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Rice Memorial MBC

Rice Memorial Missionary Baptist Church
Apostle Walter F. Camp, Presiding Senior Pastor
Pastor David K. Baker III, 2nd Presiding
802 W. 15th, Little Rock, AR 72202, 501-416-5894
www.RiceMemorialBaptistChurch.org

Return to a Just God

Definitions in **bold** letters are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance
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or Roget's Thesaurus - **August 30, 2015**

Malachi 3:1-10

Introduction: In this chapter we have, **I. A promise of the coming of the Messiah,** and of his **FORERUNNER**; and the errand he comes upon is here particularly described, both the comfort which his coming brings to his church and people and the terror which it will bring to the wicked (v. 1-6). **II. A reproof of the Jews for their corrupting God's ordinances and sacrilegiously robbing him of his dues, with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that, if they did, God would return in mercy to them (v. 7-12).** **III. A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God (v. 13-15), and of the righteousness of the righteous that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them (v. 16-18).** (Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/malachi/3.html>)

Thought 1. When Malachi was born about 424 B.C., Nehemiah was 51 years old. In 415 B.C. when Nehemiah wrote his book, Malachi was 9 years old. Nehemiah died about **405 B.C.** and **Malachi was 19 years old.** Eight years later, about **397 B.C.,** at the **age of 27,** the word of the Lord came to Malachi and he wrote all **four chapters** as revealed by the Holy Spirit. He was **93 years old** when he **died** in 331 B.C.. (Source: *The Reese Chronological Bible*)

Malachi 3:1, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the WAY before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

NOTE: Behold. Calling especial attention to the momentous truths which follow. Ye unbelievably ask, "**Where is the God of judgment?**" (Malachi 2:17.) "Behold," therefore, "I send," etc. I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. 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 my messenger, and ... he shall come. The **Father sends the Son** as "**Messenger of the covenant:**" the Son comes. Proving the distinctness (separation or difference that prevents confusion) of personality (individuality, specificness) between the Father and the Son.

My messenger - **John the Baptist;** as Matthew 3:3; Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 1:76; Luke 3:4; Luke 7:26-27; John 1:23 - prove.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Matthew 11:7, 9-11, 14, And as they departed, Jesus began to say concerning **John,** what went ye out to see? ...A prophet? Yea, and more than a prophet. For this is he, Of whom it is written, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,** which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born

of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

..And if ye will receive it, this is **Elias (Elijah)**, which was for to come.

NOTE: He shall prepare the way - Be as a pioneer before me; a corrector of civil abuses, and a preacher of righteousness.

And the Lord, whom ye seek - The Messiah, whom ye expect, from the account given by the prophet Daniel, in his seventy weeks, Daniel 9:24.

Shall suddenly come to his temple - Shall soon be presented before the Lord in his temple; cleanse it from its defilement, and fill it with his teaching and his glory.

The Messenger of the covenant - He that comes to fulfill the great design, in reference to the covenant made with Abram, that in **HIS SEED** all the families of the earth should be blessed. See the parallel texts in the margin, and the notes on them.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Malachi 3:2, But who may **abide (comprehend [understand], can bear)** the DAY of HIS COMING? and who shall STAND when he appeareth? for he is LIKE a **refiner's FIRE**, and like **fullers' SOAP (vegetable alkali)**...

NOTE: But who may abide the day of his coming? - (Mal. 4:1; Rev. 6:15; Rev. 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** (Matthew 3:10-12), and to destroy Jerusalem and the theocracy **after** they had rejected Him.

For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. 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 until the final separation (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 (cf. Isaiah 1:25).

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Zechariah 13:7-9, Awake, O sword, against **my shepherd**, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: **smite the shepherd**, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, **two parts** therein shall be **cut off** and **DIE**; but the **third** shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will **REFINE** them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them...

NOTE: The trade of the **fullers**, so far as it is mentioned in Scripture, appears to have consisted chiefly in cleansing garments and whitening them. The process of **fulling** or **cleansing clothes** consisted in treading or stamping on the garments with the feet or with bats in tubs of **WATER**, in which some **alkaline** substance answering the purpose of **soap** had been dissolved. The substances used for this purpose which are mentioned in Scripture are **natron**, (Pro. 25:20 ; Jer. 2:22) and **soap**. (Mal. 3:2) Other substances also are mentioned as being employed in cleansing, which, together with alkali, seem to identify the Jewish with the Roman process, as **urine** and **chalk**. The process of **whitening garments** was performed by rubbing into them calk or earth of some kind. Creta cimolia (cimolite) was probably the earth most frequently used. The trade of the fullers, as causing offensive smells, and also as requiring space for drying clothes, appears to have been carried on at Jerusalem outside the city.

