

Malachi

Introduction to Malachi

“Malachi, a prophet in the days of Nehemiah, directs his message of judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security in their privileged relationship with God. Malachi probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. So sinful has the nation become that God’s words to the people no longer have any impact. For four hundred years after Malachi’s ringing condemnations, God remains silent. Only with the coming of John the Baptist does God again communicate to His people through a prophet’s voice.” The Open Bible, NKJV, p. 951.

“Malachi pronounces the moral judgment of God upon the exiles returning from Babylon more than Haggai and Zechariah do. Furthermore, his book contains some of the most wonderful prophecies we have of the First and Second Advent (3:1-5), and of the ministry of Elijah and Enoch preceding the Second Advent (3:17-4:6).” The Dake Annotated Reference Bible, p. 1477.

“The meaning of the name Mal’aki (“My Messenger”) is probably a shortened form of Mal’akyua, “Messenger of Yahweh”; and it is appropriate to the book, which speaks of the coming of the “messenger of the covenant” (mentioned 3 times in 2:67; 3:1)” The Open Bible, NKJV, p. 951.

The prophet Malachi was one of the three prophets AFTER the Babylonian exile, along with Haggai and Zechariah.

“Although an exact date cannot be established for Malachi, internal evidence can be used to deduce an approximate date. The Persian term for governor, *pechah* (1:8; cf. Neh. 5:14; Hag. 1:1, 14; 2:21), indicates that this book was written during the Persian domination of Israel (539-333 B.C.) Sacrifices were being offered in the temple (1:7-10; 3:8), which was rebuilt in 516 B.C.

Evidently many years have passed since the offerings were instituted, because the priests had grown tired of them, and corruptions had crept into the system. In addition, Malachi’s oracle was inspired by the same problems that Nehemiah faced: corrupt priests (1:6-2:9; Neh. 1-9), neglect of tithes and offerings (3:7-12; Neh. 13:10-13), and intermarriage with pagan wives (2:10-16; Neh. 13:23-28).

Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. to rebuild the city walls, thirteen years AFTER Ezra’s return and reforms (457 B.C.) Nehemiah returned to Persia in 432 B.C. but came back to Palestine about 425 B.C. and dealt with the sins described in Malachi. It is therefore likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah

was absent between 432 B.C., almost a century after Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy (520) B.C.” The Open Bible, NKJV, p. 951.

The Dake Annotated Reference Bible states the book of Malachi was perhaps written in Palestine, about 557-525 B.C. Notes, p. 1477.

Survey of Malachi

- Great prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah are not yet fulfilled, and the people of Israel become disillusioned and doubtful. They begin to question God’s providence as their faith imperceptibly degenerates into cynicism. Internally, they wonder whether it is worth serving God after all. Externally, these attitudes surface in mechanical observances, 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, but they are so spiritually insensitive that they wonder WHY THEY ARE NOT BEING BLESSED BY GOD (emphasis mine).
- God uses a probing series of questions and answers, God seeks to pierce their hearts of stone. In each case the divine accusations are denied. However, their rebellion is quiet, not open. As their perception of God grows dim, the resulting materialism and externalism become settled characteristics that later grip the religious parties of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- In spite of all of this, God still loves His people and once again extends His grace to any who will humbly turn to Him.
- Malachi explores: (1) The Privilege of the Nation (1:1-5); (2) The Pollution of the Nation (1:6-3:15); (3) The Promise of the Nation (3:16-4:6). Bullet points summarized from The Open Bible, p. 952.

Malachi Chapter 1 NKJV

“Polluted Offerings to God

1 The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. [Nahum 1:1; Hab. 1:1]

Israel Beloved of God

2 “I have loved you,” says the Lord.

“Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’

Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?”

Says the Lord.

“Yet Jacob I have loved;

3 But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness.”

4 Even though Edom has said,

“We have been impoverished,

But we will return and build the desolate places,”

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

“They may build, but I will throw down;

They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness,

And the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever.

5 Your eyes shall see,

And you shall say,

‘The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.’ **FUTURE BLESSING**

Let’s read verses 1-5 in the NLT:

“2 “I have always loved you,” says the Lord. But you retort, “Really? How have you loved us?” And the Lord replies, “This is how I showed my love for you: I loved your ancestor Jacob, 3 but I rejected his brother, Esau, and devastated his hill country. I turned Esau’s inheritance into a desert for jackals.” 4 Esau’s descendants in Edom may say, “We have been shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins.” But the Lord of Heaven’s

Armies replies, “They may try to rebuild, but I will demolish them again. Their country will be known as ‘The Land of Wickedness,’ and their people will be called ‘The People with Whom the Lord Is Forever Angry.’ 5 When you see the destruction for yourselves, you will say, **‘Truly, the Lord’s greatness reaches far beyond Israel’s borders!’**”

“Malachi begins by expressing God’s love for Israel. While God rejected Esau and did not prosper Edom’s plan to rebuild, **He planned to bless Israel in their restoration process.**” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1481.
[Emphasis mine]

Polluted Offerings

6 “A son honors his father,

And a servant his master.

If then I am the Father,

Where is My honor?

And if I am a Master,

Where is My reverence?

Says the Lord of hosts

To you **priests** who despise My name. [Priesthood – Levi and his descendants:
Numbers 25:10-13]

Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’

7 “You offer defiled food on My altar,

But say,

‘In what way have we defiled You?’

By saying,

‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’

8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice,

Is it not evil?

And when you offer the lame and sick,

Is it not evil?

Offer it then to your governor!

*Would he be pleased with you?
Would he accept you favorably?”
Says the Lord of hosts.*

**9 “But now entreat God’s favor,
That He may be gracious to us.
While this is being done by your hands,
Will He accept you favorably?”
Says the Lord of hosts.**

*10 “Who is there even among you who would shut the doors,
So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain?
I have no pleasure in you,”
Says the Lord of hosts,
“Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.*

**11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,
My name shall be great among the Gentiles;
In every place incense shall be offered to My name,
And a pure offering;
For My name shall be great among the nations,”
Says the Lord of hosts.**

*12 “But you profane it,
In that you say,
‘The table of the Lord is defiled;
And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’*

*13 You also say,
‘Oh, what a weariness!’
And you sneer at it,”*

Says the Lord of hosts.

“And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;

Thus you bring an offering!

Should I accept this from your hand?”

Says the Lord.

14 “But cursed be the deceiver

Who has in his flock a male,

And takes a vow,

But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—

For I am a great King,”

Says the Lord of hosts,

“And My name is to be feared among the nations.”

“Malachi immediately places blame for the sins of the people on the attitudes of the *ministers* [*priests* – emphasis mine] of God. He lists their sins as offering polluted bread on the table of showbread (v. 7), and presenting sick, lame, damaged, or stolen animals for offerings (v. 8, 13). The priests are careless in their attitudes (v.12), saying that the work of ministry at the altar wearies them. (v. 12-13). God says He has no pleasure in their offerings (v.10). Note also and the Almighty places a curse upon the deceiver who gave a ‘corrupt’ offering to Him. (v.14). Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1481.

What was the Levitical priesthood?

“The Levitical priesthood began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses (Exodus 28:1–3). Aaron’s descendants served as the priests in Israel, ministering in the tabernacle and, later, the temple, primarily as mediators between man and God. The Levitical priests bore the responsibility of offering the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Law. Some of the Levitical priests in the Bible are Ezra; Eli; and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist.

The term Levitical is derived from the Israelite tribe of Levi. Levi was the third son of Leah and Jacob (Genesis 29:34) and the father of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Moses and Aaron. Originally, it was the firstborn son of every family who was consecrated to God and inherited the birthright, leadership, authority, etc. (Exodus 13:2). We see this institution of “first” things being what God requires as far back as Genesis 4:4 when God was pleased with the firstborn of

Abel's flock that he offered to God (see Proverbs 3:9 and Romans 11:16). Later, when God made Israel into a nation, He called them His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22–23), and each individual Israelite was called to be holy, priestly, and royal (Exodus 19:5–6). And then out of the nation of Israel God chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him and the sons of Aaron to be the priests. Thus, all priests were Levites, but not every Levite was a priest.

Some Bible commentators have said God chose the tribe of Levi to be His priests because they were obedient to God after the infamous “golden calf” incident at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:26–29). However, God had made Levi's tribe priestly before that time (Exodus 28:1–4). Furthermore, on his deathbed, Jacob had issued a stern malediction (curse) against his son Levi (Genesis 49:5–7). Patriarchal prophecies such as these were not taken lightly, and Jacob's words must have dealt Levi a sharp blow.

Jacob's prophecy that Levi's descendants would be scattered throughout Israel (Genesis 49:7) was fulfilled when God appointed them as the priestly tribe who, unlike the other tribes, would receive no land inheritance. However, in God's sovereign and mysterious way, Jacob's prophecy turned into a blessing because Levi's inheritance was better than land—it was God Himself (Numbers 18:20). And God promised to provide for the Levites from the abundance of all of the other tribes (Numbers 18:8–14).

The Levites who were not priests were given various duties in the caretaking of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Numbers 3:21–26). The priests among the Levites were given the immeasurable privilege of doing service in the tabernacle. The Levitical priests also served as judges (Deuteronomy 17:8–13) and teachers of God's law (Deuteronomy 33:10).

The high priest could deliver edicts to guide the nation (Numbers 27:21). He was the only one permitted to enter the Most Holy Place (1 Chronicles 6:49; Leviticus 24:9), divided by a curtain from the rest of the tabernacle and containing the Ark of the Testimony (or Covenant), the symbol of God's very presence (Hebrews 9:3; 1 Kings 8:6; Exodus 25:22). The high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement to offer sacrifices for all the people, including himself (Hebrews 9:7). There was only one high priest at a time.

God held the priests to the most stringent standards of behavior and ritual purity (Leviticus 21). Abihu and Nadab were sons of Aaron and two of the first priests. They disobeyed God, however, and were instantly struck down (Leviticus 10:1–2). Later, the sons of the high priest Eli “treated the offering of the Lord with contempt” and were also judged (1 Samuel 2:12–17).

In the time of Christ, the Sadducees comprised most of the priesthood and were known to be a wealthy class of people. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection (Matthew 22:23) or in any kind of spiritual realm such as angels and demons (see Acts 23:8). The chief priests Caiaphas and Annas were instrumental in having Jesus crucified (John 18:13).

The Levitical priesthood was never intended to be permanent (Hebrews 7:11). ***The death of Christ put an end to the Old Covenant and the Levitical priesthood, as evidenced by the rending of the temple veil (Matthew 27:51). Now Jesus Himself serves as the believer's Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14), called according to the order of Melchizedek, not of Levi (Hebrews 7:11–17). Through His death and resurrection, we have access to God's presence, where we can freely enjoy Him forever (Hebrews 6:19–20).*** <https://www.gotquestions.org/Levitical-priesthood.html>

SEE: Numbers 3

What is the difference between priests and Levites?

“The Levites were the tribe of Israelites descended from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The priests of Israel were a group of qualified men from within the tribe of the Levites who had responsibility over aspects of tabernacle or temple worship. All priests were to be Levites, according to the Law, but not all Levites were priests.”

Priests existed prior to the Levites in a general sense. For example, we first see the role of a priest in Genesis 14:18 during Abraham's time, long before Levi was born. Melchizedek was the king of the town of Salem, which later became Jerusalem. Melchizedek was also said to be “a priest forever” (Psalm 110:4; cf. Hebrews 6:20; 7:17). Pagan nations also had priests for their religious activities. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was the priest of Midian (Exodus 3:1;18:1).

When the Jews received the Law of Moses at Sinai, the Lord gave commands regarding a formal priesthood for Israel. The priests would be males from the tribe of Levi and must meet certain physical and age qualifications in order to serve. In addition, they had to remain ceremonially clean to perform their duties before a holy God. The priests served as mediators between the Israelites and God. They were the ones who performed animal sacrifices on behalf of the people. It was only the priests who were permitted to enter the Holy Place in the tabernacle and, later, the temple. A more detailed description of the Levitical priesthood can be found in our article “What was the Levitical priesthood?”

Among these Levitical priests was the high priest. The first high priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses. His sons and their descendants were to serve as the future high priests of the nation of Israel (Exodus 29). Only the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and temple, and that only once per year on the Day of Atonement. A more detailed description of the work of the high priest can be found in our article “What was the biblical role of the high priest?”

Ezra, one of the leaders of the Jews who returned from Babylon, was a Levitical priest (Nehemiah 12:1). Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's parents,

were both Levites descended from Aaron (see Luke 1:5). Zechariah was a priest, but his son, John, also a Levite, was a prophet, not a priest.

By the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Jewish priesthood held much spiritual and political power. In fact, the Jewish chief priests were involved in sentencing Jesus to death.

Following the resurrection of Jesus, believers now live under a new covenant in which all Christians are priests: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). We no longer need an earthly mediator between us and God because Jesus has made the final sacrifice on our behalf and acts as our Mediator (Hebrews 10:19-23; 1 Timothy 2:5). The Jewish role of high priest is now fulfilled by Jesus, who serves as our high priest. Jesus' sacrifice ended our need for continued sacrifices. The Holy Spirit guides and counsels us.

The Levitical priesthood was part of the old covenant system of sacrifices. It has been fulfilled in Jesus, and we are now under the new covenant. There is no longer a biblical mandate for priests. Every follower of Christ has access to God, regardless of gender, race, or tribe (Hebrews 7:11-28; Ephesians 3:11-12; Colossians 3:11)." <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-priests-Levites.html>

Revelation 1:4-6 NKJV

"4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Malachi Chapter 2 NKJV

“Corrupt Priests

1 “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If you will not hear,

And if you will not take it to heart,

To give glory to My name,”

Says the Lord of hosts,

“I will send a curse upon you,

And I will curse your blessings.

Yes, I have cursed them already,

Because you do not take it to heart.

God is saying He will curse their blessings! This will affect their children and their children’s children - their descendants.

3 “Behold, I will rebuke your descendants

And spread refuse (dung) on your faces,

The refuse of your solemn feasts;

And one will take you away with it.

“God rebukes the backslidden priests and warns them that He will send a curse upon them and curse their blessings. He would also corrupt their seed. “Dung spread on their faces and feasts” means they will be cast out of their positions as priests.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1482.

“He’s telling the priests, “You’ve been cut off from the covenant. The covenant was originally with Him, but you’ve turned it into something it was never meant to be. You’ve shown partiality, and you’ve strayed from the original way.” The whole message of Malachi was to reconnect the hearts to the original messenger. In other words, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers that is said Malachi chapter 4. God says, “I was good with Levi, but you’ve strayed from that.” Priests should acknowledge all these things. They caused people to stumble over God’s law. In verse three He said He

would even rebuke their descendants. There was a curse on Levi's descendants. The priesthood had been corrupted after several generations. God reminds them they must reconnect with the original seed so that they could reverse this curse and change what He had just pronounced over them. I want to connect with the original, not just with what has been passed down and polluted by men. I want to connect with He who was from the beginning. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word is the seed we want to perpetuate in our lives, our ministries, and in every single way. Connect with the original – the original Creator! He's talking about spiritual fathers and the Heavenly Father connecting with the original SEED that created us."

"Malachi 2 was written to Levi's genes. God knew He could fix and redeem Israel if He could get back the tribe of Levi." Paragraph notes taken from Chris Reed, You tube, Levi's Genes teaching. See <https://www.morningstartv.com/school-of-the-prophets>. May 12, 2023.

4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you,

*That **My covenant with Levi** may continue,"*

Says the Lord of hosts.

*5 **"My covenant was with him, one of life and peace,***

And I gave them to him that he might fear Me;

So he feared Me and was reverent before My name.

*6 **The law of truth was in his mouth,***

And injustice was not found on his lips.

He walked with Me in peace and equity,

And turned many away from iniquity.

*7 **"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge,***

And people should seek the law from his mouth;

For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

"God reminds the priests that they are sons of Levi and that He made a covenant with the tribe for life and peace because Levi revered God and His name. In addition, Levi spoke the 'law of truth', meaning he had taught others the Law and the Torah and had turned Israel away from iniquity." Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1482.

