

# THE BOOK OF MALACHI

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## INTRODUCTION

MALACHI forms the transition link between the two dispensations, the Old and the New, “the skirt and boundary of Christianity” [TERTULLIAN], to which perhaps is due the abrupt earnestness which characterizes his prophecies. His very name is somewhat uncertain. Malachi is the name of an office, rather than a person, “My messenger,” and as such is found in Malachi 3:1. The *Septuagint* favors this view in Malachi 1:1; translate, not “by Malachi,” but “by the hand of His messenger” (compare <sup><3013></sup>Haggai 1:13). Malachi is the last inspired messenger of the Old Testament, announcing the advent of the Great Messenger of the New Testament. The *Chaldee* paraphrase identifies him with Ezra wrongly, as Ezra is never called a prophet but a scribe, and Malachi never a scribe but a prophet. Still it hence appears that Malachi was by some old authorities not regarded as a proper name. The analogy of the headings of other prophets, however, favors the common view that Malachi is a proper name. As Haggai and Zechariah, the contemporary prophets, supported Joshua and Zerubbabel in the building of the temple, so he at a subsequent period supported the priest Ezra and the governor Nehemiah. Like that ruler, he presupposes the temple to have been already built (<sup><3010></sup>Malachi 1:10 3:1-10). Both alike censure the abuses still unreformed (<sup><4335></sup>Nehemiah 13:5,15-22,23-30), the profane and mercenary character of the priests, the people’s marriages contracted with foreigners, the non-payment of the tithes, and want of sympathy towards the poor on the part of the rich (<sup><4007></sup>Nehemiah 6:7) implies that Nehemiah was supported by prophets in his work of reformation. The date thus will be about 420 B.C., or later. Both the periods after the captivity (that of Haggai and Zechariah, and that of Malachi) were marked by royal, priestly, and prophetic men at the head of God’s people. The former period was that of the building of the temple; the latter, that of the restoration of the people and rebuilding of the city. It is characteristic of the people of God that the first period after the restoration was exclusively devoted to the rebuilding of the temple; the political restoration came

secondarily. Only a colony of fifty thousand settled with Joshua and Zerubbabel in Palestine (<sup><4506></sup>Ezra 2:64). Even these became intermingled with the heathen around during the sixty years passed over by Ezra in silence (<sup><4506></sup>Ezra 9:6-15 <sup><4606></sup>Nehemiah 1:3). Hence a second restoration was needed which should mould the national life into a Jewish form, re-establishing the holy law and the holy city — a work effected by Ezra and Nehemiah, with the aid of Malachi, in a period of about half a century, ending with the deaths of Malachi and Nehemiah in the last ten years of the fifth century B.C.; that is, the “seven weeks” (<sup><27025></sup>Daniel 9:25) put in the beginning of the “seventy” by themselves, to mark the fundamental difference between them, the last period of Old Testament revelation, and the period which followed without any revelation (the sixty-two weeks), preceding the final week standing out in unrivalled dignity by itself as the time of Messiah’s appearing. The seventy weeks thus begin with the seventh year of Artaxerxes who allowed Ezra to go to Jerusalem, 457 B.C., in accordance with the commandment which then went forth from God. Ezra the priest performed the inner work of purifying the nation from heathenish elements and reintroducing the law; while Nehemiah did the outer work of rebuilding the city and restoring the national polity [AUBERLEN]. VITRINGA makes the date of Malachi’s prophecies to be about the second return of Nehemiah from Persia, not later than 424 B.C., the date of Artaxerxes’ death (<sup><46306></sup>Nehemiah 13:6). About this time Socrates was teaching the only approach to a pure morality which corrupt Athens ever knew. MOORE distinguishes six portions:

- (1) Charge against Israel for insensibility to God’s love, which so distinguished Israel above Edom (Malachi 1:1-5).
- (2) The priests are reprov’d for neglect and profanation (Malachi 1:6-2:9).
- (3) Mixed marriages, and the wrongs done to Jewish wives, are reprov’d (<sup><3420></sup>Malachi 2:10-16).
- (4) Coming of Messiah and His forerunners (<sup><3427></sup>Malachi 2:17-3:6).
- (5) Reproof for tithes withheld (Malachi 3:7-12).
- (6) Contrast between the godly and the ungodly at the present time, and in the future judgment; exhortation, therefore, to return to the law (<sup><3083></sup>Malachi 3:13-4:6).

The style is animated, but less grand, and the rhythm less marked, than in some of the older prophets.

The canonicity of the book is established by the references to it in the New Testament (<sup>40110</sup>Matthew 11:10 17:12 <sup>40102</sup>Mark 1:2 9:11,12 <sup>40117</sup>Luke 1:17 <sup>40113</sup>Romans 9:13).

# CHAPTER 1

## MALACHI 1:1-14.

### GOD'S LOVE: ISRAEL'S INGRATITUDE: THE PRIESTS' MERCENARY SPIRIT: A GENTILE SPIRITUAL PRIESTHOOD SHALL SUPERSEDE THEM.

1. *burden* — heavy sentence.

*to Israel* — represented now by the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with individuals of the ten tribes who had returned with the Jews from Babylon. So “Israel” is used, <sup><4570></sup>Ezra 7:10. Compare <sup><4426></sup>2 Chronicles 21:2, “Jehoshaphat king of *Israel*,” where Judah, rather than the ten tribes, is regarded as the truest representative of Israel (compare <sup><4426></sup>2 Chronicles 12:6 28:19).

*Malachi* — see *Introduction*. God sent no prophet after him till John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, in order to enflame His people with the more ardent desire for Him, the great antitype and fulfiller of prophecy.

2. *I have loved you* — above other men; nay, even above the other descendants of Abraham and Isaac. Such gratuitous love on My part called for love on yours. But the return ye make is sin and dishonor to Me. This which is to be supplied is left unexpressed, sorrow as it were breaking off the sentence [MENOCHIUS], (<sup><4608></sup>Deuteronomy 7:8 <sup><4310></sup>Hosea 11:1).

*Wherein hast thou loved us?* — In painful contrast to the tearful tenderness of God's love stands their insolent challenge. The root of their sin was insensibility to God's *love*, and to their own wickedness. Having had prosperity taken from them, they imply they have no tokens of God's love; they look at what God had taken, not at what God had left. God's love is often least acknowledged where it is most manifested. We must not infer God does not love us because He afflicts us. Men, instead of referring their sufferings to their proper cause, their own sin, impiously accuse God of indifference to their welfare [MOORE]. Thus Malachi 1:1-4 form a fit introduction to the whole prophecy.

*Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* — and so, as far as dignity went, as much entitled to God's favor as Jacob. My adoption of Jacob, therefore, was altogether by gratuitous favor (<sup><4693></sup>Romans 9:13). So God has passed by

our elder brethren, the angels who kept not their first estate, and yet He has provided salvation for man. The perpetual rejection of the fallen angels, like the perpetual desolations of Edom, attests God's severity to the lost, and goodness to those gratuitously saved. The sovereign eternal purpose of God is the only ground on which He bestows on one favors withheld from another. There are difficulties in referring salvation to the election of God, there are greater in referring it to the election of man [MOORE]. Jehovah illustrates His condescension and patience in arguing the case with them.

**3. *hated*** — not positively, but relatively; that is, did not choose him out to be the object of gratuitous favor, as I did Jacob (compare <sup><2405></sup>Luke 14:26, with <sup><1005></sup>Matthew 10:37 <sup><1020></sup>Genesis 29:30,31 <sup><1615></sup>Deuteronomy 21:15,16).

