

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE PROPHECY OF

MALACHI

Malachi was the last of the prophets, and is supposed to have prophesied B.C. 420. He reproveth the priests and the people for the evil practices into which they had fallen, and invites them to repentance and reformation, with promises of the blessings to be bestowed at the coming of the Messiah. And now that prophecy was to cease, he speaks clearly of the Messiah, as nigh at hand, and directs the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER 1

The ingratitude of Israel. (1-5) They are careless in God's institutions. (6-14)

Malachi 1:1

Vs. 1-5: All advantages, either as to outward circumstances, or spiritual privileges, come from the free love of God, who makes one to differ from another. All the evils sinners feel and fear, are the just recompense of their crimes, while all their hopes and comforts are from the unmerited mercy of the Lord. He chose his people that they might be holy. If we love him, it is because he has first loved us; yet we all are prone to undervalue the mercies of God, and to excuse our own offenses.

Malachi 1:6

Vs. 6-14: We may each charge upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Our relation to God, as our Father and Master, strongly obliges us to fear and honor him. But they were so scornful that they

derided reproof. Sinners ruin themselves by trying to baffle their convictions. Those who live in careless neglect of holy ordinances, who attend on them without reverence, and go from them under no concern, in effect say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. They despised God's name in what they did. It is evident that these understood not the meaning of the sacrifices, as shadowing forth the unblemished Lamb of God; they grudged the expense, thinking all thrown away which did not turn to their profit. If we worship God ignorantly, and without understanding, we bring the blind for sacrifice; if we do it carelessly, if we are cold, dull, and dead in it, we bring the sick; if we rest in the bodily exercise, and do not make heart-work of it, we bring the lame; and if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the torn. And is not this evil? Is it not a great affront to God, and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? In order to the acceptance of our actions with God, it is not enough to do that which, for the matter of it, is good; but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. Our constant mercies from God, make worse our slothfulness and niggardliness, in our returns of duty to God. A spiritual worship shall be established. Incense shall be offered to God's name, which signifies prayer and praise. And it shall be a pure offering. When the hour came, in which the true worshippers worshipped the Father in Spirit and in truth, then this incense was offered, even this pure offering. We may rely on God's mercy for pardon as to the past, but not for indulgence to sin in future. If there be a willing mind, it will be accepted, though defective; but if any be a deceiver, devoting his best to Satan and to his lusts, he is under a curse. Men now, though in a different way, profane the name of the Lord, pollute his table, and show contempt for his worship.

CHAPTER 2

The priests reproved for neglecting their covenant. (1-9) The people reproved for their evil practices. (10-17)

Malachi 2:1

Vs. 1-9: What is here said of the covenant of priesthood, is true of the covenant of grace made with all believers, as spiritual priests. It is a covenant of life and peace; it assures all believers of all happiness, both in this world and in that to come. It is an honor to God's servants to be employed as his messengers. The priest's lips should not keep knowledge from his people, but keep it for them. The people are all concerned to know the will of the Lord. We must not only consult the written word, but desire instruction and advice from God's messengers, in the affairs of our souls. Ministers must exert themselves to the utmost for the conversion of sinners; and even among those called Israelites, there are many to be turned from iniquity. Those ministers, and those only, are likely to turn men from sin, who preach sound doctrine, and live holy lives according to the Scripture. Many departed from this way; thus they misled the people. Such as walk with God in peace and righteousness, and turn others from sin, honor God; he will honor them, while those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

Malachi 2:10

Vs. 10-17: Corrupt practices are the fruit of corrupt principles; and he who is false to his God, will not be true to his fellow mortals. In contempt of the marriage covenant, which God instituted, the Jews put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for strange wives. They made their lives bitter to them; yet, in the sight of others, they pretend to be tender of them. Consider she is thy wife; thy own; the nearest relation thou hast in the world. The wife is to be looked on, not as a servant, but as a companion to the husband. There is an oath of God between them, which is not to be trifled with. Man and wife should continue to their lives' end, in holy love and peace. Did not God make one, one Eve for one Adam? Yet God could have made another Eve. Wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was that the children might be

made a seed to serve him. Husbands and wives must live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a godly seed. The God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away. Those who would be kept from sin, must take heed to their spirits, for there all sin begins. Men will find that their wrong conduct in their families springs from selfishness, which disregards the welfare and happiness of others, when opposed to their own passions and fancies. It is wearisome to God to hear people justify themselves in wicked practices. Those who think God can be a friend to sin, affront him, and deceive themselves. The scoffers said, Where is the God of judgment? but the day of the Lord will come.