SEE: Deut. 17:8-13 NLT

*"8 **"Suppose a case arises in a local court that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder or only of manslaughter, or a***

difficult lawsuit, or a case involving different kinds of assault. Take such legal cases to the place the Lord your God will choose, 9 and present them to the Levitical priests or the judge on duty at that time. They will hear the case and declare the verdict. 10 You must carry out the verdict they announce and the sentence they prescribe at the place the Lord chooses. You must do exactly what they say. 11 After they have interpreted the law and declared their verdict, the sentence they impose must be fully executed; do not modify it in any way. 12 Anyone arrogant enough to reject the verdict of the judge or of the priest who represents the Lord your God must die. In this way you will purge the evil from Israel. 13 Then everyone else will hear about it and be afraid to act so arrogantly.”

8 But you have departed from the way;

You have caused many to stumble at the law.

You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,”

Says the Lord of hosts.

9 “Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base

Before all the people,

Because you have not kept My ways

But have shown partiality in the law.”

“In contrast to good priests, this group of corrupt priests had cause people to stumble. As a result, God was allowing the priests to lose influence in the eyes of the people. Note that these priests were ‘partial’ to the Law. That is, they were choosing what they wanted to believe; if they did not agree with something in the Law, they simply did not follow it and refused to teach it to the people.”
Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1482

Treachery of Infidelity

10 Have we not all one Father?

Has not one God created us?

Why do we deal treacherously with one another

By profaning the covenant of the fathers?

11 Judah has dealt treacherously,

And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem,

For Judah has profaned

The Lord's holy institution which He loves:

He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

12 May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob

The man who does this, being awake and aware,

Yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!

“Many priests returning from Babylon had married foreign wives, as referred to in Ezra 10:10-17 and Nehemiah 13:27. God was going to ‘cut off’, or remove, these priests from the ministry.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1482.

13 And this is the second thing you do:

You cover the altar of the Lord with tears,

With weeping and crying;

So He does not regard the offering anymore,

Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

Offering to God What He Will Not Receive

- “It is possible to offer repetitive words of praise or financial gifts to God that He does not acknowledge. In some cases, our prayers, praises, and financial gifts have become ‘systematic’, routine-based rituals that may have been received by others and made us feel better temporarily.”
- The routines seemed outwardly right but were inwardly wrong because all prayer, worship, and giving are not rooted in pure motives, from a sincere heart and a humble spirit of appreciation, these actions may be received by people but not by the Lord. Worship must come from our hearts, not just our mouths. We need to worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’. Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1482

*“8 ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’
Matthew 15:8 NLT*

*“24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and
in truth.” John 4:24 NLT*

14 Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the Lord has been witness

Between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously;

Yet she is your companion

And your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make them one,

Having a remnant of the Spirit?

And why one?

He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit,

And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 “For the Lord God of Israel says

That He hates divorce,

For it covers one’s garment with violence,”

Says the Lord of hosts.

“Therefore take heed to your spirit,

That you do not deal treacherously.”

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words;

Yet you say,

“In what way 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?”

“Apparently, some priests were mistreating their wives and ‘putting them away’, a term used for divorcing one’s spouse (see Luke 16:18). God reminds the people that He hates divorce; He desires for the priests to produce righteous children through their marriages. Husbands are to love and cherish their wives as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:25, 28-29) Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1483.

Malachi Chapter 3 NKJV

“The Coming Messenger

1 “Behold, I send My messenger,

And he will prepare the way before Me.

“This is a direct prophecy concerning the appearing of John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus Christ, who served as the forerunner to Christ’s public ministry. God called this person ‘my messenger’ who would ‘prepare the way before Me.’”

Matthew 11:2-15 NKJV

“2 And when John [John the Baptist] had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples 3 and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” 4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” 7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. 9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 10 For this is he of whom it is written:

‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,

Who will prepare Your way before You.’

11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Matthew 3 NKJV

“1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;

Make His paths straight.’ ”

4 Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

John Baptizes Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” 15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.””

In reference to Christ’s first coming-

And the Lord, whom you seek,

Will suddenly come to His temple, [SEE: Matthew 21:1-16; Mark 11: 1-11]

Even the Messenger of the covenant,

In whom you delight.

Behold, He is coming,”

Says the Lord of hosts.”

“This is a beautiful picture of Christ’s appearing in Jerusalem in the temple and ministering to the people. He was ‘the messenger of the covenant’ predicted in

the Law and the Prophets – the messenger who introduced a New Covenant of redemption to humankind.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1483.

SEE: (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 56:6; 59:21; 61:8; Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:6; 12:24; 13:20).

In reference to the Second Coming of Christ-

*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 launderers’ soap.

3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;

He will purify the sons of Levi,

And purge them as gold and silver,

That they may offer to the Lord

An offering in righteousness.

4 “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem

Will be pleasant to the Lord,

As in the days of old,

As in former years.

“Malachi peers into the future when Christ will return to earth and judge the nations (SEE: Matthew 25:31-32). As the KING, Messiah Christ will come as a flaming fire (SEE: II Thessalonians 1:8); He will refine the nations and the people at His appearing. A ‘refiners fire’ (v.2) is extremely hot. It melts precious metal to remove the dross and to purify the metal, making it more valuable. “Fuller’s soap” was an unknown type of soap used when washing garments. St. Jerome clarifies its meaning when he comments that to those who sin heavily, God is a ‘refining and consuming fire, but to those who commit light sins, fuller’s soap, to restore cleanness to it, when washed.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1483

5 And I will come near you for judgment;

I will be a swift witness

Against sorcerers,

Against adulterers,

Against perjurers,

*Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,”
Says the Lord of hosts.*

SEE: Matthew 24:31-46

6 “For I am the Lord, I do not change;
*Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
7 Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept them.*

Return to Me, and I will return to you,”

*Says the Lord of hosts.
“But you said,
‘In what way shall we return?’*

Do Not Rob God

*8 “Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
‘In what way have we robbed You?’
In tithes and offerings.*

*9 You are cursed with a curse,
For you have robbed Me,
Even this whole nation.*

*10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try 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 such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it.*

*11 “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,”*

Says the Lord of hosts;

*12 “And all nations will call you blessed,
For you will be a delightful land,”*

Says the Lord of hosts.

“Paying tithes was practiced before the Law (Gen. 14:20; 28:22) and commanded under grace in the NT (Matthew 23:23; Romans 2:22; I Cor. 9:7-14; 16:2; Gal. 6:6; Heb. 7:1-10).” Dake’s Study Bible, p. 1475

“Tithing, or giving of the tenth, was practiced by Abraham before the Law was given. It was established by the Law of Moses and continued throughout the time of the prophets. Malachi, the last OT prophet, instructed Israel to bring ‘all tithes into the storehouse’ and God would open the ‘windows of heaven’ upon obedient givers and provide a blessing they could not contain.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1484

“Ancient Israel was a society built around agriculture, and seven types of foods grew in the Promise Land: wheat, barley, vines (grapes), figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey. (SEE: Deut. 8:8) Moses wrote about the tithe and all requirements in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1484

“The first tithe - was the annual 10% portion given to support the Levites, the full-time priests, and ministers at the tabernacle and the temple (SEE: Num. 18:21-28.) The tribe of Levi had not been given a land inheritance in Israel; as priests, they would minister in Jerusalem and live in the temple compound and its surrounding area. They received a tithe that included grains, oil, meat offerings, and other important provisions to assist them in ministry. The Levites then took a tenth of the tithe and offered it as a heave offering unto the Lord before Aaron the priest. This ‘best portion’ of the tithe was to be eaten by the Levites and their families as a ‘reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.’ SEE: Numbers 18:31.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1484

“The second tithe - was a festival tithe to be brought to Jerusalem (SEE: Deut. 14:22-27) Each year, the Hebrew men would bring the increase of their corn, wine, oil, and the firstborn of their flocks as a tithe before the Lord, if the distance to Jerusalem was too great to transport the agricultural or animal tithe, it could be sold and turned to money. When the tithing persons arrived at Jerusalem, they could purchase whatever they wished in food or drink and eat before the Lord at the tabernacle and later the temple. The entire household was permitted to attend. With this tithe, God reminded the people not to forget the Levite, who had no inheritance or personal property.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1484

“The third-year tithe – was to assist the poor living in Israel: *Deut. 14:28-29* – “28 *“At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”* Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1484

“Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for ignoring the most important matters, not tithing.

“23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Matthew 23:23 NKJV

The writer of Hebrews comment about tithing approximately 35 years after Christ’s resurrection: *“And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.” Hebrews 7:8 KJV*

In the New Testament, tithing and the giving of offerings were already established among the Jewish believers. After Gentiles were grafted into the covenant (SEE Acts 10) and Jews believing in Christ were persecuted (SEE Acts 21:27; 26:21), believers met in homes instead of the temple (SEE Acts 20:20; 21:8). The people of the early church sold land or other goods and presented them to the apostles for distribution to those who had need (SEE Acts 4:34-35). In this context Paul taught that believers should set aside their offerings on the first day of the week: *“16 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.” I Corinthians 16:1-3 NKJV*

Christ did not destroy the Law, He fulfilled it! (Matthew 5:17)” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1486

“Giving a tithe demonstrates our love for God, and it helps keep the spirit of greed away from our financial lives. It is a tool God uses to spread the Gospel and to support the ministries that preach it (SEE Romans 10:14-15). I have grown up believing, and still do, that the tenth is the Lord’s and should be given at the church where you attend. A faithful pastor and shepherd will study, preach, pray for you, visit you in the hospital, and bury your loved ones. Therefore, the tithe assists the local ministry. Offerings are used to support the teachers, evangelists and missionaries.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1486.

SEE: I Cor. 9:7-14; Prov. 3:9-10; Gal. 6:6; I Tim. 6:17-18; I Cor. 16:2; Heb. 6:20; 7:1-11, 17, 21; Romans 4:12; Gen. 14:20; Deut. 8:10-20; Deut. 28.

SEE: Examples of Paying Tithes from Dake’s Study Bible, p. 831:

1. Abraham – Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:1-11
2. Jacob – Gen. 28:22
3. Levi in Abraham – Heb 7:9
4. Hezekiah and Israel – II Chron. 31
5. Nehemiah and Israel – Neh. 13
6. Hypocrites – Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12
7. Christians – I Cor. 9:7-14; 16:2; II Cor. 7:11; 8:1-15; Gal. 6:6; I Tim. 5:17-18; Heb. 7

The People Complain Harshly

13 *“Your words have been harsh against Me,”*

Says the Lord,

“Yet you say,

‘What have we spoken against You?’

14 *You have said,*

‘It is useless to serve God;

What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance,

And that we have walked as mourners

Before the Lord of hosts?

15 *So now we call the proud blessed,*

For those who do wickedness are raised up;

They even tempt God and go free.’ ”

Verse 15 in the NIV states: “But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.’ ”

A Book of Remembrance

16 Then **those who feared the Lord** spoke to one another,
And the Lord listened and heard them;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him

**For those who fear the Lord
And who meditate on His name.**

17 “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts,
“On the day that I make them My jewels.
And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves him.”

18 Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him.”

Let's read vs 16-18 in the NLT :

“ 16 Then those who **feared the Lord** spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those **who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.**

17 **“They will be my people,”** says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, they will be **my own special treasure.** I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. 18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

Seriously, how arrogant humans become – talking BACK TO GOD ALMIGHTY! What is even worse is when HIS CHILDREN dishonor Him with their words. Pride and rebellion. We see through this passage that when God’s children begin to FEAR THE LORD, GOD LISTENS! He HEARS THE HEARTS/DISCUSSIONS THAT REVERENTLY FEAR AND LOVE HIM and He writes it all down in a book of remembrance!

The Book of Remembrance [Notes summarized below are taken from Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1487]

*The scripture states: “16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,
And the Lord listened and heard them;
So a **book of remembrance** was written before Him
For those who fear the Lord
And who meditate on His name.”*

- The word ‘remembrance’ is the Hebrew word ‘*zifrown*’ and refers to a recorded memento or a memorable thing or writing. The root word ‘*zakar*’ means to ‘mark something that is noteworthy’. Therefore, a book of remembrance records something to mark a person as noteworthy!
- The idea of God remembering is observed often in Scripture.
 - God remembered Noah and every living thing. SEE: Genesis 8:1
 - God remembered Rachel and ‘opened her womb’. SEE: Genesis 30:22
 - God remembered His covenant with Abraham when He heard Israel cry out while in Egypt. SEE: Exodus 2:24
 - God remembered Hannah and gave her a son. SEE: I Samuel 1:19

In Chapter 4, the Lord warns of His coming day of judgment and wrath. The purpose of putting the names in this book is to spare them from the trouble coming in the future tribulation.

God identifies His children as special treasures to HIM. His special jewels are His people – Israel that shall be saved and His Church who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. His special treasure /jewels are those in covenant with Him.

Exodus 19:3-6 NKJV

*“3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:
4 ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

Psalm 135:4 NKJV

“4 For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.”

II Corinthians 4:5-7 NKVJ

“5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

I Peter 2:9-10 NKJV

“9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

This book of remembrance could very well be the book in which the names of the overcoming righteous are inscribed; these could be the ones who will be delivered by being taken prior to the Tribulation, as God, will ‘spare them as a father spareth his own son.’ Believers are told to watch and pray that they will be accounted worthy to escape the time of coming tribulation and to stand before Christ. (SEE: Luke 21:36)

Malachi Chapter 4 NKJV

“The Great Day of God

*1 “For behold, the day is coming,
Burning like an oven,
And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,”
Says the Lord of hosts,
“That will leave them neither root nor branch.*

“When Christ the Messiah returns to earth, He will come in a flaming fire and destroy the enemies of Israel with the brightness of His coming.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1486

II Thessalonians 1:3-10 NKJV

“3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”

II Thessalonians 2:8 NKJV

“8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

“This is not an illusion to eternal hell fire, as some interpret, which indicates souls will eventually be burnt up in hell. This is the destruction on the ungodly at the coming of the Lord, when He executes judgment.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1486

Jude 1:14-15 NKJV

“14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

SEE ALSO:

Micah 5:15 NKJV

“15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury On the nations that have not heard.”

Nahum 1:2 NKJV

*“God is jealous, and the Lord avenges;
The Lord avenges and is furious.
The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves wrath for His enemies;”*

Zephaniah 1:14-15 NKJV

*“14 The great day of the Lord is near;
It is near and hastens quickly.
The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter;
There the mighty men shall cry out.
15 That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,*

*2 But to **you who fear My name***

*The **Sun of Righteousness** shall arise*

With healing in His wings;

And you shall go out

And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

“The ‘Sun of Righteousness’ is a term for the Messiah. Healing is in ‘His wings’. The word is *kanaph* and refers to the edge or corner of a border, or an edge, including the edge of clothing. {prayer tassels} Some Messianic Jews believe this alludes to the corner of the garment. Using this interpretation, they teach this prophecy was fulfilled when the sick in Christ’s day touched the fringes (or the hem) of His garment and were healed. (SEE: Matthew 9:20; 14:36). Just as the rays from the light of the sun bring brightness to the earth, the Messiah, like the sun, will bring light, illumination, and healing to those in darkness.”

Isaiah 9:2 NKJV

*“2 The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.”*

*3 You shall trample the wicked,
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet
On the day that I do this,
Says the Lord of hosts.*

“The Apostle Paul wrote that Christ has and will put all enemies under His feet (SEE: I Cor. 15:25). Paul also told the Roman believers that God would bruise Satan under their feet shortly (SEE: Romans 16:20). Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1488.

*4 “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.*

“Malachi gives a word to the priests in his day to remember the words of Moses, which was the Law in the Torah.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1488.

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet

Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

6 And he will turn

The hearts of the fathers to the children,

And the hearts of the children to their fathers,

“This is the last prediction of the OT. Elijah the prophet will be sent to Israel to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” Perry Stone, OT Hebraic Study Bible, p. 1488

“This is a part of the last prophecy in the OT. It concerns the return of Elijah the prophet (not John the Baptist or some other man) to the earth, from heaven, shortly before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. AT that time there will be one of the greatest spiritual awakenings in the history of mankind. The hearts of fathers and sons, all children and parents, will be turned towards one another; families will be united in Christ; the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh and even all of Israel will be saved as a result of the ministry of Elijah and Enoch. These scriptures will be literally fulfilled: Rev. 11:3-10; Acts 2:16-21; Romans 11:25-29; Isaiah 66:7-8.” The Dake Annotated Reference Bible, p. 1477.

Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

NOTE: Matthew 5- 7 Beatitudes of Jesus come with the BLESSING...BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO.....The Kingdom of Heaven has come to earth...Repent and believe in the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven!