

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF MALACHI

Introduction:

Malachi – the last book of the OT – is one of my favorites. After this God goes quiet for 400 years until John the Baptist arrives to pave the way for the Messiah. Whereas last week the book of Zechariah was very difficult to interpret with its apocalyptic visions and symbolism, you couldn't find a clearer message than what we will be studying this morning.

Opening Illustration: “The Polished Well”

In a drought-stricken village stood an old stone well, famous for its craftsmanship. Its rim was smooth, the bucket newly oiled, the pulley replaced every year. Each morning the villagers gathered, impressed by how well the well was maintained. Based on external observation, everything looked fine.

But those who drew water daily noticed something unsettling. The water had begun to taste bitter. But people insisted nothing could be wrong—the well *looked* fine. After all, the mechanisms worked. The routine continued.

Eventually, someone lowered a light source into the well and inspected the interior. Beneath the clean stonework, the lining had cracked. Runoff had seeped in. The well had been cared for outwardly while ignored inwardly.

So it was with Israel in the days of Malachi. The sacrifices were still offered. The priests still served. The people still gathered. From the outside, everything appeared intact. But God, who sees below the surface, called out and exposed the bitterness no one wanted to admit: polluted worship, divided hearts, and a love grown cold.

Malachi opens not with a call to *do more*, but with a call to *see more clearly*—to stop confusing polished rituals with pure devotion, and outward order with inward faithfulness.

The book reads like a father responding to the protestations of his rebellious teenager who refuses to own up to his transgressions. It's not a good situation to be in a courtroom setting where God is the prosecuting attorney who is authoritatively refuting your every defense. It shows the deceitfulness of our hearts in a lack of self-awareness about how we are angering God. We can be engaging in religious activities while all the while our heart remains cold towards God.

Historical Background: There has been a Renewal of all of the external circumstances that should contribute to covenant faithfulness and divine blessing:

- Elect people of God back in the Promised Land after 70 years Captivity in Babylon – think of the positive leadership of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest
- Successful rebuilding project of the temple motivated by the faithful preaching of Haggai and Zechariah
- Worship in the temple had been reinstituted as Ezra found the book of the law and expounded God's instructions. So the priests are busy offering sacrifices.
- The Walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt under the visionary and energizing leadership of Nehemiah

Yet with all of these external conditions restored, true heart worship was not being practiced. Instead the **selfishness** of people's hearts which had ruled since the Garden of Eden, still persisted.

Author: Malachi - “*My Messenger*” – maybe shortened form of “*Messenger of Yahweh*”

4 messengers named in the book

- **1:1** – **Malachi** the prophet raised up as the messenger of the Lord; raised up in the context of the failure of the priests; that is why God raised up the prophets
- **2:7** – the **priests** were the messengers of the Lord; entrusted with the Law and the teaching of it; but they had become apostate and secularized and formalistic;
- **3:1** – “*I will send my Messenger*” = **John the Baptist / Elijah**; last of the OT prophets; gap of some 400 years
- **3:1** – the **Lord Himself** is the *Messenger of the Covenant*
 - o Called *the Lord* = someone greater than John the Baptist or Elijah or Malachi
 - o Temple referred to as “*his temple*” – He is the owner
 - o Seems to be on the same plane with Jehovah God – It looks as though “*me*” = Jehovah is virtually interchangeable with this other person called *the Lord*, who owns the temple of God

Date of the Book: 2 popular options:

- 1) Based on Daniel 9 prophecy of the 70 Weeks = 397 BC
Period of 483 years (69 X 7) – divided into 7 and 62 weeks – Why the division?
Perhaps first 49 years begins with coming of Nehemiah and the times of the Gentiles – 445 B – takes us to **397 BC** – conclusion of OT revelation and prophecy
- 2) Sometime during the absence of Nehemiah – **432-425 BC**
 - o Written during Persian domination of Israel – 539-333 BC
 - o Temple rebuilt in 516 BC – sacrifices were being offered
 - o Nehemiah first came in 444 and came back in 425 – dealing with similar sins

Ken Boa: Spiritual and Moral Conditions

People of Israel become disillusioned and doubtful; begin to question God’s providence as their faith degenerates into cynicism

- Internally, they wonder whether it is worth serving God after all
- Externally, these attitudes surface in mechanical religious rites, empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings and crass indifference to God’s moral and ceremonial law; their priests are corrupt and their practices wicked

Overview: The Book of Malachi presents God speaking back in answer to the proud cries of the self righteous. Despite all of the rebellion and unfaithfulness and smugness in their confidence in religious externals, God in His compassion still professes His love for His elect people and lays out for them the choice between blessing and cursing as He calls them to repentance. He takes up each of their outrageous denials in turn and blasts them with specific examples of their unfaithfulness in order to expose their self righteousness and shock them into repentance. He points them to the future coming of the promised Messiah who will be preceded by an appropriate forerunner. The time is now to get their act in order before they are laid low in judgment. Then God will fall silent for the next 400 years and not be heard again until the days of John the Baptist and the Messiah.

Big Idea: **God Rebukes The Proud Cries Of The Self Righteous And Calls Them To Repentance**

Malachi 3:13 “*‘Your words have been arrogant against Me,’ says the Lord. ‘Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against Thee?’”*

Bill McRae: 2 Basic Appeals

- I. (Chap. 1-2) Appeals to the nation to **Turn to the Lord** in view of the past love of the Lord
He loved them by choosing them and establishing them in the land
He appeals to them to be honest with God and give Him what He deserved
- II. (Chap. 3-4) Appeals to the nation to **Turn to the Lord** in view of the future Day of the Lord
Time of judgment; you will go thru the refiner’s fire

Structure: 6 Cycles

- Accusation
- Disputation
- Refutation

Ray Stedman: Here is a callous people who have become so indifferent and so unresponsive to God that in perfect sincerity they can say, “We don’t see this. What do you mean? Why do you say these things to us?” Throughout the book, this is the theme.

I think of the reporter on TV who is falsely mislabeling violent riots as peaceful protests. As the words come out of his mouth, “This is mostly a peaceful protest” the camera is showing a city on fire, buildings being torched, cars overturned, windows being broken. **Denial** at some point has to stop.

(1:1) Subscription

‘The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.’

I. (1:2-5) Accusation: **PROTESTING THE EVIDENCE OF GOD’S LOVE**

Disputation: How has God loved us?

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

Implication: We deserved much better treatment than what we have received.

Remember from our **background information** presented earlier that the nation was facing a lot of serious challenges:

- Politically – Why hadn't God restored their national sovereignty? They were still under Persian rule.
- Economically – Why weren't their crops producing abundantly?
- Morally and Socially – Why were there so many relational and marriage problems?
- Religiously – Why did God seem so distant when they were offering the required sacrifices?

Painful to hear children claim that they don't see any evidence of a parent's love.
What is the **Proof** that the Lord offers to support His claim of Loyal Love?

1. (:2a) PROCLAMATION OF THE LORD'S LOYAL LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE

Straightforward Affirmation of Love

"I have loved you," says the Lord.

Why isn't that enough for us? God said it and that should settle it.

Feelings come and go, but the sacred pledge of the Word of God stands firm.

G. Campbell Morgan: The Hebrew tense marks **continuity**. It does not look back only, but around and on, and I think may be rendered for our more accurate apprehension, "I have loved, I do love, I will love you," saith the Lord.

But God does not stop with just a verbal promise of His ongoing love.

2. (:2b-4) PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S LOYAL LOVE

A. (:2b-3) Fixed Distinction in God's Treatment of the Elect (Jacob) vs. the Non-Elect (Esau)

1) Reminding them of the drastic contrast

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. 'Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau'"

When he says, *I hated Esau*, some people say, what does that mean? The word *hate* here is a comparative term. we could say like this that the love that God had for Jacob and the way God expressed it towards Jacob was so great that in comparison the love that he had for Esau looked like hatred. So it's a term of **comparison**.

You might say: This doesn't sound fair. But God is the standard for what is fair. He works according to His sovereign purposes.

2) Graphically driving home his point – Complete Destruction

"and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."

B. (:4a) False Optimism on the Part of the Wicked

"Though Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins'"

The Edomites were descendants of Esau.

While Edom was not erased overnight, the evidence consistently shows a **progressive devastation followed by permanent loss of national identity and sustained habitation**.

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Edom in 586 (**Jer. 25:9, 21**), and later the Nabataeans drove the Edomites from their territory. **Edom never re-emerged as a nation** after the Persian period.

C. (:4b) Final Judgment executed by the Lord -- Permanent Destruction
“*thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘They may build, but I will tear down’*”
The last grip on the bat belongs to the Lord

Jerry Harmon: Both Israel and Edom received punishment from God at the hands of the Babylonians. When God wanted to punish Israel with the rod called Babylon, He also used that same rod to punish Edom. And so both of these nations are being punished, but there's a difference here. You see, whereas both were destroyed, God promised that He was going to restore Israel, but He also condemned Edom to complete destruction.
[Remember the **link** to his sermons on my summary page for Malachi]

D. (:4c) Future Reputation
1. As to their Wicked Character
“*and men will call them the wicked territory,*”
2. As to their Final Destiny
“*and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.*”

3. (:5) PERSONAL TESTIMONY TO THE LORD’S LOYAL LOVE

A. (:5a) Witnessing the Demise of the Wicked
“*And your eyes will see this*”

B. (:5b) Worshiping the God of Covenant Love
“*And you will say, ‘The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!’*”

We should never doubt God’s amazing loyal love directed towards us – He has promised that nothing shall separate us from His love in Christ Jesus (**Rom. 8**)

II. (1:6 – 2:9) Accusation: **PROFANING GOD’S NAME**

Disputation: How have we disrespected the name of God?

1. (1:6-14) INTEGRITY OF WORSHIP DEMANDS RESPECT FOR GOD’S NAME

*A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?’ says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests **who despise My name**. But you say, ‘How have we despised Thy name?’⁷ “You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled Thee?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’⁸ “But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why*

not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts.

⁹ *“But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts.* ¹⁰ *“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from you.* ¹¹ *“For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be **offered to My name**, and a grain offering that is pure; **for My name will be great among the nations**,” says the LORD of hosts.*

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

It’s not enough to simply go thru the external motions of offering religious worship. God demands much more to honor His name and His character.

(:6) God deserves respect and honor and reverential esteem – Remember who God is – His Majesty and Dominion

- Because of His relationship to us as Father
- Because of His relationship to us as Master

Look at the repetition of the name: “*the Lord of Hosts*” in this book – 24 times in the book

John Piper: “*Hosts*” means great numbers of armies or angels or stars. So what Malachi wants us to see and feel is that our Father in heaven has **infinite authority** in the universe. He can wield any and all armies on the earth to accomplish his purposes among the nations whether they know it or not. He has myriads of unstoppable angels who do his bidding flawlessly and never fail in their errands. And he has appointed every star in the universe its position. He holds them in place – all trillion of them – and calls them all by name. And on the altar of this Father the priests are offering animals with broken legs!!

How can we tell when we are profaning God’s name in our worship?

- When we are not showing reverence to God’s name in our attitudes – are we focusing on God or ourselves and what we can get out of worship?
- When we present unworthy sacrifices
 - o Not giving God our best – even giving Him the worst – giving him what costs us nothing
 - o Not giving God our firstfruits, but the leftovers
 - o Not giving God what would even be acceptable to high ranking human officials
- When we compartmentalize worship instead of offering Him all of us every day
- When God rejects our worthless worship (:10)

- When we complain about the burdensome nature of worship (:13)
“how tiresome it is” -- tedious to go to the worship services

2. (2:1-9) UNFAITHFULNESS IN PRIESTLY SERVICE BRINGS DOWN GOD’S CURSE – this is directed to the spiritual leaders

*“And now, this commandment is for you, O priests. ² “If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to **give honor to My name**,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. ³ “Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. ⁴ “Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi,” says the LORD of hosts. ⁵ “My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me, and **stood in awe of My name**. ⁶ “True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷ “For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. ⁸ “But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of hosts. ⁹ “So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways, but are showing partiality in the instruction.*

Issues a Wakeup call to the priests to repent – they have been blessed with the privilege of leading the people in worship and they bear the associated accountability

(:6) Four Essentials of Proper Priestly Ministry

- Teaching the Truth
“True instruction was in his mouth”
- Purity of Conduct
“and unrighteousness was not found on his lips”
- Intimacy of Fellowship
“he walked with Me in peace and uprightness”
- Effectiveness of Ministry = Fruit of Changed Lives
“and he turned many back from iniquity.”

Condemns the priests for their corruption (:8)

Condemns the priests with a curse of corresponding disrespect (:9)

Jerry Harmon: God says, since you’ve despised me, I’m going to have the people despise you. I’m going to make it to where they despise you. Now, these priests, they wanted to be popular, right? I mean, that’s the reason why they were twisting the law, perverting justice. They were trying to gain friends. And God says here, I’m going to cause people to despise you because of the way that you have treated me.

III. (2:10-16) Accusation: **PERVERTING COVENANT OBLIGATIONS**

Disputation: Why have we been denied God's favor?

1. (:10-12) MARRYING OUTSIDE OF GOD'S COVENANT FAMILY VIOLATES OUR UNIQUE SPIRITUAL IDENTITY AND DENIES US GOD'S FAVOR

Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² "As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob everyone who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the LORD of hosts.

A. (:10) The Root Sin = **Selfishness**

1) Sinning Against Our Common Father

"Do we not all have one father?"

2) Sinning Against Our Common Creator

"Has not one God created us?"

3) Sinning Against Our Fellow Brothers

"Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother?"

4) Violating the Fundamental Law of our Society

"so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?"

More is at stake than our momentary happiness

B. (:11) The Ultimate Offense = Directed Against Holy God

"Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god."

Marrying an unbeliever is equated with the most serious religious offense

Nail down your convictions in this area at a very young age.

C. (:12) The Fatal Judgment = Cut off from the Land of the Living

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

Hypocritical religious exercises will not save such an individual.

2. (:13-16) DIVORCE VIOLATES OUR UNIQUE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP AND DENIES US GOD'S FAVOR

"And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴ "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take

*heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶
“For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the LORD of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”*

Another in list of offenses

“And this is another thing you do”

A. (:13) Wallowing in Unjustified Self Pity (instead of repenting and turning to the Lord)

“you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.”

B. (:14a) Self Righteous Question

“Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’”

C. (:14b) Charge of Divorcing Your Covenant Wife

“Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

Bad deal when the Lord is testifying against you

D. (:15-16) Solemn Warning Against Divorce

“But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly off-spring? Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’”

Element of Hope – Power of the Spirit available; vision for a godly offspring

God’s final word on Divorce: *“I hate divorce”*

Treat your spouse honorably, not treacherously

Key = Act Faithfully toward your spouse – what type of behavior would that involve?

- Forgiveness and Acceptance
- Unwavering Commitment – a one-woman man
- Communication
- Tenderness
- Appreciation
- Attention

IV. (2:17 – 3:6) Accusation: PERCEIVING GOD’S PATIENCE AS INJUSTICE

Disputation: How have we questioned the integrity of God’s justice?

GOD PROMISES TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE AND PURIFY HIS PEOPLE WHEN HE SENDS HIS SPECIAL MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT TO ESTABLISH RIGHTEOUS WORSHIP

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

3:1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. ² "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ "And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. ⁴ "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years. ⁵ "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts. ⁶ "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

God's longsuffering is best defined as **His deliberate, patient restraint in judgment**, whereby He endures human sin and rebellion over time in order to give space for repentance and the fulfillment of His redemptive purposes.

Key elements of God's longsuffering

1. It is intentional restraint, not passivity

2. It flows from God's character

Longsuffering is not merely something God does; it is **who He is**.

3. It serves a redemptive purpose

4. It has a limit

Longsuffering does not mean infinite delay.

When repentance is persistently refused, judgment comes **without injustice or surprise**.

Why do the wicked seem to prosper? Putting God on trial here.

1. (3:1-4) GOD WILL SEND HIS MESSENGER TO PURIFY HIS PEOPLE FOR RIGHTEOUS WORSHIP

A. (:1) Promise of His Coming (Preceded by Forerunner) = the Agent

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

Near and Far fulfillment in the Two Comings of the Messiah and the forerunners

You better prepare the way by repenting of your sins.

B. (:2-3a) Purifying and Cleansing = the Means

“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when he appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver”

C. (:3b-4) Presenting Righteous Worship = the Goal

“so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.”

2. (3:5) BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR – JUSTICE WILL BE TERRIFYING

A. (:5a) Judgment Will Come Swiftly

“Then I will draw near to you for judgment”

When Messiah comes, it will be to bring judgment.

Page Kelley: The great and terrible day of the Lord was about to break on the people’s heads. After a forerunner had been sent to prepare the way, the Lord would come suddenly to His Temple. His appearing would answer critics and would silence complainers once and for all. . . . At the heart of their complaint against the justice of God was a denial that God was involved actively in the affairs of history. He was regarded as being outside history and indifferent to what went on within it.

B. (:5b) Judgment Will Accurately Target Smug Transgressors

“and I will be a swift witness:

- against the sorcerers*
- and against the adulterers*
- and against those who swear falsely*
- and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages*
- the widow and the orphan*
- and those who turn aside the alien”*

C. (:5c) Root Problem: Failure to Properly Fear the Lord

“‘and do not fear me,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

3. (3:6) GOD’S IMMUTABILITY VALIDATES HIS JUSTICE BY DEMONSTRATING HIS COVENANT MERCY

A. (:6a) Assertion of Immutability

“For I, the Lord, do not change” – Significance?

Malachi 3:6 uses God’s **immutability** to refute Israel’s accusation by showing that apparent injustice is actually **covenant patience**. God **has not changed in justice or blessing**; He has restrained judgment to preserve His people and invite repentance. The prosperity of the wicked is **temporary**, and Israel’s lack of blessing is **self-inflicted**—not the result of divine neglect.

B. (:6b) Appeal to Covenant Faithfulness

"therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

V. (3:7-12) **Accusation: PROCRASTINATING REGARDING REPENTANCE**

Disputation: How can we repent / How have we robbed God?

From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings.⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!¹⁰ "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.¹¹ "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts.¹² "And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

How can we have the windows of heaven opened up so that God rains down blessings upon us? Surely we cannot expect blessing if we withhold being generous in giving God His due.

1. (:7-9) PERSISTENCE IN ROBBING GOD INVOKES GOD'S JUDGMENT

A. Repentance Remains the Only Cure for Transgression

1) History of Transgression

"From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them."

2) Offer of Restoration

"Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts."

B. Self Righteous Questions

1) Where have we gone wrong?

"But you say, 'How shall we return?'"

2) How have we robbed God?

"But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?'"

C. Curse for Robbing God

1) Absurdity of Robbing God

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!"

2) Accounting of What is Owed

"In tithes and offerings."

3) National Scope of the Penalty Matched to National Scope of the Crime

"You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!"

2. (:10-12) PERVASIVE OBEDIENCE IN GIVING GOD HIS DUE WILL BRING ABUNDANT BLESSING AND PROVE GOD'S GRACIOUSNESS

A. (:10a) Challenge of Obedience

1. Required Contribution – “*Bring the whole tithe*”
2. Required Repository = “*into the storehouse*”

Jerry Harmon: What was the storehouse? Well, back then, that was the temple. And the temple had these storehouses that were rooms made up alongside of the temple, and these rooms contained grain and oil and other supplies, things for the priests, and sometimes rooms that had money and other supplies for the Levites. God says, when you bring it, bring it into the storehouse. Now, later on, the Apostle Paul will allude to this. **1 Cor. 16**, Paul said, on the first day, that's Sunday, everyone, that's all the people, lay in store, the word store, same word in the Septuagint used right here, storehouse.

3. Resulting Resources for the Work of God
“*so that there may be food in My house,*”

B. (:10b) Corresponding Test of God’s Faithfulness and Abundant Graciousness

“*and test Me now in this, ’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.’*”

This is really a test of our faith – God promises to renew our faith if we will obey and honor Him.

C. (:11) Promise of Protection and Prosperity

- 1) Assurance of Protection Against External Enemies
“*Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground*”
- 2) Assurance of Prosperity
“*’nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,’ says the Lord of hosts.*”

D. (:12) Reputation of Having Been God-Favored

“*And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,’ says the Lord of hosts.*”

VI. (3:13 – 4:3) Accusation: PROFESSING THAT IT IS FUTILE TO SERVE GOD

Disputation: How have we spoken arrogantly against God?

GOD WILL REMOVE THE BLURRING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

"Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?' "¹⁴ "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts? "¹⁵ 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also test God and escape.'" "¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one

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

4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."² "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall."³ "And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

1. (3:16-17) THE CURE FOR PRIDEFUL DISILLUSIONMENT IS THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. The Response of the People – Repentance, Renewed Obedience, and Worship

1) Rooted in the Fear of the Lord

"Then those who feared the Lord"

THE FEAR OF GOD must be present for there to be any cure.

The Fear of the Lord is the proper response to:

- a) Who the Lord is and who we are and the infinite difference between the two
- b) God's hatred and judgment of sin

It produces:

- Worship of the Lord for His majesty
- Hatred (turning from) of sin
- because of its awesome consequences from a holy God

When God played back to the people a recording of the arrogant words they had been speaking against Him, it rekindled the fear of the Lord in the hearts of the faithful.

2) Expressed in Repentance and Renewed Dedication to God's Standards

"spoke to one another"

No longer maintaining their innocence or watering down God's law;

What did they speak to one another about?

- appreciating the love of God
- respecting his name
- preserving the holiness and unity of marriage
- preparing for God's coming judgment
- obeying God's commands with respect to their tithes and offerings

3) Celebrated in Corporate Worship and Praise -- Glorifying His name together

"esteem His name together"

That's true worship! That's why we come together every Sunday.

Now their focus is not on defending themselves but on upholding God's character:

- His love for them
- His faithfulness to them as a nation

- His patience with them
- His majesty and holiness -- the fact that He is a God of justice and does what is right

B. The Response of the Lord -- Faithful to Remember and Reward

1) (:16b) Faithful to Remember

“and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him”

The Lord keeps good records -- won't forget any faithful service done in obedience to Him; (cf. book kept in time of Mordecai and Esther where the king read of Mordecai's efforts at heading off a coup attempt and decided to reward him at a most propitious time ; cf. Book of Life)

2) (:17) Faithful to Reward

a) Treated as the Lord's Precious Possession

“‘And they will be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession’”

b) Treated as Faithful Sons of the Lord

“and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”

2. (3:18) GOD WILL REMOVE THE BLURRING OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

“So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”

3. (4:1-3) THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD WILL BRING EXTREME BLESSING OR CURSING

A. (:1) Extreme Cursing for the Wicked

1) Certainty of the Coming Day of the Lord

“For behold, the day is coming”

Make no mistake – **2 Peter 3**

2) Terrible Manifestation of God's Wrath

“burning like a furnace”

Most theologians shy away from fire and brimstone preaching today

3) Extreme Cursing and Devastation

a) Reduced to Insignificance

“and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff”

b) Obliterated from the Land of the Living

“‘and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.’”

B. (:2-3) Extreme Blessing for the Righteous

1) Identified as those who Fear the Lord

“But for you who fear My name”

2) Blessed with Pervasive Righteousness

“the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings”

“and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”

3) Vindicated as Overcomers

“And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet”

4) Staged on the Day of the Lord

“‘on the day which I am preparing,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

(4:4-6) Epilogue -- LAST CHANCE TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD BEFORE THE DAY OF THE LORD

A. (:4) Mission of Moses – Looking Back – Remember the Law

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

B. (:5-6) Mission of Elijah – Looking Forward – Anticipate the Day of the Lord

1. (:5) Forerunner of the Day of the Lord

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

2. (:6) Restoration vs. Cursing

“And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

6 CYCLES -- ACCUSATION / DISPUTATION / REFUTATION

(1:1) Superscription

I. (1:2-5) PROTESTING THE EVIDENCE OF GOD’S LOVE

How Has God Loved Us?

II. (1:6 – 2:9) PROFANING GOD’S NAME

How Have We Disrespected The Name Of The Lord

III. (2:10-16) PERVERTING COVENANT OBLIGATIONS

Why Have We Been Denied The Favor Of Our God?

IV. (2:17 – 3:6) PERCEIVING GOD’S PATIENCE AS INJUSTICE

How Have We Questioned The Integrity Of God’s Justice?

V. (3:7-12) PROCRASTINATING REGARDING REPENTANCE

How Can We Repent If We Don’t Know Where We Have Gone Wrong?

VI. (3:13 – 4:3) PROFESSING THAT IT IS FUTILE TO SERVE GOD

How Have We Spoken Arrogantly Against God?

(4:4-6) Epilogue

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To appreciate God's love and compassion and faithfulness and offer of forgiveness in spite of our repeated failings.
- To focus on the heart of God which values internal righteousness rather than the routine performance of external religious functions.
- To draw us back to the heart of worship and elevate our sacrifices to the standard of excellence that befits our majestic God.
- To honor the holiness and jealousy of God by refraining from marrying unbelievers.
- To elevate our commitment to the sanctity of marriage as a divinely blessed union of one man and one woman for life.
- To reinforce our confidence in the value of serving God and remaining faithful.
- To increase our hope in the Second Coming as we wait with anticipation for the coming of our Lord and Savior.