CHAPTER 3

The coming of Christ. (1-6) The Jews reproved for their corruptions. (7-12) God's care of his people; The distinction between the righteous and the wicked. (13-18)

Malachi 3:1

Vs. 1-6: The first words of this chapter seem an answer to the scoffers of those days. Here is a prophecy of the appearing of John the Baptist. He is Christ's harbinger. He shall prepare the way before him, by calling men to repentance. The Messiah had been long called, "He that should come," and now shortly he will come. He is the Messenger of the covenant. Those who seek Jesus, shall find pleasure in him, often when not looked for. The Lord Jesus, prepares the sinner's heart to be his temple, by the ministry of his word and the convictions of his Spirit, and he enters it as the Messenger of peace and consolation. No hypocrite or formalist can endure his doctrine, or stand before his tribunal. Christ came to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile. He shall sit as a Refiner. Christ, by his gospel, shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it, shall regenerate and cleanse souls. He will take away the dross found in them. He will separate their corruptions, which render their faculties worthless and useless. The believer needs not fear the fiery trial of afflictions and temptations, by which the Savior refines his gold. He will take care it is not more intense or longer than is needful for his good; and this trial will end far otherwise than that of the wicked. Christ will, by interceding for them, make them accepted. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. Evil pursues sinners. God is unchangeable. And though the sentence against evil works be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed; the Lord is as much an enemy to sin as ever. We may all apply this to ourselves. Because we have to do with a God that changes not, therefore it is that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not.

Malachi 3:7

Vs. 7-12: The men of that generation turned away from God, they had not kept his ordinances. God gives them a gracious call. But they said, Wherein

shall we return? God notices what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word. It shows great perverseness in sin, when men make afflictions excuses for sin, which are sent to part between them and their sins. Here is an earnest exhortation to reform. God must be served in the first place; and the interest of our souls ought to be preferred before that of our bodies. Let them trust God to provide for their comfort. God has blessings ready for us, but through the weakness of our faith and the narrowness of our desires, we have not room to receive them. He who makes trial will find nothing is lost by honoring the Lord with his substance.

Malachi 3:13

Vs. 13-18: Among the Jews at this time, some plainly discovered themselves to be children of the wicked one. The yoke of Christ is easy. But those who work wickedness, tempt God by presumptuous sins. Judge of things as they will appear when the doom of these proud sinners comes to be executed. Those that feared the Lord, spake kindly, for preserving and promoting mutual love, when sin thus abounded. They spake one to another, in the language of those that fear the Lord, and think on his name. As evil communications corrupt good minds and manners, so good communications confirm them. A book of remembrance was written before God. He will take care that his children perish not with those that believe not. They shall be vessels of mercy and honor, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonor. The saints are God's jewels; they are dear to him. He will preserve them as his jewels, when the earth is burned up like dross. Those who now own God for theirs, he will then own for his. It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children; and he will not have his children trained up in idleness; they must do him service from a principle of love. Even God's children stand in need of sparing mercy. All are righteous or wicked, such as serve God, or such as serve him not: all are going to heaven or to hell. We are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other; but at the bar of Christ, every man's character will be known. As to ourselves, we have need to think among which we shall have our lot; and, as to others, we must judge nothing before the time. But in the end all the world will confess that those alone were wise and happy, who served the Lord and trusted in Him.

CHAPTER 4

The judgments on the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous.

(1-3) Regard to be had to the law; John the Baptist promised as the forerunner of Messiah. (4-6)

Malachi 4:1

Vs. 1-3: Here is a reference to the first and to the second coming of Christ: God has fixed the day of both. Those who do wickedly, who do not fear God's anger, shall feel it. It is certainly to be applied to the day of judgment, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire; to execute judgment on the proud, and all that do wickedly. In both, Christ is a rejoicing Light to those who serve him faithfully. By the Sun of Righteousness we understand Jesus Christ. Through him believers are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to see light. His influences render the sinner holy, joyful, and fruitful. It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, brought into the souls of men. Christ gave the Spirit to those who are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a Comforter to them, a Sun and a Shield. That day which to the wicked will burn as an oven, will to the righteous be bright as the morning; it is what they wait for, more than those that wait for the morning. Christ came as the Sun, to bring, not only light to a dark world, but health to a distempered world. Souls shall increase in knowledge and spiritual strength. Their growth is as that of calves of the stall, not as the flower of the field, which is slender and weak, and soon withers. The saints' triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but God who does it for them. Behold another day is coming, far more dreadful to all that work wickedness than any which is gone before. How great then the happiness of the believer, when he goes from the darkness and misery of this world, to rejoice in the Lord for evermore!

Malachi 4:4

Vs. 4-6: Here is a solemn conclusion, not only of this prophecy, but of the Old Testament. Conscience bids us remember the law. Though we have not prophets, yet, as long as we have Bibles, we may keep up our communion with God. Let others boast in their proud reasoning, and call it

enlightening, but let us keep near to that sacred word, through which this Sun of Righteousness shines upon the souls of his people. They must keep up a believing expectation of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it. John the Baptist preached repentance and reformation, as Elijah had done. The turning of souls to God and their duty, is the best preparation of them for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. John shall preach a doctrine that shall reach men's hearts, and work a change in them. Thus he shall prepare the way for the kingdom of heaven. The Jewish nation, by wickedness, laid themselves open to the curse. God was ready to bring ruin upon them; but he will once more try whether they will repent and return; therefore he sent John the Baptist to preach repentance to them. Let the believer wait with patience for his release, and cheerfully expect the great day, when Christ shall come the second time to complete our salvation. But those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who turn not to Him that smites them with a rod. None can expect to escape the curse of God's broken law, nor to enjoy the happiness of his chosen and redeemed people, unless their hearts are turned from sin and the world, to Christ and holiness. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen