

Christ. It is similar in thought to the statements in the beginning of the chapter relative to the victory of truth over error.

Verse 13. General confusion was to overwhelm those who tried to resist the new institution set up in Jerusalem. So great was that confusion to be that the enemies would be turned against each other as if they were strangers.

Verse 14. *Judah shall fight at Jerusalem*. The margin renders it "against Jerusalem" which denotes that the people of God will oppose the wealth of the heathen that will accumulate around the city.

Verse 15. These beasts of service that are used by the heathen will not enable them to prevent the great work of the Lord, but will be defeated according to verses 1-3.

Verse 16. Many who had opposed the Lord will be converted and will go up to worship. They will look to Jerusalem for the divine model of true worship. This great truth is predicted in Isaiah 2: 1-4 and Micah 4: 1-5.

Verse 17. *Shall be no rain* is a figurative prediction that all who refuse the Gospel will be denied the spiritual favors of the Lord.

Verse 18. This is the same in meaning as the preceding verse. The heathen (or Gentiles) will all be given a chance to enjoy the blessings issued from Jerusalem, but if they refuse it they will be rejected by the Lord.

Verse 19. *Keep the feast* is a figure drawn from the literal practices of the Jews in Jerusalem under the Mosaic system. It here refers to the spiritual system or institution set up in Jerusalem to supplant the former one.

Verse 20. Horses were used in temporal warfare by the people of Israel. They are used figuratively for the spiritual war under Christ against sin in all its forms. The objective in all the great warfare will be plainly announced to all the opposing forces. It will be done by a banner-like engraving upon the equipment of the horses, and it will read **HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD**.

Verse 21. These vessels refer to those used in the Jewish service, but denote the spiritual ones under Christ. *No more the Canaanite* means that no one of the heathen shall be admitted until he has submitted to the rule of heaven under Christ.

MALACHI I

Verse 1. *Burden* means an important message or saying, and the Lord had something of that character to say to the people of Israel. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets and wrote about four centuries before Christ. This would place him not long after the work of reconstruction following the return from the captivity. The people of Israel never worshiped idols after the return, but they often were careless about their duty to God and became selfish in their desires.

Verse 2. When the Lord censured them for their worldliness they complained that He did not love them. The Lord's reasoning that he still loved his people is couched in the question *was not Esau Jacob's brother?* The fact that while these men were brothers, the Lord chose Jacob or Israel instead of Esau was proof that He loved him.

Verse 3. *Hated Esau* means the Lord denied him any special favors, also He chastised him severely for wrong doings.

Verse 4. Esau was the founder of the Edomites who thought they could resist the work of God that was meant for their punishment. Yet they failed for the Lord was determined to *throw down* their work. All of this was evidence that Israel had fared better than his brother and hence was beloved by the Lord.

Verse 5. The objective of the Lord in thus punishing Esau or Edom was that He might be magnified. Israel was supposed to see all this and acknowledge God's greatness.

Verse 6. The usual treatment of a son for his father or a servant for his master is cited as an example of proper respect. God's people were not that respectful to Him, but at the same time they were denying their guilt of neglect.

Verse 7. The services of the Jews were beneath their abilities and short of the requirements of the law. Their neglect of duty was rendered more objectionable by their attitude. They would ask what was wrong in a way that implied that they could see nothing for the Lord to complain about.

Verse 8. The animals to be used in the services were required to be those in the best condition. These Jews were bringing the blind and otherwise defective ones and seemed to think the

Lord would accept them notwithstanding their poor qualities. He challenged them to try it out with their earthly ruler and see if he would accept it.

Verse 9. The prophet implies that it will be in vain for them to seek mercy of God while they are conducting such inferior services. *Been by your means* denotes that the corrupt situation was brought about by their own greed.

Verse 10. These Jews had become so selfish that they wanted to be paid for all of their services. They would not even close a door unless they were promised a reward for it. With such motives behind their activities the Lord was displeased with them.

Verse 11. God had intended from the start that the services of the law were to be temporary (Galatians 3: 19), but when these people became so insincere in their sacrifices it caused Him to be all the more displeased with them. This will shed some light on the language of Hebrews 10: 5-8 as to the *displeasure* of God with the animal sacrifices. *Among the Gentiles* is a prediction that another law and service will be instituted that will be offered to all people, not to Jews only.

Verse 12. To profane a thing means to cause it to become merely a temporal something instead of a sacred one. These Jews were pronouncing the services of the Lord to be only common activities and thus they profaned them.

Verse 13. This verse means the same as most of the preceding ones.

Verse 14. The Jews were required to offer the best of their animals for sacrifice on the altar. *A male* means just such a beast with all the special requirements as to qualities directed under the law. God never asks more of a man than he is able to give, but He will not accept any service that is less than one is capable of performing.

MALACHI 2

Verse 1. The priests were the men who supervised the services at the altar and who were responsible for their proper performances. That is why this passage is addressed to them as stated in the beginning of the verse.

Verse 2. *Not lay it to heart* signifies that the priests were tolerating this inferior service of the people. They had been guilty of such corruption even before the years of the captivity (Jeremiah 5: 31). The present genera-

tions of priests were drifting into the same unfaithfulness and the Lord was pronouncing a curse upon them.

Verse 3. *Dung of your solemn feasts*. In preparing an animal for the altar it was required that the internal parts be washed and that would include the removal of the dung. This verse threatened to take that matter and spread it on their faces.

Verse 4. Such shameful treatment as described would emphasize guilt. It would also impress them with God's respect for the service that had started with Levi which means the tribe from which the priesthood came.

Verse 5. Levi as a tribe showed his fear or reverence for God when he responded to the call to take a stand on the Lord's side (Exodus 32: 26).

Verse 6. This description of Levi (or that tribe) applies to the time when he came over to the Lord's side and showed his sincerity by fighting against the rebels.

Verse 7. The Lord then honored that tribe with being the custodian of the law. (See Leviticus 10: 11; Deuteronomy 17: 9.) With such a charge the priests were expected to be informed about the law and see that it was followed. Instead of doing so they had become indifferent and were encouraging the people in their formalities.

Verse 8. The indifference of these priests was causing the common members of the congregation to stumble or become corrupt in their practices.

Verse 9. The priesthood was an important and dignified office and should have been respected by the people. But the corruptions that were allowed to creep into the service had lowered the priests in the eyes of all people.

Verse 10. The common brotherhood of the Jews under one Father should have induced the leaders to treat the others respectfully. They did not do so but used their office to take advantage of the poor and common people.

Verse 11. The tribe of Judah had nothing to do officially with the altar services, but those men became guilty with the priests by offering these inferior articles to be used as sacrifices. They also showed their greed for gain in all of their conduct as was seen in verse 10 of the preceding chapter. *Married the daughter of a strange god*. The last word is defined in the lexicon as meaning "any deity." The Jews never worshiped idols as

that word is used after the captivity, but there are other kinds of gods whom one might worship. Paul says that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3: 5), and the Jews were certainly covetous. And Jesus compared mammon (a word meaning riches) to a god (Matthew 6: 24). Hence the *god* these Jews had married was doubtless the god of mammon or riches as we have seen by their attachment to their wealth.

Verse 12. *Master* means the man who originates these unlawful practices and *scholar* means the one who co-operates by using them and both classes were to be condemned.

Verse 13. This verse describes the hypocritical performances of the covetous priests about the altar. All their tears and weeping were for the purpose of making a show. Because of their insincere devotions the Lord refused to accept their offerings.

Verse 14. They said *wherefore*, meaning to ask why God was rejecting their service. The answer was in the form of an accusation of their unfaithfulness to their marriage relation. The priests had behaved treacherously against the women whom they had taken into covenant relation to be their life companions.

Verse 15. *Did not he make one?* This refers to the original plan of the Lord that one man and one woman should constitute the number composing the marriage unit. These corrupt priests had disregarded that law and were paying attention to other women besides their lawful wives to whom they had promised their exclusive love.

Verse 16. *Garment* is used figuratively and means something for a covering over another person or object. These priests were guilty of *violence* (unfaithfulness) against their wives, but were hiding behind the leniency of Moses on the subject of tolerating plurality in marriage. (See Matthew 19: 8.)

Verse 17. God never tires in the sense of becoming weak bodily as man does, but His patience can be exhausted. These priests were charged with having *wearied* the Lord with their words of falsehood. Those words were in the form of confusing good with evil and then implying that God was not just in condemning them.

MALACHI 3

Verse 1. The book of Malachi is the last of the inspired writings until

we come to the New Testament, and there is a space of about 4 centuries to intervene. The prophets have frequently gone from fleshly to spiritual Israel in their predictions and exhortations, either drawing parallels or showing contrasts as the nature of the occasion suggested. This book so far has consisted mostly of condemnation and admonition for fleshly Israel because of the worldiness and selfishness of their officials especially. It was appropriate, therefore, to jump across the chasm of four hundred years to the time when the Lord expected to give the world a new religious system that would be far superior and more exacting than the old one. This and the following chapter is taken up with alternating between fleshly and spiritual Israel, speaking first of one and then the other, going back and forth from one of them to the other. Our present verse goes to the time of spiritual Israel and predicts that the importance of that system is so great that a preparatory work will need to be done before the Author of that system begins His work. Hence God said he would send his *messenger* ahead, and according to Matthew 11: 10, 11; Mark 1: 2-4 he was John the Baptist. *Come to his temple* means his kingdom or church, for that institution is so called in 2 Corinthians 6: 16. *Messenger of the covenant*. The most important covenant that God made with Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12: 3 and 22: 18, which is a promise of Christ. That would identify Christ as "the messenger of the covenant."

Verse 2. *Abide the day of his coming* means to face it or feel equal to the awfulness of that day. It is because it will be very thorough in its treatment of sinners in the process of cleansing or purifying them.

Verse 3. A refiner's fire is used to separate the dross from precious metal, and the fact has been used throughout the Bible to illustrate the work of purifying men from their sins. *Sons of Levi* is said figuratively because they were the ones who were the priests under the Mosaic system. They had become corrupt in their office and the prediction means that the priests of this new covenant will be purified by the refining influence of the Gospel.

Verse 4. *Judah and Jerusalem* are used spiritually to refer to the services under Christ, in about the same sense that Levi is mentioned in the preced-

ing verse to signify the spiritual priesthood in the system under Christ.

Verse 5. The evils named in this verse had been committed by the Jews in Malachi's time, and the words of condemnation were meant as a severe rebuke of them. And they were also a prediction of the exacting regulations regarding such practices to be instituted in the time of Christ.

Verse 6. God has never dealt with man as his conduct deserved or he would have been long since consumed. It has always been thus with God for he *changes not*; that is why the sons of Jacob had not been consumed.

Verse 7. As proof that God has always been the same lenient One he is at the present time, they are reminded of the wayward conduct of the fathers in spite of the pleadings which He made with them, in which they were urged to *Return unto me, and I will return unto you*.

Verse 8. *Will a man rob God?* was doubtless answered with an emphatic "no" by these people. But they recognized the question actually to be an accusation that they had robbed Him, and then they asked in what way they had done so. The Lord's reply was that it was done in tithes and offerings. When the Jews held back a part of their tithes, or brought some inferior products to the service, they were thereby robbing God.

Verse 9. The whole nation could justly be charged with the evils complained of because all the people upheld the corrupt priests and prophets (Jeremiah 5: 31).

Verse 10. There never was or will be a time when it pays to defraud the Lord out of His deserts. On the other hand, it is always profitable in the end to be liberal and cheerful in the service to God. Hence these people are challenged to cast their trust on the Lord and cease holding back what they were obligated to give into the service of Him because it will be to their advantage to do so in reality.

Verse 11. The Lord even promised to protect their increasing products from the ravages of those who would devour them. The plants for fruit and other articles of food were guaranteed to bring their yield to maturity.

Verse 12. Besides the general favors indicated in this verse that fleshly Israel could have acquired, the greater one pertained to them as spiritual Israel. The words *all nations* were

fulfilled when the Gospel was offered to Jew and Gentile alike.

Verse 13. The Lord again takes up his complaint against fleshly Israel. One of their chief faults was to deny that what they were doing was wrong. In so speaking they virtually charged God with making a false accusation against them.

Verse 14. The Lord specifies some of the things they were saying unjustly. Perhaps the most serious was to deny that it was worth while to obey the law.

Verse 15. Here is another serious charge that reflects against the justice of God. They said that the proud and wicked persons were the ones who were accorded the most happiness by the Lord, which was the very opposite of the truth. It is no wonder that the Lord said he was "wearied" with them.

Verse 16. Going back to the subject in verse 12 and others, the prophet looks forward to some of the glorious features of the Gospel age. *Then* is an adverb of time, referring to things that were to be done in the Gospel system under Christ. The past tense is a grammatical form often used in prophetic writings, but it was several centuries in the future when Malachi wrote it. *Spake often* are from one word which is DABAR and Strong defines it, "A primitive root; perhaps properly to arrange; but used figuratively (of words) to speak." Young defines it, "To speak (consult) together." Among the many words by which it has been rendered in the King James Version are answer, communication, counsel, language, message, promise, question, reason, report, request, saying, speech, talk, and word; the last one is used 770 times. With all this critical information at hand it would indicate that the wording in our common version is justified. It undoubtedly means that the citizens in the kingdom of Christ were to be in close touch with each other, which would require that they assemble whenever they can. This all agrees with the admonition of Paul in Hebrews that the disciples of Christ should not forsake the assembling together of themselves (Hebrews 10: 25). *Book of remembrance* does not mean that God needs any mechanical plan to keep Him from forgetting anything. The expression is used figuratively and means that the names of God's children are carefully inscribed

in the heavenly record, and the fact is spoken of as being recorded in a book. (See Luke 10: 20; Hebrews 12: 23; Revelation 3: 5; 21: 27.)

Verse 17. *They shall be mine.* If I were to buy and pay for something it certainly would be mine. Jesus purchased the church with his own blood and it is said to be His. (See Acts 20: 28; 1 Peter 1: 19; 2: 9.) *Jewels* is from CEGULLAH which Strong defines, "wealth." It is the word for "peculiar treasure" in Psalms 135: 4. The Lord regards the members of his church as jewels since they are so valuable. He having paid such a great price (his blood) for them. *That day* means the Gospel dispensation in which time He was to *make up* or gather these jewels into the fold or church. *I will spare them*, etc., is equivalent in thought to that in Hebrews 8: 11.

Verse 18. The gist of this verse is that the members of the new kingdom will have superior knowledge of what is right and wrong. That is because they will have the "perfect law of liberty" for their guidance. But this is not all, for the leaders of the Jewish kingdom, especially in the days of Malachi's writing, had mixed together the good and the evil and had refused to make any difference between them. (See chapter 2: 17.) The Gospel was to be clear and exacting and those who believe it will be trained to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5: 11).

MALACHI 4

Verse 1. The preposition *for* is used to connect the present passage with the one immediately preceding it in chapter 3: 18. The strictness of the Gospel in its requirements as to the citizens of the new kingdom is the subject. (See Acts 17: 30 and 1 Peter 4: 17, 18.) We also recall the many instances where Christ showed the contrast between the old and the new. He would refer to certain liberties that had been tolerated in "old time" and then say "but I say unto you,"

etc. This strictness of the new law is figuratively referred to as an oven for burning refuse. *Leave them neither root nor branch* refers to the complete condemnation and rejection of the ways of sin that was to be manifested by Christians.

Verse 2. The healthful effects of the Gospel of Christ is likened to the warm and healing rays of the sun. *Go forth* is from *ruwsu* which Strong defines, "To spread; figuratively act proudly." Moffatt renders it to "leap." The verse as a whole means that the citizens in the kingdom of Christ were to be blessed with great spiritual strength and activity.

Verse 3. We know that Christians are not permitted to use any kind of literal violence against sinners, hence this treading of them is explained by the comments on verse 1. And we know this "burning" and "treading" did not refer to the time after the judgment day, for it was to occur *in the day that I shall do this*, referring to the time of the Gospel age.

Verse 4. A last exhortation is given to the Jews of the time of Malachi, that they should remember the law of Moses. There was never to be another law of government given to them until that one so forceably predicted in this book of the prophet.

Verse 5. But while no other written law was to be given before that new age is ushered into the world, there was to be a man sent just before that time to speak orally to the Jews by way of preparation for the new law. That man was to have the power and spiritual strength of Elijah. *Dreadful day* means that the kingdom of Christ would be severe against sinners (see comments on verses 1 and 3), but would be respected by the righteous.

Verse 6. The phrases of this verse refer to the reformatory work that was to be accomplished by this Elijah (or John the Baptist). Without the effects of this forerunner and the new kingdom to follow, the whole world would have suffered the wrath of an outraged God.