***laid his mountains ... waste*** — that is, his territory which was generally mountainous. Israel was, it is true, punished by the Chaldeans, but Edom has been utterly destroyed; namely, either by Nebuchadnezzar [ROSENMULLER], or by the neighboring peoples, Egypt, Ammon, and Moab [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 10.9,7; MAURER], (<sup><2405></sup>Jeremiah 49:18).

***dragons*** — jackals [MOORE] (compare <sup><2345></sup>Isaiah 34:13). MAURER translates, "Abodes of the wilderness," from an Arabic root "to stop," or "to abide." *English Version* is better.

**4. *Whereas*** — "But if" Edom say [MAURER]. Edom may strive as she may to recover herself, but it shall be in vain, for I doom her to perpetual desolation, whereas I restore Israel. This Jehovah states, to illustrate His gratuitous love to Israel, rather than to Edom.

***border of wickedness*** — a region given over to the curse of reprobation [CALVIN]. For a time Judea seemed as desolate as Idumea; but though the latter was once the highway of Eastern commerce, now the lonely rock-houses of Petra attest the fulfillment of the prophecy. It is still "the border of wickedness," being the resort of the marauding tribes of the desert. Judea's restoration, though delayed, is yet certain.

***the Lord hath indignation*** — "the people of My curse" (<sup><2345></sup>Isaiah 34:5).

**5. *from the border of Israel*** — Ye, restored to your own "borders" in Israel, "from" them shall raise your voices to "magnify the Lord," acknowledging that Jehovah has shown to you a gratuitous favor not shown to Edom, and so ought to be especially "magnified from the borders of Israel."

**6.** Turning from the people to the priests, Jehovah asks, whereas His love to the people was so great, where was their love towards Him? If the priests, as they profess, regard Him as their Father (<sup><2760></sup>Isaiah 63:16) and

Master, let them show the reality of their profession by *love and reverential fear* (<sup><0212></sup>Exodus 20:12 <sup><0666></sup>Luke 6:46). He addresses the priests because they ought to be leaders in piety to the rest of the people, whereas they are foremost in “despising His name.”

***Wherein have we despised***, etc. — The same captious spirit of self-satisfied insensibility as prompted their question (Malachi 1:2), “Wherein hast Thou loved us?” They are blind alike to God’s love and their own guilt.

**7. *ye offer***, etc. — God’s answer to their challenge (Malachi 1:6), “Wherein have we despised?”

***polluted bread*** — namely, blemished sacrifices (Malachi 1:8,13,14 <sup><0521></sup>Deuteronomy 15:21). So “the *bread of thy God*” is used for “*sacrifices to God*” (<sup><0208></sup>Leviticus 21:8).

***polluted thee*** — that is, offered to thee “polluted bread.”

***table of the Lord*** — that is, the altar (<sup><3022></sup>Ezekiel 41:22) (not the table of showbread). Just as the sacrificial *flesh* is called “bread.”

***contemptible*** — (<sup><3012></sup>Malachi 1:12,13). Ye sanction the niggardly and blemished offerings of the people on the altar, to gain favor with them. Darius, and probably his successors, had liberally supplied them with victims for sacrifice, yet they presented none but the worst. A cheap religion, costing little, is rejected by God, and so is worth nothing. It costs more than it is worth, for it is worth nothing, and so proves really dear. God despises not the widow’s mite, but he does despise the miser’s mite [MOORE].

**8.** Your earthly ruler would feel insulted, if offered by you the offering with which ye put off God (see <sup><0222></sup>Leviticus 22:22,24).

***is it not evil?*** — MAURER translates, “There is no evil,” in your opinion, in such an offering; it is quite good enough for such a purpose.

**9. *now ... beseech God that he will be gracious*** — Ironical. Think you that God will be persuaded by such polluted gifts to be gracious to you? Far from it.

***this hath been by your means*** — literally, “hand.” These contemptible offerings are your doing, as being the priests mediating between God and the people; and think you, will God pay any regard to you (compare Malachi 1:8,10)? “Accept thy person” (“face”), Malachi 1:8, answers to “regard your persons,” in this verse.

**10. Who ... for naught** — Not one even of the least priestly functions (as shutting the doors, or kindling a fire on the altar) would ye exercise without pay, therefore ye ought to fulfill them faithfully (<sup><4093></sup>1 Corinthians 9:13). DRUSIUS and MAURER translate, “Would that there were absolutely some one of you who would shut the doors of the temple (that is, of the inner court, in which was the altar of burnt offerings), and that ye would not kindle fire on My altar in vain!” Better no sacrifices than vain ones (<sup><2011></sup>Isaiah 1:11-15). It was the duty of some of the priests to stand at the doors of the court of the altar of burnt offerings, and to have excluded blemished victims [CALVIN].

**11. For** — Since ye Jewish priests and people “despise My name” (Malachi 1:6), I shall find others who will magnify it (<sup><4109></sup>Matthew 3:9). Do not think I shall have no worshippers because I have not you; for from the east to the west My name shall be great among the Gentiles (<sup><2769></sup>Isaiah 66:19,20), those very peoples whom ye look down upon as abominable.

**pure offering** — not “the blind, the lame, and the sick,” such as ye offer (Malachi 1:8). “In every place,” implies the catholicity of the Christian Church (<sup><4092></sup>John 4:21,23 <sup><5108></sup>1 Timothy 2:8). The “incense” is figurative of prayers (<sup><3910></sup>Psalms 141:2 <sup><6008></sup>Revelation 8:3). “Sacrifice” is used metaphorically (<sup><5517></sup>Psalms 51:17 <sup><5810></sup>Hebrews 13:10,15,16 <sup><6105></sup>1 Peter 2:5,12). In this sense the reference to the Lord’s Supper, maintained by many of the fathers, may be admitted; it, like prayer, is a spiritual offering, accepted through the literal offering of the “Lamb without blemish,” once for all slain.

**12. Renewal of the charge in Malachi 1:7.**

**fruit ... meat** — the offerings of the people. The “fruit” is the *produce* of the altar, on which the priests subsisted. They did not literally say, The Lord’s table is contemptible; but their *acts* virtually said so. They did not act so as to lead the people to reverence, and to offer their best to the Lord on it. The people were poor, and put off God with the worst offerings. The priests let them do so, for fear of offending the people, and so losing all gains from them.

**13. what a weariness is it!** — Ye regard God’s service as irksome, and therefore try to get it over by presenting the most worthless offerings. Compare Micah 6:3, where God challenges His people to show wherein is the “weariness” or hardship of His service. Also <sup><2492></sup>Isaiah 43:22-24, wherein He shows that it is they who have “wearied” Him, not He who has wearied them.

**snuffed at** — despised.

**it** — the table of the Lord, and the meat on it (<sup><3012></sup>Malachi 1:12).

**torn** — namely, by beasts, which it was not lawful to eat, much less to offer (<sup><1223></sup>Exodus 22:31).

**thus ... offering** — *Hebrew, mincha; the unbloody offering* of flour, etc. Though this may have been of ordinary ingredients, yet the *sacrifices* of blemished animals accompanying it rendered it unacceptable.

**14. deceiver** — hypocrite. Not poverty, but avarice was the cause of their mean offerings.

**male** — required by law (<sup><0803></sup>Leviticus 1:3,10).

**great King** — (<sup><3982></sup>Psalms 48:2 <sup><4055></sup>Matthew 5:35).

**my name ... dreadful among ... heathen** — Even the heathen dread Me because of My judgments; what a reproach this is to you, My people, who fear Me not (Malachi 1:6)! Also it may be translated, “*shall be feared among,*” etc. agreeing with the prophecy of the call of the Gentiles (<sup><3011></sup>Malachi 1:11).



# CHAPTER 2

## MALACHI 2:1-17.

### REPROOF OF THE PRIESTS FOR VIOLATING THE COVENANT; AND THE PEOPLE ALSO FOR MIXED MARRIAGES AND UNFAITHFULNESS.

1. *for you* — The priests in particular are reprov'd, as their part was to have led the people aright, and reprov'd sin, whereas they encouraged and led them into sin. Ministers cannot sin or suffer alone. They drag down others with them if they fall [MOORE].

2. *lay ... to heart* — My commands.

*send a curse* — rather, as *Hebrew*, “the curse”; namely, that denounced in <sup><BIB></sup>Deuteronomy 27:15-26 28:15-68.

*curse your blessings* — turn the blessings you enjoy into curses (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 106:15).

*cursed them* — *Hebrew*, *them severally*; that is, I have cursed each one of your blessings.

3. *corrupt*, etc. — literally, “rebuke,” answering to the opposite prophecy of blessing (<sup><BIB></sup>Malachi 3:11), “I will *rebuke* the devourer.” To rebuke the seed is to forbid its growing.

*your* — literally, “for you”; that is, to your hurt.

*dung of ... solemn feasts* — The dung in the maw of the victims sacrificed on the feast days; the maw was the perquisite of the priests (<sup><BIB></sup>Deuteronomy 18:3), which gives peculiar point to the threat here. You shall get the dung of the maw as your perquisite, instead of the maw.

*one shall take you away with it* — that is, ye shall be taken away with it; it shall cleave to you wherever ye go [MOORE]. Dung shall be thrown on your faces, and ye shall be taken away as dung would be, dung-begrimed as ye shall be (<sup><BIB></sup>1 Kings 14:10; compare <sup><BIB></sup>Jeremiah 16:4 22:19).

4. *ye shall know* — by bitter experience of consequences, that it was with this design I admonished you, in order “that My covenant with Levi might be” maintained; that is, that it was for your own good (which would be

ensured by your maintaining the Levitical command) I admonished you, that ye should return to your duty [MAURER] (compare Malachi 2:5,6). Malachi's function was that of a reformer, leading back the priests and people to the law (Malachi 4:4).

**5-9.** He describes the promises, and also the conditions of the covenant; Levi's observance of the conditions and reward (compare <sup><0511</sup>Numbers 25:11-13, Phinehas' zeal); and on the other hand the violation of the conditions, and consequent punishment of the present priests. "Life" here includes the *perpetuity* implied in <sup><0513</sup>Numbers 25:13, "*everlasting* priesthood." "Peace" is specified both here and there. MAURER thus explains it; the *Hebrew* is, literally, "My covenant was with him, *life* and *peace* (to be given him on My part), and I gave them to him: (and on his part) fear (that is, reverence), and he did fear Me," etc. The former portion of the verse expresses the *promise*, and Jehovah's fulfillment of it; the latter, the *condition*, and Levi's steadfastness to it (<sup><638</sup>Deuteronomy 33:8,9). The Jewish priests self-deceivingly claimed the privileges of the covenant, while neglecting the conditions of it, as if God were bound by it to bless them, while they were free from all the obligation which it imposed to serve Him. The covenant is said to be not merely "*of life and peace*," but "*life and peace*"; for the keeping of God's law is its own reward (<sup><9911</sup>Psalms 19:11).

**6. law of truth was in his mouth** — He taught the people the truths of the law in all its fullness (<sup><630</sup>Deuteronomy 33:10). The priest was the ordinary expounder of the law; the prophets were so only on special occasions.

**iniquity ... not found** — no injustice in his judicial functions (<sup><678</sup>Deuteronomy 17:8,9 19:17).

**walked with me** — by faith and obedience (<sup><052</sup>Genesis 5:22).

**in peace** — namely, the "peace" which was the fruit of obeying the covenant (Malachi 2:5). Peace with God, man, and one's own conscience, is the result of "walking with God" (compare <sup><8221</sup>Job 22:21 <sup><2715</sup>Isaiah 27:5 <sup><918</sup>James 3:18).

**turn may ... from iniquity** — both by positive precept and by tacit example "walking with God" (<sup><232</sup>Jeremiah 23:22 <sup><2718</sup>Daniel 12:3 <sup><910</sup>James 5:20).

**7.** In doing so (Malachi 2:6) he did his duty as a priest, "for," etc.

**knowledge** — of the law, its doctrines, and positive and negative precepts (<sup><8001</sup>Leviticus 10:10,11 <sup><648</sup>Deuteronomy 24:8 <sup><488</sup>Jeremiah 18:18 <sup><3011</sup>Haggai 2:11).

*the law* — that is, its true sense.

*messenger of ... Lord* — the interpreter of His will; compare as to the prophets, <sup><3013></sup>Haggai 1:13. So ministers are called “ambassadors of Christ” (<sup><4012></sup>2 Corinthians 5:20); and the bishops of the seven churches in Revelation, “angels” or messengers (<sup><6101></sup>Revelation 2:1,8,12,18 3:1,7,14; compare <sup><4014></sup>Galatians 4:14).

**8. *out of the way*** — that is, from the covenant.

*caused many to stumble* — By scandalous example, the worse inasmuch as the people look up to you as ministers of religion (<sup><0127></sup>1 Samuel 2:17 <sup><3185></sup>Jeremiah 18:15 <sup><4106></sup>Matthew 18:6 <sup><0701></sup>Luke 17:1).

*at the law* — that is, in respect to the observances of the law.

*corrupted ... covenant* — made it of none effect, by not fulfilling its conditions, and so forfeiting its promises (<sup><3110></sup>Zechariah 11:10 <sup><1439></sup>Nehemiah 13:29).

**9.** Because ye do not keep the condition of the covenant, I will not fulfill the promise.

*partial in the law* — having respect to persons rather than to truth in the interpretation and administration of the law (<sup><0915></sup>Leviticus 19:15).

**10-16.** Reproof of those who contracted marriages with foreigners and repudiated their Jewish wives.

*Have we not all one father?* — Why, seeing we all have one common origin, “do we deal treacherously against *one another*” (“His brother” being a general expression implying that all are “brethren” and sisters as children of the same Father above, <sup><3048></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 and so including the *wives* so injured)? namely, by putting away our Jewish wives, and taking foreign women to wife (compare <sup><3014></sup>Malachi 2:14 and <sup><3121></sup>Malachi 2:11 <sup><3301></sup>Ezra 9:1-9), and so violating “the covenant” made by Jehovah with “our fathers,” by which it was ordained that we should be a people separated from the other peoples of the world (<sup><0205></sup>Exodus 19:5 <sup><0324></sup>Leviticus 20:24,26 <sup><0403></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3). To intermarry with the heathen would defeat this purpose of Jehovah, who was the common Father of the Israelites in a peculiar sense in which He was not Father of the heathen. The “one Father” is Jehovah (<sup><0315></sup>Job 31:15 <sup><4006></sup>1 Corinthians 8:6 <sup><0406></sup>Ephesians 4:6). “Created us”: not merely physical creation, but “created us” to be His peculiar and chosen people (<sup><0428></sup>Psalms 102:18 <sup><0341></sup>Isaiah 43:1 45:8 60:21 <sup><0406></sup>Ephesians 2:10), [CALVIN]. How marked the contrast between the honor

here done to the female sex, and the degradation to which Oriental women are generally subjected!

**11. *dealt treacherously*** — namely, in respect to the Jewish wives who were put away (<sup><3214></sup>Malachi 2:14; also <sup><3210></sup>Malachi 2:10,15,16).

***profaned the holiness of ... Lord*** — by ill-treating the Israelites (namely, the wives), who were set apart as a people *holy unto the Lord*: “the holy seed” (<sup><450E></sup>Ezra 9:2; compare <sup><341B></sup>Jeremiah 2:3). Or, “the holiness of the Lord” means His holy ordinance and covenant (<sup><4R0B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:3). But “which He loved,” seems to refer to *the holy people*, Israel, whom God so gratuitously loved (Malachi 1:2), without merit on their part (<sup><4970E></sup>Psalms 47:4).

***married***, etc. — (<sup><4500E></sup>Ezra 9:1,2 10:2 <sup><4632E></sup>Nehemiah 13:23, etc.).

***daughter of a strange god*** — women worshipping idols: as the worshipper in Scripture is regarded in the relation of a child to a father (<sup><3427E></sup>Jeremiah 2:27).

**12. *master and ... scholar*** — literally, “him that watcheth and him that answereth.” So “wakeneth” is used of *the teacher* or “master” (<sup><230H></sup>Isaiah 50:4); masters are *watchful* in guarding their scholars. The reference is to the priests, who ought to have taught the people piety, but who led them into evil. “Him that answereth” is the *scholar* who has to answer the questions of his teacher (<sup><4017E></sup>Luke 2:47) [GROTIUS]. The Arabs have a proverb, “None calling and none answering,” that is, there being *not one alive*. So GESENIUS explains it of the Levite watches in the temple (<sup><4D0E></sup>Psalms 134:1), one *watchman* calling and another *answering*. But the scholar is rather the *people*, the pupils of the priests “in doing this,” namely, forming unions with foreign wives. “Out of the tabernacles of Jacob” proves it is not the priests alone. God will spare neither priests nor people who act so.

***him that offereth*** — His offerings will not avail to shield him from the penalty of his sin in repudiating his Jewish wife and taking a foreign one.

**13. *done again*** — “a second time”: an aggravation of your offense (<sup><4632E></sup>Nehemiah 13:23-31), in that it is a relapse into the sin already checked once under Ezra (<sup><4500E></sup>Ezra 9:10) [HENDERSON]. Or, “the second time” means this: Your first sin was your blemished offerings to the Lord: now “again” is added your sin towards your wives [CALVIN].

***covering ... altar ... with tears*** — shed by your unoffending wives, repudiated by you that ye might take foreign wives. CALVIN makes the

“tears” to be those of all the people on perceiving their sacrifices to be sternly rejected by God.

**14. *Wherefore?*** — Why does God reject our offerings?

***Lord ... witness between thee and ... wife*** — (so <sup><0349></sup>Genesis 31:49,50).

***of thy youth*** — The Jews still marry very young, the husband often being but thirteen years of age, the wife younger (<sup><0188></sup>Proverbs 5:18 <sup><2546></sup>Isaiah 54:6).

***wife of thy covenant*** — not merely joined to thee by the marriage covenant generally, but by *the covenant between God and Israel*, the covenant-people, whereby a sin against a wife, a daughter of Israel, is a sin against God [MOORE]. Marriage also is called “the covenant of God” (<sup><0127></sup>Proverbs 2:17), and to it the reference may be (<sup><0024></sup>Genesis 2:24 <sup><0316></sup>Matthew 19:6 <sup><0170></sup>1 Corinthians 7:10).

**15. MAURER and HENGSTENBERG** explain the verse thus: The Jews had defended their conduct by the precedent of Abraham, who had taken Hagar to the injury of Sarah, his lawful wife; to this Malachi says now, “No one (ever) did so in whom there was a residue of intelligence (discriminating between good and evil); and what did the one (Abraham, to whom you appeal for support) do, seeking a godly seed?” His object (namely, not to gratify passion, but to obtain the seed promised by God) makes the case wholly inapplicable to defend your position. MOORE (from FAIRBAIRN) better explains, in accordance with <sup><3120></sup>Malachi 2:10, “Did not He make (us Israelites) one? Yet He had the residue of the Spirit (that is, His isolating us from other nations was not because there was no residue of the Spirit left for the rest of the world). And wherefore (that is, *why then* did He thus isolate us as) the one (people; the *Hebrew* is ‘*the one*’)? In order that He might seek a godly seed”; that is, that He might have “a seed of God,” a nation the repository of the covenant, and the stock of the Messiah, and the witness for the one God amidst the surrounding polytheisms. Marriage with foreign women, and repudiation of the wives wedded in the Jewish covenant, utterly set aside this divine purpose. CALVIN thinks “the one” to refer to the conjugal one body formed by the original pair (<sup><0024></sup>Genesis 2:24). God might have joined many wives as one with the one husband, for He had no lack of spiritual being to impart to others besides Eve; the design of the restriction was to secure a pious offspring: but compare *Note*, see on <sup><3120></sup>Malachi 2:10. One object of the marriage relation is to raise a seed for God and for eternity.

**16. *putting away*** — that is, divorce.

*for one covereth violence with ... garment* — MAURER translates, “And (Jehovah hateth him who) covereth his garment (that is, his *wife*, in *Arabic* idiom; compare <sup><1236</sup>Genesis 20:16, ‘He is to thee *a covering* of thy eyes’; the husband was so to the wife, and the wife to the husband; also <sup><1620</sup>Deuteronomy 22:30 <sup><1839</sup>Ruth 3:9 <sup><3168</sup>Ezekiel 16:8) with injury.” The *Hebrew* favors “garment,” being accusative of the *thing covered*. Compare with *English Version*, <sup><1971</sup>Psalm 73:6, “violence covereth them as a garment.” Their “violence” is the putting away of their wives; the “garment” with which they try to cover it is the plea of Moses’ permission (<sup><1640</sup>Deuteronomy 24:1; compare <sup><1016</sup>Matthew 19:6-9).

**17. *wearied ... Lord*** — (<sup><2369</sup>Isaiah 43:24). This verse forms the transition to Malachi 3:1, etc. The Jewish skeptics of that day said virtually, God delighteth in evil-doers (inferring this from the prosperity of the surrounding heathen, while they, the Jews, were comparatively not prosperous: forgetting that their attendance to minor and external duties did not make up for their neglect of the weightier duties of the law; for example, the duty they owed their wives, just previously discussed); or (if not) Where (is the proof that He is) the God of judgment? To this the reply (Malachi 3:1) is, “The Lord whom ye seek, and whom as messenger of the covenant (that is, divine ratifier of God’s covenant with Israel) ye delight in (thinking He will restore Israel to its proper place as first of the nations), shall suddenly come,” not as a Restorer of Israel temporally, but as a consuming *Judge* against Jerusalem (<sup><3158</sup>Amos 5:18,19,20). The “suddenly” implies the unpreparedness of the Jews, who, to the last of the siege, were expecting a temporal deliverer, whereas a destructive judgment was about to destroy them. So skepticism shall be rife before Christ’s second coming. He shall suddenly and unexpectedly come then also as a consuming Judge to unbelievers (<sup><6139</sup>2 Peter 3:3,4). Then, too, they shall affect to seek His coming, while really denying it (<sup><2159</sup>Isaiah 5:19 <sup><2475</sup>Jeremiah 17:15 <sup><3122</sup>Ezekiel 12:22,27).

# CHAPTER 3

## MALACHI 3:1-18.

### MESSIAH'S COMING, PRECEDED BY HIS FORERUNNER, TO PUNISH THE GUILTY FOR VARIOUS SINS, AND TO REWARD THOSE WHO FEAR GOD.

**1. Behold** — Calling especial attention to the momentous truths which follow. Ye unbelievably ask, Where is the God of judgment (Malachi 2:7)? “Behold,” therefore, “I send,” etc. Your unbelief will not prevent My keeping My covenant, and bringing to pass in due time that which ye say will never be fulfilled.

**I will send ... he shall come** — The Father *sends* the Son: the Son *comes*. Proving the distinctness of personality between the Father and the Son.

**my messenger** — John the Baptist; as <sup><418B></sup>Matthew 3:3 11:10 <sup><410D></sup>Mark 1:2,3 <sup><417F></sup>Luke 1:76 3:4 7:26,27 <sup><4123></sup>John 1:23, prove. This passage of Malachi evidently rests on that of Isaiah his predecessor (<sup><340B></sup>Isaiah 40:3-5). Perhaps also, as HENGSTENBERG thinks, “messenger” includes *the long line of prophets* headed by *Elijah* (whence his name is put in Malachi 4:5 as a representative name), and terminating in John, the last and greatest of the prophets (<sup><4119></sup>Matthew 11:9-11). John as the representative prophet (the forerunner of Messiah the representative God-man) gathered in himself all the scattered lineaments of previous prophecy (hence Christ terms him “much more than a prophet,” <sup><4126></sup>Luke 7:26), reproducing all its awful and yet inspiring utterances: his coarse garb, like that of the old prophets, being a visible exhortation to repentance; the wilderness in which he preached symbolizing the lifeless, barren state of the Jews at that time, politically and spiritually; his topics sin, repentance, and salvation, presenting for the last time the condensed epitome of all previous teachings of God by His prophets; so that he is called pre-eminently God’s “messenger.” Hence the oldest and true reading of <sup><4102></sup>Mark 1:2 is, “as it is written in *Isaiah* the prophet”; the difficulty of which is, How can the prophecy of Malachi be referred to Isaiah? The explanation is: the passage in Malachi rests on that in <sup><340B></sup>Isaiah 40:3, and therefore the *original source* of the prophecy is referred to in order to mark this dependency and connection.

**the Lord** — *Ha-Adon* in Hebrew. The article marks that it is JEHOVAH (<sup><0237></sup>Exodus 23:17 34:23; compare <sup><0681></sup>Joshua 3:11,13). Compare <sup><2087></sup>Daniel 9:17, where the Divine Son is meant by “for THE Lord’s sake.” God the speaker makes “the Lord,” the “messenger of the covenant,” one with Himself. “I will send ... before Me,” adding, “THE LORD ... shall ... come”; so that “*the Lord*” must be one with the “Me,” that is, He must be GOD, “before” whom John was *sent*. As the divinity of the Son and His oneness with the Father are thus proved, so the distinctness of personality is proved by “I send” and He “shall come,” as distinguished from one another. He also comes to the temple as “His temple”: marking His divine lordship *over* it, as contrasted with all creatures, who are but “servants *in*” it (Haggai 2:7 <sup><388></sup>Hebrews 3:2,5,6).

**whom ye seek ... whom ye delight in** — (see on <sup><307></sup>Malachi 2:17). At His first coming they “sought” and “delighted in” the hope of a *temporal* Savior: not in what He then was. In the case of those whom Malachi in his time addresses, “whom ye seek ... delight in,” is ironical. They unbelievably asked, When will He come at last? <sup><307></sup>Malachi 2:17, “Where is the God of judgment” (<sup><2159></sup>Isaiah 5:19 <sup><3158></sup>Amos 5:18 <sup><608></sup>2 Peter 3:3,4)? In the case of the godly the desire for Messiah was sincere (<sup><0125></sup>Luke 2:25,28). He is called “Angel of God’s presence” (<sup><2308></sup>Isaiah 63:9), also Angel of Jehovah. Compare His appearances to Abraham (<sup><0181></sup>Genesis 18:1,2,17,33), to Jacob (<sup><0311></sup>Genesis 31:11 48:15,16), to Moses in the bush (<sup><0187></sup>Exodus 3:2-6); He went before Israel as the Shekinah (<sup><0149></sup>Exodus 14:19), and delivered the law at Sinai (<sup><0178></sup>Acts 7:38).

**suddenly** — This epithet marks the second coming, rather than the first; the earnest of that unexpected coming (<sup><0128></sup>Luke 12:38-46 <sup><605></sup>Revelation 16:15) to judgment was given in the judicial expulsion of the money-changing profaners from the temple by Messiah (<sup><0112></sup>Matthew 21:12,13), where also as here He calls the temple *His temple*. Also in the destruction of Jerusalem, most unexpected by the Jews, who to the last deceived themselves with the expectation that Messiah would suddenly appear as a temporal Savior. Compare the use of “suddenly” in <sup><0114></sup>Numbers 12:4-10, where He appeared in wrath.

**messenger of the covenant** — namely, of the ancient covenant with Israel (<sup><2308></sup>Isaiah 63:9) and Abraham, in which the promise to the Gentiles is ultimately included (<sup><8016></sup>Galatians 4:16,17). The gospel at the first advent began with Israel, then embraced the Gentile world: so also it shall be at the second advent. All the manifestations of God in the Old Testament, the Shekinah and human appearances, were made in the person of the Divine Son (<sup><0123></sup>Exodus 23:20,21 <sup><3112></sup>Hebrews 11:26 12:26). He was the messenger of the old covenant, as well as of the new.



2. (Malachi 4:1 <sup><4166></sup> Revelation 6:16,17). The Messiah would come, not, as they expected, to flatter the theocratic nation's prejudices, but to subject their principles to the fiery test of His heart-searching truth (<sup><4180></sup> Matthew 3:10-12), and to destroy Jerusalem and the theocracy after they had rejected Him. His mission is here regarded as a whole from the first to the second advent: the process of refining and separating the godly from the ungodly beginning during Christ's stay on earth, going on ever since, and about to continue till the final separation (<sup><4153></sup> Matthew 25:31-46). The refining process, whereby a third of the Jews is refined as silver of its dross, while two-thirds perish, is described, Zechariah 13:8,9 (compare <sup><2125></sup> Isaiah 1:25).

3. *sit* — The purifier *sits* before the crucible, fixing his eye on the metal, and taking care that the fire be not too hot, and keeping the metal in, only until he knows the dross to be completely removed by his seeing his own image reflected (<sup><4189></sup> Romans 8:29) in the glowing mass. So the Lord in the case of His elect (<sup><4320></sup> Job 23:10 <sup><4960></sup> Psalm 66:10 <sup><4178></sup> Proverbs 17:3 <sup><2480></sup> Isaiah 48:10 <sup><4820></sup> Hebrews 12:10 <sup><4103></sup> 1 Peter 1:7). He will *sit* down to the work, not perfunctorily, but with patient love and unflinching justice. The Angel of the Covenant, as in leading His people out of Egypt by the pillar of cloud and fire, has an aspect of terror to His foes, of love to His friends. The same separating process goes on in the world as in each Christian. When the godly are completely separated from the ungodly, the world will end. When the dross is taken from the gold of the Christian, he will be for ever delivered from the furnace of trial. The purer the gold, the hotter the fire now; the whiter the garment, the harder the washing [MOORE].

*purify ... sons of Levi* — of the sins specified above. The very Levites, the ministers of God, then needed cleansing, so universal was the depravity.

*that they may offer ... in righteousness* — as originally (Malachi 2:6), not as latterly (Malachi 1:7-14). So believers, the spiritual priesthood (<sup><4165></sup> 1 Peter 2:5).

4. *as in the days of old* — (<sup><3111></sup> Malachi 1:11 2:5,6). The “offering” (*Mincha*, *Hebrew*) is not expiatory, but prayer, thanksgiving, and self-dedication (<sup><4611></sup> Romans 12:1 <sup><4835></sup> Hebrews 13:15 <sup><4165></sup> 1 Peter 2:5).

5. *I ... come near ... to judgment* — *I* whom ye challenged, saying, “Where is the God of judgment?” (<sup><4177></sup> Malachi 2:17). *I* whom ye think far off, and to be slow in judgment, am “near,” and will come as a “swift witness”; not only a judge, but also an *eye-witness* against sorcerers; for Mine eyes see every sin, though ye think I take no heed. Earthly judges need witnesses to enable them to decide aright: I alone need none (<sup><4911></sup> Psalm 10:11 73:11 94:7, etc.).

**sorcerers** — a sin into which the Jews were led in connection with their foreign idolatrous wives. The Jews of Christ's time also practiced sorcery (<sup><408B></sup>Acts 8:9 13:6 <sup><416I></sup>Galatians 5:20; JOSEPHUS [*Antiquities*, 20.6; *Wars of the Jews*, 2.12.23]). It shall be a characteristic of the last Antichristian confederacy, about to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's Coming (<sup><428M></sup>Matthew 24:24 <sup><509P></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:9 <sup><663B></sup>Revelation 13:13,14 16:13,14; also <sup><492D></sup>Revelation 9:21 18:23 21:8 22:15). Romanism has practiced it; an order of *exorcists* exists in that Church.

**adulterers** — (<sup><301S></sup>Malachi 2:15,16).

**fear not me** — the source of all sins.

**6. the Lord** — Jehovah: a name implying His immutable faithfulness in fulfilling His promises: the covenant name of God to the Jews (<sup><008B></sup>Exodus 6:3), called here "the sons of Jacob," in reference to God's covenant with that patriarch.

**I change not** — Ye are mistaken in inferring that, because I have not yet executed judgment on the wicked, I am changed from what I once was, namely, a God of judgment.

**therefore ye ... are not consumed** — Ye yourselves being "not consumed," as ye have long ago deserved, are a signal proof of My unchangeableness. <sup><612J></sup>Romans 11:29: compare the whole chapter, in which God's mercy in store for Israel is made wholly to flow from God's unchanging faithfulness to His own covenant of love. So here, as is implied by the phrase "sons of *Jacob*" (<sup><023G></sup>Genesis 28:13 35:12). They are spared because I am JEHOVAH, and they *sons of Jacob*; while I spare them, I will also punish them; and while I punish them, I will not wholly consume them. The unchangeableness of God is the sheet-anchor of the Church. The perseverance of the saints is guaranteed, not by their unchangeable love to God, but by His unchangeable love to them, and His eternal purpose and promise in Christ Jesus [MOORE]. He upbraids their ingratitude that they turn His very long-suffering (<sup><2182></sup>Lamentations 3:22) into a ground for skeptical denial of His coming as a Judge at all (<sup><451D></sup>Psalms 50:1,3,4,21 <sup><2181></sup>Ecclesiastes 8:11,12 <sup><2571I></sup>Isaiah 57:11 <sup><414A></sup>Romans 2:4-10).

**7-12.** Reproof for the non-payment of tithes and offerings, which is the cause of their national calamities, and promise of prosperity on their paying them.

**from ... days of your fathers** — Ye live as your fathers did when they brought on themselves the Babylonian captivity, and ye wish to follow in

their steps. This shows that nothing but God's unchanging long-suffering had prevented their being long ago "consumed" (Malachi 3:6).

**Return unto me** — in penitence.

**I will return unto you** — in blessings.

**Wherein**, etc. — (<sup><3816></sup>Malachi 3:16). The same insensibility to their guilt continues: they speak in the tone of injured innocence, as if God calumniated them.

**8. rob** — literally, "cover": hence, defraud. Do ye call defrauding God no sin to be "returned" from (Malachi 3:7)? Yet ye have done so to Me in respect to the tithes due to Me, namely, the tenth of all the remainder after the first-fruits were paid, which tenth was paid to the Levites for their support (<sup><6273></sup>Leviticus 27:30-33): a tenth paid by the Levites to the priests (<sup><4839></sup>Numbers 18:26-28): a second tenth paid by the people for the entertainment of the Levites, and their own families, at the tabernacle (<sup><6128></sup>Deuteronomy 12:18): another tithe every third year for the poor, etc. (<sup><6148></sup>Deuteronomy 14:28,29).

**offerings** — the first-fruits, not less than one-sixtieth part of the corn, wine, and oil (<sup><6104></sup>Deuteronomy 18:4 <sup><6130></sup>Nehemiah 13:10,12). The priests had this perquisite also, the tenth of the tithes which were the Levites perquisite. But they appropriated all the tithes, robbing the Levites of their due nine-tenths; as they did also, according to JOSEPHUS, before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Thus doubly God was defrauded, the priests not discharging aright their sacrificial duties, and robbing God of the services of the Levites, who were driven away by destitution [GROTIUS].

**9. cursed** — (Malachi 2:2). As ye despoil Me, so I despoil you, as I threatened I would, if ye continued to disregard Me. In trying to defraud God we only defraud ourselves. The eagle who robbed the altar set fire to her nest from the burning coal that adhered to the stolen flesh. So men who retain God's money in their treasuries will find it a losing possession. No man ever yet lost by serving God with a whole heart, nor gained by serving Him with a half one. We may compromise with conscience for half the price, but God will not endorse the compromise; and, like Ananias and Sapphira, we shall lose not only what we thought we had purchased so cheaply, but also the price we paid for it. If we would have God "open" His treasury, we must open ours. One cause of the barrenness of the Church is the parsimony of its members [MOORE].

**10.** (<sup><1039></sup>Proverbs 3:9,10).

**storehouse** — (<sup><4811></sup>2 Chronicles 31:11, *Margin*; compare <sup><1331></sup>1 Chronicles 26:20 <sup><608></sup>Nehemiah 10:38 13:5,12).

**prove me ... herewith** — with this; by doing so. Test Me whether I will keep My promise of blessing you, on condition of your doing your part (<sup><4810></sup>2 Chronicles 31:10).

**pour ... out** — literally, “empty out”: image from a vessel completely emptied of its contents: no blessing being kept back.

**windows of heaven** — (<sup><4110></sup>2 Kings 2:7).

**that ... not ... room enough**, etc. — literally, “even to not ... sufficiency,” that is, either, as *English Version*. Or, even so as that there should be “*not merely*” “sufficiency” but *superabundance* [JEROME, MAURER]. GESENIUS not so well translates, “Even to a failure of sufficiency,” which in the case of God could never arise, and therefore means *for ever, perpetually*: so <sup><4715></sup>Psalms 72:5, “as long as the sun and moon endure”; literally, “until a failure of the sun and moon,” which is never to be; and therefore means, *for ever*.

**11. I will rebuke** — (See on Malachi 2:3). I will no longer “rebuke (*English Version*, ‘corrupt’) the seed,” but will rebuke every agency that could hurt it (<sup><3104></sup>Amos 4:9).

**12. Fulfilling the blessing** (<sup><4531></sup>Deuteronomy 33:29 <sup><3837></sup>Zechariah 8:13).

**delightful land** — (<sup><2089></sup>Daniel 8:9).

**13-18.** He notices the complaint of the Jews that it is of no profit to serve Jehovah, for that the ungodly proud are happy; and declares He will soon bring the day when it shall be known that He puts an everlasting distinction between the godly and the ungodly.

**words ... stout** — *Hebrew*, “hard”; so “the *hard* speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (<sup><6115></sup>Jude 1:15) [HENDERSON].

**have we spoken** — The *Hebrew* expresses at once their *assiduity* and *habit* of speaking against God [VATABLUS]. The niph'al form of the verb implies that these things were said, not directly *to* God, but *of* God, to one another (<sup><4331></sup>Ezekiel 33:20) [MOORE].

**14. what profit ... that we ... kept**, etc. — (See on <sup><3427></sup>Malachi 2:17). They here resume the same murmur against God. <sup><8214></sup>Job 21:14,15 22:17 describe a further stage of the same skeptical spirit, when the skeptic has actually ceased to keep God’s service. <sup><4731></sup>Psalms 73:1-14 describes the temptation to a like feeling in the saint when seeing the really godly suffer and the

ungodly prosper in worldly goods now. The Jews here mistake utterly the nature of God's service, converting it into a mercenary bargain; they attended to outward observances, not from love to God, but in the hope of being well paid for in outward prosperity; when this was withheld, they charged God with being unjust, forgetting alike that God requires very different motives from theirs to accompany outward observances, and that God rewards even the true worshipper not so much in this life, as in the life to come.

**his ordinance** — literally, what He requires to be kept, “His observances.”

**walked mournfully** — *in mournful garb*, sackcloth and ashes, the emblems of penitence; they forget <sup><280B></sup>Isaiah 58:3-8, where God, by showing what is true fasting, similarly rebukes those who then also said, Wherefore have we fasted and Thou seest not? etc. They mistook the outward show for real humiliation.

**15. And now** — Since we who serve Jehovah are not prosperous and “the proud” heathen flourish in prosperity, we must pronounce them the favorites of God (<sup><3017></sup>Malachi 2:17 <sup><4752></sup>Psalms 73:12).

**set up** — literally, “built up”: metaphor from architecture (<sup><104B></sup>Proverbs 24:3; compare <sup><104E></sup>Genesis 16:2, *Margin*; <sup><103B></sup>Genesis 30:3, *Margin*.)

**tempt God** — dare God to punish them, by breaking His laws (<sup><498B></sup>Psalms 95:9).

**16.** “Then,” when the ungodly utter such blasphemies against God, the godly hold mutual converse, defending God's righteous dealings against those blasphemers (<sup><381B></sup>Hebrews 3:13). The “often” of *English Version* is not in the *Hebrew*. There has been always in the darkest times a remnant that feared God (<sup><119B></sup>1 Kings 19:18 <sup><6104></sup>Romans 11:4).

**feared the Lord** — reverential and loving fear, not slavish terror. When the fire of religion burns low, true believers should draw the nearer together, to keep the holy flame alive. Coals separated soon go out.

**book of remembrance ... for them** — for their advantage, against the day when those found faithful among the faithless shall receive their final reward. The kings of Persia kept a record of those who had rendered services to the king, that they might be suitably rewarded (<sup><706B></sup>Esther 6:1,2; compare <sup><702B></sup>Esther 2:23 <sup><504B></sup>Ezra 4:15 <sup><496B></sup>Psalms 56:8 <sup><286B></sup>Isaiah 65:6 <sup><201B></sup>Daniel 7:10 <sup><6102></sup>Revelation 20:12). CALVIN makes the fearers of God to be those awakened from among the ungodly mass (before described) to true repentance; the *writing* of the book thus will imply that some were reclaimable among the blasphemers, and that the godly should be assured

that, though no hope appeared, there would be a door of penitence opened for them *before* God. But there is nothing in the context to support this view.

**17. *jewels*** — (<sup><233B></sup>Isaiah 62:3). Literally, “My peculiar treasure” (<sup><1295></sup>Exodus 19:5 <sup><1305></sup>Deuteronomy 7:6 14:2 26:18 <sup><1309></sup>Psalms 135:4 <sup><1314></sup>Titus 2:14 <sup><1319></sup>1 Peter 2:9; compare <sup><2118></sup>Ecclesiastes 2:8). CALVIN translates more in accordance with *Hebrew* idiom, “They shall be My peculiar treasure *in the day in which I will do it*” (that is, fulfill My promise of gathering My completed Church; or, “make” those things come to pass foretold in Malachi 3:5 above [GROTIUS]); so in Malachi 4:3 “do” is used absolutely, “in the day that I shall do *this*.” MAURER, not so well, translates, “in the day which I shall make,” that is, appoint as in <sup><1334></sup>Psalms 118:24.

***as ... man spareth ... son*** — (<sup><1343></sup>Psalms 103:18).

**18. *Then shall ye ... discern*** — Then shall ye see the falseness of your calumny against God’s government (<sup><3185></sup>Malachi 3:15), that the “proud” and wicked prosper. 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 appearances, 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” (<sup><1381></sup>Psalms 58:11).

***return*** — Ye shall turn to a better state of mind on this point.

# CHAPTER 4

## MALACHI 4:1-6.

### GOD'S COMING JUDGMENT: TRIUMPH OF THE GODLY: RETURN TO THE LAW THE BEST PREPARATION FOR JEHOVAH'S COMING: ELIJAH'S PREPARATORY MISSION OF REFORMATION.

1. *the day cometh ... burn* — (Malachi 3:2 <sup><6002></sup> 2 Peter 3:7). Primarily is meant the judgment coming on Jerusalem; but as this will not exhaust the meaning, without supposing what is inadmissible in Scripture — exaggeration — the final and full accomplishment, of which the former was the earnest, is the day of general judgment. This principle of interpretation is not double, but *successive fulfillment*. The language is abrupt, “Behold, the day cometh! It burns like a furnace.” The abruptness imparts terrible reality to the picture, as if it suddenly burst on the prophet’s view.

*all the proud* — in opposition to the cavil above (<sup><3185></sup> Malachi 3:15), “now we call the *proud* (haughty despisers of God) happy.”

*stubble* — (<sup><3018></sup> Obadiah 1:18 <sup><4182></sup> Matthew 3:12). As Canaan, the inheritance of the Israelites, was prepared for their possession by purging out the heathen, so judgment on the apostates shall usher in the entrance of the saints upon the Lord’s inheritance, of which Canaan is the type — not heaven, but earth to its utmost bounds (<sup><4108></sup> Psalm 2:8) purged of all things that offend (<sup><4134></sup> Matthew 13:41), which are to be “gathered *out of His kingdom*,” the scene of the judgment being that also of the kingdom. The present dispensation is a spiritual kingdom, parenthetical between the Jews’ literal kingdom and its antitype, the coming literal kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

*neither root nor branch* — proverbial for *utter* destruction (<sup><3019></sup> Amos 2:9).

2. The effect of the judgment on the righteous, as contrasted with its effect on the wicked (Malachi 4:1). To the wicked it shall be as an oven that consumes the stubble (<sup><4133></sup> Matthew 6:30); to the righteous it shall be the advent of the gladdening Sun, not of condemnation, but “of righteousness”; not destroying, but “healing” (<sup><3216></sup> Jeremiah 23:6).

***you that fear my name*** — The same as those in <sup><3086></sup>Malachi 3:16, who confessed God amidst abounding blasphemy (<sup><2365></sup>Isaiah 66:5 <sup><1002></sup>Matthew 10:32). The spiritual blessings brought by Him are summed up in the two, “righteousness” (<sup><1013></sup>1 Corinthians 1:30) and spiritual “healing” (<sup><1943></sup>Psalm 103:3 <sup><2579></sup>Isaiah 57:19). Those who walk in the dark now may take comfort in the certainty that they shall walk hereafter in eternal light (<sup><2800></sup>Isaiah 50:10).

***in his wings*** — implying the *winged swiftness* with which He shall appear (compare “suddenly,” Malachi 3:1) for the relief of His people. The *beams* of the Sun are His “wings.” Compare “wings of the morning,” <sup><1939></sup>Psalm 139:9. The “Sun” gladdening the righteous is suggested by the previous “day” of terror consuming the wicked. Compare as to Christ, <sup><1292></sup>2 Samuel 23:4 <sup><1811></sup>Psalm 84:11 <sup><1078></sup>Luke 1:78 <sup><1000></sup>John 1:9 8:12 <sup><1544></sup>Ephesians 5:14; and in His second coming, <sup><1019></sup>2 Peter 1:19. The Church is the *moon* reflecting His light (<sup><1011></sup>Revelation 12:1). The righteous shall by His righteousness “shine as the Sun in the kingdom of the Father” (<sup><1038></sup>Matthew 13:43).

***ye shall go forth*** — from the straits in which you were, as it were, held captive. An earnest of this was given in the escape of the Christians to Pella before the destruction of Jerusalem.

***grow up*** — rather, “leap” as frisking calves [CALVIN]; literally, “spread,” “take a wide range.”

***as calves of the stall*** — which when set free from the stall disport with joy (<sup><488></sup>Acts 8:8 13:52 20:24 <sup><547></sup>Romans 14:17 <sup><852></sup>Galatians 5:22 <sup><1004></sup>Philippians 1:4 <sup><1008></sup>1 Peter 1:8). Especially the godly shall rejoice at their final deliverance at Christ’s second coming (<sup><2310></sup>Isaiah 61:10).

**3. Solving the difficulty** (<sup><315></sup>Malachi 3:15) that the wicked often now prosper. Their prosperity and the adversity of the godly shall soon be reversed. Yea, the righteous shall be the army attending Christ in His final destruction of the ungodly (<sup><1243></sup>2 Samuel 22:43 <sup><1944></sup>Psalm 49:14 47:3 <sup><3070></sup>Micah 7:10 Zechariah 10:5 <sup><1012></sup>1 Corinthians 6:2 <sup><1026></sup>Revelation 2:26,27 19:14,15).

***ashes*** — after having been burnt with the fire of judgment (Malachi 4:1).

**4. Remember ... law** — “The law and all the prophets” were to be in force until John (<sup><1113></sup>Matthew 11:13), no prophet intervening after Malachi; therefore they are told, “Remember the law,” for in the absence of living prophets, they were likely to forget it. The office of Christ’s forerunner was to bring them back to the law, which they had too much forgotten, and so “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” at His coming (<sup><1017></sup>Luke



1:17). God withheld prophets for a time that men might seek after Christ with the greater desire [CALVIN]. The history of human advancement is marked by periods of rest, and again progress. So in Revelation: it is given for a time; then during its suspension men live on the memories of the past. After Malachi there was a silence of four hundred years; then a harbinger of light in the wilderness, ushering in the brightest of all the lights that had been manifested, but short-lived; then eighteen centuries during which we have been guided by the light which shone in that last manifestation. The silence has been longer than before, and will be succeeded by a more glorious and awful revelation than ever. John the Baptist was to “restore” the defaced image of “the law,” so that the original might be recognized when it appeared among men [HINDS]. Just as “Moses” and “Elias” are here connected with the Lord’s coming, so at the transfiguration they converse with Him, implying that the law and prophets which had prepared His way were now fulfilled in Him.

**statutes ... judgments** — *ceremonial* “statutes”: “judgments” in civil questions at issue. “The law” refers to *morals* and *religion*.

**5. I send you Elijah** — as a means towards your “remembering the law” (Malachi 4:4).

**the prophet** — emphatical; not “the Tishbite”; for it is in his official, not his personal capacity, that his coming is here predicted. In this sense, John the Baptist was *an* Elijah in spirit (<sup><4016></sup>Luke 1:16,17), but not *the literal* Elijah; whence when asked, “Art thou Elias?” (<sup><4002></sup>John 1:21), He answered, “I am not.” “Art thou that prophet?” “No.” This implies that John, though knowing from the angel’s announcement to his father that he was referred to by Malachi 4:5 (<sup><4017></sup>Luke 1:17), whence he wore the costume of Elijah, yet knew by inspiration that he did not exhaustively fulfill *all* that is included in this prophecy: that there is a further fulfillment (compare *Note*, see on Malachi 3:1). As Moses in Malachi 4:4 represents the law, so Elijah represents the prophets. The Jews always understood it of the literal Elijah. Their saying is, “Messiah must be anointed by Elijah.” As there is another consummating advent of Messiah Himself, so also of His forerunner Elijah; perhaps in person, as at the transfiguration (<sup><4078></sup>Matthew 17:3; compare <sup><4071></sup>Matthew 17:11). He in his appearance at the transfiguration in that body on which death had never passed is the forerunner of the saints who shall be found alive at the Lord’s second coming. <sup><6103></sup>Revelation 11:3 may refer to the same witnesses as at the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah; <sup><6106></sup>Revelation 11:6 identifies the latter (compare <sup><11071></sup>1 Kings 17:1 <sup><3167></sup>James 5:17). Even after the transfiguration Jesus (<sup><4071></sup>Matthew 17:11) speaks of Elijah’s coming “to restore all things” as still future, though He adds that Elijah (in the person of John the Baptist) is come already *in a sense*

(compare <sup><412></sup>Acts 3:21). However, the future forerunner of Messiah at His second coming may be a prophet or number of prophets clothed with Elijah's power, who, with zealous upholders of "the law" clothed in the spirit of "Moses," may be the forerunning witnesses alluded to here and in <sup><612></sup>Revelation 11:2-12. The words "before the ... *dreadful* day of the Lord," show that John cannot be exclusively meant; for he came before the day of Christ's coming in grace, not before His coming in terror, of which last the destruction of Jerusalem was the earnest (Malachi 4:1 <sup><412></sup>Joel 2:31).

**6. turn ... heart of ... fathers to ... children**, etc. — Explained by some, that John's preaching should restore harmony in families. But <sup><412></sup>Luke 1:16,17 substitutes for "the heart of the children to the fathers," "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," implying that the reconciliation to be effected was that between the unbelieving disobedient children and the believing ancestors, Jacob, Levi, "Moses," and "Elijah" (just mentioned) (compare Malachi 1:2 2:4,6 3:3,4). The threat here is that, if this restoration were not effected, Messiah's coming would prove "a curse" to the "earth," not a blessing. It proved so to guilty Jerusalem and the "earth," that is, the *land* of Judea when it rejected Messiah at His first advent, though He brought blessings (<sup><412></sup>Genesis 12:3) to those who accepted Him (<sup><412></sup>John 1:11-13). Many were delivered from the common destruction of the nation through John's preaching (<sup><412></sup>Romans 9:29 11:5). It will prove so to the disobedient at His second advent, though He comes to be glorified in His saints (<sup><5002></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

**curse** — *Hebrew, Cherem*, "a ban"; the fearful term applied by the Jews to the extermination of the guilty Canaanites. Under this ban Judea has long lain. Similar is the awful curse on all of Gentile churches who love not the Lord Jesus now (<sup><412></sup>1 Corinthians 16:22). For if God spare not the natural branches, the Jews, much less will He spare unbelieving professors of the Gentiles (<sup><412></sup>Romans 11:20,21). It is deeply suggestive that the last utterance from heaven for four hundred years before Messiah was the awful word "curse." Messiah's first word on the mount was "Blessed" (<sup><412></sup>Matthew 5:3). The law speaks wrath; the Gospel, blessing. Judea is now under the "curse" because it rejects Messiah; when the spirit of Elijah, or a literal Elijah, shall bring the Jewish children back to the Hope of their "fathers," blessing shall be theirs, whereas the apostate "earth" shall be "smitten with the curse" previous to the coming restoration of all things (<sup><412></sup>Zechariah 12:13,14).

May the writer of this Commentary and his readers have grace "to take heed to the sure word of prophecy as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn!" To the triune Jehovah be all glory ascribed for ever!