(Source: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/fuller/>)

Malachi 3:3, And he shall SIT as a **refiner** and **purifier** of silver: and he shall **purify** the

sons of Levi, and **purge** them as **gold and silver**, that they may **offer** unto the Lord an **offering** in righteousness.

NOTE: The **Messianic thrust** of the passage continues here. The **covenant** with **Levi** is **NO MORE**; but there will be a **NEW "priesthood,"** namely, the totality of all Christians in Christ, and **their offerings** "in righteousness" shall be such as were spoken of by Peter, whose language shows that he had this very passage in mind:

"The proof of your faith, being more precious than **gold ... proved by fire ...** ye are built up a **spiritual house ... a holy priesthood** to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ, etc. (1 Peter 1:7; 2:5).

The **sacrifices** "in righteousness" offered by the Christian include: **our faith** (Phil. 2:17), the love of God (Mark 12:33), our words, "the calves of our lips" (Hosea 14:2), our confession of Christ (Heb. 13:15,16), our baptism into Christ (Rom. 12:1), our praise (Hebrews 13:15), our contributions (Philippians 4:18), our songs (Colossians 3:16), our prayers (Revelation 5:8), the entire life of a Christian (2 Timothy 4:4), etc. In this dispensation, the **bloody sacrifices** of the **Mosaic law** **are replaced** by **spiritual sacrifices**. These must be distinguished from the One Great Sacrifice of the blood of Christ for all men, which is the atonement for sin.

The fact of the priesthood (Levi) being mentioned first here indicated that **God's JUDGMENT** would **always begin** with those of the greatest privilege. It is so even yet, and eternally. "For the time is come for **judgment** to begin at the **house of God**; and if it begin **first at us**, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel?" (1 Pet. 4:17). Peter's conclusion here fits exactly into this prophecy. Hailey's deduction is therefore correct: "The Lord will not come simply as a judge of the heathen, but as a judge of His own as well." (Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

1 Peter 1:6-7, Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold **TEMPTATIONS**: That the **TRIAL** of your **faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with FIRE, might **be FOUND** unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...

Temptations defined 3986. a putting to PROOF by experience of evil, by implication, adversity (misfortune; calamity; affliction; distress).

Trial defined 1383, trying (TRY: **1.** To ESSAY (to try the value and PURITY of metals. In this application, the word is now more generally written ASSAY [to try or prove, by examination or experiment, the quantity and purity of metallic substances.]); **2.** To purify (to make PURE).

Thought 1. As you can see, the word "try" has TWO meanings. Either our faith is tried to "prove the purity" or our faith is being tried to "make it pure." As we'll see, scripture says the faith God gave us is "PURE and MOST HOLY."

2 Timothy 1:3-5, ...I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the **unfeigned (undissembled, sincere [PURE; unmixed]) FAITH** that is IN thee...

Jude 1:20, But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your **most HOLY FAITH**, praying in the Holy Ghost...

Thought 2. Now, let's go back to the thought in 1 Peter 4:17, about God's "JUDGMENT" beginning at the house of God. Because of Jesus' sacrifice of his blood, we've been redeemed from the CURSE of Law, being made a curse for us. Therefore, the New Covenant, under which we live, doesn't have any "curses" written in it. And God can be merciful and more longsuffering with the people of his kingdom and the world.

Galatians 3:13, Christ hath **redeemed (buy up)** US from the **curse** of the law, being MADE a **curse** for us: for it is written, **CURSED (accursed** [worthy of the curse]) is every one that **hangeth** on a tree...

Thought 3. However, according to his wisdom and the knowledge of the Christian who REFUSES to be CORRECTED by the teaching of his WORD and warnings from him directly by his Spirit or indirectly through his ministers, etc. through whom he speaks, there'll be a time, God will "JUDGE" them with punishment, which can range from being put out of fellowship by the pastor, sickness, or even physical death. (1 Cor. 11:28-32).

Jeremiah 23:29, Is **not** my **WORD** like as a **fire?** ...

2 Timothy 2:19-21, But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to **honor**, and some to **dishonor**. If a man therefore **PURGE (cleanse)** himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, ...meet for the master's USE, and prepared unto every good work.

Acts 5:1-5, But a certain man named **Ananias**, with **Sapphira** his wife, sold a possession, And **kept back** part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath **Satan filled thine heart (MIND)** to **LIE** to the **Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast **thou conceived** this thing in thine heart? thou hast not **lied** unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and GAVE UP the GHOST: and great **FEAR (reverence)** came on all them that heard these things.

1 Corinthians 5:11-13 ...now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a **brother** be a **fornicator**, or **covetous**, or an idolater, or a **RAILER**, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one **NO not to eat**.

Railer defined 3060, a blackguard (a person who uses scurrilous (low and indecent) language, or treats others with foul abuse).

For what have I to do to **JUDGE** them also that are without? do not ye **JUDGE** them that are within? But them that are without God **judgeth**. Therefore **put away (REMOVE)** from among yourselves that WICKED person.

Malachi 3:4, Then shall the **offering of Judah** and **Jerusalem** be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

NOTE: Whatever was meant, the "Judah and Jerusalem" of this verse are NOT to be understood in any sense as the **literal land** of Palestine. It is the ideal Jerusalem, the **Church of the Living God**, which is meant. Not all the scholars have discerned this...

Before leaving these verses (Malachi 3:3,4), the problem raised by Smith should be noted: "The emphasis upon sacrifice and ritual here is in striking contrast to the depreciation of ritual at the hands of the earlier prophets." Such a view derives from **two fundamental errors: (1)** the earlier prophets did not depreciate ritual at all, but ritual **INSINCERELY** practiced. The common critical opinion that God's prophets care for nothing except social justice is a ridiculous caricature of what they really taught. **(2)** The "offering" here refers to the **"spiritual sacrifices"** of the **new covenant**, which throughout the New Testament receive the most emphatic emphasis.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

1 Peter 2:1-5, Ye also, as **lively (LIVING)** stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Malachi 3:5, And I will come near to you to **judgment**; and I will be a swift witness against the **SORCERERS**, and against the **adulterers**, and against **false** swearers, and against those that **oppress** the **hireling** in his **wages**, the **widow**, and the **fatherless**, and that **turn aside** the stranger from his right, and **FEAR (revere) not** me, saith the Lord of hosts.

NOTE: This summarizes the **social injustices** which marked the Israel of Malachi's day, which were abhorrent to God, not merely at that time, but in all generations; and the fact of Malachi's mentioning the components of the **true worship** of God prior to and ahead of these obligations has been an embarrassment to some of the "social gospel" commentators; but the order given here is correct. The reason for this lies in the truth that social justice never was maintained at any place on earth in any time of human history, apart from the **knowledge** and **worship** of the **true God**. The worship of God and social justice stand related to each other as CAUSE and EFFECT. The fool's proposition that ethical and moral equity can appear apart from and totally dissociated from the worship of God in Christ is disproved by every page of human history.

As Durant expressed it: "There is **no significant example** in **history** ... of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion." All of the holy apostles of the New Testament followed the same order of stressing **religious duties to God FIRST**, and moral and social obligations **afterward**. The outline of every one of Paul's epistles was doctrine FIRST, hortatory (Encouraging; giving advice) SECOND. Jesus himself in giving the "first and great commandment," made "**love of God**" **first**, and "**love of neighbor second**." People cannot improve upon this order.

The terror of such a judgment as that mentioned here lies in the fact that God is both witness and judge, as well as executioner of the penalty.

..."**And fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts** ..." As Hailey said, "The root of their actions was clear; they did NOT FEAR (reverence) Jehovah."¹

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Malachi 3:6, For I am **the LORD (Eternal; Jehovah [Yahweh])**, **I CHANGE NOT**; therefore ye sons of Jacob **ARE NOT** consumed.

NOTE: The **unchangeableness** of **God** meant that, no matter what Israel did, God would preserve them until the Messiah was delivered to mankind through their flesh. What the passage is saying is, that if it were not for the **immutable** (unchangeable; unalterable) **PROMISES** of God, Jacob would have been consumed in an instant, a fate which they fully deserved. If God had destroyed fleshly Israel, the Messiah would not have come; and all men would have been forever lost in sin. It was, therefore, with respect to God's eternal purpose of redemption, that **he could not**, and **would not destroy Jacob**. Adam Clarke properly discerned the import of the passage: "Because of this ancient **COVENANT**, ye Jews are not totally consumed; but ye are now, and shall be still, preserved as a distinct people."¹

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Malachi 3:7-8, Even from the days of your fathers ye are **gone away** from **mine ordinances**, and have not kept them. **RETURN unto me**, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? **Will a man rob (defraud []) God?** Yet ye have **robbed me**. But ye say, **Wherein have we robbed thee?** In **TITHES** and **OFFERINGS**.

Defraud, deprive of right, either by obtaining something by deception or artifice (stratagem), or by taking something wrongfully without the knowledge or consent of the owner; cheat.

NOTE: Return unto me - in penitence. And I will return unto you - in blessings. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? - (cf. Malachi 1:7; Malachi 2:17; Malachi 3:8; Malachi 3:13). The same insensibility to their guilt continues: they speak in the tone of injured innocence, as if God calumniated (falsely and maliciously accused of what is criminal, immoral, or disgraceful) them.

Will a man rob God - literally, cover [qaaba` (Hebrew #6906)], hence, **defraud**. Do ye call **defrauding God** no sin to be "**returned**" from? (Malachi 3:7.) Ye have done so to me in respect to the tithes due to me-namely, the **tenth** of all the reminder AFTER the **first-fruits** were paid, which tenth was paid to the Levites for their support (Leviticus 27:30-33): a **tenth paid** by the **Levies** to the priests (Numbers 18:26-28): a **second tenth paid** by the people for the entertainment of the Levites and their own families at the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 12:18): **another tithe every third year** for the poor, etc. (Deut. 14:28-29). **Offerings** - the first-fruits, not less than one-sixtieth part of the core, wine, and oil (Deuteronomy 18:4). 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** was God defrauded - the priests not discharging aright their sacrificial duties, and robbing God of the services of the Levites, who were driven away by destitution (poverty), (Grotius). The priests connived at the people's blemished offerings (Malachi 1:7-10; Malachi 1:13-14) and neglect of the due payment of the Levites' tithes, in order to ingratiate themselves with the people, and get to themselves whatever offerings were presented. This was the first abuse rectified by Nehemiah on his return to Jerusalem, in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 13:6-13).
(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Malachi 3:9, Ye are **CURSED** with a **curse**: for ye have **robbed me**, even this whole nation.

Thought 1. As we know, according to their Covenant, this was justice for their actions.

Malachi 3:10, Bring ye all the **tithes** into the **storehouse**, that there may be **meat** in mine house, and **prove me** now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

NOTE: Bring ye all the tithes - if ye desire to be prospered by the Lord (Proverbs 3:9-10). Into the storehouse - (margin, 2 Chron. 31:11 : cf. 1 Chronicles 26:20; Neh.10:38). "**Eliashib the priest, having oversight of the chamber of the house of God**," having become "allied to Tobiah," had, in Nehemiah's absence, given him the use of the "great chamber" which had been previously used as the "**storehouse**" of the **tithes** which ought to have been paid to the Levites. Malachi here supports Nehemiah in his resolute restoration of the chamber to its right use. Nehemiah "cast forth all the stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber," and cleansed it (Nehemiah 13:4-12), and caused "all Judah to bring the **tithe** of the **grain, new wine, and the oil** unto the **treasuries**" (margin, "(storehouses)"). PROVE ME now herewith - with this, by doing so. Test me whether I will keep my promise of blessing you, on condition of your DOING your part. God was the same promise-keeping God now as in the days of Hezekiah, to whom "Azariah the chief print said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty; for the Lord **hath blessed His people**, and that which is left is this great store" (2 Chronicles 31:10).

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/view.cgi?bk=mal&ch=3#1>)

Hebrews 7:8, And here men that die **receive tithes**; but there **he receiveth** them, of whom it is witnessed that HE LIVETH.

NOTE: "There (in heaven) he (Christ) receiveth tithes!" (Hebrews 7:8); and this cannot be unless **his disciples** give them. (Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=heb&ch=7#1>)

Malachi 3:11, And I will **rebuke** the **devourer** for **your sakes**, and he shall **not destroy** the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.