to love Jesus far more than we love even those closest to us.

God’s choosing Jacob over Esau, and the statements in **vv. 3-4** about God’s making Edom a desolation and that he is “indignant forever” against the Edomites both reflects the historical situation and is designed to “open Israel’s eyes” in answer to their question in **v. 2**, “*How have you loved us?*” God demonstrated his love for Israel by bringing them back from the exile and rebuilding the temple. At the same time, “Malachi qualified the general love of the Lord. The present covenant privileges may belong to the descendants of Jacob; yet individuals are at risk if they do not respond to God’s grace but choose to live to themselves and complain. Instead, the fulfillment of the promises belongs to the *s^egullâ*. The *s^egullâ* (‘treasured possession,’ 3:17; see Ex. 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4) are the children of God who serve God for his sake, persevere, and form a counterculture (Mal 3:16; see 1 Peter 2:4-12). God’s love is restricted to those who persevere in loving him [see Mal 4:2].” (VanGemeren 1990: 206)

On the other hand, “The Edomites had harassed the Judeans as they attempted to flee Judah and Jerusalem at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). The books of Obadiah and Lamentations speak of the hatred shown by the Edomites, who did not help the people of Judah in her time of need, but instead rejoice in her tragedy.” (VanGemeren 1989: 706) While Israel was in captivity in Babylon, they cried out regarding this, “*Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem, who said, ‘Raze it, raze it to its very foundation’*” (**Ps 137:7**). God heard that cry. The phrase “*the Lord of hosts*” in **v. 4** occurs twenty-four times in Malachi. “Hosts” are heavenly powers, and the phrase indicates God’s omnipotence and his universal and sovereign rule. The reference to “*the wicked territory*” in **v. 4** and the statement in **v. 5** that “*Your eyes will see this and you will say, ‘The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel’*” indicate that “when men of a future generation see the desolation, they will conclude that Edom must have been desperately wicked to merit such punishment. Israel, on the other hand, will have indisputable proof of God’s sovereign care.” (Adamson 1970: 806) That is what, in fact, happened. Ultimately, like Sodom and Gomorrah, Edom “became extinct, not because God hated her and loved Jacob, but because she was not righteous, even exceeding the other two nations in her depravity” (“Why did God”: n.p.). God’s actions toward Israel and his judgment on Edom are designed to show the world (i.e., people and nations far beyond Israel and Edom) God’s sovereignty. God’s judgments may take a long time to come to pass, but they are certain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Verse 2 says that God “loved Jacob.” How does God both manifest and qualify that love?
2. Verse 3 says that God “hated Esau.” What does that mean?
3. The people of Judah were looking at their situation back in the land and were asking of God, “How have You loved us?”
 - Do you think their question was a legitimate one? Why or why not?
 - What were they overlooking?

- How can this biblical example help us when we look at our own circumstances and begin to question God's love or concern for us?

B. God requires true worship (1:6–2:9)

- **1:6-8—Priests are presenting defiled offerings**

⁶ *“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, “How have we despised Your name?”* ⁷ *You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, “How have we defiled You?” In that you say, “The table of the Lord is to be despised.”* ⁸ *“But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?” says the Lord of hosts.*

This section presents a series of seven rhetorical questions by God (two in v. 6 and five in v. 8) and two questions by the priests (one in v. 6 and one in v. 7) which God answers. **Lev 22:17-27** and **Deut 15:21** had forbidden bringing any defective, lame, blind, or other blemished animals to the altar. It was the duty of the priests to inspect such animals to make sure they were “perfect to be accepted” with “no defect in it” (**Lev 22:21**). In fact, in **Deut 17:1**, God had even said, “You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God.” Here, God is telling the priests that their failure to follow the requirement to only offer undefective animals was not a mere technical violation. Instead, it amounted to despising the name of the Lord himself (v. 6). They were despising the name of the Lord not only by what they did but also by what they said. In v. 7 it says, “But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is to be despised.’” In other words, the priests were saying, “the table of the Lord (i.e., the altar) is despicable or contemptible.” They were at least saying that in their hearts, and that was manifest by what they were doing on the altar.

Additionally, in vv. 6 and 8, God makes three *a fortiori* arguments, arguing from the lesser to the greater. *A fortiori* is a Latin phrase meaning “with even stronger reason”. It is used in logic and law to describe an argument that when one fact is established, a second, related fact must be even more certainly true. In v. 6, God argues that a son honors his earthly father, and a servant honors his earthly master. Yet, by presenting defective animals on the altar, the priests are not honoring or respecting God, who is Father and Master of all (see **Isa 63:16; 64:8; Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13**). In v. 8, God’s argument is that the priests would not present blind, lame, or sick animals to their human governor, and the governor would not accept such gifts. If it would be wrong to offer such defective animals to a human governor, how much more wrong and evil it is to offer defective animals to God, the creator and governor of the entire universe, on his own altar!

- **1:9-10—Turn to the Lord for his grace**

⁹ *“But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says the Lord of hosts.* ¹⁰ *“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from you.”*

The priests could repent and change their ways and thereby receive God’s favor. However, if they do not do so, God asks yet one more rhetorical question in v. 9, “With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” The answer (as in all such rhetorical questions) is obvious: if you continue to disregard God’s name and honor by disobeying what God has said and treating your sacred duties with contempt, God will *not* receive you kindly. He makes that plain in v. 10, where he specifically says, “I am not pleased with you . . . nor will I accept an offering from you.” In fact, at the beginning of v. 10, where he says, “Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar!” what he is saying is that it would be better to close the temple entirely rather than continue to dishonor God by offering vain worship (see **1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:10-17**).

- **1:11-14—People profane God’s name by falsely obtaining defiled offerings**

“^{d1} For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of hosts. ¹² “But you are profaning it, in that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’ ¹³ You also say, ‘My, how tiresome it is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it,” says the Lord of hosts, “and you bring what was taken by robbery and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?” says the Lord. ¹⁴ “But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the Lord of hosts, “and My name is feared among the nations.”

When God says twice in **v. 11** “my name will be great among the nations,” and repeats in **v. 14** “my name is feared among the nations,” he is reiterating what a number of the prophets previously had said, namely, that God will bless the nations (**Isa 2:2-4; 19:18-25; 49:5-6; 56:1-8; Mic 4:1-4; Zeph 3:9; Zech 8:20-23**).⁴ Malachi is contrasting how God will be honored by the nations with how Israel’s own priests are profaning and defiling the altar of the Lord. However, God’s name being great among the nations goes beyond his simply blessing the nations—it means that God will incorporate the nations (i.e., the Gentiles) into the true people of God. Isaiah, in fact, had appeared to redefine the “people of God” (contrary to the limitations of the Mosaic Covenant; see **Deut 23:1-8**): “Isaiah announces that in the last days, when God will reveal his righteousness, biological descent or bodily mutilation [i.e., eunuchs] will no longer determine membership in his people. Foreigners will ‘join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants’ (56:7). . . . The criterion for being a part of YHWH’s future restoration and establishment of his kingdom is not ethnic descent but a contrite spirit and a contrite heart [57:15] and a righteous response to God’s will on the part of those individuals who belong to the remnant for whom God has compassion (58:7-14)—those who ‘take refuge’ in YHWH ‘shall possess the land and inherit my holy mountain’ [57:13], both ‘the far and the near’ [57:19]. This means that in the Isaianic prophecies the criteria for membership in the eschatological people of God have changed in a fundamental way: when YHWH restores the earth, both repentant Jews and repentant Gentiles will constitute the covenant people.” (Schnabel 2002: 41) We see Isaiah’s prophecy being foreshadowed by Christ when he cast out the moneychangers. **Matt 21:14** says, “*The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.*” That indicates that Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of **Isa 56:3-8** that there would be a new people of God “in My house,” since that prophecy had indicated that eunuchs would be able to worship with Gentiles, even though they were prohibited from doing so by the Old, Mosaic Covenant (**Deut 23:1**).

This new people of God has now been created in Jesus Christ. We also see the new people of God as prophesied by Isaiah in **Isa 56:3-8** fulfilled in **Acts 8:26-38** when the Ethiopian eunuch converted to Christ and was baptized and with the coming of the Gentiles to faith in Christ, since all believers in Christ, regardless of physical defects or ethnic background, are now “priests” in the new, true, house of God (**Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6**). This is made abundantly clear throughout the NT. **Eph 2:12-15** explicitly says, “¹² remember that you [i.e., Gentiles] were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.” Additionally, the NT takes the great OT covenant ideas and terms which had described Israel and applies them to the church. “When metaphors used for Israel in the OT are applied to Jesus’ disciples, it is an allusion to the fact that they, as the new people of God, are related typologically to the old people of God” (Goppelt 1982: 109; see Menn 2025: 164-65 for sixteen such OT covenant ideas and terms that are applied to the church).

The statements in **v. 11**, “from the rising of the sun even to its setting” and “in every place,” speak of

⁴ A number of translations use the future tense in **v. 11**. Robert Alden points out that “since the Hebrew has no future verbs but only a-temporal participles, we have no sure way of knowing what Malachi meant temporally. Notice at the end of **v. 14**, [NASB] uses the present tense for a similar sentiment. It is hard to imagine that ‘incense and pure offerings’ were brought to the Lord around the world in Malachi’s day. So [NASB’s] use of the future tense . . . seems reasonable. Likewise, consistency would require the future tense to be used in **v. 14b**, too.” (Alden 1985: 713-14; see also Payne 1980: 471-72)

the worldwide nature of the coming true worship of God. In Malachi's day, God's name was not considered "*great among the nations, and in every place.*" Consequently, these statements must be taken prophetically as applying to the future. The fulfillment is found in **Rev 5:9-10**, where the four living creatures and twenty-four elders in heaven proclaim of Christ, "*Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.*" (see also **Rev 7:9**) The phrase "*in every place*" is used in **1 Cor 1:2**; **2 Cor 2:14**; **1 Thess 1:8**; and **1 Tim 2:8** regarding the prayers of the saints and the spread of the gospel. Philip Towner states, "Both of these features and the sense of universality suggest that the phrase originated in and consciously echoes Mal 1:11" (Towner 2007: 893).

The typological correspondence between OT Israel and the OT priests and the church is also seen in the reference to "incense," pure offerings (**v. 11**), and animal sacrifices (**vv. 12-14**). **Ps 141:2**; **Rev 5:8**; **8:3** tell us that incense corresponds to "*the prayers of the saints.*" **Heb 13:15-16** tells us that the true sacrifices that God accepts are "*a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*" and "*doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased*" (see also **Rom 12:1**; **1 Pet 2:5**). Jesus summarized the essence of this when he told the woman at the well, "*But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers*" (**John 4:23**). Pagans offered incense and other offerings to their gods, but such offerings were not to "*My name*" and hardly could be considered "pure." Consequently, the references to incense, pure offerings, and sacrifices must be understood as prophecies of the future and taken figuratively, not literally.

Indeed, the entire OT priesthood and sacrificial system was a "type" and "shadow" that pointed to and find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. **Heb 10:1-18** point out that the OT law "*was only a shadow of the good things to come*" (**10:11**), "*it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*" (**10:4**), "*by one offering He {Jesus} has perfected for all time those who are sanctified*" (**v. 14**), and "*now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin*" (**10:18**). Thus, the sacrifice and work of Christ involved a "*setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness*" [i.e., the Levitical priesthood] and "*a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God*" (**Heb 7:18-19**). The fact that Jesus is called both a "priest" and a "high priest" (**Heb 2:17**; **3:1**; **4:14-15**; **7:11**, **15-17**, **24**, **26**, **28**; **8:1-2**; **9:11**) indicates that the entire OT sacrificial system and priesthood have been replaced because, according to the OT law, Jesus was not able to be a priest at all since he was not descended from Aaron or the tribe of Levi but from the tribe of Judah (**Heb 8:4**; see **Matt 1:2-3**; **Luke 3:33-34**). Instead of an entire priesthood acting as mediators between God and mankind, now there is "*one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (**1 Tim 2:5**). In contrast to the OT priesthood being limited to the tribe of Levi (**Num 18:1-24**; **Jer 33:19-22**), as a result of the sacrifice of Christ *all* believers in Jesus Christ are now priests in the eyes of God (**1 Pet 2:5, 9**; **Rev 1:6**; **5:10**; **20:6**).

Malachi has emphasized the disobedience of the priests in offering defective sacrifices. However, the NT makes clear that God's announcement that "*my name will be great among the nations*" (**Mal 1:11, 14**) and his plan to reconstitute the true people of God in Jesus Christ and those connected with him was not primarily because of the sins and corruption of the OT priesthood in the rebuilt temple. Instead, the book of **Hebrews** never specifically refers to the "temple" but always to the "tabernacle." Walker points out why: "The author of Hebrews, however, was not wanting to cast any aspersions on the contemporary Temple in practice, but rather making a far more fundamental point concerning the very essence of the Temple. By concentrating his attention on the 'tabernacle' in the wilderness, he could argue that the Tabernacle system of worship, even when considered in its most pristine and pure form under Moses (before any human sin might have twisted the divine intention), had been declared redundant by God through Jesus. His critique of the present Temple was not bound up with any political issues or personal disenchantment, but rather with God's eternal purposes." (Walker 1996: 207-8) Jesus is the final spiritual reality. The entire OT tabernacle/temple-system is no longer valid. Thus, **Heb 9:11** says that Christ "*entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.*" **Heb 9:12** adds that he entered the holy place "*through his own blood.*" The true, heavenly "*tabernacle*" is equated with Christ himself (i.e., with "*his blood*"). This point is implicit in Mat 1:11's statement, "*my name will be great among the nations,*" since what that is saying, in essence, is that "God would indeed triumph with or without the obedience of those entrusted with the nation's spiritual care" (Kaiser, et al. 1996: 348).

- **2:1-4—The Lord will curse those who do not honor his name**

¹ "*And now this commandment is for you, O priests.* ² *If you do not listen, and if you do 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; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. ³ Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. ⁴ Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi,” says the Lord of hosts.

God is now going beyond what he said in **1:11-14** where he contrasted the honor he will receive from the nations with the dishonor the priests are showing. Now, he is saying that, if he is not honored by the priests, he has cursed them and will curse them. By emphasizing “*If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,*” God is reminding the priests that it is their duty, not only to offer sacrifices, but also to teach the people God’s law (see **Deut 31:9-13**). They could not do that if they themselves were not living out the truths of God’s word. “Refuse” (v. 3) refers to the contents of the bowels of the sacrificial animals. The priests were responsible for carrying the internal waste of sacrificial animals outside the camp. Here, God is saying that he will spread that waste on the faces of the corrupt priests and then they and it would both be carried away. With respect to the curse in **vv. 2-3**, Payne observes that “the violence of the retribution and its specific application to their posterity combine with the known pronouncements of Jesus against the priests of His day (Mt 21:23, 41, 44-45) to suggest a fulfillment . . . in the destruction of the priesthood at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70” (Payne 1980: 472). Yet, even in pronouncing this very strong curse, God is making clear that it is pronounced not simply out of anger or vindictiveness. Instead, it is so that “*My covenant may continue with Levi*” (v. 4). In other words, he is looking to the purity of the priesthood and the health of the people and nation as they originally were set up and intended to be.

It should be noted that the phrase “covenant with Levi” does not appear elsewhere in Scripture. There is some debate concerning exactly what it is referring to. It may relate to one or more of the following events. In **Exodus 32**, when Moses came down from the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments and saw that the people had made a golden calf, the following occurred, “*Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, ‘Whoever is for the Lord, come to me!’ And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. ²⁷ He said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his ^[a]neighbor.’” ²⁸ So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*” (**Exod 32:26-28**) In **Num 3:5-15**, God chose the tribe of Levi to serve in the tabernacle and said “*Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine*” (**Num 3:12**). In **Deut 33:8-11**, Moses blessed the tribe of Levi and said, “*Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man, whom You proved at Massah, with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah; ⁹ who said of his father and his mother, ‘I did not consider them’; and he did not acknowledge his brothers, nor did he regard his own sons, for they observed Your word, and kept Your covenant. ¹⁰ They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, and whole burnt offerings on Your altar.*” Some also look to the “covenant of peace” and the “covenant of a perpetual priesthood” that God made with Phinehas in **Num 25:10-13** as being a basis of the covenant with Levi that Malachi refers to (see Schrock 2023: 1. The Levitical Covenant). Jonathan Hill concludes, “It was the faithfulness of tribe of Levi to God’s covenant with the whole nation that they earned the right and privilege of the priesthood. Yet, in Malachi the whole nation appears to be waning from religious zeal. What makes God’s charges against the Levites so damning isn’t the fact that they had a special covenant with God apart from the nation of Israel. It was that they were historically the leaders in keeping the covenant. They were leaders to the degree that they had been blessed with the rights of priesthood and assisting in temple duties. Yet in Malachi the priests are no longer leaders in righteousness. They have accepted worthless sacrifices. They have not stood for truth at all cost. They had made serious compromises. They were no longer acting in the character of Levi described by Moses in Deuteronomy 33 and they were in danger of seeing their blessings become a curse.” (Hill 2010: Conclusion)

- **2:5-7—Remember God’s covenant with Levi**

⁵ “*My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷ For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*”

These verses elaborate what the covenant with Levi, mentioned in v. 4, was supposed to be and what the priests were supposed to be like. The “*life and peace*” of the covenant (v. 5) was conditioned on the priests faithfully performing their priestly duties and living lives of reverence and righteousness. Verse 7 demonstrates that conditionality by beginning with the word “for” i.e., “because”) and then stating that a priest needs to “*preserve knowledge*” and be a faithful teacher, “*for he is a messenger of the Lord of hosts.*” All of this indicates that God is not interested simply in outward, formal obedience. Rather, as the messengers of the Lord, the priests were to lead and teach by example. Their inner lives were to match their outer lives. This is relevant to the church today, because all Christians are “priests” in the eyes of God (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

- **2:8-9—By corrupting God’s covenant, you stumble others and are yourselves despised**

“⁸ But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of hosts. ⁹ “So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.”

Ironically, the priests were leading and teaching by example. However, theirs was the negative example of corruption. The result is that “*you have caused many to stumble by the instruction*” (v. 8). Because the priests had caused many to stumble, God had “*made you [the priests] despised and abased before all the people*” (v. 9). Verse 9 summarizes what has been said throughout 1:6—2:8. The word “despise” in 1:6 and 2:9 indicates this. In 1:6, the priests are said to “*despise My name.*” Consequently, in 2:9 God says “*I also have made you despised.*” This is a very poignant example of the biblical principle stated in Gal 6:7, “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*” Or, as stated in Obad 1:15, “*As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.*”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The priests were offering defective animals on the altar, in violation of God’s law, and apparently that that it was no big deal. God thought otherwise and even said he would curse them. Why do we so often think that our sin is “no big deal,” especially given the fact that the standard he expects of us is to “*be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect*” (Matt 5:48)?
2. What is the “sacrifice of praise” that we are to render to God?
3. The people and priests of Israel in Malachi’s day were being disobedient to God. God promised to create a new people of God, instead of limiting his people to physical Israel. Do you think that God can take away our privileges and positions if we fall into ruts and do not honor him from our hearts? In what ways should the example of OT Israel cause us to re-evaluate ourselves, our worship, and what we are doing?
4. How were the OT priesthood, sacrificial system, and OT Israel “types” of the church?
5. What is the “covenant with Levi,” and how is it relevant to us today?
6. God told the priests that “*you have turned aside from the way,*” and “*you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.*”
 - How do we not keep God’s ways?
 - How do we show partiality?

C. The people have dealt treacherously in the area of marriage (2:10–16)

- **2:10-12—People deal treacherously by taking foreign wives**

¹⁰ Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah has dealt treacherously,

and an 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 As for the man who does this, may the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob everyone who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the Lord of hosts.

Even before Israel entered the promised land, God warned his people about the danger of marrying pagan foreigners. **Deut 7:3-4** states, “³ Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you.” (see also **Exod 34:11-16**) God’s primary concern was maintaining spiritual purity and avoiding idolatry. After entering the land, however, Israelites freely indulged in intermarriage with pagans and foreigners, which was how Israel and Judah had accepted the cultures and gods of the nations (see **Judg 2:11-13, 19; 1 Kgs 11:1-8**). Now, after the return from exile in Babylon, the same problem is occurring. Yet, **v. 10** points out, by the use of rhetorical questions, that Israel has one father and was created by one God to be God’s people. Ultimately, everything in life is spiritual, since what we do reveals what is most important to us. This is particularly true with respect to the most intimate union a man and woman can have—marriage. Consequently, **vv. 10-11** contain very strong language condemning what Judah has done: “*deal treacherously*”; “*profane the covenant of our fathers*”; “*an abomination*”; and “*profaned the sanctuary of the Lord.*” **Verse 12** concludes by saying that the person who does this is to be excommunicated, since it would be grossly hypocritical to make an offering to the Lord of hosts while, at the same time, flagrantly disobeying him.

- **2:13-16—God will not accept those who deal treacherously with their wives**

¹³ “*This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.*” ¹⁴ *Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.* ¹⁵ *But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.* ¹⁶ *For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the Lord of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”*

The people were “*weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand*” (**v. 13**). Instead of lamenting the fact that God was no longer accepting and blessing them, the people should have been bemoaning their sins, which were the reason why God was no longer accepting and blessing them. These verses reveal that, in addition to marrying foreign, pagan women (**v. 11**), the Israelites also were divorcing their wives. Divorce is an abomination to God (**v. 16**). God hates divorce because it amounts to infidelity and covenant breaking (**v. 14**). The statement about “*him who covers his garment with wrong*” (**v. 16**) refers to the ancient custom of spreading a garment over a woman when a man and woman agreed to marry, as Ruth asked Boaz to do (**Ruth 3:9**). Covering the garment with wrong refers to unfaithfulness in marriage and “the brutal treatment involved in divorce” (Adamson 1970: 808; see also Kaiser, et al. 1996: 351). Yoilah Yilpet points out, “Marriage involves a solemn vow that is witnessed by God (see Ezek 16:8). Loyalty to one’s spouse is required, and God punishes unfaithfulness.” (Yilpet 2006: 1095).

Divorce also is a violation of the created order. “(1) God has made ‘man’ as one, namely male and female (Gen. 2:24); (2) man is ‘one,’ being both flesh and spirit; (3) God’s purpose is to raise up godly children through holy matrimony, which is characterized by a union of flesh with flesh and spirit with spirit. . . . Only those who have the Spirit are his children, and must respond by guarding their spirit. Covenant fidelity has a spiritual dimension that is expressed by marital fidelity.” (VanGemenen 1989: 709) Divorce (especially when followed by remarriage to a nonbeliever) is the exact opposite of God’s purpose for a believing husband and wife, united in the covenantal relationship of marriage, to raise up “*godly offspring*” (**v. 15**). Thus, Jesus pointed out that, although Moses permitted divorce, it was only “*because of your hardness of heart . . . but from the beginning it has not been this way*” (**Matt 19:8**). He therefore concluded that husband and wife “*are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*” (**Matt 19:6**)

Important spiritual and practical consequences flow from this: (1) Marriage is built into the creation order (**Gen 2:24**). (2) Because marriage is built into the creation order, it is an institution of great value, a part of

creation that God called “*very good*” (**Gen 1:31**). (3) Because marriage is an institution of great value to God, we must value our own marriage as a relationship of great value—and therefore give the time, attention, and effort necessary to demonstrate that we consider our marriage to be of great value to us. (4) Marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and his church (**Eph 5:22-32**). (5) Because marriage is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church, marriage, at root, primarily is a *spiritual* relationship. (6) Because marriage is a reflection the relationship between Christ and the church, our attitude toward, and how we relate to, our spouse really is a reflection of our attitude toward and relationship with Christ and the Father. (7) Because our attitude toward and relationship with our spouse is a reflection of our attitude toward and relationship with Christ and the Father, we may expect to see *practical outworkings* of God’s chastisement or blessing in our lives, depending on how we treat our spouse (**1 Pet 3:7-12**). Indeed, in **1 Pet 3:7**, Peter ends his instructions to husbands by giving another important reason why they must honor their wives: “*so that your prayers may not be hindered.*” How you treat your wife is a sign of, and affects—either positively or negatively—your own relationship with God and your spiritual development. Wayne Grudem states, “No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife ‘in an understanding way, bestowing honour’ on her.” (Grudem 1988: 145-46). He concludes, “To take the time to develop and maintain a good marriage is God’s will; it is serving God; it is a spiritual activity pleasing in his sight” (Grudem 1988: 146).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. God raised the issue of marrying unbelievers in order to maintain spiritual purity. This indicates that marriage is, at root, spiritual.

- How can we maintain our spiritual purity today?
- How can our marriages reflect our spiritual state?

2. Why does God hate divorce?

3. How do our marriages reflect our relationship with God?

4. What can we do, individually and as churches, to strengthen our marriages?

D. The Lord will come to purify and to judge (2:17—3:6)

- **2:17—The people have wearied the Lord**

¹⁷ You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”

This verse introduces chapter 3. It points back to the discussions of corrupt worship, defiled offerings, marrying pagan women, divorcing Israelite wives, and corrupting God’s covenant. Not only the corrupt practices of the priests and the people are in view. God states that the people have wearied him by their attitude toward him and toward their own sin. Thus, they are saying in their hearts “*Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them.*” This is a direct attack on God’s character. The Bible makes it absolutely clear that “God hates those who do evil (Exod 23: 6-7; Ps 94:21-23; Prov 17:15) but delights in those who keep his law and practice mercy and justice (Isa 56:1-8; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8)” (Yilpet 2006: 1096). This also is the exact opposite of how Israel was supposed to be. Before Israel entered the land, Moses told them, “⁵ See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. ⁶ So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” (**Deut 4:5-6**) Now, even despite the exile in Babylon and their return to the land, they are still acting in disobedience to God. As a result, God had said in **Mal 1:11**, “*My name will be great*

among the nations.” God will answer the people’s question at the end of **v. 17**, “*Where is the God of justice?*” in **3:1, 5**, that he will “*suddenly come to His temple*” and “*I will draw near to you for judgment.*”

- **3:1-4—God will send his messenger to purify the people**

¹ “*Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,*” says the Lord of hosts. 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 fullers’ soap.*” ³ *He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.* ⁴ *Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.*”

Matt 11:10, **Mark 1:2**, and **Luke 7:27** all quote the first half of **v. 1**, regarding “*My messenger,*” and apply it to John the Baptist (see also **Isa 40:3-5**; **Luke 1:76**). In other words, “*My messenger,*” John the Baptist, “*will clear the way before Me,*” i.e., before the Lord. As the prophesied messenger and forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus called John the Baptist “*more than a prophet*” (**Matt 11:9**; **Luke 7:26**) and said, “*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*” (**Matt 11:11**) The second half of **v. 1**, regarding the Lord coming into his temple, refers to Jesus Christ. Christ came to the temple first as a baby to be dedicated (**Luke 2:21-38**), then as a young person who sat with and asked questions of the teachers (**Luke 2:41-47**), when his parents came to the feast of Passover, then yearly for the feasts and festivals, when he taught at the temple (see **Luke 22:53**; **John 7:14**), and then in the last week of his life (see **Matt 21:12-14**). “*The messenger of the covenant*” who “*is coming*” is equated with “*Me*” and “*the Lord*” and also refers to Jesus. “*The covenant*” refers to the New Covenant, which was inaugurated by the “*messenger of the covenant,*” Jesus Christ (see **Luke 22:20**). It is called “*the covenant*” because it is the final covenant of God, in which the earlier covenants find their fulfillment.

In **v. 1**, the phrase “*in whom you delight,*” referring to the “*messenger of the covenant*” (Christ), indicates that, even in their sin (**Mal 2:17**), the people were looking for their Messiah. However, it appears that Malachi, like other prophets and even Jesus’ disciples, conflated Christ’s first coming and his second coming. They assumed that Messiah would come only one time, not twice. Robert Yarbrough states, “Not clearly foreseen, apparently, by either Old Testament prophets or the earliest New Testament disciples, was the already-not yet complexion of the messianic age” (Yarbrough 1996: 65), i.e., the kingdom of God and reign of Christ have been inaugurated, realized in principle, and are present now (the “already” of the kingdom); however, they have not yet been fully manifested, but await a future consummation in all their glory (the “not yet” of the kingdom).

While **v. 1** focuses on the birth and earthly ministry of Christ, **vv. 2-4** focus on Christ’s second coming and the judgment and purification it will bring—judgment and condemnation of the unrighteous but vindication and purification of the righteous. **Verses 1-4** are echoing **Amos 5:18-20**. Amos likewise said that people were “*longing for the day of the Lord,*” but that will be a day of “*darkness instead of light.*” The references to Levi in **v. 3** and Judah and Jerusalem in **v. 4** are not referring to physical Levi, Judah, Jerusalem, or their physical descendants. Rather, as discussed above in **1:11-14**, these are pointing to the new, true, spiritual Israel, those who are united to Christ by faith, i.e., the cleansed and purified church, who are the new, true, and permanent priests of God (**1 Pet 2:5, 9**; **Rev 1:6**; **5:10**; **20:6**).

- **3:5-6—God will also judge those who act unrighteously**

⁵ “*Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,*” says the Lord of hosts. ⁶ “*For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.*”

God’s judgment had been mentioned in **vv. 2-3**. Now, it is made more specific. **Verse 5** is also the answer to those in **2:17** who had “*wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, ‘How have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is*

the God of justice?” **Verse 5** shows that God is concerned about, and will judge, sins of all kinds: religious (sorcery) and social (adultery, false swearing, and oppression). Or, one can look at these as sins of commission (sorcerers, adulterers, and those who swear falsely) and sins of omission (those who do not treat employees, widows, orphans, and aliens fairly). It is, therefore, not surprising that **Rev 22:15** concludes with a very similar list of sins of those who are excluded from the New Jerusalem.

The theme of fair treatment for widows, orphans, and the oppressed is one of the most consistent and prominent themes in both the OT and NT. It is not an occasional suggestion, but is woven directly into biblical law, prophetic warnings, and the teachings of Jesus. For example, **Jas 1:27** says, “*Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*” The word translated as “religion” is *thrēskeia* which refers to “ceremonial service or worship” (Zodhiates 1993: *thrēskeia*, 742). James is pointing out that “*pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father*” involves the entire person, inside and out. James is echoing what Jesus had said that, at the judgment, how we have treated the poor and the needy will demonstrate what we really thought of him (**Matt 25:31-46**). Keeping oneself “*unstained by the world*” primarily relates to our inner being, i.e., not being “stained” by the values, priorities, and mindset of the world. James is echoing what Malachi is saying: both explicitly mention widows and orphans; Malachi’s reference to sorcerers, adulterers, and those who swear falsely reflects the inner character of the person, akin to James’s “*keep[ing] oneself unstained by the world.*”

All of the sins mentioned in **v. 5** stem from and reflect the fact that those who commit such sins “*do not fear Me.*” Even if a person does not commit the specific sins listed in **v. 5**, and appears to be a law-abiding and decent person, we all worship someone or something. Absent a saving relationship with the Lord, such a person will worship himself, or money, or success, or family, or someone or something else. Ultimately, such false gods cannot fulfill you and will let you down. They also tend to warp a person and his or her judgment because, by definition, worshiping anything other than the true God amounts to elevating something temporal and worldly (even if, in itself, it is a good thing) into something of ultimate importance. In his book *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine stated, “Now he is a man of just and holy life who forms an unprejudiced estimate of things, and keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves that less or more which ought to be loved equally. No sinner is to be loved as a sinner; and every man is to be loved as a man for God’s sake; but God is to be loved for His own sake. And if God is to be loved more than any man, each man ought to love God more than himself.” (Augustine 397: 1.27-28) Thus, he summarized, “the essence of sin is disordered love” (Cady 2019: n.p.).

That is why, when Jesus was asked what the great commandment of the law was, he replied, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”³⁸ *This is the great and [a]foremost commandment.*³⁹ *The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*⁴⁰ *On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*” (**Matt 22:37-40**) Our relationship with the Lord is primary. Famous Russian writer and Christian Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn recognized this in a speech he gave in 1983. He said that the basic reason why “the demon of evil, like a whirlwind, triumphantly circles all five continents of the earth” stems from the fact that “men have forgotten God” (Solzhenitsyn 2018: II. The Templeton Address). It is our relationship with God which ultimately molds our character and affects our relationships with other people. In turn, our relationships with other people reveal what our true relationship with God is. The apostle John made this clear when he said, “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen*” (**1 John 4:20**). The reason is that everyone has been made in the image of God, and how we treat God’s image shows what we really think of him. All sins, including those specifically mentioned, ultimately are against God: sorcery is invoking demons and false gods (see **2 Chron 33:6; Gal 5:20; Rev 18:23**); adultery goes against the God-ordained marriage, which is the fundamental unit of society, and which is a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church (**Gen 2:24; Eph 5:29-32**; see also **Ps 51:4**); false swearing profanes the name of the Lord (**Lev 19:12**) and goes directly against Christ, who is the truth (**John 1:14; 14:6**); with respect to how we treat the poor and needy, as we have seen, how we treat the poor and the needy demonstrates what we really think of Christ (**Matt 25:31-46**). Thus, our sins go far deeper, are far worse, and are far more spiritually significant than we tend to think.

The word “For,” which begins **v. 6**, shows that **v. 6** is tied to and flows from what had just been said in **v. 5** and the preceding verses. The fact that the Lord does not change is important. Although OT Israel, throughout its history was unfaithful to the Lord, from its disobedience when Moses was on Mount Sinai up to the time of Malachi, God did not consume them, because he loved them. Thus, when God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ—who “*is the same yesterday and today and forever*” (**Heb 13:8**)—by his grace he

inaugurated his kingdom in his lowliness, allowing his own people to reject and persecute him. When he comes again, however, he will come in judgment, as **vv. 2-3** and **5** state.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think that, when God withholds judgment, people often think he is absent or will not judge them?
2. In what ways did John the Baptist act as the messenger and forerunner of Jesus, the Messiah?
3. How is Jesus Christ shown to be God incarnate in these verses?
4. According to **vv. 2-3**, what does the judgment entail?
5. In **v. 5**, why do you think that Malachi enumerated the particular sins that he did?
6. All of the sins listed in **v. 5** stem from the fact that people “*do not fear Me [i.e., God].*”
7. Why and how does not putting the Lord first in your life (i.e., those who “*do not fear Me*”) adversely affect a person’s judgment and life, even if he or she does not commit the specific sins listed in **v.5**?

E. The people have disobeyed the Lord with respect to their money (3:7-12)

In this section, and continuing through **4:3**, Malachi contrasts the wicked and the righteous, in that order: **3:7-9** discusses the wicked; **3:10-12** discusses the righteous; **3:13-15** discusses the wicked; **3:16-18** discusses the righteous. **4:1-3** then discusses the judgment, but **v. 1** deals with the wicked, and **vv. 2-3** deal with the righteous.

- **3:7-9—God curses those who are disobedient with respect to their money**

⁷ “*From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,*” says the Lord of hosts. “*But you say, ‘How shall we return?’*”
⁸ “*Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.*”⁹ *You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!*

In chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2, God primarily condemned the priests (but also the people) for their unfaithful behavior, particularly with respect to their improper sacrifices and offerings. In the latter part of chapter 2, God condemned the entire nation, primarily for divorcing their wives and marrying pagan, foreign women. God’s condemnation of the entire nation went to Israel’s violation of the most intimate and important relationship God had ordained, that of marriage. Now, God condemns the entire nation again, and again his condemnation goes to the heart of matters of fundamental importance: in **v. 7** it is Israel’s disobedience to God’s law; in **vv. 8-9** it is what Israelites have done with their money.

God is not fooled by lip service. As the saying goes, “actions speak louder than words.” This was true in the OT, as Malachi says in **v. 7**, and it has continued to be true since Jesus came. As James states in **Jas 2: 17, 20**, “*faith without works is dead or useless.*” In other words, mental, non-life-changing beliefs in theological propositions, and even verbal affirmation and adherence to orthodox doctrine is *not saving faith*. Jesus said in **John 14:23**, “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word*” (see also **John 14:21**). Jesus highlighted this when he spoke about the judgment in **Matt 25:31-46** and compared people to sheep and goats. The “faith” of the goats was mental; it didn’t change their lives. The faith of the goats is no better than the faith of the demons (see **Jas 2:19**). The faith of the sheep penetrated deeply into their souls so that they naturally started living the life of Christ without even realizing it. And the biggest evidence of that was how they treated people, especially people in need. Note, however, *how* God approached his people here in **v. 7**. He says, “*Return to Me, and I will return to you.*” He is not approaching the people as a vengeful, wrathful judge, but as a wounded, betrayed lover who still loves his beloved and is willing and desirous of forgiving her and restoring the relationship.

At the end of **v. 7**, the people ask, “*How shall we return?*” The entire book of Malachi has been telling the people how to get right with God. But in **vv. 8-9** God gives a specific example of how to return to him, namely, with their tithes and offerings. What God is doing is looking at the things that are, or should be, most important to us—God’s law and our offerings to him, our marriages, and our money—and showing how these

most important things reveal that the people really do not worship God at all, but are self-centered and are concerned only about themselves. In these verses, God accuses the people of robbing him. Robert Alden points out, “Stealing means not only taking what is not yours but keeping back for yourself what belongs to someone else. In this case, one-tenth of a man’s income was due God; failure to pay that debt amounted to robbery (cf. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11)” (Alden 1985: 720). Alden also points out that, in v. 9, when God says that “*the whole nation of you*” is under a curse, the word for “nation is *goy*, which term generally “was used of heathen nations, as Malachi himself did in 1:11, 14; 3:12” (Alden 1985: 721). In short, what Israel was doing revealed that they were no better than a heathen nation.

- **3:10-12—If the people obey the Lord with their money, God will bless them**

¹⁰ *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹ Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the Lord of hosts. ¹² “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the Lord of hosts.*

In these verses, God says that the remedy for the robbery the people were committing, and the way to break the curse, is for the people to do what they should have been doing all along, “*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse.*” Not only would this break the curse, but it would result in blessing. These verses have been very much misinterpreted by many in the church today and are used by the so-called “prosperity” teachers who claim that anyone who tithes (i.e., gives 10% of his or her income) will receive far more than that in material blessings.⁵ Because of these widespread, albeit erroneous beliefs and teachings, we need to consider the OT tithe and the nature of New Covenant giving.

“Tithe” means 1/10 (i.e., 10%). The OT Israelites were commanded to give two tithes per year; every third year they were required to give another 10% to the poor.⁶ The tithe was, in effect, a tax that all Israelites (whether they were “born again” or not) were required to pay in order for the nation to function in the land. If averaged over a three-year period, each Israelite was required by law to give about 23% of his income each year for God’s work (Blomberg 1999:46). OT Hebrews also voluntarily gave (over and above the legally-required tithe) to support God’s work.

This passage is a specific instance of God’s applying the promised blessings and curses of the Mosaic Law to Israel. Because OT Israel was an agricultural economy, both the promised blessing of **Mal 3:10** and the curses of **Mal 3:9, 11** relate to land and crops. The blessings and curses are promised to the nation as a whole; they are not individual blessings or curses promised to individuals who tithe or do not tithe. Both are based and dependent on the Mosaic Covenant and the specific covenantal relationship between God and OT Israel. The language used goes back to what Moses had said just before Israel entered the promised land. In **Deut 26:16** Moses had specifically admonished the Israelites to obey all of God’s commandments and laws. In **Deut 28:12** God promised that he “*will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand*” if Israel was careful to do all of the commandments of the law. If Israel failed to keep the whole law, then God promised to withhold the rain and cause the crops to fail and be consumed by locusts, worms, and crickets (**Deut 28:23-24, 38-42**; see also **Lev 26:3-6; 14-16, 19-26**). Additionally, in **Mal 3:10** the “*windows of heaven*” (NASB) or “*floodgates of heaven*” (NIV) is the same phrase used in **Gen 7:11** and **8:2**, and refers to abundant rain. In **Mal 3:11** the “devourer” is a literal translation of the Hebrew word, but it is clear from the context that some sort of agricultural pest is indicated. Thus, the NIV translates the verse as, “*I will prevent pests from devouring your crop.*” The ESV contains a footnote which states that the term is “probably a name for some crop-destroying pest or pests.” Extra-biblical evidence

⁵ Kaiser et al. point out the completely unbiblical and unChristian nature of the position of the prosperity teachers: “The motivation for doing something so poorly ought to be its own best rebuke. Why would we wish to give only to get more? The reason for giving would be so selfish that it could hardly command the attention and respect of the God it purported to serve.” (Kaiser et al. 1996: 351-52) There is a thorough critique of the prosperity gospel at Menn 2008-2016: 57-77.

⁶ The first tithe was given to support the Levites and the priests, because the Levites had not been given the inheritance of land as had the other tribes (**Lev 27:30-33; Deut 12:18; Num 18:21-24**). The second tithe, which was known as the “festival tithe,” was a tenth of the 9/10’s left over; that which was not used for the annual festival was given to the Levites (**Deut 12:5-7; 14:22-27**). The third tithe was known as the “charity tithe” and was given every third year to help the Levites, the poor, strangers, orphans, and widows (**Deut 14:28-29; 26:12**). After receiving the tithe, the Levites then were required to offer a “tithe of the tithe” to the Lord in the storehouse (**Num 18:25-32; Neh 10:38-39**).

from related languages suggests that what is referred to is an infestation of caterpillars (Hurowitz 2002: 327-36). Blomberg observes, “Malachi clearly alludes to the covenantal arrangement unique to the nation of Israel. And verse 12 continues, ‘then all the nations will call you blessed’, an obvious reference to the distinctive promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.” (Blomberg 1999: 80)

Because the OT law of the tithe was part of the Old, Mosaic Covenant and law, and was specific to OT Israel, Christians today are not bound by it. To turn the promise of **Mal 3:10** from a physical blessing on the nation to a personal blessing is to take that verse completely out of the context of the blessings and curses of **Deuteronomy 28** on which it was based. Ken Sarles points out that the promised blessings and curses of **Deuteronomy 28** “were historically conditioned, having been fulfilled in the history of the nation Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. The blessings and cursings to the nation Israel living under the Law cannot be extended to New Testament saints.” (Sarles 1986: 347) Blomberg concludes, “Land and worship in the New Testament are both clearly ‘spiritualized’, at least during the church age. . . . That is to say they are fulfilled in Christ in such a way that believers may not claim these promises in a literal, materialistic sense during the Christian era.” (Blomberg 1999: 83)

Although we are not under the law of the tithe or other OT laws, OT law and examples provide good foundational principles for giving by Christians today. OT laws, commands, and rules may be viewed as examples of universal or general principles, which may help and guide us to the extent that they are similar to our current situation. Jesus and the NT writers looked at OT laws as *illustrations* of greater principles. OT laws could be violated when adhering to them would violate the principle. For example, Jesus cites the Sabbath laws as pointing to himself and to the principle of compassion (**Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-11**). Jesus and Paul both quote OT laws as examples of the greater law of love (**Matt 22:37-39; Rom 13:9**). Applicable principles of giving from the OT include the following: (1) When God’s people are being faithful and see an important need, they give willingly and generously. (2) God blesses those who help the poor and needy but is against those who do not give to the poor and needy.

The practice of tithing in the New Covenant era should represent a spiritual discipline and “foundation” of giving by which we acknowledge God’s ownership of all of our money and possessions. Just as the OT is the foundation for the NT, so tithing (10%) should be the “foundation” (not the “ceiling”) of New Covenant giving. *The Africa Bible Commentary* states well the principle behind the tithe that we should be striving for: “Many churches treat the tithe regulation as meaning that we should give a tenth of all that we have to God. There is no problem with this if it is taken as a guiding principle. But there is a problem if it is treated legalistically and seen as a rule binding every believer and as a requirement for satisfying the law of God. The NT principle is to give in proportion to how God has blessed us (1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:13-15). This would mean that those who have been richly blessed will be able to give far more than a mere tenth. Christ gave all of himself for us. Why should we keep so much for ourselves and give him so little? But unfortunately church leaders cannot promote this principle while they advocate tithing as a rule. Believers will be content to give only a tenth, when they should be giving more to help meet the needs of the church in Africa. What we should be doing is working with the spirit of the tithe, encouraging believers to give more and not laying a burden of guilt on those who for a time and for good reason are unable to give.” (Adeyemo 2006: 230)

The New Covenant standard for giving is not the tithe but the cross. We should keep our focus on Christ. Christ did not just give 10% of himself but gave all of himself for us. As a result, we have infinitely greater blessings from God than the OT Hebrews ever had:

<u>Old Covenant</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>
1. Under the OC, the people had to continually make sacrifices for their sins (Lev 4:1-5:13; 5:14-6:7; 6:24-30; 7:1-8; 8:14-17; 16:3-22; Num 5:5-10; Heb 7:27).	1. In the NC, Christ has made the one sacrifice that is sufficient to forgive all of His people’s sins forever (John 1:29; Heb 7:26-28; 9:11-12, 28; 10:1-18).
2. Under the OC, only some of Israel’s sins were covered, and only for 1 year (Num 15:30-31; Heb 9:7; 10:1-3).	2. In the NC, <i>all</i> of our sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven <i>forever</i> (Jer 31:34; Acts 10:43; 13:38-39; Heb 10:1-18).
3. The OC did not give eternal life (Rom 3:21; Gal 3:11, 21).	3. In the NC, we are given eternal life (John 3:14-16, 36; 17:2-3; Heb 5:9).
4. Under the OC, God’s presence only dwelt in the temple, and the people had to go to the temple to get close to the presence of God (1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chron 5:11-14; 7:1-2).	4. In the NC, we <i>are</i> the temple, and God has come to us (1 Cor 3:9, 16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-7:1; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 3:12).
5. Under the OC, only the priests could enter the temple (Num 18: 22-23; Heb 9:6).	5. In the NC, all Christians <i>are</i> priests (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).
6. Under the OC, only the high priest could enter the holy of holies to be in the presence of God (Lev 16:2-34).	6. In the NC, Christ is our high priest (Heb 4:14-5:10; 7:1-10:25).

7. Under the OC, the high priest could only enter the holy of holies one day each year (Lev 16:34; Heb 9:7). 8. Under the OC, the Holy Spirit left the temple, never to return (Ezek 9:3; 10:1-19; 11:22-23). 9. Under the OC, the Holy Spirit never indwelt people, but only came upon certain people and then would leave (Exod 31:3; Num 11:16-29; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 14: 6, 19; 1 Sam 10:1-11; 16:13-14; 19:20-24). 10. Under the OC, the people were in bondage to the law which they could never fulfill (Acts 15:10; Rom 7:6, 23; 8:2-3; Gal 3:23; 5:1). 11. Under the OC, the people had hearts of stone (Zech 7:12).	7. In the NC, Christ is continually in the presence of God interceding for us (Heb 7:25; 9:24). 8. In the NC, Jesus promised that He would “never leave us or forsake us” (Heb 13:5). 9. In the NC, the Holy Spirit has come to live inside all believers, and will never leave us or forsake us (Ezek 36:27; John 14:16-17; 16:7; Acts 2:14-18, 38-39; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). 10. In the NC, Christ has fulfilled the law for us and has written His law (the law of Christ) on our hearts (Jer 31:33; Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4; Col 2: 13-15; Heb 8:10; 10:16). 11. In the NC, God has replaced our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezek 11:19; 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3).
---	--

In the New Covenant we have a direct, personal relationship with God that OT believers never had (**Jer 31:34; Heb 4:16; 7:19**). We have unlimited access to God our Father, through Jesus Christ, that the OT believers could only dream about (**Matt 27:51; Heb 10:19-22**). God has even adopted us into his own family (**Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:26; 4:6-7; Eph 1:5**). Since we have been given so much more than they were given, how can Christians view the tithe (10%) as a lot or as the maximum? Instead, we should view it as the minimum. Our giving reveals the state of our heart. The primary issue is not *whether* to give, or even *how much* to give, but the *reason why* we give: Do we give because the law commands us externally to give (Old Covenant), or because the gospel changes us internally so that we want to give (New Covenant)? Our attitude towards giving reveals, perhaps better than any other area of life, whether we truly have been born again or not. “If Christ could sacrifice so much for us, how dare we refuse to give generously to the needy!” (Blomberg 1999:193)

The early believers understood the radical difference that Christ and the Gospel means for our lives. They understood the implications of the Gospel in all aspects of life, including their use of money and material possessions. They applied the New Covenant principles of giving which were proclaimed by Jesus and the Apostles—that giving should be done freely, generously, and in proportion to one’s resources in order to build the kingdom and meet real needs. As a result, the early church was characterized by radical generosity and sacrificial giving that lasted for hundreds of years. That type of giving can occur again as we get our eyes off the Old Covenant law, get our eyes focused on Christ and the Gospel, and teach our people the principles of New Covenant giving. True Christian giving is not merely a physical event, a mere transfer of money. Instead, in its essence, giving is spiritual. Giving is a gift of God’s grace in operation. Paul makes this clear in **2 Corinthians 8-9**, which is his longest discussion of giving in the NT. Among other things, he makes clear that New Covenant giving: should be done freely and voluntarily (**2 Cor 8:3, 8; 9:7**); should be done systematically (**1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:6-7**); should be planned and thought out (**2 Cor 9:7**); should be done regularly (**1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 9:6**); should be done liberally and generously (**2 Cor 8:3, 9; 9:5-6, 13**); and should be done in proportion to one’s resources and ability (**1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:3, 11-12**), i.e., the more one is able to give, the more he should give (**1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:3, 11, 12**).

The purpose of true Christian giving is to meet real needs (**2 Cor 8:4, 13-15; 9:12**). Needs may be physical (e.g., poverty; lack of food, clothing, or shelter; health problems). That was the specific reason for the collection in **1 Cor 16:1-4** and **2 Corinthians 8-9**. Needs also may be spiritual (e.g., missions; supporting the pastor and church leaders; maintaining church property; reaching out to the community in various ways; providing discipleship and other Christian materials to the pastor, church members, and other people). The results of true Christian giving are at least fourfold: (1) God is glorified (**2 Cor 9:11-15**); (2) the recipients are helped (**2 Cor 8:13-15; 9:12**); (3) the givers are blessed (**2 Cor 8:2; 9:1-4, 6-11, 13-14**); and (4) giving knits the church together—giving inspires the saints to help each other and stirs up zeal in other believers to do likewise because giving is an example of Christ-likeness (**2 Cor 9:2, 13**).⁷

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is what we do/how we live a primary and fundamental test of whether or not we have true, saving faith?
2. Why is what we do with our money a primary and fundamental test of whether or not we have true, saving faith?

⁷ The many aspects of Old Covenant versus New Covenant giving are fleshed out in greater detail in Menn 2008-2016: 40-57.

3. Discuss the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
4. Discuss the differences between Old Covenant giving (the law of the tithe) and New Covenant giving.

F. *God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked and will judge (3:13—4:6)*

In many respects, this section sums up the argument of the book as a whole.

- **3:13-15—The wicked are arrogant against the Lord**

¹³ *“Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’* ¹⁴ *You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?’* ¹⁵ *So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.”*

These verses essentially concern lack of trust in God. They raise the question of what difference it makes to serve, obey, and remain faithful to God (see **Job 21:14-15; 22:17; 34:9; 35:3**). They also lay out the ancient question of why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (see **Job 21:7; Ps 73:12-13; Jer 12:1**). These verses summarize the spiritual state of the people that Malachi has been addressing throughout the book. In Malachi’s case, people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, the temple had been rebuilt, and the sacrificial system had been reinstated. Nevertheless, the promises of the prophets of a glorious new Jerusalem and a messianic kingdom of peace had not taken place (see **Isa 65:17-25**). Consequently, the enthusiasm of the post-exile returnees had waned, and corruption, unfaithfulness, and questioning the profit of serving God had set in. In **v. 10**, God had invited the people to put him to the test, to see that he is good and will abundantly bless faithfulness and obedience. Here, the people are responding that it is the arrogant and the wicked who are putting God to the test by their unfaithfulness and disobedience, and they are the ones who are getting away with it and are being blessed! They were demonstrating that, in essence, they had the mindset of the so-called “prosperity” teachers (see above). In other words, they were only interested in obeying God if there was some immediate profit or gain from doing so. That is a temptation which is universal. When people are waiting for promises to be fulfilled and when life does not meet one’s expectations, it is easy to question God’s goodness and faithfulness to us. Thus, although Malachi wrote in a specific historical context to particular people, the issues he addresses apply to us when we face similar circumstances.

- **3:16-18—Those who fear the Lord will be heard by him and spared**

¹⁶ *Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name.* ¹⁷ *“They will be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”* ¹⁸ *So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.*

These verses point out that not everyone had the cynicism of the arrogant ones of **vv. 13-15**. These verses also show that God takes a “long view” of things. So should we. Faithfulness and obedience to God may not result in some immediate, material pay-off. As Jesus said, faithfulness may even result in persecution (see **Mark 10:29-30; John 15:20**). Consequently, remaining faithful may involve paying a price, sometimes a very great price. We need to constantly be aware of this. The apostle Peter and the church in his day faced these same issues, and Peter warned us of this. In **2 Pet 3:3-4** he stated, *“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’”* In the face of this, Peter exhorted us to *“be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (2 Pet 3:14)*. He concluded, *“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:17-18)*. Remaining faithful in this life will have blessed, everlasting consequences. Jesus said, *“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 10:32-33)* Those who remain faithful are called *“those who feared the*

Lord” (v. 16, twice), those “*who esteem His name*” (v. 16), those who “*will be Mine*” (v. 17), those “*who serve him*” (v. 17, 18, twice), and “*the righteous*” (v. 18). It is clear, therefore, that God is not indifferent to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of people here on earth. Instead, he is aware of what we are doing and will honor and reward those who stay faithful to him, no matter what their circumstances may be.

The seriousness with which God pays attention to his people is emphasized by the reference to the “*book of remembrance*” in v. 16. This is highlighting that what we do here is making a permanent record that will be verified at the judgment because it is being written down. The reference to God’s “book” goes back to **Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; Dan 7:10; 12:1** (see also **Ps 87:6; Isa 4:3; Ezek 13:9**). It is carried forward into the NT (see **Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27**). On the day of judgment, the righteous will be spared the judgment that will befall the unrighteous (v. 17). All will see the difference between themselves and the ungodly. The difference will be as clear as the difference between those who come to the light and those who remain in darkness (**John 3:20-21**); the latter will be cast into “*outer darkness*” (**Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30**). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown conclude, “Do not judge before the time till My work is complete. It is in part to test your disposition to trust in God in spite of perplexing circumstances, and in order to make your service less mercenary, that the present blended state is allowed; but at last *all* (‘ye,’ both godly and ungodly) shall see the eternal difference there really is ‘between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not’ (Ps. 58:11).” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown 1961: 874)

- **4:1-3—At the judgment, the Lord will judge the wicked and reward the righteous**

¹ “*For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will 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 will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.*”³ “*You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,*” says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi uses very graphic language to describe the day of judgment. For the wicked, i.e., the arrogant and evildoers, it will be “*burning like a furnace*” that will consume them like chaff, root and branch. This language foreshadows the “*eternal fire*” (**Matt 25:41; Mark 9:48; Luke 16:24; Jude 7**), the “*lake of fire*” (**Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8**), which is the fate that awaits all unbelievers. With respect to the righteous, i.e., “*you who fear My name*,” however, the judgment will result in healing, joy, and great glory. VanGemenen states, “The phrase *the sun of righteousness* is to be understood in the sense of Isaiah’s prophecies.⁸ Righteousness represents the effects of God’s righteousness upon this earth: victory and glory (Isa. 51:6-7; 62:1-2a). Yahweh shares his victory and glory with his people. They will experience the fullness of restoration as a healing process. Regardless of their suffering in life, Yahweh guarantees that his victory and his restoration will be shared by his own. The light will dawn for his people in such a way that all the promises of the Law and the Prophets, our Lord, and the apostles will be fulfilled in them. That moment will mark the full establishment of his kingdom!” (VanGemenen 1989: 711)

This judgment will occur as part of the events entailed by the Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming ushers in and entails a complex of events, including resurrection and judgment. The resurrection and judgment applies to human beings (both Christians and non-Christians) and to creation itself (i.e., the purging of evil from the universe and the renewal of creation by the institution of the “new heaven and new earth” [**Rev 21:1**]).

Verse 3 indicates that the righteous “*will tread down the wicked*” and they will be like “*ashes under the soles of your feet.*” This is symbolic language which highlights the infinitely different statuses the righteous and the wicked will have, for all eternity, as a result of the judgment. It also may be highlighting the fact that, at the judgment, the redeemed will play a role in judging the unredeemed. In **Matt 12:39-42 (Luke 11:29-32)**, Jesus says that the men of Nineveh “*will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented,*” and “*the Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.*” “*Stand up*” is the future middle indicative of the verb *anistēmi*, from which the noun *anastasis* (resurrection) is derived. “*Rise up*” is the

⁸ Many see the phrase “*sun of righteousness*” as a reference to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, since he is the one who brings healing, vindication, and eternal life. However, the phrase “*sun of righteousness*” is not used in the NT. On the other hand, Christ is called “*the Sunrise from on high [who] will visit us*” (**Luke 1:78**), and Jesus said, “*I am the Light of the world*” (**John 8:12**).

future passive indicative of the verb *egeirō* (lit., “will be raised up”), which is essentially synonymous with *anistēmi*. “At the judgment” and “this generation” “both have eschatological content. The scene painted presupposes a universal judgement, for it involves the Ninevites and the Israel of Jesus’ time, as well as the queen of the South.” (Davies and Allison 1991: 2:358) In other words, we see the redeemed and the unredeemed from different times and places being resurrected together (i.e., “with this generation”) at the time of the judgment, with the redeemed playing a part in the judgment of the unredeemed.

These descriptions of the judgment emphasize the importance of remaining faithful now, regardless of our circumstances here on earth. The radically different eternal destinies of the righteous and the wicked hang on the issue of persevering faithfulness now, in this life.

- **4:4—Exhortation: Remember the law of Moses**

Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

We have previously noted that many commentators consider **4:4-6** to be an appendix or epilogue to the book, not a part of the final unit (Dorsey 1999: 322n.6; VanGemeren 1990: 204). In fact, Robert Alden contends that **v. 4** is the first of two concluding appendices and **vv. 5-6** are the second concluding appendix (Alden 1985: 724; see also Watts 2007: 189). With respect to **v. 4**, Alden states, “This verse, in a sense, closes the entire book. Malachi began with an illustration from Genesis (Jacob and Esau) and spent most of the first half of the book reminding priests and people of the need to keep the Mosaic Law. Now, close to the end of the book, he gives another terse reminder of their continuing obligation to those laws.” (Alden 1985: 724). His statement about this verse closing the entire book receives some confirmation in that this verse appears after **v. 6** in the Septuagint. Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. **Verse 4** echoes the ending of the book of Ecclesiastes, “*The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments*” (**Eccl 12:13**).

The law of Moses was still in effect, and remained in effect, until superseded by the New Covenant and the law of Christ (**Luke 22:20; Rom 8:2; 10:4; 1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2**). The law was a temporary “type” or “shadow” that was in effect until Christ came (**Gal 3:23-25; Heb 10:1**); both Moses and the law pointed to Christ and the New Covenant (see Menn 2025: 112-15, 184-93). It is Christ who fulfilled the law on our behalf (**Matt 5:17**). In **John 5:46**, Jesus said, “*If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.*” **Luke 24:27** says that, following his resurrection, Jesus encountered two disciples on the road to Emmaus and “*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*” The point is this: here in **v. 4**, the exhortation to remember the law of Moses is because, heretofore, the people had understood Moses and the law “carnally, without perceiving that its earthly promises were figures of things spiritual” (Augustine 1950: 20.29). As a result, the people said, “*It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?*” (**Mal 3:14**) Now, Malachi “intends that they learn to interpret the law spiritually” (Augustine 1950: 20.29). By doing that, they can find Christ in the OT, as Jesus pointed out in **Luke 24**. Only by doing that can they be saved from the judgment.

- **4:5-6—Before the judgment, God will send Elijah to restore the people**

⁵ “*Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*” ⁶ *He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.*”

If **v. 4** was looking backward (to Moses), **vv. 5-6** are looking forward. Rikk Watts says, “The appeal to Moses looks back to remind the nation that it is still under the law, thus linking the prophets to the ancient tradition, and the reference to Elijah, by looking forward, anticipates Yahweh’s future return” (Watts 2007: 189). **Mal 3:1** had said, “*Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.*” **Matt 11:10, Mark 1:2, and Luke 7:27** all quote that and apply it to John the Baptist. Now, **v. 5** says, “*Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*” Before John the Baptist was born, an angel appeared to Zacharias (John the Baptist’s father), quoted the first half of **v. 6**, and identified John the Baptist as “*he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah*” (**Luke 1:17**). Jesus further identified John the Baptist as the Elijah who was to come. In **Matt 11:14**, Jesus said, “*If you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.*” Later, Jesus had this dialog with his

disciples in **Matt 17:10-13**, “¹⁰ And His disciples asked Him, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ ¹¹ And He answered and said, ‘Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹² but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.” (see also **Mark 9:11-13**)⁹

“The great and terrible day of the Lord,” of course, refers to the day of judgment. As we earlier discussed in connection with **3:1-4**, Malachi, like other prophets and even Jesus’ disciples, conflated Christ’s first coming and his second coming. They assumed that Messiah would come only one time, not twice, and that his coming would bring judgment. In fact, however, Christ comes twice: the kingdom of God and reign of Christ have been inaugurated, realized in principle, and are present now as a result of his first coming (the “already” of the kingdom); the final judgment will occur, and Christ’s kingdom and reign they will become fully manifested and consummated in all their glory at his second coming (the “not yet” of the kingdom). Consequently, Elijah (John the Baptist) has come before the great and terrible day of the Lord and has given us (so far) 2000 years of grace to turn to the Lord and “*restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.*”¹⁰ We are without excuse if we do not do so.¹¹

Rikk Watts points out that, although the phrase in **v. 6**, “*restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers,*” is “sometimes taken to mean righting the family dislocations of 2:10-16, [it] seems best understood in light of the immediately preceding reference to Moses as the restoration of the postexilic faithless generation to the covenant loyalty of the ancient forefathers” (Watts 2007: 189). E. W. Hengstenberg similarly states that, in **v. 6**, the “fathers” are “the pious forefathers, the patriarchs, especially David, and the pious generation living in his time. The hearts of the pious fathers and the ungodly sons are estranged from each other. The bond of union, the common love for God, is wanting.” (Hengstenberg 1970: 632) This point is corroborated in that John the Baptist’s ministry was, in fact, a ministry of repentance, which led people of all types to repent of their sins and turn from their faithless ways, as opposed to a “family” ministry directed to restoring the relationships between fathers and children (although, undoubtedly, such family restorations would have taken place as a result of John the Baptist’s ministry) (see **Matt 3:1-12; 14:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; 6:14-29; Luke 3:1-30; John 1:19-24; 3:22-36**). By bringing the people to repentance, by showing them the true, spiritual meaning of Moses and the OT (see comments regarding **v. 4**, above), Elijah-John could soften the hearts of the people and thereby lead them to Christ, in whom fathers and children would find true restoration and unity. In short, Watts states, but also cautions, “Elijah-John’s coming did initiate the eschatological restoration of all things. . . . But the Scriptures also understood that only the faithful remnant of historically rebellious Israel would participate (see, e.g., Isa. 6 and 29 in Mark 4 and 7, respectively; cf. [Isa] 48:8, 17-22; 65:1-16; 66:24).” (Watts 2007: 190)

Alden points out that **v. 6** “has set before Israel the age-old alternatives: respond to the God who loves them (1:2), or suffer the terrible consequences (4:1, 6)” (Alden 1985: 724). The word for “curse” refers to “the practice of devoting things or persons irrevocably to the Lord, often by total destruction” (Alden 1985: 725). That language is akin to the statement in **v. 1** that the judgement “*will leave them neither root nor branch,*” i.e., the destruction will be total. Watts summarizes, “Jesus’ identification of John with Malachi’s promised Elijah further confirms that this is the great and terrible day of the Lord, and that Jesus himself necessarily specially identified with Yahweh’s personal presence (e.g., [Mark] 2:1-12; 4:35-41; 6:47-52) Since Jesus opponents have rejected Elijah-John, who was to purify the Levitical priesthood and call them back to Torah and covenantal

⁹ John the Baptist denied being the literal Elijah reincarnated (**John 1:21**). The Bible denies the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation. Andreas Köstenberger states that probably “the Baptist denied being ‘Elijah’ to counter the expectation (current in his day) that the same Elijah who escaped death in a fiery chariot would return in like spectacular manner” (Köstenberger 2007: 425). That John the Baptist was the prophesied Elijah of **Mal 4:5** is seen in that John the Baptist came “*in the spirit and power of Elijah,*” was specifically identified by Jesus as the Elijah prophesied by **Mal 3:1; 4:5**, and “his ministry constituted the typological fulfillment of the prophecy of Mal. 4:5” (Köstenberger 2007: 425).

¹⁰ The phrase “*the great and terrible day of the Lord*” comes from **Joel 2:11, 31**. Peter quoted from **Joel 2:28-32** on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:14-21**). There, the phrase is translated “*great and glorious day.*” The point is that Peter was quoting Joel’s prophecy as having been fulfilled by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. That occurred 2000 years ago, akin to “Elijah’s” having come (in the person of John the Baptist) 2000 years ago, even though neither event was immediately before the “*the great and terrible day of the Lord*” (i.e., the final judgment).

¹¹ The NT gives no indication that Elijah or John the Baptist will return yet another time shortly before Christ comes again. Interestingly, however, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah himself (not John the Baptist) appeared with Christ and were recognized as such (**Matt 17:3-4**). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown comment that, just as Moses and Elijah are connected in **vv. 4-5**, “so at the transfiguration they converse with Him, implying that the law and prophets which had prepared His way were now fulfilled in Him” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown 1961: 875).

faithfulness, it is little wonder that they clash with Jesus on precisely these issues ([Mark] 2:1-3:6; 7:1-23). . . . It also means that official Israel ('they'), in rejecting John and consequently Jesus by choosing Jesus' death rather than the life he offered (Deut. 30:15 in Mark 3:4-6), had put themselves under the covenant curse." (Watts 2007: 190)

Yoilah Yilpet concludes by pointing out how this is equally relevant to us today, "We are prone to the same sins as the people in Malachi's day. But God's unchanging love still calls us to repentance and offers us salvation. The central theme of both the OT and the NT is redemption. Those who love God and are committed to him will be ushered into God's presence in eternity on the day of the Lord. But those who refuse to turn from their sins and to find God will be destroyed." (Yilpet 2006: 1098)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are we tempted to not trust and obey God when times are difficult and when we do not receive what we want and ask for?
2. Why is it important to continue to trust and obey God even when times are difficult and even when we do not receive what we want and ask for?
3. How can we help our brothers and sisters remain faithful when they're going through hard times and may be paying a great price for their faithfulness to God?
4. How does the thought of the reality of the final judgment affect your faith, trust, and how you live your life?
 - How should it?
5. Are there any particular passages in the OT in which you see Jesus present, either in pre-incarnate appearances, in prophecy, or typologically (see Luke 24:27)?
 - What difference, if any, does seeing Jesus in the OT make to you?
6. In 4:6, "restoring the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers" appears primarily directed to restoring the hearts of the generation that lived in Malachi's day to the piety and covenant loyalty of the patriarchs who had lived many generations in the past.
 - What good, if any, do you see in looking back to the examples of notable Christians in the past? What can we learn from them and their examples, either positively or negatively? Give examples if you have ever done this.
 - Modern churches sometimes appear to be "reinventing the wheel" when it comes to their theology, rituals, and practice. C. S. Lewis called this "chronological snobbery," i.e., the false assumption that whatever has gone out of date is automatically wrong or inferior simply because it is old. He argued that discarding historical wisdom blinds us to our own modern prejudices. What good, if any, do you see in looking back to the examples of theology, churches, and church practices of the past? What can we learn from them and their examples, either positively or negatively? Give examples if you have ever done this.
7. How has Malachi—the last book of the OT—pointed forward to Christ and the New Covenant era?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamson, James. 1970. "Malachi." In *New Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. D. Guthrie, J. A. Motyer, A. M. Stibbs, D. J. Wiseman, 804-9. Carmel, NY: Guideposts.
- Adeyemo, Tokunboh, ed. 2006. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive.
- Alden, Robert. 1985. "Malachi." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank Gaebelin, 701-25. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Augustine. 397. *On Christian Doctrine*. Online: <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/ddc.html>.

_____. 1950 (reprint). *The City of God*. New York: Random House. Online (another edition): <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.html>.

Blomberg, Craig. 1999. *Neither Poverty nor Riches* (NSBT 7). Nottingham, England: Apollos.

Cady, Nick. 2019. “Augustine & Disordered Loves.” *Theology for the People*. Online: <https://nickcady.org/2019/04/11/augustine-disordered-loves/>.

Davies, W. D., and Dale Allison. 1991. *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (ICC). 3 volumes. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Dorey, David. 1999. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Goppelt, Leonhard. 1982. *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*. Translated by Donald Madvig. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Grudem, Wayne. 1988. *1 Peter* (TNTC). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Hengstenberg, E. W. 1970 (reprint). *Christology of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel.

Hill, Jonathan. 2010. “The Covenant with Levi Mentioned in Malachi.” *The Hill House*. Online: <https://followjonathan.com/2010/09/25/the-covenant-with-levi-mentioned-in-malachi/>.

Hurowitz, Victor. 2002. “*akl* in Malachi 3:11—Caterpillar.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121: 327-336.

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. 1961. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Kaiser, Walter, Petter Davids, F. F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch. 1996. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Köstenberger, Andreas. 2007. “John.” In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 415-512. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Menn, Jonathan. 2008-2016. *Biblical Stewardship*. Online: <https://www.eclea.net/courses.html#stewardship>.

_____. 2025. *Biblical Theology: The Story of the Christ*. Eugene, OR: Resource.

Payne, J. Barton. 1980 (reprint). *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Sarles, Ken. 1986. “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143: 329-52.

Schnabel, Eckhard. 2002. “Israel, the People of God, and the Nation.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45: 35-57. Online: http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/45/45-1/45-1-PP035-057_JETS.pdf.

Schrock, David. 2023. “The Levitical Covenant (Part 2): Three Truths About the Levitical Covenant.” *Christ All Over*. Online: <https://christoverall.com/article/concise/the-levitical-covenant-part-2-three-truths-about-the-levitical-covenant/>.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. 2018. “‘Men Have Forgotten God’: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s 1983 Templeton Address.” *National Review*. Online: <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/12/aleksandr-solzhenitsyn-men-have-forgotten-god-speech/>.

Towner, Philip. 2007. “1 Timothy.” In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 891-902. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

VanGemeren, Willem. 1989. “Malachi.” In *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell, 704-12. Grand Rapids: Baker.

_____. 1990. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Walker, P. W. L. 1996. *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

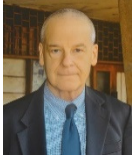
Watts, Rikk. 2007. "Mark." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 111-249. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

"Why did God hate Esau from the womb when he had done no evil?" *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Online: <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/43607/why-did-god-hate-esau-from-the-womb-when-he-had-done-no-evil>.

Yarbrough, Robert. 1996. "Biblical Theology." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by Walter Elwell, 61-66. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker. Online: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/biblical-theology.html>.

Yilpet, Yoilah. 2006. "Malachi." In *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo, 1093-98. Nairobi: Word Alive.

THE AUTHOR



Jonathan Menn lives in Appleton, WI, USA. He received a B.A. in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with honors, in 1974, and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. He then earned a J.D. from Cornell Law School, magna cum laude, in 1977, and was inducted into the Order of the Coif legal honor society. He spent the next 28 years practicing law, as a civil trial attorney, in Chicago and then as a partner at the Menn Law Firm in Appleton, WI. He became a believer and follower of Jesus Christ in 1982. An increasing love for theology and ministry led to his pursuing a Master of Divinity at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. He received his M.Div. from TEDS, summa cum laude, in May 2007. Between 2007-2013 he was the East Africa Director of Equipping Pastors International. Now Jonathan is the Director of Equipping Church Leaders-East Africa (www.eclea.net). His extensive written teaching materials on biblical subjects are available at www.eclea.net. Jonathan may be contacted at: jonathanmenn@yahoo.com.