

The Book of Malachi

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(2001, 1992, and 1971 Studies)

The following notes on the Book of Malachi were compiled from Bible studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 2001 and 1992 with excerpts from a 1971 study. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the studies, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1992
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Malachi is the last prophetic book of the Old Testament both in format and in its writing. The Book of Nehemiah may have been written slightly later, but it is a historical book, the chronological sequence being Ruth, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Because these four are historical books, they were not mixed in with the 12 Minor Prophets, which are basically prophecy mingled with a little history.

Although it is conjectural to say the Book of Malachi was written about the time of Nehemiah, the conclusion is logical because of the time sequence of the prophetic books and the historical books. They were both going down separate paths, with Malachi being the last of the prophetic books and Nehemiah being the last of the historical books. Thus the two books were contemporaneous.

No detailed accurate historical information is known about Malachi as a person. Hebrew traditions furnish some light but not with a sufficiency of credibility as to who he was and his background.

Mal. 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

Comment: “Malachi” means “my messenger,” that is, Jehovah’s messenger. The same Hebrew root word appears three other times in the Book of Malachi. “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the *messenger* of the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 2:7). “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” (Mal. 3:1).

Reply: Yes, and verse 1, which is the first instance of the Hebrew word, can be read, “The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by *my messenger*.” Thus this prophetic book is called the “Book of Malachi” because of this mysterious “my messenger.” Based on the New Testament, we find out who that messenger is from a spiritual standpoint, but certainly the book was written by some individual back there—a messenger used by God to record this prophecy and to speak to Israel. However, who he was and where he was born are a mystery. The identity of “my messenger” is unknown.

Mal. 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Mal. 1:3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

The Book of Malachi was written a little differently in that the prophet repeatedly raised a question and then answered it. He brought out the Jews’ thinking in question form, revealing their sad lack of appreciation for what Jehovah had done for them.

First, God spoke to Israel: “I have loved you.” Then the thinking of the Jews was given: “Wherein have you loved us?” God replied, “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother, yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”

This book starts with the chief individuals Jacob and Esau. God should not have been put in the embarrassing position of having to give a rebuttal to the Jews' thinking. The Israelites had the nerve to question God, and now He condescended to come down to their level and answer the common gripe of much of the populace as to whether He really loved them.

Let us reason on the situation. Jacob and Esau were twins. When they were born, God exercised His prerogative to show a preference for Jacob above Esau. The Israelites were forgetting that God blessed Jacob more than Esau. Jacob got the spiritual blessing, as well as temporal blessings many years later, whereas Esau was blessed only along temporal lines. What was the lesson for Israel? God was telling the people to go back to history where His providences had been exercised on their behalf as a people. He was saying, "Did not I show a preference for Jacob when he was born in contradistinction to Esau?"

Since Esau was the older twin brother, would he not have asked, "Why did the Lord choose Jacob?" There is a lot behind the buildup of feeling and animosity between Arabs and Jews. Underneath is a current of controversy. To this day, a deep-rooted enmity exists between them, and the hostility began back in Genesis when Jacob fled for his life because Esau wanted to kill him. Later there was a reconciliation, and of course in the future, there will be a reconciliation, settling this hostility.

God was saying, "Jacob and Esau were twins, but I did not choose Esau, even though he was the elder brother." God's decision should have answered the argument. If we follow through on Jacob's posterity, we can see that God dealt with Israel in a special sense through the Period of the Judges and the Period of the Kings. God went back to the beginning of their history and, by inference, also pointed to the present day. The root problem was with the complainers themselves.

"And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." Edom was laid waste by King Nebuchadnezzar. We should keep in mind that the Book of Malachi was written around 400 BC, which was after the destruction of the Babylonian Empire. The Jews returned to their homeland following the decree of Cyrus in 536 BC, and they had been in their land for approximately 100 years when the question was raised, "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

A twofold desolation of Edom was shown in Obadiah 10-12, as follows:

"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

"In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

"But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress."

The Book of Obadiah was a prophecy of what would happen to Edom at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. (The time setting was many years earlier than the writing of Malachi.) God pronounced His displeasure on Edom and prophesied of the waste that would occur. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Egypt, and other countries were all taken into captivity. To this day, Edom,

which is now the southern portion of Jordan, is sparsely populated and poor compared to the Amman area in the north where the main population lives, crops are grown, and industry exists.

The Amplified Old Testament reads, “I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what *and* how have You loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? says the Lord; yet I loved Jacob (Israel), But [in comparison with the degree of love I have for Jacob] I have hated Esau [Edom], and have laid waste his mountains.” In other words, God’s love for Esau was as nothing compared to His love for Jacob.

Jeremiah 49:13 mentions the *perpetual* wastes of Edom: “For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.” From the prophetic standpoint, Edom, Bozrah, and Esau all represent Christendom. Once nominal Christendom falls, the desolation will be everlasting. Thus literal Edom is a fitting picture of spiritual Edom.

Obadiah 19 reads, “And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines”; that is, the Gaza Strip and Edom will become part of Israel.

Mal. 1:4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

Verse 4 is a reaffirmation of what was stated in Obadiah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah regarding Edom’s experiences. Here we see the thoughts of the Edomites when they were displaced. They had hope in their hearts that they would someday return to the original homeland and settle there again. The Edomites would try to rebuild what had been made desolate, but their efforts would come to naught. Accordingly, very few inhabitants live there today, and this is especially noticeable in the journey south to Petra, even though the soil is rich. The land is undeveloped desert, yet northern Jordan is relatively advanced.

Mal. 1:5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The Revised Standard has, “Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, ‘Great is the LORD, beyond the border of Israel!’” Israel’s borders will be extended into Edom in the Kingdom.

Mal. 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Mal. 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

What condescension! The *great* Jehovah came down and reasoned with *puny* man on certain principles the people lacked. God asked, “Doesn’t a son honor his father? If I am a Father, why are you not honoring me as such?” In other words, the Israelites were not respecting God as their Father. We pray, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:9). As a people, the Israelites were not hallowing God’s holy name and entreating Him as a Father, yet they were His children, for He had fostered that nation. It was unheard of for a human servant to talk back to his human master in those days. Up until relatively recent times, servants could be executed for insubordination, but here Israel, the “servant,” was not obeying

its “master” (*God*). If God is the Master, where was their reverence?

God said, “O priests, that despise my name.” Worst of all, the priests, those most responsible, despised God’s name by their *actions*. Their lips professed one thing, but their thoughts and actions indicated otherwise. Hypocrites serve God in name only, taking His name in vain.

The priests asked, “How have we despised thy name?” God replied, “You offer polluted bread on my altar.” Imagine! The priests offered polluted bread on God’s altar, yet they had the nerve to ask, “How have we polluted you?” God answered them, “You say that the table of the LORD is contemptible.” Actions and deeds, as well as words, are indicators of the heart, at least to some extent. (We are not to secretly love God and Jesus, for if we do not outwardly demonstrate our love, we are hiding our light.) Therefore, by their actions, the priests showed their lack of respect for God. The indicator was that they offered “polluted bread,” that is, old or leavened bread, cereal, etc., offerings. In other words, the priests offered God what they felt they could conveniently dispose of. While ostensibly depriving themselves, they offered polluted bread to Him. Perhaps the flour was moldy, for example. The onlookers thought the offering was generous, but God knew the true condition of the offering and the offerer’s heart and motive. Instead of discarding the spoiled or inferior food, the priests put it on the altar—how blasphemous! They reasoned, “God will not come down here and strike us dead.” The Lord’s table was regarded as more or less ceremonial; it was meaningless as far as vitality or power was concerned, so the priests just went through the motions.

Mal. 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Comment: The Revised Standard is good. “When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that no evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that no evil? Present that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.”

What a scathing denunciation! Blind, lame, and sick animals were being offered to Almighty God! The priests incurred double responsibility in winking the eye at these perfunctory practices. They saw what was happening, but they said nothing because they wanted to stay friends with the offerers. They knew that the Law required perfect animals, healthy and whole, yet they allowed unacceptable offerings. The people were supposed to give their *best*. In fact, if the tithe selected a lame animal, a perfect one had to be substituted.

Here was the strong reality in question form: “Would you do such a thing to your *earthly* ruler?” If the Israelites gave their governor such an offering, he would spit in their face. It would be less hypocritical to give no sacrifice at all than to insult him with that offering. Inherently, the people would not treat their governor that way because they knew what would result, yet they did not worry about the table of the Lord as long as they made a *good appearance*. Since the lamb was slain and skinned and the meat looked good on the altar, they reasoned, “Who will know?”

When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem the second time and saw how hypocritical the people were, he was boiling mad. By nature, he was generous and considerate in his thinking and not a firebrand like Ezra, but under these conditions, he was very disturbed. While he was back in Persia, the Israelites in Jerusalem had developed a lot of bad habits, which he now discovered. And this was the setting for the Book of Malachi. Thus the traditional time placement of Malachi being contemporary with Nehemiah seems to be correct.

Q: What are some of the spiritual lessons in verses 1-8?

A: While Edom was desolate and represents Christendom in a spiritual sense, there is a triple fulfillment based on other prophecies. (1) Of course literally in the type, prior to Malachi's day, King Nebuchadnezzar had taken Edom captive to Babylon. The desolation still remains, for Edom is a "mean" nation even today. But now the prophet was writing of a subsequent and lasting desolation. (2) Some prophecies indicate there will be another destruction of Edom by Israel at the end of the age, still future. As indicated by the prayer in Psalm 83, Israel will have an astounding victory over the Arabs prior to Jacob's Trouble. (3) In addition, the desolation of Edom pictures the destruction of Christendom.

The Book of Malachi started out with the people's question to God: "What evidence is there that you love us?" God used Jacob as a lesson or proof of His love for Israel. Not only had He shown His preference for Jacob over Esau, but He laid a curse of punishment, or judgment, on Edom as a people. Then He said, "In addition to the love I showed you in the past in regard to Jacob and Esau and a judgment already inflicted on Esau, there will be another judgment. Then, eventually, your eyes will be opened to see my love for you." This love will be manifested after the Jews are converted as a nation at the end of Jacob's Trouble.

If an earthly ruler would not accept a lame or blind animal, how much less would God accept such a sacrifice! In the antitype, the nominal Church, which professes to be the people of God, has committed these sins in principle. And in regard to the true brotherhood, we must carefully search our own lives to see if we are guilty.

Q: Aside from the literal sacrifices where the Israelites cheated with sick animals, would the next level of application be when Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for being hypocrites and spiritually blind and lame?

A: Yes, and natural Israel is committing the same sins today. The nation is not godly, and neither is the United States. Despite Israel's rich heritage, the people have not proclaimed a national fast with heartfelt mourning. Now we can see the reason for the Holy Remnant's being chosen. Sincere, godly Jews will be richly blessed.

Comment: It is confusing because Edom and Israel are both mentioned, and both can represent nominal spiritual Israel. Can Israel also represent true spiritual Israel?

Reply: That is why we are studying Malachi. When we observe what natural Israel did, we should ask, "Are we, as individuals, doing the same thing? Are we taking the Lord's name in vain?" We are studying the principles of how to show the Lord *by our deeds* that we are either a true or a nominal spiritual Israelite.

Q: In what way does Edom picture Christendom?

A: Esau lost the birthright because he esteemed a meal (a mess of pottage) to be of more value (Gen. 25:29-34). Jacob properly appreciated the spiritual birthright, the spiritual promise given to Abraham ("In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"—Gen. 28:14), whereas Esau wanted material things, the goods of this life. Jacob pictures the true Church, who are looking for the spiritual birthright. Esau pictures the nominal Church, who forfeit the spiritual blessings, even though they had them first.

Mal. 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

The Amplified Old Testament reads, "Now then I [Malachi] beg of you priests, Entreat God

earnestly that he will be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand [that is, as a defective animal for sacrifice], will he accept it or show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts.” Verse 9 was scathingly directed to the priestly leadership.

Mal. 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Comment: A transliteration of part of verse 10 is, “I would that one among you would shut the doors of the temple that no more vain fire should kindle on my altar.” It would have been better for the Israelites to offer no sacrifices than to offer sick animals.

Verse 10 is still directed to the priests. Again we will read from the Amplified Old Testament, which takes some liberties: “O that there were one among even you, whose duty it is to minister to me, who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar to no purpose—an empty, futile, fruitless pretense. I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts; nor will I accept an offering from your hand.”

Q: What is the thought of “shut the doors”?

A: In their leadership position, the priests could have stopped the pretense, sham, and hypocrisy. By being derelict in their responsibility, they were actually leading the people astray. The priests should have “shut the doors” to this malpractice.

If the sick, blind, and lame animals being offered in the outer court of the Temple were unacceptable, then any incense kindled in the Holy was also unacceptable.

Mal. 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

The King James future tense is correct. The Gentiles would be favored because of Israel’s defective offerings. God was saying to Israel, “With your polluted practices, is it any wonder that in the future, I will turn to the Gentiles, and their purer offerings will be acceptable?” The Gentiles would eventually be drawn into God’s inner circle, as it were. Stated another way, subsequent offerings by Gentiles in the Gospel Age would be acceptable to God.

Mal. 1:12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

Verse 12 is similar to verse 7. The Amplified Old Testament has, “But you priests profane it when, by your *actions*, you say, The table of the LORD is polluted, and the fruit of it is contemptible and may be despised [disregarded].” In other words, the priests did not think it was important to be that careful about the offerings. They thought of the sacrifices from a *ceremonial* standpoint only, but God desired the *proper spirit* with the ceremony.

“Ye say” means “by your actions or deeds you are saying”; that is, the disobedience was not necessarily done audibly by the lips. A common saying is, “Actions speak louder than words.”

Mal. 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

Verses 13 and 14 applied to both the individual offerers and the priests; both were responsible. The offerings were regarded as drudgery. Instead the Israelites should have simply accepted the offerings as God's will, even if they did not understand them. Today, as people develop intellectually, they tend to regard all sacrifices as bloody and offensive, but *God* instituted the animal sacrifices—and He will do so again in the future with Ezekiel's Temple (Ezek. 40:38-43; 42:13; 43:18-27; 44:11,15,27,29; 45:15-25; 46:2-7,11-15,20,23,24).

Comment: What a great blessing it will be when the Jews back there are raised from the tomb and given an explanation of the sacrifices! Then they will understand why the instructions were so particular.

To those Israelites who meditated on the sacrifices, it would have been clear that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). Realizing that the life was in the blood would have helped them to accept a crucified Savior—a suffering Messiah. The Law was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, but the Israelites forgot (and failed to reason on) God's works and miracles (Gal. 3:24).

The common-sense logic was, If the Israelites brought polluted animals, would God accept them? No! But the Israelites viewed the ceremonies as having no power. Their attitude was, "Who can say nay if we bring a lame animal?" They felt there was no danger in disobedience. *Faith* was required for the people to see that disrespect for God and the divine will would jeopardize their future.

Comment: An example of an improper offering in the antitype, that is, in nominal spiritual Israel, is a prayer that is read. The prayer should come spontaneously from the heart.

"Behold, what a weariness is it!" The worshippers were weary of all the sacrificing. There were two reasons for the fatigue.

1. Sometimes the animal had to be carried, and that was a physical burden, let alone a temporal loss in sacrificing the animal. The whole arrangement did not appeal to the Israelites. It would have been much easier and quicker to just have a monetary exchange. Trying to explicitly follow all of the instructions was very wearying—taking the animal to the door of the Holy, skinning it, etc., etc. The people would rather have paid someone else to do the work.
2. The Israelites began to question why God wanted these things done. They were saying in effect, "The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof ... is contemptible" (verse 12). They murmured in their hearts, and their discontent manifested itself when they offered diseased animals. In fact, they brought animals that were sick, blemished, lame, blind, female (only males were to be offered), and even dead. They did not appreciate God's care for them ("Wherein hast thou loved us?"—verse 2). They felt God was very impersonal and not helping them, so their attitude was, "Why do these things? Why should we expend money and effort when we cannot even see God with our eyes?" Yet they continued to offer imperfect sacrifices out of habit because everyone else did and that was the norm. Many do things—and have done them all down the age—without enthusiasm because they say, "What will the neighbors think if we do not do such and such?" That motivation is not proper for either Christian or Jew.

God had done tremendous miracles for Israel, such as delivering them from bondage in Egypt and through the Red Sea. From time to time, the prophets referred to such miracles as if to say, "If you are asked to do something you do not understand, do not question; obey on *faith*. God does not have to explain every detail to you. Trust Him!" The Israelites failed to think of God as their Father, as a personal, caring Deity. Thus the requirements of sacrifice were burdensome to them.

Mal. 1:14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

“I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is [shall be—future tense] dreadful among the heathen.” The word “dreadful” means “reverentially feared.” God’s name will be reverentially feared and thoroughly respected in the future.

“But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.” The implication is that female animals were offered. An individual had a male in his flock but offered a substitute female.

Comment: The thought of verse 14 is, “Cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a perfect male but sacrifices unto God a corrupt thing (a female).”

Reply: Yes. Also, inferior and diseased animals were substituted.

Why did God conclude by saying, “I am a great King, and my name shall be reverentially feared among the heathen”? God’s silence was not a sign of weakness. He was giving the Israelites an opportunity to manifest their love, but there was a limit to His patience. God was patient because He was merciful to them, but the Israelites had gone too far and *judgment would come!* A lesson for Christians is that we should tremble at the Lord’s Word and never minimize its importance.

Verse 11 and the end of verse 14 use the same reasoning: “My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering.” A day will come in the future when God’s name is exalted in *all* nations. In *every* nation, “incense” will be offered to His name—a “pure offering.” Verse 14 shows that because the Israelites were misusing their grant of favor, the light and blessing would be extended to the Gentiles. Jesus was “a light to [en]lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32).

We should keep in mind that the Book of Malachi was written after the end of the 70-year captivity in Babylon. The Israelites still had not learned their lesson. Later this book will mention the “messenger of the covenant” (3:1). Some would give this reference to Jesus a superficial interpretation by saying it applies to Malachi himself, for his name means “messenger of Jehovah.”

Mal. 2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

Verses 1-10 were again directed to Israel’s priests: “And *now*, O ye *priests*, this commandment is for you.” God had a bone to pick with the priesthood. After hearing the rebuke in the previous chapter, the priests should have been sorry and repentant.

Mal. 2:2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

If the priests did not repent and change their ways after hearing the instruction and being rebuked for past malpractices, God told them the consequences through the mouth of the Prophet Malachi; namely, they would be cursed. But why does the account say, “Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart”? God knew that the priests would not have receptive hearts, that they would not repent. The principle is the same in Malachi 4:6

about the end of the Gospel Age: “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” It is a foregone conclusion that the hearts will not be converted, so the curse will come on the earth.

God was saying to the priests, “I have just castigated you, but the lesson is not getting through. I am telling you what the situation is, but your hearts are not receptive. Therefore, if you do not conform—and I know you will not do so based on your attitude—you will be cursed.”

Mal. 2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

The threat of punishment continued with verse 3 explaining the “curse.” “Behold, I [God] will corrupt your seed [grain].” Their “seed” was especially grain and food crops, but it could also be thought of as their children. Blight, a locust plague, a severe storm, or some other means would keep the seed from coming to full fruition for harvest. The seed would be sown, but it would not bring forth the anticipated crop.

Q: Would the curse affect the entire nation or just the seed of the priests?

A: The priests blessed the seed of others, but the blessing would not be effective. They were called upon to bless the seed of the fields of both individuals and households.

“Behold, I will ... spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts.” The priests offered vital part(s) of the animal on the altar (for example, the breast, right shoulder, or inner organs), but God was saying, “When you come with an offering, I am going to put dung back in your face. Do you think I will accept the organs you are offering? I will give back the dung—I will push it onto your faces.” Thus we can see how repulsive the sick and polluted animal offerings were to God. “One shall take you away with it [the dung].” (Normally, the hide, hooves, and dung of the animals were taken outside the camp.)

A providence happens to individuals that will be understood better in the future. There are scriptural representations of the destiny of some of the false prophets and how they ended up. Also, history records certain details of the retribution and demise of such individuals as Pontius Pilate. More information will be forthcoming in the Kingdom.

As time went on, the priesthood became a stench and an abomination to the people. This deterioration has also been true of the nominal Church in the Gospel Age; it started out pure but became the harlot. Because of money, ease, indolence, and the spirit (pleasures) of the world, the religious leaders became corrupt, bringing shame on the office of the priesthood—to reach a climax at the end of this age. A violent revolution will occur when the masses realize that Papacy’s reform (window dressing) is superficial, and Protestantism will have the same experience.

“The dung of your solemn feasts” referred in the type to animal sacrifices in the Temple. The animal was segmented at the altar into various parts for various purposes. Certain organs were to be sacrificed to the Lord, part of the animal was a meat offering or was given to the priesthood to be stored for later use, and part was to be burned outside the camp. Of course the entrails and excrement were also part of the animal. Some of the feasts took place on very solemn occasions. Therefore, when it came to the unpleasant and embarrassing parts (the entrails and the excrement), the priests had to discreetly cover them up in some way and carry them away lest they interfere with the lesson of the sacrifice. Only the organs to be offered on the altar were conspicuous. On these holy occasions, the excrement and entrails were handled with extra care. The hide, flesh, and dung were carried without the camp and burned in an

appointed place, producing a stench in the nostrils of the people. However, like the aroma of roasting meat, the odor of the organs on the Brazen Altar was pleasing to those in the Holy.

God was displeased with the *hypocrisy* and the *superficiality* of the offerings, so He said He would rub the priests' noses in the unpleasant parts (the dung): "I will ... spread dung upon your faces." He would actually do even more, as it were; He would plaster their faces with dung and cast the priests out with it. (Our delicate translations lose the *power* of this reasoning.) When the public realize in the future that the institution of Papacy is false—that the whole arrangement is wrong and hypocritical—they will want to do to Papacy what God said He would do to the priests. They will tear down the system with indignation, and they will shame any who played a religious role in it.

Mal. 2:4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Before discussing verses 4-6, we will take a related side path. Psalm 106:16 speaks of Aaron as "the saint of the LORD." In the final analysis, Aaron was a very noble character who is referred to in Scripture in a favorable sense, notwithstanding the golden calf incident in Moses' absence. Numbers 16:3,4 reads, "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." The making of the golden calf is looked upon as a sign of weakness for Aaron, but let us consider the matter. Certainly in a comparison, Moses was head and shoulders above Aaron in character, but Aaron is called a "saint." When Moses was absent day after day after day, the people pressured Aaron and recognized him as the substitute head. As time passed, Aaron himself began to wonder what he should do, thinking perhaps Moses had died. After all, 40 days is a long time for someone to go up into a mountain and not return. (Since he had been second fiddle to Moses, he now felt a lack, a loss, when Moses did not return. If we had been greatly helped by someone we trusted and then he died, we, too, would be in a dilemma.) Thus Aaron was put in a very strange situation.

Based on other Scriptures where Aaron is given a favorable connotation, we reason that God must have appreciated his unique position and the great pressure put upon him by the people. Normally when we are weakened by a sudden experience, we may not be as fully responsible for some things that we do because our mind and emotions are in a scrambled state. Such is not our normal attitude. In contrast, Israel's priests *habitually* did wrong; offering polluted offerings was their *normal* practice. Chapters 1 and 2 of Malachi criticized the priests for their *practiced* deceit, whereas Aaron helped many people. His mouth and wisdom were a blessing to many of the Israelites.

Numbers chapter 16 records the incident where Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went to Moses and said, "You and Aaron speak too much and assume too much authority. What about us? Didn't God appoint the tribe of Levi? Shouldn't we share in the leadership role?"

Moses replied, "Don't you realize that God has already blessed you with the privilege of coming near to Him in the Tabernacle services?" (The inference was that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were not a Moses or an Aaron.) As a person of renown in Israel, Korah was the spokesman for the rebellion, but he went even further, saying, "Everyone in the congregation is equal to you, Moses and Aaron, in the Lord's sight. They are all holy." (Korah was not referring just to the Levites but to the *whole* nation of Israel.) It is true that as long as the Israelites obeyed God, they were a separate people, but they were not in the category of Moses and Aaron (Amos 3:2). As a result, Moses had to make a test of Aaron's rod, which budded,

and Korah and the other rebels were destroyed.

The point is that Levi was pictured in a favorable light in the Book of Malachi, and the condemnation of the priesthood in the prophet's day occurred around 400 BC, a *long time* afterward (Mal. 2:4,8). God's covenant was with Levi, who was a man of "life and peace" (Mal. 2:5,6). He had a good stabilizing influence on the people, and he spoke words of instruction, wisdom, and purity. He brought many close to the Lord and turned them away from iniquity. The Mosaic Law was even identified with the Levitical law, the law of Levi, showing that Levi was very reputable.

Back to the incident with Aaron and the golden calf. Yes, he did succumb and show weakness, but who would not have done the same in a similar circumstance? He was probably not in sympathy with the making of the golden calf but was merely stalling for time when Moses was gone for so many days. Aaron said he would go along with the idea if the calf could be made from gold earrings donated by the women. Trying a delaying tactic, he was surprised when the women responded—and so quickly. He had thought the costly personal sacrifice would stop the women or at least slow them down. In the meantime, he hoped Moses would return. However, Moses did not come down from the mount until after the calf was made, and as the people's representative, Aaron now felt obligated to proceed. First, a mold was made. Then it took several days to get the fire hot enough to melt the gold. Although Aaron did show weakness in this incident, there evidently was a change subsequently. After this experience and the one with Miriam, both of which happened early in the wilderness wanderings, Aaron was faithful and was approved of God. Psalm 133 gives the idealistic picture of the holy anointing oil being poured on Aaron's head and running down his beard to the hem of his garment.

Malachi 2:8 states, "Ye [the priests in Malachi's day] have corrupted the covenant of Levi." The suggestion is that Levi was an honorable person. When we read the accounts of David, Jacob, and Levi, we find some unfavorable characteristics. For example, a prophecy about Levi mentioned weapons, showing he had a disposition that needed to be overcome, and so did David. But in the final analysis, David was a man after God's own heart, and Levi, too, ended up with an honorable connotation. Therefore, we cannot be so high-minded as to what we would have done in the same circumstance.

Some Christians who say, "I would *never* do such and such," end up doing that very thing. God is merciful to those who take the proper steps to conform to His character.

Jonah is another example. He was a *true* prophet of God, but the Holy Spirit chose to tell us of only one incident in his life. Because he was a stickler for *righteousness*, he could not understand God's sending him to such a wicked city—Nineveh.

Earlier God said that if the priesthood did not obey the commandment and glorify Him, He would punish them and their seed. However, all things being equal, if the priesthood obeyed, God would keep the Levites in honor and let the covenant remain with them because He so appreciated the stand they had taken with Moses against the golden calf many years earlier. However, in the meantime, something else had happened so that the future priesthood in Ezekiel's Temple will be taken only from the Zadok branch of the Levites. Zadok was very devout in David's day. Therefore, the covenant stayed with the Levites but was narrowed down to the lineage of Zadok. Notice that the Levites were addressed here as one man: "Levi."

Why were Levi and his good attributes and faithfulness brought into the account here? There was a lot of condemnation of the priesthood in Malachi's day, so these verses reminded the priests of their pure beginning and how the priesthood had become corrupted. The priesthood was being addressed, not the populace (verse 1).

Mal. 2:5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

Comment: Numbers 25:10-13 reads, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.”

Reply: Phinehas was of the tribe of Levi. By killing a man and a woman who were grievously sinning in the sight of the nation, he stayed a plague. With a javelin, he pierced both of them through. He was related to Levi, and by that action, he confirmed God’s interest in the continuity of the Levitical priesthood. In other words, the Levites, the moral instructors, intervened in a morality issue through the person of Phinehas.

“My covenant [of life and peace] was with him [Levi]”; that is, God’s covenant was originally with the Levites. Early in their history, the Israelites worshipped the golden calf. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai and found the golden calf, an imaginary line was drawn, and the question was asked, “Who is on the LORD’S side?” (Exod. 32:26). The Levites all *quickly* decided to take a stand for God and then, upon instruction from Him, slew their brothers until He told them to stop. This obedience showed that the Levites properly feared God. Thus of all the tribes, they were best suited to represent the religious aspect and to mediate between God and the nation. By taking Moses’ side, they evidenced *character* and were in a position to teach. As a whole, the Levites faithfully performed for a while, but corruption crept in as time went on.

The Levites were substituted for the firstborn, who were delivered from the tenth plague in Egypt. By sparing the firstborn, God had really “purchased” them, but instead He took the tribe of Levi. A covenant was then made with the Levites that they should represent the priesthood.

Mal. 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

“The law of truth was in his [Levi’s] mouth.” Levi was the first parent of the priesthood; that is, he preceded Aaron. The firstborn sons were ransomed, redeemed, and replaced by the tribe of Levi. As already mentioned, when Moses asked, “Who is on the LORD’S side?” the whole tribe of Levi responded. These acts, including the righteous indignation of Phinehas, show that the Levitical priesthood not only stood behind Moses but also stood for Jehovah. Of course Aaron was a descendant of Levi, the lineage being Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Aaron.

Levi “walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity”; that is, when the tribe of Levi was selected for standing on God’s side, their wholesome influence turned many from iniquity. The covenant God made with Levi was that (1) he and his progeny were to be the priestly tribe with no inheritance in the land, and (2) from them, the priesthood would be selected. When the Law of Moses came, with all of its specifics, the continuity of the priesthood remained. Some of those specifics were observed before the Law was given; for example, there was some recognition of the sabbath day. However, the Mosaic Law added an abundance of detail and provided more structure. The point is that the Law Covenant God gave at the hand of Moses was separate from the covenant He had previously made with Levi.

Q: At the time of Jacob’s deathbed prophecy, it was said of Simeon and Levi that “instruments

of cruelty” were in their habitations (Gen. 49:5). The King James margin has the clause “Their swords are weapons of violence.” This prophecy came true in a good sense in the incident at Mount Sinai when the Levites were on the Lord’s side. Was the prophecy a warning to Levi and his posterity that this tendency was in them, but if it was disciplined for the Lord and for righteousness, instead of for cruelty, it was a good characteristic?

A: A sermon could be given on this subject, but we think along the following line. The Apostle Peter had certain characteristics before consecration that needed disciplining. However, once Peter consecrated, dedicating his life to follow Jesus, this trait of violence and not wanting to be under rulership became constrained. Similarly, a wild horse that is broken is far superior to an ordinary horse that is brought up gently and fed well. The spirited horse that is broken and controlled is far more valuable than one that is docile by nature. The same is true with people. Hence God chooses rough diamonds. The Lord’s jewels are not putty but have some backbone to start with. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that backbone has to be curbed and controlled, and when it is, the result is superior to the common lot of mankind, who lack that drive. Accordingly, Aaron’s character changed for the good, as did that of Paul and Peter.

When Jacob went into Egypt, 70 males accompanied him, including Levi, who was no youngster at that time. From the original cruel trait, there was a change, as we are reading in Malachi. After standing up for Moses and the Lord at Mount Sinai, a change came in the Levites’ lives. From that time forward in the wilderness, there were very good qualities.

Mal. 2:7 For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

“The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek the law at his mouth: for he [the priest] is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”

Comment: This principle is excellent to carry forth into the New Creation.

Reply: All of the consecrated, who are called to be kings and priests, have this additional responsibility. Therefore, knowledge is not to be decried or belittled because it is an important function. The “law of truth” is to be in their mouth for others to seek (verses 6 and 7).

Mal. 2:8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Mal. 2:9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

The priesthood became corrupt and left their responsibility of being proper instructors, examples, and representatives of God. They “departed out of the way.” Malachi was writing at a very late date—in the days of Nehemiah. In writing about the current situation, he was saying that originally the Levitical priesthood was worthy, but now it was so corrupt that even the people disesteemed the priesthood.

The Levites were “partial in the law” by showing favoritism in judgment and taking advantage of widows and orphans. One sin was that they were partial to their friends in matters of judgment. They were supposed to be *impartial* according to the Spirit of Jehovah, but instead they granted favors to family and friends and accepted bribes from others. In other words, the priesthood was *mercenary*. The priests not only made sure the tithes were paid but also tried to increase them. In the days of Eli, for example, his sons selected unauthorized parts of the meat for their tithes. By so doing, they made the priesthood a stench. Eli was disobedient by not

reprimanding his sons.

Comment: The Levites put heavy burdens on others but not on themselves.

Mal. 2:10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Malachi was speaking. He identified himself with the priests in pleading with them and using the pronoun “we.” He was saying that there was a distinction between clergy and laity (just as in the nominal Church) with the Levites taking advantage of the people. Partiality, a feeling of superiority, and taking advantage of certain prerogatives for self-aggrandizement were all examples of dealing treacherously.

From a natural standpoint, treachery and false dealing are less apt to occur in an actual fleshly family. Family members may argue, but there is a certain amount of loyalty and respect because they are all related according to the flesh.

Spiritually speaking, there would be fewer problems if brethren *truly loved* one another according to the scriptural injunction. Christians are to regard one another as *equals*, all having the same *Father*. Then they will have sympathy and tolerance for one another’s shortcomings, differences in doctrinal beliefs, differences in social practices, etc., and they will try to help one who strays.

We are all part of a *spiritual family*, but the danger when someone differs with us doctrinally or on another point—and we are sure we are right—is that we will begin to think the individual is not loyal to the truth. If we have this attitude, our heart will shrink a little, it will be harder to deal with that one as a brother or sister in Christ, and we will have a certain amount of reserve, such as not calling on that one for prayer. This caution would not include one who openly sins grossly or renounces a fundamental doctrine, for such individuals should be noted and treated according to the situation. The high standard should be for *ourselves*, and the judgment of others should be left with the Lord, although we can try to help without getting unduly spun into the web ourselves (Jude 23).

If the priests had regarded the Israelites properly as children of the Most High, they would not have taken advantage of the people but would have wanted to *help* and *serve* them. If the priests had had the spirit of oneness as God’s chosen people, and if they had been sincerely dedicated to the office, they would have realized what a privilege and honor it was to serve the people, and the base treachery would have been eliminated. They did not recognize the unity of the one calling—that the Israelites were a peculiar people called out of the world. The Christian is to deal with his brethren as new creatures. “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). The Jewish nation should have had that principle or spirit in dealing with each other.

Mal. 2:11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

How had Judah “profaned the holiness” of God? It was like history repeating itself a *double* time. Much earlier Israel, the ten tribes, had been taken into captivity for their sins and disobedience. Judah should have learned the lesson and reformed but did not. Consequently, King Nebuchadnezzar was permitted to take the two tribes into captivity. After 70 years, the Jews were allowed to return and rebuild the Temple, but they still had not learned the lesson. The Jews who returned from exile were predominantly from Judah, and they began to do the

same evil things all over again.

It was now about 454 BC, and the return from the 70-year Babylonian captivity had taken place in 536 BC. The Jews who had returned to Israel were mostly Levites and people from Judah. Hence this message, this scathing denunciation, was especially addressed to the two-tribe kingdom and the Levites.

How had Judah “married the daughter of a strange god”? King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah had joined together years earlier to fight the common enemy Syria. In this league, the son of Jehoshaphat had married the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. God frowned upon this union, for Israel was in a far worse spiritual condition than Judah. Because of the marriage, the sins of Israel would filter into and, in time, permeate Judah. Verse 11 is based on that past incident, but it also had a current application in Malachi’s day.

Comment: According to the Law, the Jews were to marry within their own tribe, let alone within the nation, but Nehemiah 13:23 tells, “In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab.” Mixed marriages were forbidden.

Reply: Earlier Ezra had made the Jews separate from their foreign wives, but in a very short time, they reverted back to mixed marriages. In Ezra’s day, many of the marriages had occurred back in Babylon, whereas in Nehemiah’s day, just a short while later, the Jews again disobeyed by marrying local foreign wives. Ezra 9:1,2 tells how the Jews who returned from exile intermarried with the daughters of the surrounding heathen lands (Canaanites, Hittites, etc.). As a result, the holy seed was again corrupted—Balaam’s counsel to King Balak was again being followed. Even though Ezra had made the Jews separate from their heathen wives, the people returned to their wrong practices in Malachi’s day, thus diluting the Jewish religion, especially through the children. (Heathen mothers raised their children to worship heathen gods.) Incidentally, Papacy followed this practice for years. When there was intermarriage with a Protestant, the Catholic was expected to raise all children in the Catholic religion.

What is the thought of the clause “which he loved”? At one time in the past, Judah did love the holiness of Jehovah. The King James margin has the alternate reading “which [Judah] ought to love.” God’s mercy to Judah lasted longer than it did to the ten tribes because the latter were a little more wicked. Eventually the two tribes were also taken into captivity, and the land was made desolate.

Mal. 2:12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

God would cut off those who intermarried regardless of who they were—“the master [teacher] and [even] the scholar.” The NIV reads, “As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty.” All would be held accountable. To “cut off” implied even putting to death.

Comment: The master and the scholar were regarded as being very intelligent and having the ability to reason, but their intelligence and position did not matter, for all would be cut off.

Mal. 2:13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

God did not accept the offerings because of *insincere* sorrow and repentance. The people cried and repeatedly said they were sorry, but they kept making the same willful mistakes, which

they were capable of correcting.

Comment: We are reminded of Judas, who cried but was not forgiven.

Reply: Yes, the colloquial term “crocodile tears” indicates insincerity while appearing to be contrite. Since God can read the heart, He knows when sorrow is misleading.

Comment: In the antitype, it is like the wrong principle of sinning on Saturday night and going to Confession on Sunday without trying to correct the matter.

Reply: The “tears” are not necessarily literal in that case but refer to superficial repentance by a person’s going to the Confessional booth to have sins remitted yet not effecting any change in his life in regard to proper worship of the Lord.

Comment: A practice down through history was to hire women as mourners for a funeral, thereby producing a hypocritical atmosphere of extreme sorrow that may not have been felt by the family members of the deceased.

Comment: Jesus contrasted the publican who stood afar off and beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” Meanwhile, the Pharisee prayed, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” Jesus said that the sinner, who humbled himself, was justified but not the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14).

Malachi was saying that the people’s insincere tears would not make God change His mind. The same evil practices were repeated so often throughout Israel’s history that God would not listen to them.

Mal. 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Malachi was speaking about the marriage covenant. The “wife of thy youth” was the original Jewish wife who was put away for a heathen wife. Thus the Israelite men were not being faithful to their marriage vows. There was a double problem: (1) The wife of their youth was cast aside because the men wanted younger women. (That problem also exists today where the original wife is forgotten and despised or ignored.) (2) The new wife was of “foreign” extraction, that is, not a Jew. The men married the daughter of a “strange god” (verse 11).

In reading these verses, we can see that God hates divorce—and what usually motivates it: adultery and unfaithfulness. The Jewish man’s divorcing the wife of his youth and marrying a heathen woman, thus forsaking his earlier marriage vows, was an analogy to how the *nation* was unfaithful to God and forsook its vows to Him. Both priesthood and people were guilty of divorce and remarriage to foreign wives. Covenant breaking is dealing “treacherously.”

Mal. 2:15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Mal. 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

The NIV is good: “Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why

one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.” Marital fidelity within a given tribe and within the nation would lead to a godly seed. God despised divorce because it was a disguise for lust and the desire to change. In many cases, the bill of divorce was a cover-up of wrong motives by the man. That was dealing treacherously with God and His commandments.

God wanted a pure and godly Jewish seed so that Messiah would come from that lineage. Consider the circumstances of the Jewish nation. If a male Jew wanted to be faithful to the God of Israel, he hearkened to the instructions and commandments laid down in the Law. The people knew that the Messiah was to be born of the seed of a Jewish woman, and as a people, the Jews were looking forward to the Messiah. Therefore, the nation would become contaminated through mixed marriages.

Some in Old Testament times who were more advanced in the study of the Law realized that Messiah would have associates and not just be one individual. In fact, the thought has been inbred in the Jews down through many centuries that the Messiah is Israel. In the spiritual sense, Messiah is the holy seed of which Christ is the Head and the Church is his body. From a natural standpoint, the Holy Remnant will be a holy seed, or class, down here on the human plane.

“And did not he [God] make one?” is a reference to Adam and Eve, who were “made one.” God approved the marriage relationship, and all should abide by it. When Eve sinned, Adam could not bear the thought of separation from her—he thought that if she was removed from him, he would be all alone again—so he “committed suicide” by also partaking of the forbidden fruit. That situation was directly opposite to the one Malachi was rebuking, but a certain lesson concerning providence was common to both. If the one to whom the Jew was married was undesirable in God’s sight (like Eve when she sinned), he should have had *forbearance and sufficient faith* to wait for God’s providence to remove the wife (that is, if she was as bad as he thought). The Jews should not have forced the issue by obtaining a divorce. Adam’s rash act indicated a *lack of faith*. Instead he could have reasoned, “God breathed the breath of life into me, and I became a living soul. Subsequently God took Eve out of my side. Surely a residue of that spirit remains, and God’s hand is not shortened so that He cannot create another woman.” Instead of sinning, Adam should have abided by the contract he had made with God, and in time, another woman would have been raised up. But Adam lacked experience and faith.

Therefore, Malachi was saying, “Isn’t there enough residue of the spirit of God? If the Jews have this problem with their marriage, isn’t there enough faith to wait for providence to remedy the situation?” The danger was in jumping out ahead of the Lord and marrying a foreigner. *God* is the One who instituted the marriage relationship in the first place.

As already stated, the purpose of this reasoning was that God wanted a *pure, godly seed*. Matthew 19:7,8 tells that He had arranged for a bill of divorcement under the Law because of the hardness of the people’s hearts. Under certain circumstances, the Jew could be divorced. It takes the efforts of both parties to make a satisfying marriage. Because problems sometimes developed with one party, the people wanted a divorce arrangement, and the Lord made provision for divorce under certain circumstances.

Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 tell that with the Christian, the one contingency where divorce is permitted is fornication. When husband and wife are both consecrated, divorce is not permitted unless one of them commits adultery and thus causes a breach in the contract.

Some feel the Scriptures teach this matter only one way—that the man can put away the wife

and remarry but that the wife cannot put away the husband and remarry. That was the case under the Law but not with the Christian. Since there is neither male nor female in Christ, either husband or wife can obtain a divorce if the other party has committed adultery. The condition was stated in the *masculine* gender, but so are all the promises to the Christian. In the type, the man represents the Lord, and the woman represents the Church. The Lord is always faithful; the Church is sometimes unfaithful. Perhaps that is the reason the Holy Spirit expressed matters from the masculine standpoint both in the Law and with the Christian.

Based on Matthew 5:32, if the law of the land grants a divorce to a man when his wife has not committed adultery, she cannot remarry, even though she is legally divorced. Separation is permitted but not remarriage. The reverse is also true: the husband cannot remarry. In other words, a consecrated individual has no right to divorce and remarry unless the spouse has committed adultery. If one marries a divorced party who has committed adultery (thus causing the former marriage to dissolve), that one commits adultery. However, one can marry an *innocent* divorced party whose spouse has committed adultery.

Brothers who disobey on these matters should not be elders. And any brother or sister who commits adultery should be disfellowshipped in a class trial. Incidentally, the term “put away” in the scriptural context of marriage means *divorce*, not mere separation.

In regard to the Law favoring the man, we should remember that the Law was typical. Because the type had to remain pure, the man, who represented the Lord, got the advantage in many instances. However, the New Testament cannot be interpreted from the standpoint of the Law.

Mal. 2:17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

Both back there in Malachi’s day and in our day, evil was called good. To be faithful, we must recognize that evil is evil and good is good.

The expression “yet ye say” followed by a question is used multiple times in the Book of Malachi, but *actions* speak louder than words (Mal. 1:2; 2:14,17; 3:13). In this case, the action bespeaks the words. Two polarized views are given in the illustration of verse 17: (1) Some look on the evildoer with compassion and mercy and overlook the evil characteristics and traits to the injury of the person and to the disgust of God, who is aware of this situation. (2) Others recognize the evil as evil, but they question God’s providence, asking, “Why does God permit wrong? Where is the God of judgment?” In their sourness and bitterness, they become rejects.

Thus some are more loving than God, and others are so severe in their judgment that when they see providence favoring the evildoer, they question God. Both classes manifest wrong conditions. Instead we should recognize evil as evil and good as good and try to be as merciful as possible, especially if proper repentance is manifested. We should be concerned for long-term salvation and not for short-term expediency for the sake of fellowship.

James 5:20 states, “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” The one who converts a sinner from the error of his way hides a multitude of sins of both the sinner and himself. In other words, if we see a wrong and endeavor to help such a one so that proper steps of repentance are taken and amends are made, God will be more merciful to us in overlooking some of our sins. However, mercy must be extended according to the instruction of Scripture. Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy,” but that mercy is predicated upon doing things *God’s way* (Matt. 5:7). We are to be merciful *as God is merciful*.

Israel was a covenanted people, yet they said one of the following:

1. “All who do evil are good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them.” The Israelites saw that those doing evil were prospering materially, so they concluded that God liked the evil ones. Because there was no radical punishment, they assumed that evil was permissible.
2. “Where is the God of judgment?” The Israelites criticized God for not justly punishing the disobedient and rewarding the obedient. This attitude slandered God and His methods.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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.

As a review, Nehemiah, the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was given a 12-year leave of absence to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls in 454 BC, which was the twentieth year of the king's reign. When the 12 years ended, Nehemiah went back to Persia. Subsequently he got a second leave of absence to return to Israel. The Book of Malachi describes existing conditions at that time, that is, upon Nehemiah's second return. The prophet decried those conditions.

In most Bibles, verses 1-6 of this third chapter form one theme, but we will purposely omit verses 5 and 6 for the time being. Verses 1 and 2 are very familiar, but the Lord's Word is like silver refined seven times. There is *much* information in these two verses—much more than meets the eye initially.

Several questions arise. To whom do the pronouns “I,” “my,” and “me” refer? Who is the “messenger” in the beginning of verse 1? Who is “the messenger of the covenant” mentioned later in the verse? In order to be on the right track, we have to consider some other Scriptures.

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the *LORD*, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

“Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

“And the glory of the *LORD* shall be revealed, and *all* flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the *LORD* hath spoken it.” (Isa. 40:3-5)

These three verses in Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3:1,2 are grouped together in the New Testament, as will be shown.

“As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Mark 1:2,3)

Notice that verse 2 is a partial quotation of Malachi 3:1, and verse 3 is a quotation from Isaiah 40:3. In other words, these two verses in the Gospel of Mark are excerpts from Malachi 3 and Isaiah 40.

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:76,17—notice the *reverse order*)

We continue to exhaust New Testament texts that refer to Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

“And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

“As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Luke 3:3,4)

“This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (Luke 7:27; see also Matt. 11:10)

“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

“He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.” (John 1:22,23)

The reference in the Gospels to “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” is a quotation from Isaiah 40:3-5. In the Gospels, the identity of that “voice” is clearly John the Baptist. However, notice the pronouns in the readings. For example, in Luke 7:27, “I” is God, and “thy face” refers to Jesus’ face. In other words, *God* was saying that He would send His messenger to introduce *Jesus* to the nation of Israel. Thus the pronoun “I” in the parallel Gospel citations refers to Jehovah.

However, Malachi 3:1 is phrased differently: “Behold, *I* will send *my* messenger, and he shall prepare the way before *me*.” On the surface, a problem exists, for the New Testament expressly states that Malachi 3:1 had at least a *partial* fulfillment in the ministry of John the Baptist, who introduced Jesus before the nation, and that Jehovah sent John as His messenger for this purpose.

Once again we will read Malachi 3:1 but with some explanatory insertions. “Behold, I [Jehovah] will send my messenger [The Christ, a multitudinous seed of which Christ is the Head and the glorified Church is the body], and he [The Christ] shall prepare the way before me [Jehovah].” This interpretation is not disharmonious with the application in the Gospels because Malachi 3:1 has *two fulfillments at two different times*, one at the First Advent and one at the Second Advent. At the First Advent, Jesus was in the flesh, and throughout the Gospel Age, the Church, which was not officially recognized until Pentecost, has been represented in the flesh.

Let us put the matter another way. What about Elijah the prophet from a symbolic standpoint? Elijah represents The Christ, Head and body members, because a *man* in Scripture includes the head as well as the body members. When addressed separately, the Church is pictured as a *woman*. Therefore, Elijah the prophet is The Christ in the flesh, Jesus being the first. After he finished his ministry, the gospel Church did the work of Elijah. (We are omitting the mini-picture of John the Baptist at this time.)

When Jesus was asked by his disciples, “Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?” he replied that Elijah would have a *double* fulfillment. “Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Matt. 17:10,11). Notice, “Elias truly shall [1] first come, and [2] restore all things.” In other words, the Elijah *in glory* shall “restore all things” at his second coming, whereas the Elijah *in the flesh* expounds the truth in an attempt, if possible, to turn the hearts of the people to the Lord. However, what fails during the Gospel Age to exalt every valley, to bring down every hill, to make every crooked way straight, etc., will be accomplished in the Kingdom. The Pastor made a quantum leap in speaking about the Elijah class and the messenger as being not the Church in the flesh in the present age, suffering persecution, but the Church in glory, who will restore all things, achieving restitution.

In summary, Malachi 3:1 is saying, “Behold, I [Jehovah] will send my messenger [The Christ] ... [to] prepare the way before me ... saith the LORD of hosts.” In contrast, the New Testament implies the way before Jesus.

What about the word “Lord” in Malachi 3:1? “... 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.” The use of just an initial capital “L” (Hebrew *adon*) is a reference to Jesus. When John the Baptist said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord [Jesus], as said the prophet Esaias,” he was quoting from Isaiah 40:3, which has “LORD” in all caps, referring to Jehovah (John 1:23). Thus there are two fulfillments: (1) John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus at the First Advent; (2) The Christ will prepare the way for Jehovah at the Second Advent. The preparation of the way before God (Isa. 40:3) will be successful in that every valley will be raised up and every hill or mountain will be brought low. In addition, “the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.” The latter is a *vertical* correction, for the crooked are like a serpent that will be made parallel. With every mountain being brought low and every valley being exalted, the thought is that the contour of the land will be flattened out and made a plain in a *horizontal* correction.

The *full* fulfillment of Malachi 3:1-4 will occur at the Second Advent. Only a *partial* fulfillment took place at the First Advent. All will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. This context in the Book of Malachi, which is condensed like an acorn, is very comprehensive, and thus we began our consideration of the third chapter with the statement that the Word of God is like silver refined seven times (Psa. 12:6). Verse 4 reads, “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.” Verse 4 applies to *natural* Israel, and not to the Church in any sense of the word. If we go back one verse and reread verse 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,” we see that the reference is to *both natural and spiritual* Israel.

Bro. Russell was intent on explaining the spiritual (or higher) fulfillment, but verse 3 also has a natural fulfillment. The purging of the sons of Levi so that they can make “an offering in righteousness ... as in the days of old” means a purging of natural Israel, namely, the Holy Remnant. Many brethren cannot see Israel as being at the forefront when the Kingdom is starting because the Jews are not in a proper heart condition. The nation is ungodly and does

not manifest true reverence. However, the majority of Jews will not be part of the Holy Remnant class, and it is the majority voice that is currently being heard.

The same principle applies to the Truth movement. The prevalent doctrines are those of the majority, but that fact does not necessarily mean those doctrines are all correct. In fact, John the Baptist said, “He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). By extension, those of the Little Flock who are still in the flesh are becoming fewer and fewer in number, while the Great Company are increasing percentage-wise. The views of the Little Flock are not being expressed by the movement as a whole, for the thinking and views of the Great Company are predominating. This is blunt talk, but people are afraid to talk bluntly today.

In the spiritual application, the sons of Levi represent the consecrated, those who are aspiring to be of the spiritual priesthood. We are all running for the prize of the high calling, desiring to be members of the spiritual priesthood in glory and to be kings associated with Jesus, but in the final analysis, only certain individuals selected by God will be members of the Little Flock. Of course we cannot make the distinction, for all we have to do is to look inward and see our own imperfections. The question is, Will the Lord overlook our imperfections and grant us membership in that elect class? That is our hope, but we have no guarantee.

One sits “as a refiner and purifier of *silver*,” but the end result will be *two classes: gold and silver* (Mal. 3:3). Silver is used because it is common to both metals in the purifying process. Verse 3 pictures the testing of the consecrated, “silver” being the foolish virgins, the Elisha class, the Great Company, and the “gold” being the wise virgins, the Elijah class, the Little Flock.

As a sidelight, the refining process for silver begins with impurities. Reprobate silver is not used but silver that has the potential for purifying. When the refiner starts the flame, the metal gets hot, and the first color that appears is a deep red. Accordingly, when we consecrate, our imperfections are likened to scarlet. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). When we enter the narrow way, we begin to see how much we have to develop to attain the hope of the high calling. As we strive against our imperfections, the red becomes orange—a little less, a paler red—and finally down to silver as we make sufficient progress. Silver is used in the back of mirrors, and so the Refiner sits there until he sees his face distinctly in the mirror, meaning that all impurities are removed. At the end of the age, even the Great Company will have their impurities removed when they wash their robes in the great Time of Trouble (Rev. 7:13,14). Jesus looks for his reflection in each of the consecrated, and both the silver and the gold classes will get cleansed in the final analysis. Stated another way, to be of either class, one must reach the “silver” stage of development.

Silver and gold pertain to metals that must be melted to be rid of impurities. “Reprobate silver” pictures the Second Death (or reject) class, for it is silver from which the impurities cannot be removed.

Comment: In *Harvest Gleanings*, the Pastor said that the object of the refiner is to separate the dross, but if the metal clings too closely to its impurities, more and more heat will be applied until, finally, even the metal itself will be destroyed, thus illustrating the causes which lead to Second Death.

Malachi brought in the thought of not only metals but also clothing. The purpose of “fullers’ soap” is to clean clothing, or laundry. Thus there is a double work: the cleaning of both metal and clothing. Fullers’ soap is *strong*. Launderers or dry cleaners are usually quite successful in removing stains, but the problem is that the repeated removal of deep stains often damages the shirt because of the use of caustic solutions.

We will now consider verse 2. To understand the unknown, we sometimes have to reason from the known. If something is unknown and bewildering, it helps to take out the parts that are clear so that the problem part will not be as fuzzy.

“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” When will verse 2 be fulfilled? The fulfillment will begin in the trouble at the end of the Gospel Age, during Christ’s Second Advent. Jesus has been sitting as an angel on a cloud with a sickle in his hand to reap the Lord’s true wheat *before* the grapes of wrath of the vine of the earth are cast into the great winepress of trouble (Rev. 14:14,15,18,19). First, he will reap the earth of the Little Flock—the wheat germ, or kernels of wheat.

Verses 2-4 have a fulfillment at this end of the age and even a little further on, but Jesus said there was a partial fulfillment back at the First Advent. Elijah *in the flesh* does a work but is unsuccessful. Then will come the great Time of Trouble when Elijah *in the spirit* will be empowered from on high and will succeed in converting the fathers to childlike obedience, humility, and meekness. The hearts of the fathers will be changed in the Kingdom Age when they come forth from the tomb.

Next we will return to verse 1. “Behold, I will send my messenger.” At the First Advent, the term “my messenger” was John the Baptist, but at the Second Advent, the term will refer to The Christ, God’s representative, who will do Kingdom work to make *every* valley and mountain level. In still another (or third) sense, the term “my messenger” can be considered the consecrated in the flesh, who have been preaching the gospel down through the Gospel Age beginning with Jesus, the Head, who said, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

When considered from one standpoint, “my messenger” prepares the way of *Jehovah* in the Kingdom Age. From another standpoint, the preparing of *Adonai* (Jesus) took place at the First Advent. Thus Malachi 3 contains two pictures.

The “messenger of the covenant” is primarily Jesus. In the larger sense in the future, the application is to The Christ in connection with the New Covenant. At the present time, we are *practicing* ministers of the New Covenant; that is, we are practicing now, hoping to qualify as ministers of the New Covenant for mankind. The New Covenant, which will be made with Israel, will be part of the overall Abrahamic Covenant.

As a point of interest, this book is called the “Book of Malachi,” and the word “Malachi” means “my messenger.” Thus this book is a paronomasia, a play on words, used by God to keep the message from being understood too clearly too quickly. Present truth is needed to even begin to scratch the surface.

A literal individual was named Malachi; that is, he was named “My messenger.” Malachi 1:1 states, “The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi,” and some Bibles use “my messenger” instead of “Malachi” in this first verse. As initially voiced, the words of the prophecy in chapter 1 through the Prophet Malachi were God’s message to natural Israel. Chapter 2 gives another application to Malachi but in a *plural* form: “For the priest[hood]’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he [the priesthood] is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 2:7). The priests of Levi were supposed to dispense knowledge, but instead they dispensed *misinformation*, *wrong instruction*. Thus they were called “my messengers” but in a very modified sense. The priests did not realize their responsibility—that they had the privileged position of becoming the *spiritual* seed (or priesthood). They could

have been both the natural and the spiritual seed, but they lost the latter. Hence “messenger” can be considered a collective community. “Priesthood” is a singular word, but it comprises a number of people.

The “my messenger” class of the Old Testament failed. In the restricted sense, the “my messenger” class of the Gospel Age has been loyal but not successful. In the *broad* sense, the priesthood of this age has failed as miserably as, or worse than, the priesthood of natural Israel. Malachi was speaking of the *priests*, not the people. Spiritually speaking, Malachi was addressing *us*, the consecrated in the present life, because the spiritual priesthood is in the *process of incremental development* in the present age. The full fulfillment is yet future, but a partial fulfillment started at the First Advent, at the beginning of the Gospel Age.

Isaiah 4:2-5 reads:

“In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are *escaped* of Israel.

“And it shall come to pass, that he that is *left* in Zion, and he that *remaineth* in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is *written among the living* in Jerusalem:

“When the Lord shall have *washed away the filth* of the daughters of Zion, and shall have *purged* the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of *judgment*, and by the spirit of *burning*.

“And the LORD will create upon *every dwellingplace* of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”

When this purging work is complete, God’s presence will be manifested to *every dwelling place*. The Prophet Isaiah was talking about *natural* Israel, about “he that is left” in Jerusalem, about the Holy Remnant, about the survivors of the future holocaust called Jacob’s Trouble. In the holocaust, not only will a large portion of Gog be destroyed (to come up in the resurrection later), but also a great number in Israel will go into the tomb. *Every one* of those who are left “shall be called *holy*.” The account implies that *no one* will survive Jacob’s Trouble unless, from God’s standpoint, he is considered holy—“every one that is written” in God’s book.

In all probability, since we are living at the end of the age, the Holy Remnant are all on the scene now. Of course they are not manifest yet, but they are here. Also, even in our midst, as well as in nominal Christendom, God knows those who are His very elect but are not yet manifest. As time goes on, those whom He has chosen will be revealed. There should be no problem with Israel’s being the chief nation in the Kingdom, for the Holy Remnant will be a truly changed people. Similarly, when we see some who have made a true conversion to Christ, our heart goes out to them. We admire them for the stand they are taking, knowing that trials and difficulties await them for walking anew in the spirit in the narrow way.

Q: Does Psalm 83:3 refer to the Holy Remnant with the term “hidden ones”? “They have taken crafty counsel against thy people [Israel], and consulted against thy hidden ones.”

A: Yes. Psalm 83 pertains to Israel’s being threatened by those living in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Transjordan, and up north toward Syria. The surrounding Arab nations in these areas *will unite in purpose* against Israel, conspiring to have a real jihad to destroy Israel *utterly*. Psalm 83 is Israel’s prayer; the Holy Remnant will figuratively get down on their knees.

Mal. 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 not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Mal. 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Notice that God will come near to Israel “to judgment,” and He will be “a swift witness” against sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, those who do not fear Him, and those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, the fatherless, and strangers. Then God said, through Malachi, “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed [utterly].” God will purge out the sorcerers, adulterers, liars, etc., and the Holy Remnant will remain. However, the Holy Remnant in Israel will not necessarily know of this selectivity; they will just see that they are surviving and others are not. From God’s standpoint, all Jews not fit to be of the Holy Remnant will be purged out. As time goes on, each survivor will realize God has been doing a cleansing and a purging work. In addition, the Ancient Worthies will come forth.

Q: What is the thought in verse 1 that Messiah “shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger [The Christ] of the [New] covenant”?

A: For many years, we had wondered and longed to know what will cause the sudden conversion of the Jew in Jacob’s Trouble. Like us, the Jews are very strong-minded, whether for right or for wrong, so certainly a discourse will not bring the conversion. Therefore, we believe that there will be a *literal* beholding of a gigantic hologram of Jesus on the Cross. Every eye will see Jesus at that time and recognize him as the Messiah (Rev. 1:7). Such a huge scene will open the beholders’ minds instantly.

While sitting in a meeting in our home some time ago, Sr. Saphore told us that when she was on the Mount of Olives, an uncommon heavy rainstorm occurred with lightning. As she looked out the window, she was aghast to see opposite them on Calvary a vision of Jesus on the Cross. I was dumbfounded, and then, as several Scriptures flooded my mind, I knew that was the answer with regard to the conversion of the Holy Remnant. They will not see Jesus literally, but they will see a huge hologram of the Crucifixion, a three-dimensional picture, as they flee through the split Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4,5).

In the *Jerusalem Post* about a year later, in a column in the back, two rabbis testified that during another storm, they had seen Jesus on the Cross on the hill in Jerusalem. They got a lot of opposition for this testimony, but to us, this second account was a confirmation of the validity of a hologram appearing at the time God rescues the Holy Remnant in the near future.

Jacob’s Trouble will start when Gog and Magog are seen coming down and approaching Jerusalem. The Jews will experience real fear, knowing that the situation is hopeless from a natural standpoint. The conversion of the Holy Remnant has to be a greater experience than one like that of a drowning man who emotionally calls on God without a depth of consecration. Many Jews believe Jesus is a false Messiah, and some Orthodox Jews will even spit when his name is mentioned. For such individuals to see that Jesus truly is the Messiah will bring great fear, mourning, weeping, and contrition. That will be the conversion—when they recognize Jesus and realize the holocaust is God’s judgment coming on them to cleanse them. Not only is Israel, the land, being prepared but also the people, the Holy Remnant.

Comment: Paul’s experience is an example of the conversion principle. He was so zealous in persecuting Christians that all it took was a vision to convert that zeal into proper channels. Formerly Paul was of the disposition to spit at Jesus’ name. Subsequently he was ready to die

for Jesus.

Supplemental Commentary on Malachi 3:1-6

There is a play on words in verse 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.” Malachi used sarcasm in the clauses “whom ye seek” and “whom ye delight in.” Through a series of questions, chapters 1 and 2 show the heart condition of the nation and the priests, who refused to recognize their sins. Hence they did not seek and delight in the Messiah to come. The priests’ service was hypocritical and superficial. If they were truly interested in the Lord’s Word and obeying the Law of Moses, the clauses would have been more meaningful. Therefore, Malachi inserted a strong tinge of sarcasm.

Although the term “messenger of the covenant” refers to Jesus and the New Covenant from the standpoint of the Jewish people, the term is broad with additional meanings. Jesus is the messenger of the *covenants* (plural), as follows: (1) The Law (or Hagar) Covenant was instituted with Moses, but the messenger sent of God to deliver the Law to him was the Logos. (2) At the First Advent, Jesus was the messenger sent of God for the Grace (or Sarah) Covenant. (3) With the New Covenant, the messenger is enlarged to include the Church and hence is The Christ. Thus the “messenger” of the Law Covenant, the Grace Covenant, and the New Covenant applies to Jesus, respectively, in his preexistence, at the First Advent when he announced the opportunity of the high calling, and to the New Covenant in the future when his body members are with him.

The word “messenger” is the Hebrew *malak*, also meaning “angel.” Angels are usually messengers, although there is a slight difference between the two terms. In verse 1, Malachi called Jesus “the messenger of the covenant.” In connection with the Mosaic Law Covenant, the Logos was the “angel of presence”; that is, he spoke on behalf of God, acting as though he were God Himself. Actually, Jesus’ role is to be God’s spokesperson with all three covenants. For example, the angels who announced Jesus’ birth at the First Advent said his name would be Emmanuel, meaning “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.” What is the “temple”? The context is future, for the suddenness of Jesus’ coming is related to Jacob’s Trouble, when a huge hologram of Messiah will be seen. “The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab. 2:20). The appearance of Messiah will bring about the repentance that is necessary in the Holy Remnant. First, God will deal with the Holy Remnant, miraculously sparing them from death because they are written among the survivors, but while they will be recognized of Him, they must repent and come into relationship with Christ in order to get full acceptance. Thus the selection of the Holy Remnant is a process in which God determines who will be part of the nucleus when the Kingdom of God is inaugurated down here on earth.

Q: Does the “house” of Haggai 2:7 apply to the “temple” of Malachi 3:1? “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

A: The shaking process will take place at the end of the age, but the building of the “house,” the Third Temple, will require a little time. When completed, it will be a “house of prayer” for all nations (Isa. 56:7).

Notice that the class being addressed in Malachi 3:1 was natural Israel. Therefore, the “sudden” coming applies to the natural seed and has a future fulfillment at the end of the age. In the

meantime, the spiritual “temple” class, the Church, must be complete before this visitation to natural Israel would apply.

Comment: Chapter 2 ends with the question “Where is the God of judgment?” Chapter 3 gives the answer in telling how He will come—with wrath and judgment and with Jesus doing a refining work.

Reply: Yes, the third chapter goes into the details of how God will come and the purging and cleansing aspect. It is true that Jesus sits as a refiner of silver and gold with regard to his gospel Church, but the thrust of the context here in Malachi is that the Holy Remnant will come through the trouble. Zechariah 13:8,9 reads, “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: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.” Two parts (the Little Flock and the Great Company) will be cut off, and the third part (the Holy Remnant) will go through the trouble. The application of Malachi 3:3 is primarily *natural*, but it has spiritual overtones.

Both Zechariah 13:8,9 and Malachi 3:3 state that natural Israel will be refined as *silver* and *gold*. Thus there is a hint in both Scriptures that the Holy Remnant may consist of *two* classes. Just as there are two classes spiritually (the Little Flock and the Great Company, Elijah and Elisha, etc.), so the Holy Remnant will consist of two classes, with the gold class having a few more leadership qualities.

Malachi 3:2 alludes to the washing of clothes: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” In a *spiritual* sense, the Great Company will wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:13,14). However, in the *natural* context, the washing of clothes indicates that the secondary class of the Holy Remnant will need more cleansing. Evidently, some of the Holy Remnant have been living a life *consistent with the Law* as much as is humanly possible, but another portion of the Holy Remnant will need the experience of Jacob’s Trouble to awaken them to the need of further cleansing. We would suggest, then, that there is a double class of the Holy Remnant as well as of the spiritual “remnant” in the Harvest period. From the spiritual standpoint, Jesus sits on a white cloud with a sharp sickle, he sits down on the seashore and sorts fish, and his servant feeds his people with meat in due season (Rev. 14:14; Matt. 13:47,48; Luke 12:42-44). This refining work is a Harvest picture that culminates, first, in the completion of the gold class and then, later, deals with the silver class (the Great Company).

Comment: The situation with the Holy Remnant is almost like a reversal and duplication of the situation with Cornelius. Although Cornelius was not accepted until AD 36, he was ready and waiting.

Reply: That is true. Cornelius was in a waiting, praying, and serving attitude *for years*, whereas many Gentiles were converted suddenly, without having given much previous thought, as a result of hearing the apostles preach the gospel. The “Cornelius” class, which has tried to serve God in blindness, is more commendable.

And there is another point. Prior to his conversion, Paul tried to serve God *zealously*, even though he was persecuting the Church. When converted, he was *more converted* than the ones who were not trying to serve God previously. God appreciates both classes, but He appreciates the “Paul” class more, for they *zealously* try to serve Him in their ignorance and blindness. Consider Peter, who said, “Since my youth, I have not eaten anything unclean” (Acts 10:14 paraphrase). Not an ordinary Jew, he had been faithful not to touch unclean things *before* his

enlightenment.

Mal. 3:7 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?

Comment: In verse 6, God said, “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”; that is, the promise He had previously made to Israel still applied. Then in verse 7, he added, “Return unto me, and I will return unto you.” Thus, despite the harsh judgments that were coming and the disobedience, God said He would receive the people back if they repented. The same principle applies with the Christian.

Comment: A marginal reference is Acts 7:51, where Stephen was addressing the Jews with his defense: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye.”

Verses 6 and 7 are a manifestation of *agape* love, which is a principled, unemotional, and disinterested love. God said, “I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.... Return unto me, and I will return unto you.” While *agape* love is a higher form of love in certain respects for the one who possesses it, yet for the receiver, *phileo* love is a closer love. God loves one who is serving Him; that is, *agape* love is manifested when one repents and turns to God, but it is not as close a love from the recipient’s standpoint as the love for one who *has maintained and continues to maintain* a relationship with God. We are admonished not to *phileo* (emotionally) love the world, or we will be guilty of friendship with the world, which God hates (James 4:4). Individuals of the world are enemies of God through wicked works and other things. However, God loves those of the world from the *agape* (detached, unemotional) standpoint in the sense that He allows them the opportunity of return. In contrast, His love for us now as individuals is the closer and more meaningful *phileo* love. *Agape* love is when God first calls and deals with a person or when a backslider repents, takes the proper steps, and comes back. *Phileo* love is a *sonship* love, as well as a *brotherly and sisterly* love.

Mal. 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Will a man rob God?” The normal response would be, “No! God forbid.” But God said through the Prophet Malachi, “Yet you *have* robbed me.” The natural response would be, “When did we rob you?” God replied, “In tithes and offerings.” In other words, “You have been remiss in the tithes and offerings that I commanded. Either you failed to perform them, or you cheated me by subtracting a little each time.” The reference was to literal, practical, material offerings pertaining to religious service. For example, tithes (or donations) for the sustenance of the priesthood were not properly performed. Since the priesthood had no inheritance in the land, this disobedience was a serious neglect. Instead of giving the required 10 percent, the Israelites gave 5 percent or perhaps nothing.

Comment: This same attitude will exist at the end of the Millennium, as shown in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46). The goat class will hypocritically ask, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?” They will not have served the Lord with a full heart.

Mal. 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

God continued to speak, “In tithes and offerings, you are cursed with a curse, for the *whole nation* has robbed me.” This statement condemned the nation, for only a very few Israelites

would not have been guilty of robbing God.

Mal. 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.

Mal. 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.

Jehovah enjoined the people to bring “all the tithes into the storehouse” so that there would be meat in His house. Then He added, “Prove me now herewith ... if I will not open [to] you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” Thus God issued a challenge. If the Israelites would bring *all* the tithes required, they would be *materially* compensated. In fact, they would be *abundantly* compensated for whatever deprivations might occur in connection with their faithfully giving the tithes.

In regard to opening the “windows of heaven” and pouring out a blessing, God mentioned the fruitfulness of the land, for it would yield an abundance of crops if the Israelites were faithful to their vows. For the 10 percent tithe that they were required to give, they would be compensated far more with the other 90 percent. Most of their offerings were freewill and voluntary, for although the tithes were mandatory, it was up to each individual to feel the responsibility and to give willingly. Since the people could not discern punishments for failure to give and obey, many thought, “Why bother?”

Comment: For those who knew Scripture, this terminology about opening the “windows of heaven” was powerful, for it hearkened back to the Flood in Genesis. There the “opening” was negative, but the *abundance* of water that poured out was being compared with the *abundance* of blessings the Israelites would receive for faithfulness.

Reply: Yes, the terminology was strong and emphatic. God was dealing with Israel, to whom material blessings were promised for obedience. With the Christian, the blessings are along spiritual lines. Christians are spiritually rewarded for bringing in “all the tithes,” that is, for being faithful to their consecration vows. If we are stingy in our consecration vows to God, He will be stingy to us. If our obedience is wholehearted and generous, we will be blessed proportionately—if not now in the present life then beyond the veil.

Comment: The Israelites were not just to bring tithes but “*all* the tithes.” If they fulfilled their *whole* part of the covenant, then God would do likewise. The spiritual lesson is that if we are faithful to our consecration vows, the divine nature will be the opening of our “windows of heaven” blessing.

Reply: Of course we tend to draw spiritual lessons, but the context is literal. If the Israelites faithfully brought tithes of *all* their crops and livestock, God would bless them abundantly.

Mal. 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

If the Israelites were faithful in giving all of their tithes, they would be called “blessed” by all of the other nations, and the land would be “delightsome.” Others would give them praise and express appreciation and get radial benefits by enjoying their land. Everyone would share in the happiness. Although these blessings did not happen back there, they will occur in the Kingdom. Of course there are counterpart lessons for spiritual Israel with regard to having the

Lord's favor.

Comment: This is a very good chapter for the Holy Remnant. In Jacob's Trouble, the sons of Levi will be purified as gold and silver so that "the offering of Judah and Jerusalem [will] be pleasant unto the LORD ... as in former years.... And all nations shall call ... [the Holy Remnant] blessed: for ... [they] shall be a delightsome land" (Mal. 3:3,4,12).

Reply: Yes, there is a prophetic application.

Mal. 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Mal. 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

Mal. 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

"What profit is it ... that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" The King James margin is even more forceful for verse 14: "What profit is it ... that we have walked *in black* [being outwardly reverent] before the LORD of hosts?" A visual concept is given of the Israelites walking in dark clothing, being depressed.

For verse 15, the King James margin says the wicked are "built" up. The conditions were a test of faith, for those who were faithful to God suffered loss. Conversely, those who did wickedly seemed to be blessed because they prospered. They were "set up"; they were recognized and honored and given popularity. In fact, even those who openly challenged God prospered.

One who was a well-known elder in the truth for many years became a humanist and then an atheist. Finally he said that to prove there was no God, he would curse God with a clenched fist on any occasion. Thus we see what can happen, and the lesson is that providence has to be carefully analyzed. If we respond emotionally to providence, we may interpret it incorrectly. Instead we should study the providence. Almost invariably when certain things happen, we should withdraw and ask, "If I follow this providence, what will it lead to?" for what seems to be a providence can be a test or a temptation. We should refrain from making a hasty verbal contract with an aye or a nay until we prayerfully evaluate a matter. Otherwise, we might emotionally respond and say nay to a true providence.

Here the people saw that those who did wickedly prospered, but should the observers do likewise just because such individuals were not punished? No! The wicked acted as if there were no God, but was that true? Such conditions test one's faith. A wicked person might get recognition, prestige, and honor while a godly person gets dishonor, but should that situation change the latter's relationship and covenant vows to the Lord? No! The implication is that if the *majority* of God's professed people in the flesh (natural Israel) drew the wrong lesson, then spiritually speaking, this would also be the case. The great majority would not properly appraise the situation. However, this chapter of Malachi shows there is room for change. If, after consecration, a person awakens to his situation and truly repents, God will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). The individual may not get a crown, but the possibility is that he will get life.

"Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Because Satan is the god of this present evil world, such are the prevailing conditions.

Comment: Much of Psalm 73 talks about the prosperity of the wicked. At first, Asaph thought this condition was good, but then he came to his senses. In verse 22, he said, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.” He saw that only God can give strength and happiness. Also, Psalm 94:3,4 reads, “LORD, how long ... shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?” Verses 11 and 12 go on to say, “The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law.” Then the Psalm shows the joys of being chastened by the Lord, as opposed to being in the state of the wicked, and how things will change.

Reply: A proverbial saying is that the wicked are like “a green bay tree” (Psa. 37:35). This statement is powerful, for not only is the bay tree tremendous in size, but it spreads out its arms (its branches) and smothers everything under it.

Mal. 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

Mal. 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Malachi gave this advice to his contemporaries, and probably extremely few responded to get that individual blessing. Prophetically speaking, this is advice for the Holy Remnant class, who will be spared but in a different way than the Christian is spared. As God’s beloved Son, Jesus Christ faithfully served his Father, yet he died on the Cross. The question, therefore, is a study in itself. How did God “spare” Jesus? God gave him sustaining grace for that experience and for his faithfulness *greatly* rewarded him with the number two position in the universe for eternity. Thus the sparing of one as a new creature is different from the sparing of one from the standpoint of the old nature.

When this prophecy is explained from the *natural* standpoint, it pertains to the Holy Remnant of Israel at this end of the age. When the prophecy is applied *spiritually*, the thought is that faithful Christians are blessed as new creatures, but they are not spared sickness, accidents, persecution, trouble, etc.

Comment: Two proof texts that verse 16 can apply to the Holy Remnant in regard to a “book of remembrance” being written are the following. (1) “At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found *written in the book*” (Dan. 12:1). (2) “And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is *written* among the living in Jerusalem” (Isa. 4:3).

Reply: Yes, that information is very important for the Holy Remnant of natural Israel.

For the Christian, the *spiritual* application is very important. Hebrews 10:25,26 tells us not to forsake the “assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the [evil] day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” In other words, there is a danger of Second Death if we cut ourselves off exclusively from fellowship. We are to look for spirituality and help through fellowship with others—although it is permissible to exercise some discrimination in our choices.

Comment: The mention of “jewels” in verse 17 reminds us of the high priest’s breastplate and

the characteristics of the different jewels. The 144,000 will be divided into 12 spiritual tribes of 12,000 each.

Reply: A beautiful *Reprint* article (No. 2404) is entitled “Gathering the Lord’s Jewels.”

Comment: The KJV margin has “special treasure” for “jewels.”

Reply: Bible commentators almost universally say that “jewels” is not the application, but it is a good thought. Not only were jewels on the high priest’s breastplate, but they are related to the Little Flock. Spiritually speaking, the Lord’s jewels are gathered and then snapped into the ouches, or receiving pins, on the breastplate when they get the divine nature and are made kings and are set on thrones at the marriage of the Lamb. At that time, the antitypical jewels will be placed in the framework of the breastplate. However, the jewels are made and developed *before* placement in their proper setting. The gathering of the remaining jewels will take place at the end of the Gospel Age. Thus there is a *spiritual* “holy remnant” class and a *natural Israel* “holy remnant” class.

Comment: *Reprint* No. 4930, titled “Waiting for Messiah,” states, “These [faithful Christians] are to be God’s jewels on the spirit plane, as the faithful Jews of the past are to be the jewels on the earthly plane, marked or enrolled for distinguished honor in connection with Messiah’s kingdom.” To consider the faith of the Ancient Worthies is humbling, so calling them “jewels” is appropriate.

Q: Is verse 17 a proof text that the Little Flock will be spared the great Time of Trouble?

A: Yes, that is an application along spiritual lines.

Mal. 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Comment: Verse 18 refers to the general resurrection in the Kingdom and particularly to the Jews warned by the Prophet Malachi in this chapter. In the present life, they did not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, but when they come back from the tomb, they will see that the righteous, faithful minority—the Holy Remnant and the Ancient Worthies—have been installed in office and that the Lord and His principles were right.

Reply: Earlier in this chapter, the “ye” class said, “Wherein have we robbed thee [God]?” Generally speaking, the Jews were slack and careless in respect to serving God in the natural realm, but in the Kingdom, this class will see that God rewards and honors those who served Him faithfully, even though they were deprived in the present life.

Mal. 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Comment: The term “the day” refers to the Millennium, for “neither root nor branch” will be left. The *entire* Kingdom Age will be required to eliminate *all evil*.

Reply: Yes, verse 1 is broader than merely the great Time of Trouble at the end of the Gospel Age, for “the day” will burn up *all* the proud and *all* who do wickedly. The reference is to more than just a point in time. During the Kingdom Age, the dead will be raised from the tomb in inverse order, with Adam being the last. The people will come back with the same character they had upon entering the tomb, and any who persist in their evil ways will be burned as

stubble. Thus, in the day of Messiah, it will be determined who are not worthy to enter into the age beyond the Millennium. The Kingdom Age will be a searching “day” of trouble.

The words of Malachi were very negative here, for verse 1 is talking about the proud and the wicked. All will have to come forth from the tomb and be given their trial for life before this condition is accomplished with the elimination of all evil.

Comment: The “burning” will include all of the incorrigible going into Second Death.

Reply: Yes. The great Time of Trouble will trigger, or set in motion, the wheels for Messiah’s Kingdom. Events will move quickly toward his reign, during which judgments will occur. Those who persist in wickedness will be destroyed, and those who learn righteousness will be rewarded with life.

Q: Will all have to be resuscitated from the tomb before verse 1 is fulfilled?

A: Yes, the Kingdom Age is the time allotted for instruction, correction, and judgment.

Mal. 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Mal. 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

Verses 2 and 3 refer again to the Kingdom Age but to those who will *prove to be* righteously disposed. The fact “the Sun of righteousness [will] arise with *healing* in his wings” does not mean that those who come forth from the grave will be forgiven everything they ever did in the previous life. However, after certain judgments and efforts of walking up the highway of holiness take place, those who are righteously inclined will be rewarded with everlasting life. Those who respond to the instructions of “that prophet” in that day will benefit (Acts 3:23).

In chapter 6 of *Tabernacle Shadows*, “Sacrifices Subsequent to the ‘Day of Atonement,’” the Pastor quoted Psalm 51:19, “Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer *bullocks* [perfect sacrifices] upon thine altar.” The chapter shows that after the Kingdom is inaugurated, the people will have a means of communication with Jesus and the priesthood. The people will bring offerings during the Kingdom Age, but some will bring only a cereal offering for sin because they are so mentally or morally delinquent that they cannot present to the Lord an acceptable offering like a bullock. Thus there will be a scale of offerings in the Kingdom. Back in the type, the poor brought the least offering. In the antitype in the Kingdom Age, those who do not have the ability to render an acceptable sacrifice will bring the least offering. Eventually, by the end of the Kingdom Age, those individuals who have properly responded to the instruction, and thus are pictured as bullocks in Psalm 51:19, will be fully mature and fully capable of rendering the requirement of perfect deeds. For that reason, we believe the Ancient Worthies will get a spirit resurrection at the end of the Kingdom, for otherwise, the distinction between them as perfect human beings and the rest of tried and perfected mankind would be negligible. With this further exaltation and reward, the Ancient Worthies will shine as the stars of heaven. In contrast, the Church will shine as the sun (Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3).

Those who fear God’s name in the Kingdom will “grow up as calves of the stall.” Calves grow rapidly as they respond to treatment and feeding, and the purpose of the Kingdom is to help the willing and obedient of mankind grow big and mature as bullocks into the perfection of humanity. Incidentally, the perfect man Christ Jesus was pictured as a bullock (Lev. 8:2).

Comment: The Revised Standard uses the term “leaping like calves from the stall.”

Reply: Both thoughts are correct: growing up and leaping. Those who respond will quickly get benefits of health and happiness. Each step of obedience will bring a blessing.

“Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.” The wicked who will be trodden down as ashes are the incorrigible of the Kingdom Age; they will go into Second Death. They are likened to stubble that is burned, leaving neither root nor branch (verse 1).

Notice that God did not say, “I” but “Ye shall tread down the wicked: for they shall be ashes under the soles of *your* feet.” The wicked will no longer be allowed to flourish, but in what way?

Comment: The pronoun choice shows a responsibility just as under the Law of Moses. In the Kingdom, one who is aware of a grievous sin against God is required to expose it and not to cover it up.

Reply: Yes. The righteous will have to point out the need for change in those who manifest pride or wickedness. Those who receive the correction favorably and respond to the admonition will lose their pride and wickedness.

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46) shows that the sheep class, who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, etc., will reap the reward of life. In contrast, the goat class, those who fail to spiritually or figuratively visit the sick or commiserate with those in the prison house of death (praying for their release from the tomb), etc., will not get life. However, as has been said, Malachi 4:3 shows the responsibility of the righteous in the Kingdom to point out the need for change in the proud and the wicked. In the final analysis, there is no hope for the incorrigibly wicked.

Q: Why was the phrase “fear *my name*” used in verse 2 instead of “fear *me* [God]”? “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”

A: God’s “name” is like His office. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, *whose name is Holy*; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). Those who fear God’s “name” reverence Him for what He stands for. In other words, the proper reverence, or fear of God, is manifested by those who worship Him and truly appreciate His standards and want to conform their life to that standard.

Comment: Malachi 3:16 uses similar language: “Then they that feared [reverenced] the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and ... a book of remembrance was written ... for them that feared the LORD, and that *thought upon his name*.” The reference is to the Holy Remnant as well as to those of the Little Flock, showing that a minimum standard for getting life on any plane is to reverence God.

Reply: “Perfect love” is perfect love for God, perfect love for what He stands for, and the reflection of perfect love in one’s own life. The worship of God and a reverence for Him and His name can be in the heart, but these qualities are reflected, even imperfectly, by one’s deeds.

We wonder if verse 3 is showing us that at the end of the Kingdom Age, God through Christ will destroy the host that goes up as the sand of the sea to encircle the camp of the saints (the

Ancient Worthies). However, this text seems to be reflecting on those who go into Second Death before that time. Some will refuse to listen to the voice of “that prophet” or to the voice of those who are righteously inclined (Acts 3:23). Others will be weeded out at the hundred-year trial. The righteous of humanity will “tread down the wicked” under the soles of their feet before the group purging in the Little Season at the end of the Millennium. For any of the “wicked” to survive to the end of the Kingdom—for any to have escaped Second Death that long—means that they will have *prudently* obeyed the laws of the Kingdom but not have undergone a proper reformation in their heart. Even though God and The Christ will be able to see the heart condition of these individuals all along, their existence will be tolerated because God wants others to witness the righteousness of His indignation when the wicked start to do the deed that is in their heart. That class will curb and suppress the deed until the Little Season, when the Adversary draws them out by his logic and thinking. Satan’s logic will prompt those in the improper heart condition, who have harbored wickedness, to expose what dwells within, thus manifesting their true character. Then God, through Christ, will destroy the incorrigible.

This reasoning suggests that the Law of the Kingdom will be like the old Mosaic Law, which will be reinstated but under a slightly different arrangement. The New Covenant will have many features similar to the old Law Covenant, one being the responsibility of those who witness wrong actions.

Q: Why do we say “healing in his beams” instead of “healing in his wings”?

A: Since the word “wings” means just *two* wings, “beams” is a better rendition, for the rays of the sun promote healing and life *everywhere*. The rays will search out and penetrate or uncover *all* darkness. To those who respond, healing will take place. “Wings” are comforting but not as universal in meaning. Some use the word “pinions” instead of “rays.”

Comment: On the covers of the older *Volumes*, Bro. Russell had the Egyptian symbol of the orb of the sun with a wing on each side.

Reply: The Pastor also used Isaiah 18:1,2, “Woe [Ho] to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to ... a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!” He interpreted these verses to mean that the Harvest message would go out from America.

In the Kingdom, the Old and New Testaments will be replaced by the living exponents of truth. Just as God raised up prophets to warn and instruct His people during different periods of Old Testament times, so in the Kingdom, He will have living advocates of truth. The light (truth) will then be much clearer and greater than at present. Pure truth will go forth. Certainly the truth of the Kingdom Age will be based on the Old and New Testaments but in a far grander way. Today they are likened to a lamp that shines in a dark place, but that lamp will be replaced by sunlight (Psa. 119:105; Isa. 30:26). Although the message of the Ancient Worthies will be accurate and true, The Christ will be instructing the earthly representatives how to act and what to say.

Mal. 4:4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Comment: In Deuteronomy 4:10, Moses addressed the Israelites, “Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

Reply: Verse 4 is definitely based on the fact that when God instructed His people (natural Israel) in ancient times, He did it in an audiovisual sense. The Israelites did not see God personally, but they saw manifestations of His presence in a very awesome manner. As a result of their encounter in meeting God the third day, when He spoke and there was an earthquake with thunder and smoke and a voice like a trumpet waxing louder and louder, the fruitage was that Moses came down from the mount with the Ten Commandments (Exod. 19:15-19). The people's promise to obey the Decalogue was one thing, but the expansion of the Decalogue into various statutes and ceremonial services explained what God's will was for them at that time. What the Mosaic Law of the past failed to accomplish will be achieved in the future in the Kingdom under the New Covenant.

Mal. 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Mal. 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

“Elijah” comes twice. (1) In the present life, Elijah the prophet comes as The Christ *in the flesh*, with Jesus as the Head. This first coming has been unsuccessful. (2) Elijah the prophet will come as The Christ *in glory* and be successful; this will be the second coming.

The Pastor wrote that Jesus, in his earthly ministry, was a representation of the Elijah (the prophet) class, of which he was the Head. The various members of the Elijah body down through the Gospel Age have been unsuccessful in the present life, for they did not accomplish the desired conversion work. However, that same class, when elevated to glory with Christ as their Head, will again enjoin the people to follow the Lord, and this time the needful softening up and repentance will be brought about in those who are righteously disposed.

In Matthew 17:11, Jesus said, “Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.” The thought is that Elijah, The Christ in the flesh, “truly shall *first* come, and [then, the *second* time, being glorified, shall] restore all things.” When elevated to glory, The Christ will successfully produce the desired conversion. In fact, “the great and dreadful day of the LORD [the great Time of Trouble]” will come because the world does not heed Elijah the prophet in the flesh. Verse 5, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet *before* the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD,” is a proof text that the Church must be complete *before* the great Time of Trouble.

During the Gospel Age, the present life, Elijah the prophet has been gradually developed—Jesus the Head was first, followed by the body members. The completion of the Elijah the prophet class embraces the entire Gospel Age, during which they have endeavored to do a converting work, but they have not been successful. However, after that class is complete and glorified, they will be successful in the role of teachers and prophets in the next age.

Q: What is the thought of the clause “Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse”?

A: The smiting of the earth with a curse is the great Time of Trouble; the “curse” is like a plague.

Q: Could the thought also be that if The Christ glorified did not “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” then God would curse the earth from the standpoint of *destroying* it? Is the emphasis on the fact that God's plan will come to fruition, for otherwise, the earth would be *expunged*?

A: We can reason from that standpoint as well.

Q: Isn't there also an earlier picture of this principle with John the Baptist and the time of trouble that came on Israel in AD 69-70?

A: Yes. Just like the French Revolution, that trouble on Israel was a prototype of the great Time of Trouble still future. What John the Baptist endeavored to do with Israel at the First Advent was not successful, but a small remnant responded, accepting Jesus' ministry and gospel and becoming Christians. Down through the Gospel Age, the John the Baptist work of the Elijah class has been successful in calling out those who are receptive to hearing the truth. Thus the preaching of the gospel successfully forwarded God's purpose in finding the Little Flock, but additional work, Kingdom work, awaits the glorified Elijah class, The Christ, beyond the veil.

Comment: The reasoning seems correct that the "great and dreadful day of the LORD" is the Time of Trouble. The glorified Christ will "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." Otherwise, God would *utterly destroy* the earth. One translation actually has "with utter destruction."

Reply: The word "coming" in the expression "the *coming* of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" suggests that the trouble is irrevocable. In contrast, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" is conditional.

Comment: The Hebrew word for "curse" is *cherem*. Young's *Analytical Concordance* shows that *cherem* is translated "accursed," "accursed thing," "cursed," "cursed thing," "dedicated thing," "devoted," "devoted thing," "things which should have been utterly destroyed," "utter destruction," and "appoint utter destruction." A devoted thing is appointed for destruction. Because it has been devoted to God, it is not to be used anymore in a regular sense.

Reply: That same Hebrew word can have two radically different meanings depending on context. The destruction would be literal if Elijah the prophet were not successful in the conversion work.

Comment: The Pastor said that the scourging and the curse will accomplish for mankind in a short time what the message of Elijah failed to accomplish. The earth will be smitten with a curse because the work of Elijah was not enough to do the converting.

Reply: We have no problem with the Pastor's reasoning, and that is how we have been viewing the verse right along. However, verse 6 can be read the alternate way that has been suggested. If the intended meaning of *cherem* is "accursed" and "utter destruction," the two verses would have to be separated.

In the statement "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," who are the "fathers"? Since the text shows a reciprocal action, the term "fathers" is broader than just the Ancient Worthies. The "fathers" will have a change of heart to childlike conditions. Since "children" would be the current generation, "fathers" can simply mean "seniors" or "progenitors," including those in the tomb going back to Adam. Both fathers and children will be affected; both need a change of heart.

Verse 6 is used not only from the standpoint of the relationship of the Ancient Worthies to succeeding generations but also as a *condition*; that is, the hearts of the people will be softened and humbled into a childlike condition where they will be receptive to the principles originally enunciated by the prophets. When mankind is humbled, the message of the prophets will become meaningful to them.

Comment: In an earlier study, the thoughts in the following two paragraphs were presented:

When will the hearts of the “fathers” (the Ancient Worthies) be turned to the children in the *full* sense? In the resurrection, the Ancient Worthies will love and want to help the people. This text could not be fulfilled without a resurrection. The Church in glory will resurrect the Ancient Worthies and make them “princes in all the earth” (Psa. 45:16). The Church will direct them in doing this reconstruction work.

The “children” are the world of mankind, who will be the “adopted” children of the Second Eve. They will be under her tutelage and under the “fatherhood” of the Second Adam. The Ancient Worthies will have a higher stature than the “children.” Having been tested, they will be resurrected perfect and will be respected and looked up to as “fathers.” The Ancient Worthies will realize they have a mission on behalf of the world of mankind. In Old Testament times, they knew a great day was coming, but they will get the *details* when they are resurrected. And the rest of the world will be told they have to hearken to the Ancient Worthies. The Law will go forth from glory (Zion), but the words will come from Jerusalem, the earthly headquarters or capital (Isa. 2:3).

Reply: Yes, there is an application in regard to the Ancient Worthies, but there is also a *moral* lesson. Consider child abuse, where an abusive father needs correction. In other cases, disobedient children need correction. If the father converts and changes for the good, then the son or daughter who has a natural antipathy for the father should also change. Both need changing. The moral standpoint is the broader application.

The past application is also true. The human family will be fathered by Jesus, the Second Adam, and it will be mothered by the Church, the Second Eve. The mission of both the Ancient Worthies and The (glorified) Christ will be the same, for the Ancient Worthies will be the human representatives of The Christ.

If “curse” (Hebrew *cherem*) means “utter destruction,” then if reform were not achieved, God would be disgusted and would smash and destroy the earth completely. But this would also imply failure on His part. Since God has purposed redemption and a class who will respond and get everlasting life, His plan will be successfully accomplished. Otherwise, there would be no need for His furthering any more creation or for His continuing to deal with this planet.

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 2001)

Mal. 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

The name Malachi means “my messenger.” A supposition is that the name means “messenger of Jehovah,” but to have this meaning, the name would have to be “Malachiah.” Of course the Jews feel he was a messenger of Jehovah and add the “ah.” Probably that is the case, although the definition is not ironclad. Elsewhere in the book, the theme of “messenger” is used.

“By Malachi” is “by the hand of Malachi” in the Hebrew. Because of the subsequent message, we know the book was addressed to both houses of Israel.

The Book of Malachi was purportedly written just after Nehemiah’s service. When he went back to Israel the first time, he was given a 12-year leave of absence to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. At that time, he had the cooperation of the Jews and their obedience and zeal in trying to accomplish almost the impossible. When that leave of absence expired, he returned to Persia, and some years later he got a second leave of absence, the length of which is unknown. The conditions of the nation were radically different on this second return to Jerusalem, being much like those prior to Babylonian captivity. By Malachi’s message, we can tell the nature of those conditions in Israel at that late date, which was not too long before the coming of Jesus at the First Advent. In round numbers, Malachi’s ministry took place around 400 BC.

Mal. 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Mal. 1:3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

God said to Israel, “I have loved you.” The strong reply was, “Wherein hast thou loved us?” Then God spoke again, “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? Yet I loved Jacob.” As the older of the two, Esau would normally have the right of the firstborn, but the fact he consented to sell his birthright in his hunger shows how little regard he had for it. God loved Jacob because of what he was, and anyway, that was God’s privilege. In addition, the subsequent behavior of Esau revealed evil characteristics, which ostensibly gave the right of the firstborn to Jacob. However, Jacob was interested in only a certain portion of the birthright—the spiritual portion.

Based on use and context elsewhere in Scripture, the word “hate” is defined as “love less.” For example, Jesus used that term in the New Testament: “If any man come to me, and *hate not* his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). The thought is that if a Christian’s father, mother, wife, etc., obstruct his spirituality, those individuals are considered enemies, for the Lord comes first, then family (depending on the nature of the family), and finally country. (Spiritually speaking, a Christian is an alien, but he is to be a well-behaved alien, as opposed to a fighter of carnal battles.)

What audacity for Israel to respond, “Wherein hast thou loved us?” Not only was Jacob the father of the nation, but his name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28).

“And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.” Edom’s mountains were laid waste around 606 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar made

Judah, Egypt, Edom, etc., desolate without inhabitant. But the fact that verse 3 was written much later in history suggests God's wisdom in His preferential choice of Jacob because Esau's subsequent behavior was not right. As a people, the Edomites were the very ones who *condemned* Israel. Also, Edom frustrated the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. When the Israelites wanted to go to the Land of Promise, Edom was the first country they encountered in going from south to north. Moses said, "We will not take even water from you. Just let us go peaceably by the highway, and I will guarantee that we will not do anything inordinate in our passage." However, the Edomites refused to give permission, and Moses and the children of Israel had to travel down below in the hot desert to continue their journey. Eventually the Lord visited judgment on Ammon, Moab, and Edom.

Comment: The Book of Malachi was written about the time of Nehemiah, so when the Israelites said, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" the setting was after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity and after God had allowed the Jews to return to Israel.

Reply: God did a lot for the Israelites through the Period of the Judges and the Period of the Kings. He could have turned His back on them, but for Abraham's sake, He did not do so. The books of Obadiah and Malachi bring out multiple facets of the Israelites' disobedience. For one thing, they were superficial worshippers. They supposedly worshipped God, but their disobedience was rampant, just like nominal Christendom in the antitype.

The term "dragons of the wilderness" refers to misfits among the animals, such as rodents, foxes, poisonous snakes, and scorpions, which destroy crops and are dangerous to man. In addition to heat and the lack of water in the wilderness, these creatures were enemies.

Mal. 1:4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

During the 70 years that Edom was in Babylon, the sentiments were, "We are impoverished, but we will return and rebuild the desolate places." But God said, "They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever [for a long time, Hebrew *olam*]." Ever since this judgment under King Nebuchadnezzar, Edom has been nothing as a country. Previously, the land was very fertile with hundreds of thousands of sheep and goats, but after the 70-year captivity, the experience was the opposite.

"They shall build, but I will throw down." For example, cities with big buildings are buried in the desert sand. In what way was Edom called, "The border of wickedness"? The part of Israel that borders Edom was like a line. If a person stepped over that boundary line, he was in the land "of wickedness." Stated another way, a stigma became attached to Edom. The situation was tit for tat—Israel did not think too highly of Edom, and vice versa for various reasons. The Edomites were also called, "The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever." For instance, even if the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah had not been buried under the Dead Sea, who would want to go into such an unholy place? The thought would be very much in mind that these were the cities God destroyed for wickedness. Actually, God did the same thing with Edom. Knowledge of the behavior of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah has persisted to this day, so the terms are part of our current language.

Mal. 1:5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The Israelites would say, “The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.” From a practical standpoint, a line was drawn. On Israel’s side of the line, the land was blessed, and on the other side, it was cursed. Therefore, from that border inward into Israel, the land was blessed, and from that border outward into Edom, the land was cursed, for it was a land of wickedness and ill repute. Apparently, there was some obvious border line. Incidentally, even in the desert, there are border lines, which consist of one or two stones on top of each other. Perhaps a hundred feet later is another boundary of stones for some bedouin tribe.

Q: Based on the Revised Standard Version, does verse 5 also include the thought that Israel’s borders will be extended into Edom in the Kingdom?

A: Yes, that is true, although the borders will not be extended too much into Edom, for that land was promised to Esau for a possession. The actual future borders of Israel will be from the river Arnon in Ammon and Moab. At the time the Israelites entered the land under Joshua, God gave 2 1/2 tribes an inheritance east of the Jordan River, but anything south of the river Arnon as a line of demarcation remained a possession of non-Israelites.

Other Scriptures tell us that God will extend the borders of Israel up into the land of Gilead. When the influx of Jews occurs after the Kingdom is established, the land west of Jordan will be too small; it will be like a straitjacket. Therefore, Israel will get the east bank but up in the north. In addition, Israel will get part of the Sinai.

From the standpoint of the time after the 70 years’ captivity, there was a line of demarcation, but as regards the future, there will be a change from the border of Israel. The account here in Malachi does not tie down the change as including only the border between Israel and Edom.

Mal. 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Subsequently the Lord found fault particularly with Israel’s priesthood. The priests’ errant and irreverent behavior influenced the populace, for what they did, the people did. The same is true today. The environment is corrupting the people, and the disobedience of the leaders hastens the disobedience of the people.

Verse 6 is very plain language: “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts [to the priests].” Spiritually speaking, the same wrong principles exist in nominal Christendom. For example, one can go from the Mass to the tavern. The priesthood helps to corrupt the people by advocating the burning of a few candles, giving a donation, or entering the Confessional. Instead the priesthood should stress real repentance and godly living. Many violations in moral behavior are condoned by both Catholics and Protestants.

Q: Are we to understand that this father-son relationship was on a *national* level, rather than on a personal level?

A: Yes. The unique difference with the gospel Church, which was introduced as an entirely new relationship, is that the relationship is on a *personal* level. In the Exodus, God regarded the nation of Israel as a child in a *collective* sense.

When God said the priests despised His name, their reply was, “Wherein have we despised thy name?” The answer is given in verses 7 and 8.

Mal. 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

Malachi continued to zero in on the priesthood. It is true that the populace brought blind, lame, and sick offerings, but the priests were even more culpable because they winked the eye and allowed such offerings to God. However, we can be sure that the priests got the choice portions of the animals. With God being invisible and far away, the temptation was to assume He could not see, but He sees everywhere. The darkest place on earth is like sunshine to Him. No matter where the Christian is—in the desert, on a mountain, or in a dungeon covered with concrete—God can see him because He is the Emperor of the universe. He allows liberty and license now because mankind are living during the permission of evil, and the evil is a test.

The “polluted bread” was food, including both cereal and meat offerings—everything of a food value that was put on the altar. While the people offered the polluted bread, the priests took it from their hands and laid it on the Lord’s altar. The priests should have pointed out this bad behavior instead of condoning it. To think that *Almighty God* would even stoop to reason with *fallen* creatures shows His concern for and interest in people, especially the consecrated. Sooner or later He will give everybody an opportunity for a favorable destiny. Of course at the present time, He is looking for those at the highest level and mercifully provides for a secondary spiritual class. Faith would say that to have any kind of life in the spirit realm is far superior to perfect life on the human plane. In fact, for anything beautiful and wonderful down here, the spiritual correspondencies will be exceedingly marvelous. Our Heavenly Father is a gracious, loving God, and He does not want to visit Second Death on anyone until an individual merits it. Everyone will be given the opportunity to escape death and get life.

“The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ... dwell[s] in the high and holy place, [but stoops down to dwell] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). We appreciate this quality of our Heavenly Father, for when we see a person in a lowly condition crying for help, especially for deliverance from sin, our heart is also touched. Not only is God just, powerful, and wise, but He is loving as well.

How did the Israelites pollute God’s altar by saying, “The table of the LORD is contemptible”? They were doing this by sign language, and actions are sometimes louder than words. For example, if we say something that sounds wonderful but do something contemptible, that behavior is louder than the words. Thus the priests were not literally saying, “God’s table is contemptible,” but they were doing and condoning evil practices.

Comment: The principle is the same in Jude 4, which states that ungodly individuals in the true Church turn the grace of God “into lasciviousness” and deny “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They do not verbalize a denial but deny God and Jesus by their actions.

Reply: Similarly, Jesus said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). By the act of persecuting Christians, Saul was, in effect, persecuting Jesus.

Mal. 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

The Israelites offered blind, lame, and sick animals to *Almighty God*. If an Israelite had given such an animal to a common, ordinary master or governor, the gift would have been a stench in the recipient’s nostrils, yet this was done to Jehovah. How amazing it is that God would even reason with such individuals! For us to have an insight into and an appreciation of God’s Word

is an unbelievable privilege. In ignoring the Bible, people are missing a Godsend. The early settlers of America greatly appreciated the Scriptures and religious freedom. Proportionately speaking, many more people were godly back there than today.

Mal. 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi was speaking: “And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us.” In his long prayer as an exponent of his people before the throne of grace, Daniel said, “We have sinned.” Similarly, the exemplary Malachi wanted the priests to petition God to be gracious “unto us.”

Comment: Instead the *priests* should have been asking Malachi to beseech God on *their* behalf.

Reply: Yes, they would have manifested a repentant attitude by requesting Malachi to do the praying: “Would you pray to God for us? Because of our behavior and our sins, we feel we are not fit to be before the throne of grace.”

“This hath been by your means”; that is, “This has been the result of *your* doings.” The priests were responsible for what they had done.

“Will he regard your persons?” In other words, if the people did not thoroughly repent and change their behavior, would God just forgive them? If they did not repent, their habitual conduct would lead to harsh judgment. The priests were to pray that God would be gracious, and they were to acknowledge that any judgment against His people under this circumstance was thoroughly justified. God was giving opportunity for repentance. Ostensibly, the people were making offerings for their sins, but offerings of sick and lame animals were meaningless. Would God regard this insincere outward show of penance? No! The people needed to beseech God for mercy and forgiveness for their contemptible actions that were so displeasing to Him.

Comment: Verse 9 is confusing because of the change from Malachi’s speaking to the phrase “saith the LORD of hosts.”

Reply: Malachi was quoting God, who had instructed him to speak this way. Having learned from the Lord what was displeasing, he transmitted this message but in a way that was different from the other prophets. Malachi had the liberty to use common-sense thinking.

Mal. 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Comment: The Revised Standard reads, “Oh, that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire upon my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.”

God had no pleasure in the people’s offerings. The Israelites thought that their lame and diseased animals would be acceptable and that thereby they were rendering their dues to the Creator of the universe. However, by bringing such animals, the people were, in reality, shutting the doors for God’s approval. Did they now expect Him to open the doors for them? Ostensibly, they came in a reverential attitude, but actually, they were cheating God.

Q: Is the thought that God would rather have the priests close the doors to the Temple so that the people could offer nothing than for them to persist in offering inferior and diseased

animals?

A: That is one way to explain verse 10. The wording was intentional so that the verse could be interpreted in different ways. The wrong principle of offering sick animals was being emphasized, but what is a “sick” animal? Perhaps the animal looked normal and could run around and be quite frisky, but it may have had a lesion on one leg, for example. Other animals actually looked sick, especially if they were lame and hobbled.

Comment: Since Malachi was the last of the prophetic books, it was written quite far down in Israel’s history. The priesthood was hereditary, and by this time, it had deteriorated. Isaiah 9:15 is applicable to the degenerating situation: “The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.”

Reply: Yes, the “ancient and honourable” head began with the Patriarchs. Abraham was almost like a priest in his own way, that is, until he met Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). At the time of Moses, specific laws were given, making a distinction between the civil and the ecclesiastical.

Mal. 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles.” Eventually God’s name will be great worldwide. Verse 11 was a prophecy that because of the Israelites’ behavior, God would turn His favor to the Gentiles. Some Jews appreciate this reasoning, especially the ultra-Orthodox, who know that the God of Israel will convert the world. In Malachi’s day, the Israelites’ behavior had gotten to such a low common denominator that while they offered clean animals, their spirit was wrong. A wrong spirit was bad enough, but to make matters tenfold worse, they offered sick and lame animals. But even if they had offered good animals, their offerings would still have been offensive because of their attitude. By their offering lame animals, their wrong motives were clearly apparent. Jesus said that we are to judge people by their fruits, by their actions (Matt. 7:16-20). We judge a tree by its fruit, but we cannot judge a tree before the time of fruit bearing. As a general rule, we cannot judge motives, but once the motives come out in behavior, that is another matter. We can then recognize certain things that take place.

“And in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.” This language is figurative yet literal, and of course the message would not have been too popular when Malachi was addressing the priesthood. The words “heathen” and “Gentiles” are synonymous terms in this instance.

Comment: The people wanted to keep the best animals for themselves, and the priests were culpable for not intervening and stopping the offering of diseased and lame animals.

Reply: Yes, that was the people’s *habitual* practice. Surely the priests would not have taken the right shoulder, leg, etc., of a *sick* animal for themselves, for their portion. In many cases, a piece of the animal was offered to God, a piece went to the priests, and the residue went to the person making the offering.

Mal. 1:12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

Verse 12 is a summarization of the Lord's table being polluted. Fruit, meat, and bread are more or less synonymous terms, relatively speaking. The deeds that accompanied these offerings were similar to the offerings in that the offerers were sick and lame, let alone what they were offering. Such acts were an *outward* manifestation of an *inward* moral sickness.

Mal. 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

The Israelites considered the offerings to be a great "weariness." They brought "that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick." The great Jehovah asked, "Should I accept this of your hand?" "Of course not!" is the implied answer.

Comment: In the antitype in our day, this condemnation shows that nominal priests and ministers preside at a table that is full of rotteness.

Reply: In the Harvest period, the nominal spiritual table is likened to a table of vomit (Isa. 28:8; 1 Cor. 10:21). The responsibility of the religious leaders is thus shown. However, while we criticize those in the nominal Church, we have to be careful with regard to ourselves. It is easy to be critical of others, but we need to examine our own personal behavior. God is looking for the proper qualities in anyone who will be a priest and a king in the next age.

"Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts." What is another way of saying the same thing? After the people had been making their offerings in a perfunctory, superficial manner for a while, not only did they develop a character along those lines, but their attitude led to utter contempt where they did not even bring an offering because of weariness. Spiritually speaking, we have to be careful that we do not get discouraged and disappointed but that we hold fast the profession of our faith to the end of our course, no matter what others do or say that is contrary to God's Word, the bottom line.

Here, then, were those who became ungodly *outwardly*. What can happen in the antitype? Some get tired of being a Christian and say, "What is the use? Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we will die." They then forsake even the profession of Christianity.

There are three conditions or circumstances for the Christian: (1) A person is growing in grace, (2) he comes to a standstill, or (3) he is backsliding. Before a person backslides, he usually comes to a standstill. Individuals are very enthusiastic when they first consecrate, but as time goes on, a lot of temptations and discouragements occur. Sometimes a person comes to a standstill, and that is the critical time because any backsliding is like going downstream, making it more difficult to retrace one's steps against the current. In some of his sermons, the Apostle Paul seemed to be addressing individuals who had come to a standstill and were in danger of going backward into oblivion.

Mal. 1:14 But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

"Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." Verse 14 is a lesson or caution that comes down to us, for we have made a vow of consecration and we sacrifice unto the Lord. It is easy to criticize others, but we, too, could be guilty of offering "a corrupt [or unacceptable] thing." However, we cannot deceive the Heavenly Father. For that reason, the Pastor suggested there are times when we should do some soul searching and take spiritual inventory, especially when we come to a standstill and

are discouraged. We must weigh matters, for to forsake the way would be utterly foolish and would lead to losing our sense of reasoning on spiritual matters. We cannot fake honoring the Lord, and these matters require soul searching because *every one of us* is imperfect. *All* are corrupt; “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). That statement is still true of the consecrated, the difference being that they have the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Therefore, we must watch out for the old man, the old creature, that is in us and reasons with us, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). At one time or another, deceitful things come into all of our minds, and we must deal with them. Malachi repeated over and over this practical, common-sense lesson about lame and sick animals—as if he were trying to *drum it into dull heads*.

Q: Does the fact that a male is mentioned in verse 14 indicate that in the type, some of the Israelites were bringing female animals for offerings, contrary to the Law?

A: That could be true in some instances, especially when the animals were young. However, verse 14 can also be explained as follows. It has been said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and the offerer had good intentions. He had “in his flock a male, and voweth,” but he “sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.” In other words, he had a male in his flock and vowed to give it to the Lord—and probably the animal *was not sick* to start with. But subsequently the offerer had second thoughts, so at the time of the offering, he substituted an inferior animal.

“For I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” The heathen feared their gods, thinking they were easily angered and had to be pacified. They did not regard them as gods of love. Consequently, they would be afraid to offer a sick animal. A lesson for the Christian is not to get too familiar with the Heavenly Father, for to do so leads to carelessness.

Comment: The Lord is not looking for flowery language. He wants humility, simplicity, and wholesomeness. The Law forbade the offering of “honey” with sacrifices because it pictured flattery (Lev. 2:11).

Mal. 2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

“And now, O ye priests” reminds us of the content of the first chapter, which was addressed to the priests. In other words, chapter 2 continues in the same vein of admonition.

Mal. 2:2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

In the first part of verse 2, God threatened to send a curse on Israel, and in the second part, He indicated that He had already sent the curse in part. What, then, does the verse remind us of? Malachi made a great impression upon the Jews through several statements in his book that sounded like a curse (Mal. 3:1,2; 4:1,5,6). “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” When Elijah came, that day would be like an “oven,” and who would be able to “abide [stand]” it? The coming of Messiah was blended with those strong admonitions. The curse would come in a very strong way, yet mixed with that curse was the coming of Messiah, which was relatively near at hand.

Comment: Under the Law, the nation of Israel, the people, were told that if they obeyed, they

would get blessings, and if they disobeyed, they would get curses.

Reply: Yes, that principle is inculcated in the Law. Similarly, we say that the law of gravity always exists, and so the basic principles in the Mosaic Law remain the same.

Q: Was God's statement "I have cursed them already" part and parcel with the fact that the Israelites had been in captivity in one form or another ever since 606 BC, for even at this point, they were still a vassal state? That condition never ended until their destruction in AD 69-73.

A: Yes. Even though they went back to their land, they were a vassal state under the Persian Empire. Depending on who was the king in power, one period was quite brutal, and another was quite lenient.

"I [God] will curse your blessings." This statement was addressed to the priests. Therefore, when the priests were asked to give a blessing, the opposite would result.

Comment: That statement is interesting. In other words, the blessings that the priests put on the people, who were giving corrupt sacrifices, turned into a curse.

"I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye [the priests] do not lay it [the commandment to give glory to my name] to heart." God had started with an ultimatum: "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, ... I will even send a curse upon you."

Mal. 2:3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

"Behold, I will corrupt your seed [both their grain and their offspring]." The curses under the Law specified that the ground would be cursed as well as the fruit of the womb (Lev. 26:20,25; Deut. 28:18,40,42,51,53). Moreover, in battle the Israelites would be defeated by the enemy, etc. The "curse" had many ramifications.

"I will ... spread dung upon your faces." The word "dung" is used twice in verse 3. It is one thing to have dung on the head, on the hair, and it is another thing to have it on the face. On the head, "dung" is usually in the form of ashes, but in real grief, dung is substituted for ashes to show that one thinks of himself as filth. The ashes could be insincere because many faked repentance, but the use of actual dung was quite meaningful.

"I will ... spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts." In other words, the people's "solemn feasts" were like dung to Jehovah. The religion was formal and hypocritical and hence was a stench in His nostrils. The ceremonial features of the Law were symbols. If the people had entered into the spirit of the symbols, they would have manifested sincerity. However, to not be in heart sympathy with the ceremonial features meant the people were going through the motions in a perfunctory manner.

"One shall take you away with it." The supplied word "one" should be omitted. "I [God] will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, ... and shall take [turn] you away with it." Jehovah was acting rather than the parties themselves. Therefore, to "take" the people away meant He was brushing them away as being offensive.

Comment: The entrails and the dung of certain animals offered for sacrifice were taken without the camp.

Reply: In the antitype, that procedure shows how the sacrifices of the Christian are esteemed by the world; that is, they are viewed as a stench. However, there was nothing wrong with a proper sin offering. Usually it was only on special days that the entrails and the dung were taken outside the camp—for example, when a new high priest was consecrated upon the death of the previous high priest or when the priest or the congregation as a whole had sinned. Thus the sacrifices were viewed as a stench rather than as a pleasing smell in the Lord's nostrils.

Comment: Verse 3 was still being addressed to the priests.

Reply: Yes, although secondarily the people were also involved.

Mal. 2:4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Comment: At the time of the making of the golden calf and the subsequent orgy when Moses came down from the mount with the Ten Commandments, God asked, "Who is on my side?" The Levites responded properly by slaying their brethren (Exod. 32:26-28).

Reply: That incident is certainly the basis of verse 4. However, in the future, the Zadok portion of the Levites will serve in the Third Temple, and the rest of the Levites will function in a lesser capacity. To be a priest originally, one had to be a son of both Levi and Aaron. To get the benefit of inner association with the Lord—to even belong to the Levitical tribe—was an honor. Korah was put to death for abusing that privilege.

During the days of Moses, the priesthood was an honorable profession. Infractions such as the offering of strange fire by Nadab and Abihu were punished so that the priesthood was kept pure. But after Moses deceased and time went on, the priesthood became corrupt.

The same principle applied to the kings of Israel and Judah. The majority were corrupt. Even with Saul, when he was chosen to be king, he was so bashful and humble that he hid, yet he was one of the tallest men in the nation. From that humble beginning, he was corrupted. The same experience has happened to many individuals who were blessed of the Lord initially. As stated earlier, the principle is, "The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail" (Isa. 9:15). When God establishes the Third Temple in the Kingdom, no Canaanite will be involved with any of the services (Zech. 14:21).

Mal. 2:5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

In verses 4-6, it is interesting to read at this very late date about the beginnings of Levi. Things were done that were right, and things were done that had flaws. But in looking back, we see that God evidently judges in regard to one's *habit* of serving Him. Sometimes there are flaws because all are imperfect. For example, even though Moses was prevented from entering the Promised Land because he smote the rock twice, Paul said that Moses had no fault from God's standpoint, that is, in his *overall* character (Heb. 3:2). Both those in olden times before Christ and those in the Spirit-begotten Church of the Gospel Age have faults, but the Lord knows how to judge properly.

Mal. 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

Mal. 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

“For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge.” The priests were to keep the knowledge of God’s Law and not to fabricate their own laws. The same principle applies to the vitals of both Old Testament times and Christianity of the Gospel Age. Loyalty to God’s Word and its principles is a mandatory requirement, as stated in verse 6: “The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips.”

“He [faithful Levites] walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.” It is hard to “turn many away from iniquity” if one is not a good example himself of walking properly before God. The priesthood of Malachi’s day was doing the opposite and, consequently, was leading many *into* iniquity.

“They [the people] should seek the law at his [the priest’s] mouth: for he [the priest] is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.” The priest should have taught the Law as dutifully and faithfully as he could, for he was the messenger of Jehovah. The word “messenger” is the theme of the Book of Malachi.

Mal. 2:8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

The priests had “departed out of the way” and “caused many to stumble” at the Law. They had “corrupted the covenant of Levi.”

The message of Malachi is quite different from other messages in that it basically consists of fundamental principles rather than a lot of prophecy except as we get deeper into the book. The message is supposedly a common-sense realization of what God requires of an individual. The priests should have dutifully taught those principles.

The government in the Kingdom Age will have to be a dictatorship, for a democracy would never prosper with a perfect Law. There will have to be a perfect Mediator, as well as a perfect Law and perfect enforcement and rewards. The whole arrangement in the Kingdom will be successful because of the completeness of the arrangement and the details for any emergency or contingency that would arise. If evil is nipped in the bud as it is starting to grow, it will not prosper. But when nothing is done, as in the present evil world, the iniquity just keeps spreading from one generation to another until the whole becomes corrupt.

Mal. 2:9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

God continued to speak: “Ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.” One of the hardest things to do is to be *impartial* “in the law” and to not be prejudiced by gifts, family relationships, and friendships, all of which can sway judgment. In fairness, a judge should hear and consider both sides of an issue and not just take one side. Our attitudes are being judged in the present life.

Verse 6 mentions walking with God in equity and peace. The priest who did so both dispensed and was blessed himself in his service. The Levitical priesthood was honorable and pure as originally initiated. The priests in Malachi’s day were children of Levi, yet they were corrupt and did not measure up to the requirements of the Law. It was difficult not to have a root of bitterness or favoritism arise but to be a just judge dispensing justice.

Because the priests had departed out of the way and caused many to stumble, “therefore have I [God] also made you [the priests] contemptible and base before all the people.” While the

people saw that the priesthood was not walking up to par and properly discharging its responsibilities, that did not mean the people themselves were just and righteous. And that is true with us too. It is easy to see the faults of others and very difficult to see our own. We can be sure that whoever God selects to be of the Little Flock will be tried and true in heart.

Comment: As a practical example, when management is poor in the workforce, bad principles filter down through the employees.

Reply: Yes. Whether the situation has to do with moral laws or efficiency of service, the manager of even a little outlet can run things very nicely, even though the store is part of a chain, but unfortunately, the managers are often lax and take liberties, just like the employees, with unwarranted sick days and being unjust.

A prime example of laxity in the priesthood is Eli. He failed to properly reprimand his two sons, who stirred the pot to obtain the choicest meat for themselves and used the office for fornication purposes right in the Tabernacle precincts. Apparently, Eli was oblivious to the sins at first, but when the people complained to him about his sons' violations, he was disobedient in not expelling them from the priesthood. Here is a case where the heart of the old man was deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Eli probably reasoned, "Who would take their place if I removed them from the priesthood?" Instead he should have obeyed principle and trusted that the Lord would provide. God dealt with Samuel, who was the replacement, and Eli and his progeny were eventually rejected. At any rate, the people recognized the errancy of the priesthood.

Mal. 2:10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Note: These questions were treated in the commentary from the 1992 Malachi study.

Originally, there was so little study on prophecy that it was practically nil. Therefore, in the past, we led studies differently and more or less spoke at length in a relatively coherent fashion, rather than speaking in fits and spurts as we do now. Since then society has changed, and we are living more and more in a democracy, in which it is felt that everyone has equal rights, men and women alike, in every field of endeavor. Thus the clime is different today. Having personally been 60 or more years in the truth, we have seen conditions radically change, including the behavior of the brethren and their attitude toward consecration. No wonder it has taken so long to get the remaining members of the Little Flock! The present decadent society is sterile in bringing forth the type of Christian God is looking for to complete the body of Christ. The Harvest work is now an obvious gleaning process. While individuals are still consecrating, certain improvements should be expected as they grow older in the truth. The harvesting of olives is an illustration of the general harvest versus the subsequent gleaning. Initially the ripe olives fall easily off the trees, but to glean the small residue of the crop, one must climb a ladder and use a rod to hit the limb. We are living in the end time of the Gospel Age, of which Jesus said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" The number of Christians who will make the high calling becomes fewer and fewer, and the proportion of the Great Company class becomes greater and greater, to the point where it is overwhelming. However, the Lord judges the heart and knows just how true we are to our vows. It is good that He has burning eyes which can search the will—not just the heart, the mouth, or the brain but *the intent* (Rev. 1:14). As Charles Dickens said, "We are living in the best of times and the worst of times."

Mal. 2:11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath

married the daughter of a strange god.

“Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he [at one time] loved.” The principle is similar to Jesus’ admonition to the Ephesian church, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left [or forgotten] thy *first love*” (Rev. 2:4). This can easily happen.

Judah “hath married the daughter of a strange god.” By intermarriage with Gentile women, contrary to the Law, the religion of false gods was introduced into Israel. As an earlier example, the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, and one of the last tests before entering the Promised Land came through the influence of Balaam. King Balak of Moab had hired him to prophesy against the Israelites, but when Balaam went to curse them, he ended up issuing a marvelous prophecy about the Messiah, the Star that would come out of Jacob (Num. 24:17). However, Balaam also counseled Balak how to trap the children of Israel into sin, namely, by befriending them and getting them to commingle with the daughters of strangers. Hence the daughters of Moab successfully seduced the Israelite men, and as a result, many died of a plague. With all of the schooling during the 40 years and with the Israelites being so close to entering the Promised Land, it is surprising how many failed this test.

The gods of the Egyptians and surrounding nations, such as the queen of heaven and Molech, entered Israel (Jer. 7:18; 32:35; 44:25). To his credit, King Josiah cleaned house of the heathen religions, but as soon as he died, the false religions again flourished. Truth, as well as history, is stranger than fiction.

Incidentally, *leisure* time brings corruption. In the early 1900s, work often extended from sunrise to sunset. Then the 12-hour workday was shortened to a 10-hour day, a 9-hour day, an 8-hour day, and finally a 7-hour day. Also, the workweek was decreased from six days to five days. Society was more puritanical when the workday and workweek were longer; the standards were much higher than today with all the additional leisure time. With few exceptions, people do not use the extra time to meditate on the Lord.

Mal. 2:12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

After the 70-year Babylonian captivity and the return of the Jews to Israel, not much detailed information was given in the Scriptures about the priesthood—at least not like that in the books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. After the 70 years, much of the information was prophetic and historical, yet we know that society was very corrupt. In AD 69-70, the Jews lost the Temple that was rebuilt under Zerubbabel. Also at that time, the Jews were scattered in Diaspora, so that today the descendants do not know their lineage.

Mal. 2:13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

Verse 13 mentions the superficial type of worship that existed in Malachi’s day. “The altar of the LORD [was covered] with tears, with [ceremonial] weeping, and with crying out.” These insincere emotions were not a sign of true repentance. God, who looks not on the outer appearance but on the heart, can discern whether repentance is real (1 Sam. 16:7).

Mal. 2:14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Mal. 2:15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Mal. 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Verses 14-16, which pertain to practical everyday living, show that adultery was commonly practiced in Malachi's day. Even Jesus mentioned adultery at his First Advent. He said that divorce was permissible under certain circumstances because of the hardness of the hearts of the males, who had the upper hand and misused it. Counsel was subsequently given in the New Testament that elders should be the husband of one wife at a time (1 Tim. 3:2). (Of course if a wife died, the husband could remarry.) The practice of "putting away" meant divorce, which was commonly done. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Not only is divorce rampant today, but conditions are so bad that many cohabit without marriage and just go from one partner to another. Society is so callous that people either marry or do not marry for tax purposes depending on what law is in effect at the time. A man frequently puts aside the wife who sacrificed on his behalf, perhaps even building up his business, and looks for a younger woman. Someone else gets the fruit of all that labor and the affection, care, and interest.

"Did not he [God] make one [of Adam and Eve]? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed." What happens with reproduction in a society that condones immoral behavior? Generally speaking, the offspring do not have much of an example to behold. Of course there are exceptions in history where, in spite of adultery and fornication, some very unusual people have come on the scene who are to be credited for what good they have done, but that is not the norm. For the most part, the ungodly seed overwhelms the few exceptional cases. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."

Comment: The statement "Yet had he the residue of the spirit" is somewhat cryptic in the King James. The following translations seem to be better. The NIV reads, "Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." The RSV has, "Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth."

Reply: The purpose of marriage should be honorable in producing a seed that the parents would care for. Today many parents have little or no interest in their offspring, and this situation exists even among supposed Christians.

"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away [divorce]: for one covereth violence with his garment [that is, he sweeps the dirt under the rug], ... therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

Mal. 2:17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

The first question pertains to wearying Jehovah. "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words.

Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him?” Words become meaningless and wearisome to God when the *deeds* of the one who is speaking are inconsistent with his profession. The common thought was, “Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them.” Today the thought is not verbalized in this way. Instead people are soft on things such as homosexuality, lesbianism, divorce, and fornication, which are contrary to God’s Word. Sometimes both partners agree to do as they wish and then come together just to have a home and a meal. The Book of Malachi is quite different from the other Minor Prophets in that it uses common sense to show society is going downhill and becoming increasingly decadent. Although still a superpower, the United States is not what it used to be.

Comment: Revisionist history tries to say our Founding Fathers were corrupt and decadent.

Reply: Those who are in the tomb cannot defend themselves.

Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, portrays conditions not just back in the prophet’s day but also today, in the end time. Jews consider Malachi to be an end-time prophecy because of the way it concludes. They say, “Elijah the prophet is coming. Who shall abide that day?”

The other question that was asked in Malachi’s day was, “Where is the God of judgment?” Some feel that God was unjust to punish Adam and Eve for eating of the forbidden fruit, but they were given a simple test of obedience. The Old Testament is regarded as too rigid and severe and as unkind, unloving, unsympathetic, and lacking in tenderness. Many have a negative view of God and His Law, which is a *perfect* standard. However, the problem is not with the Law but with us, as imperfect people. The question “Where is the God of judgment?” is almost like Satan’s asking in Genesis 3:1,4 (paraphrased), “Did God say, ‘If you eat of that tree, you will die’? You shall not surely die.” Satan was the father of lies, and of those who question the whereabouts of the “God of judgment,” it could be said, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44).

There is no information about where the Prophet Malachi came from and how he was treated. To the contrary, we are well aware of the background of other prophets and the opposition they received for preaching—prophets such as Jeremiah and Isaiah. But here was a prophet whose preaching was really kosher, so we can imagine that the nation regarded him as a lead balloon. Especially because of the way his message concluded, the Jews would have considered Malachi a messenger of doom, but that “doom” was merited, for it expressed *God’s* judgments.

Mal. 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.

This familiar quotation is used several times in slightly different ways. With regard to the first half of this verse, “Behold, I will send my messenger,” who is the “messenger”? The more obvious (and first) application is John the Baptist, as referred to in all four Gospels.

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey” (Matt. 3:1-4). Matthew quoted primarily Isaiah 40:3 but also included Malachi’s words with the clause about preparing the way. A “voice ... in the wilderness,” John the Baptist came from the wilderness and was roughly clothed in “raiment of camel’s hair” with a leather girdle about his loins when he preceded and introduced Jesus’ ministry.

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets [primarily Isaiah and Malachi], Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:1-4). This text is similar to that in Matthew. Again Isaiah 40 was quoted with a squib of information from Malachi. Here the application is clearly identified with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. John prepared “the way of the Lord, [to] make his paths straight”; that is, John’s preparatory work was the doctrine of repentance. All grace is contingent upon repentance, which obtains forgiveness of sin. Then one is introduced, as it were, into the presence of the Father and of Jesus and is thus in a condition to become a recipient of the very purpose for which John the Baptist and Jesus came. When Jesus began his ministry, he also spoke of repentance, saying, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel” (Luke 1:76-80). The “child” was John the Baptist. The words of this citation were uttered by the Holy Spirit through Zacharias, the father of John. Thus John the Baptist was further identified, without question, as one of the fulfillments of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

“John [the Baptist] bare witness of him [Jesus], and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.... He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias” (John 1:15,23).

“And he [John the Baptist] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Luke 3:3,4). This text is a further verification of a quotation of a mixture of Malachi and Isaiah.

Notice the frequent use of the phrase “the voice of one” in the preceding quotations. That “voice” was the “message” that was to be made known. The ministry of John the Baptist did effectually “prepare ... the way of the Lord [Jesus].” John did not convert the nation of Israel at the First Advent, but he did help to prepare a remnant to receive the Messiah. For example, when our Lord began his public ministry, two disciples of John the Baptist appeared on the scene, Andrew being one (John 1:35-40). Because John was effectual in preparing a remnant, the disciples could identify Jesus, when he began his ministry, as the one they were looking for. They knew he was the Messiah, who would be successful in converting the world.

Now we will take another step. “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5,6). News of John the Baptist’s ministry was noised abroad, for it was startling that a man clothed with a leather girdle had come from the desert. The Jews at that time were familiar with Malachi 4:5, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Thus when John the Baptist came in strange garb from the wilderness, the people thought that they were in the last days and that a day of judgment was imminent. His baptizing at the river

Jordan was so effectual that even the scribes and Pharisees wanted to be baptized. What a startlingly effective technique God used in preparing the way for Jesus' ministry!

John the Baptist had been informed that he would be the one to identify the Messiah. Moreover, God had promised him a sign; namely, the individual would come to him to be baptized, and John alone would see the confirmatory sign of the Spirit of God descending in the form of a dove and lighting upon the shoulder of that person. John knew that Jesus was a most remarkable person, as proven by his comment, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14). Jesus had a reputation beforehand of being a most unusual godly person who was interested in God's Word and dedicated to holiness. Certainly Jesus was not silent earlier, but now, at age 30, his public ministry began. However, for John, it was the dove and not those characteristics that identified Jesus as the Messiah.

John the Baptist felt his purpose was to have sinners acknowledge their sins. Although Jesus lived an exemplary life, John went ahead and performed the baptism ceremony. When Jesus rose from the immersion and John saw a dove come down on his shoulder, he knew Jesus of Nazareth was the one. The Messiah was here! Henceforth John voiced this fact to those who would be known as Jesus' followers: "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:15). Thus John the Baptist prepared the way of a small part of the nation to receive the Messiah. But certainly his experience was only a *partial* fulfillment, for the prophecy was that *every* valley would be exalted and *every* mountain and hill would be made low, etc.—as though even nature would acclaim the Messiah, let alone the secondary figurative application we use about a mountain being a strong, dictatorial type of government (Isa. 40:4).

However, the events that were expected with regard to the coming of Messiah did not occur as anticipated. The Jews were looking for *dramatic* blood, thunder, and smoke, whereas Jesus preached and did miracles *quietly yet dramatically*. These signs were much more important than happenings in nature alone.

John the Baptist said to the scribes and Pharisees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:7,8). Then he prophesied of a future day of judgment, and the fulfillment was in AD 69-73.

Pastor Russell wrote primarily in the prophetic sense on Malachi 4:5,6. In the "Elijah Shall First Come" chapter in the *Second Volume*, he explained in great detail that the Elijah picture has a double application. The analysis and the identity of the Elijah class are very helpful with so many logical and convincing confirmations that they cannot be refuted. The Pastor showed that the Elijah class would have a twofold mission: (1) an attempt to convert the world and (2) the actual conversion of the world. In one part of his life in the type, Elijah effectually killed the false prophets of Baal and of the groves. The slaying pictures that the antitypical Elijah class will be instrumental in the Kingdom Age in turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and vice versa. Jesus said that Elijah would be victorious in the final analysis: "Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11).

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. *Every* valley shall be exalted, and *every* mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and *all* flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:3-5). Notice the use of the words "every" and "all." These things were not accomplished in John the Baptist's day. Obviously, this work awaits the Kingdom, when those who refuse to listen to the Messiah will be cut off, for then every knee must bow and every tongue must confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.

2:10,11). Then shall the glory of Jehovah be revealed, “and all flesh [the whole world] shall see it together.” The light of that day will be like the sun sevenfold (Isa. 30:26). When the sun shines, it lightens the whole horizon.

Isaiah 40:3,4 is sandwiched in between two events that particularize the Kingdom application. Verses 1 and 2 read, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.” Then verse 5 states, “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Thus verses 3 and 4 are sandwiched in between a message to Israel. The balance of chapter 40 pertains to the inauguration of the Kingdom during Jesus’ Second Advent.

In other words, the *same* party who did a work at the First Advent will do a work now, at the Second Advent. When our Lord came the first time, it was to give his life a ransom for all, and at the Second Advent, he comes to apply the benefits of that ransom to mankind. Additional Scriptures bolster this fact, as follows.

“This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear” (Acts 7:37). Moses was a type of Christ. The next verse adds, “This [Moses] is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina[i], and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38). Notice the words “church,” “angel,” and “him” (Moses in the type). There was a “church in the wilderness” in both the type and the antitype (during the 1,260 years). Now we have a little tie-in that Jesus is represented by Moses, who was closely identified with the Tabernacle in the wilderness. For instance, whenever Moses wanted a message, God spoke to him through an arrangement, and he came out with instructions for the people. Thus the Tabernacle was the “church in the wilderness.”

In another way too, Moses was in the “church in the wilderness.” Being a son of Amram, he was of the tribe of Levi, and the priests, as well as the Levites, were all sons of Levi. This relationship is represented by the Tabernacle arrangement, but the Tabernacle itself, in a peculiar sense, pictures the Church. The high priest represents the personality of the Messiah, the Head of the body class. In regard to the Levitical class, Malachi 3:3 states, “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.” Pastor Russell identified Jesus as the one who is doing the refining work. Jesus sits as the refiner of the gold (the Little Flock) and the silver (the Great Company). But there is another application, which is actually the primary one. The Christ will be represented in the flesh by the sons of Zadok in the Third Temple. A tried class, the sons of Zadok will be the earthly representatives of the gold class. Zechariah said of that time, “There shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 14:21).

The antitypical Levites, the Great Company, compromise in the present life, for they try to have one foot in the world and the other foot in heaven, one foot to please the public and the other foot to please the Lord. Their problem is one of double-mindedness; their situation is unstable. To be proven faithful even of this secondary class, they will have to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the future great tribulation. However, not just at the end of the age but also down through the Gospel Age, there have been members of the Great Company class, although they will not be officially recognized until the Little Flock is complete. Proof of the existence of this antitypical Levitical class down through the age is the fact that the Apostle Paul relegated an individual over to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh” so that the spirit would be saved (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:6,7).

Back to the natural picture again. When the Third Temple is built at the beginning of the Kingdom Age, a tried class will be put into office, for God prepared the Ancient Worthies in Old Testament times. The Ancient Worthies will have a twofold application in the Kingdom. Some will be put into an administrative civil type of service, and others will serve in a religious capacity. The Ancient Worthies are usually pictured in the broader service of being public agents of the Kingdom in all the world, but the Zadok priesthood, the religious class, who are also Ancient Worthies, will be confined to the Third Temple. Stated another way, in our vocabulary, the term “Ancient Worthies” normally refers to only the “princes in all the earth,” but the Zadok priesthood is included (Psa. 45:16).

“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9). The pronouns “their” and “them” refer to the children of Israel. Verse 9 expresses the love, mercy, and pity of Jehovah on behalf of His people. He is the God of Israel, and the “angel of his presence” is the Logos. The word “angel” means “messenger,” a word that is repeatedly used in the Book of Malachi and that is identified with a covenant. The ostensible and publicly seen “messenger” of the Law Covenant was Moses, but actually God used the Logos as His “messenger.” The Logos, who went before Jehovah, appeared physically, as it were, to Joshua as an angel. When Joshua, a *strong* leader of the Israelites, saw a warrior with a drawn sword, he trembled (Josh. 5:13-15). Joshua asked, “Who are you?” and the man (the Logos) replied, “I am the captain of God’s host.” And it was the Logos who appeared to Moses in the burning bush when he was first called in Sinai. The angel, the Logos, said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”; that is, “I am the *voice*—the messenger, the mouthpiece, the Word—of Jehovah” (Exod. 3:2-6).

Therefore, the angel of God’s presence is Jesus, the mouthpiece of the Heavenly Father. Jehovah is the One who sends this messenger. It is interesting that the Book of Revelation pictures Jesus in the Gospel Age as an “angel,” a messenger (Rev. 7:2; 8:3-5; 10:1,5,8-10; 11:1; 18:1; 20:1; 21:17; 22:6,8).

“For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:6-9). The time of trouble came on Israel in AD 69-73, which was more than 30 years after the ministry of John the Baptist. Meanwhile, the one who was thought to be the Messiah ended up on the Cross. Thus ostensibly, Jesus was defeated in the eyes of the nation. The man who cured thousands and spoke as never man had spoken previously was crucified naked on the Cross on a hill where all could see him. However, the darkness that covered the land and the earthquake that accompanied the opening of the graves were signs that no one could refute or gainsay. The early Church fathers and the historians did not find fault with those details, for they did occur. Depending on the circumstance, sometimes what is not said is as loud as what is said. An expression is used: “The silence is deafening.”

The reign of Messiah at the Second Advent will be preceded by *real* trouble. Bodies of the slain will be on mountains all over the world, not just in Christendom (Isa. 34:3; 66:16; Jer. 25:33; Nah. 3:3). For various reasons, there will be many fatalities. This will be the day of God’s wrath, the “great and dreadful day of the LORD” related to Elijah the prophet (Mal. 4:5,6).

As already pointed out, the name Malachi means “messenger” (Mal. 2:7; 3:1). In the *Second Volume*, the Pastor showed that there are various applications of Elijah: (1) with John the Baptist, (2) in the Gospel Age, and (3) in the Kingdom Age. And so it is with this “messenger.”

Jesus is God's messenger in the Gospel Age, and he will be God's "voice" in the Kingdom Age. God "hath appointed a day, in the which *he* will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom *he* hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). As the Mediator between God and man, Jesus will do the judging in the Kingdom Age on behalf of the Father (1 Tim. 2:5). Thus the Malachi picture takes on a tremendous significance. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, but certainly it is not the least.

Comment: An additional Scripture about John the Baptist's being a partial fulfillment of "the messenger" in Malachi 3:1 is Matthew 11:10, "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

Mal. 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

Mal. 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.

"But who may abide the day of his coming [at the Second Advent]?" The trouble at the Second Advent will be different from that of the First Advent. At the Second Advent, the trouble will be immediate to, or tied in with, the public inauguration of the Kingdom, whereas at the First Advent, the trouble was an aftereffect.

"Who shall stand when he [Jesus] appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he [Jesus] 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 [Jehovah] an offering in righteousness."

Comment: Verse 1 has a partial application to John the Baptist at the First Advent. Verse 2 applies to the end of the Gospel Age. Verse 3 can apply to a refining of the Little Flock and the Great Company.

Reply: Jesus is also refining those who will be his representatives in the Third Temple.

Q: In the natural picture in a previous study, the sons of Levi, who are purged as silver and gold, were defined as the Holy Remnant. Is that still part of the interpretation?

A: Yes. The Word of God is like silver refined seven times. Malachi 3:3 treats the Levites, whereas Isaiah and other prophecies speak more of the Holy Remnant. The priesthood is particularly referred to here in Malachi. It is true that the same principle of purging applies to the Holy Remnant in Jacob's Trouble, but their refining is shown in other Scriptures. God will prepare not just those who are to be in the various nations as His representatives but also the priesthood and the populace. The Holy Remnant will include children, and even babes. Because of their relationship to the ones being spared, God will have compassion on them. The principle is something like that with Rahab. God was dealing with Rahab in the type, but she must have been a convincing witness to her family, for despite the high walls of Jericho, they stayed in the house with a scarlet cord bound in the window (Josh. 2:17-21). The point is that in connection with the introduction of the Kingdom, Israel will be purged from top to bottom as a nation.

Comment: The statement that Jesus "shall sit as a refiner and ... shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD [Jehovah] an offering in righteousness" corresponds with the Apostle Peter's statement about the Little Flock: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices,

acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Comment: Even though there will be animal sacrifices in the Kingdom, the term “offering in righteousness” implies a right heart condition.

Reply: While much of the aspect of sacrificing has not been understood down through the Gospel Age, the part that deals with the spiritual priesthood has been grasped to a greater or lesser degree.

While we mentioned the Holy Remnant in the past in discussing verse 3, we were speaking extemporaneously. We believe that the gist of what we are saying in this study is scriptural. We are living now at a time when it becomes more and more necessary to have a considerable amount of truth, but because the Laodicean period has lacked physical persecution thus far, we are getting fewer and fewer in number. John the Baptist said of Jesus’ followers, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Similarly, the Church class on this side of the veil is decreasing. We are living in perilous times, which require a searching of the heart. Our consecration is serious business, and we hope we will attain the high calling.

Mal. 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.

When the Temple is built and there is no Canaanite in it and the services are performed by those who have been handpicked and refined, “then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.” The goals of the sons of Zadok are pictured as “gold” but on an earthly plane. Stated another way, they will be the representatives of the heavenly gold class, the Little Flock. The prince (the Ancient Worthy) who sits in the east gate of the Temple will also be the representative of the Church in glory. God’s mercy is shown by the fact that the other ministers—the rest of the Levites and the Great Company—will be an in-between class. With His high and lofty thinking, God could have discarded them, but He is merciful because they committed their lives either to serve Him prior to Christ or to serve Jesus in the present life. They committed their lives to serve to the best of their ability. In summary, the work of verses 1-4 embraces the First and Second Advents. When the government of the Kingdom is set up, the world of mankind will be dealt with.

The offering will be “as in the days of old, and as in former years.” The New Covenant will be the old Law Covenant revised for the new Kingdom. Both covenants are “law” covenants, which are not to be confused with the Grace (or Sarah) Covenant. The Church is not under the New Covenant but will be part of the Mediatorial class of the New Covenant.

Mal. 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 not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Verse 5 describes categories of the unfit class to be dealt with in the Kingdom. Jesus will reign as a benevolent dictator, and he will make sure that all of these untoward attitudes and sins are eliminated. Those individuals who do not obey and kneel down before him will be expunged. It is a wonderful arrangement that God even deals with unfit people whose hearts are turned toward Him and are trying to serve Him. There is a point of demarcation where the Father’s mercy and pity end and a judgment of Second Death is given, but as illustrated with the nation of Israel, He deals very mercifully with His people until that point is reached. With all the evils Israel committed for centuries, it is a marvel that He did not cast them into the dustbin. Surely the great Creator does not need us, for planet Earth, with everything on it, is like dust on a

scale (Isa. 40:12,15). Earth is microscopic in reality, but God is moved by those whose hearts and minds are centered on Him. His attributes of compassion, pity, and mercy are marvelously blended together with His attributes of power, judgment, and strictness. Natural and spiritual Israel are treated accordingly. Even nominal spiritual Israel, including popes who allowed cardinals to kiss their toe in a misappropriation of Psalm 2:12, will be dealt with mercifully in the Kingdom Age in that they will get an opportunity for life. Those rightly exercised will feel shame.

Comment: Verse 5 is a good Scripture to show that those who consider themselves Christians in the present age must utterly forsake these practices. The Apostle Paul said, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9,10). If God will not allow these practices in the Kingdom Age, He will not allow them now with the Christian.

Reply: That is true after consecration. Paul said in the next verse, “Such were some of you: but [now] ye are washed, ... sanctified, ... [and] justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The categories of sin in verse 5 affect the life and destiny of others as well as self; that is, they are not just done to self. If one who is consecrated commits these sins, they burgeon into much greater responsibility. Therefore, to quote “love” as covering all sin would apply to sins *prior to* consecration, which are cast behind the Lord’s back. Willful sin on the part of the consecrated brings retribution in the present life. Even the Apostle Paul was left for dead on one occasion because as a witness, he had participated in the stoning of Stephen. We believe that Paul actually died but that he was resuscitated like Lazarus and then continued his ministry. Stephen’s argument was so starkly precise that Paul practically quoted him later in his own life. Therefore, what Stephen said did get into Paul’s head.

Mal. 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Verse 6 states a principle: “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Even though Jehovah is a God of justice, His other qualities of wisdom, love, and power balance out His plan, so that the world of mankind will be given an opportunity for life in the Kingdom. However, to get life, they must forsake their former practices of the present life, some of which are enumerated in verse 5.

Mal. 3:7 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?

Comment: The principle is expressed in James 4:8, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Of course repentance is involved.

Reply: The Prophet Isaiah said, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18).

Q: Does the question “Wherein shall we return?” mean “What have we done wrong?”

A: Yes.

Comment: “Return unto me, and I will return unto you” is a reminder of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Reply: The errant son came to his senses when he was eating husks. To a certain extent, repentance was shown twice. (1) He said, “I have sinned against God, and I have sinned against my father and am not worthy of a gracious welcome” (Luke 15:18 paraphrase). (2) When his father saw him approaching in the distance, presumably the prodigal son was bent over in sorrow and anguish. Today the doctrine of forgiveness is taught regardless of the repentance of the party who has sinned. The Apostle Peter asked, “Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother if he sins against me? Shall I forgive him seven times?” Jesus replied, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven [that is, 490 times]” (Matt. 18:21,22). However, Luke’s Gospel added another clause: “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him*” (Luke 17:3). If the trespass occurs seven times in one day, he is to be forgiven *if* the forgiveness is preceded by repentance. These principles are defined quite distinctly.

Mal. 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

The answer to the question “Will a man rob God?” is a rhetorical no, but God said, “Yet ye have robbed me.” The Israelites replied, “Wherein have we robbed thee?” They had robbed God in “tithes and offerings.” The point was not necessarily that they did not pay tithes and make offerings but that the type of tithes and offerings was unacceptable. For instance, every tenth healthy animal was to be committed to the Lord, but sick, lame, and blind animals were substituted. Presumably a good animal was being offered, but that was not the case. The offering served a double purpose for the Israelite: (1) Ostensibly it was a proper offering, and (2) the offerer wanted to get rid of the undesirable animal. However, nothing is hidden from God, but for those who lack faith, that fact becomes meaningless. Pride can also be a factor in putting something in the collection plate, to be seen of others. In any event, the service rendered to God was unacceptable for various reasons, yet the Israelites did not realize their wrong heart condition.

Comment: By extending the principle to the Christian in the Gospel Age, the individual who buries his talent in the earth is robbing God (Matt. 25:25).

Reply: Yes, Old Testament principles also pertain to the gospel Church. Although justification comes by faith and not by the works of the Law, the Christian is edified by studying the *principles* of the Law.

Comment: The Pastor likened robbing God to the Laodicean spirit. “Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). The bottom line is to pay our vows to the Lord.

Comment: Nehemiah 13:10 states, “And I perceived that the portions [tithes] of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field [garden].”

Reply: Yes, when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem the second time, he found great dereliction in the paying of tithes. Under the Law, the purpose of the tithes was to sustain the Levites, who had no inheritance in the land. Accordingly, they depended largely on the tithes that came from the people. For any inadequacies that developed, the Levites had gardens. However, because of a lack of time, they could not devote a lot of care to those gardens and thus could not reap an abundance from them, but whatever grew supplemented the tithes they were given. As a result, they had a decent living.

Mal. 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Mal. 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.

Verse 10 explains that the effect of the curse (verse 9) was along the lines of sparse productivity and low increase in the yield of the fields. No doubt the Israelites blamed God, the weather, or whatever, whereas the real problem was their robbing Him from a reasonable portion of their income. The Christian, who has committed his all to the Lord and is to provide things decent, needful, and honest in the sight of men, finds that this principle is true. The Lord does pour out a double or triple blessing for the generous freewill giving of one's time, talents, etc.

Comment: The spirit of verse 10 is expressed as, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Mal. 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.

The "devourer" would be plagues in nature, particularly a locust plague, which was common in Israel. In fact, a footnote in the Revised Standard Version uses the term "devouring locust." The various developmental stages of the locust constituted the plague. Joel 1:4 reads, "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten." The four stages of development are listed as palmerworm, locust, cankerworm, and caterpillar. To simplify the matter, there are two kinds of common locust: the annual caterpillar and the more devastating locust, which occurs every 17 years or in another time frame.

We will consider the 17-year locust, starting with the mature insect, which drills a hole in a tree and deposits seed. Usually that seed does not develop until the next spring (or warmer weather), when it begins to do mischief inside the tree. We are inclined to think that the larvae are more apt to work when they are put into the tree, go into hibernation, and then come out as tiny microbes, which develop into caterpillars. The caterpillars subsequently develop into grasshoppers or 17-year locusts. The palmerworm does the work inside the tree, and the cankerworm is the same sort of larvae, or baby state, but outside the tree. The larvae are very small, hardly visible, but they develop into worms and then into insects that can fly. Thus a palmerworm in a tree develops into a cankerworm, which becomes a flying insect, or a locust.

These insects adversely affected the people's livelihood—their crops, the food supply, primarily vines and trees that produced fruit. The mature locust was regarded as the real enemy, for not much could be seen in the larvae or pupae stage.

Comment: John the Baptist ate the fully developed locust with honey.

Reply: Yes. The protein content of the adult locust can sustain life. Depending on the part of the world, locusts can grow quite large.

Other Scriptures that mention locusts are as follows:

"When your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the *palmerworm* devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD." (Amos. 4:9)

“Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.... All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.” (Deut. 28:38,39,42)

“It [the siege] shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.... Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.” (Nah. 3:15,17)

“And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.” (Isa. 33:4)

“And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.” (Exod. 10:13-15)

“The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.” (Prov. 30:27) When locusts swarm in a plague, they darken the sky, causing an eclipse-like effect.

“He [God] gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.” (Psa. 78:46) The caterpillar and the locust are the same, but they differ in size and appearance.

The above texts are examples of how the Lord used the insect world for various illustrations in Scripture. We believe that in the Kingdom Age, all of the insects will be seen to have symbolic lessons. Since the Bible gives only a thumbnail description of certain insects, a tremendous amount of information and knowledge will be given to mankind in time.

Mal. 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

God will take care of the matter with Israel and bring the establishment of the Kingdom, at which time “the desert shall ... blossom as the rose” and “the earth shall yield her increase” (Isa. 35:1; Ezek. 34:27). All of these blessings will become possible when wars cease and no enemy is permitted to interfere with the fruitage of the ground or the womb.

Comment: The *Photodrama of Creation*, page 8, states, “There are scientists who claim that the earth still has one ring about it, an electrical ring which, falling, will in a few years destroy fermentation, microbes and parasites, and greatly assist plant and animal life.”

Reply: Yes, the Pastor was quite far in advance of his day. We do believe that in the insect world is the same thing as in the human genome. For instance, the genome of the fruit fly was studied, and from what was learned, scientists branched out into other studies. Now they are trying to decode the human genome. We think that God will simply turn the switch, for everything is under His control. There is a death gene, whereas scientists are trying to find the

life gene. We view matters the other way around. When the death gene is turned off, mortal life will become automatic. At that time, disobedience will be the only reason a person will die.

Mal. 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Mal. 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

How astounding that the Israelites would have thought this way! They actually thought they were generous in their offerings when they were *perfunctorily* and *halfheartedly* sacrificing *diseased and lame* animals. They had the nerve to blame God and ask, “Why do calamities befall us?” Notice their attitude: “We have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts.” In other words, although they wore sackcloth and ashes, their mourning was not sincere. Malachi was giving the history of the nation of Israel. The same sins were repeated over and over down to his day despite the fact that God had provided the Law and the prophets and had raised up judges to deliver the people following periods of disobedience.

Mal. 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

Malachi observed that those who merited punishment often lived more prosperously than the general populace. During the permission of evil, “they that tempt God are even delivered.”

Mal. 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

Verse 16 illustrates a very important lesson. When we think of the time element of Malachi’s day in the Jewish Age, his admonitions and lessons were primarily slanted toward Israel. Although, to a certain extent, the principles and ramifications spilled over into other nations, which were also having plagues and problems, the nation of Israel should have known better because they had information from the Law and their prophets. The same principle of verse 16 also exists in the Gospel Age. It is natural to infer that if God wrote “a book of remembrance” with regard to those who died faithfully in the Jewish and prior ages, the same principle would apply to faithful Christians during the 2,000 years of the Gospel Age. Even though very few attain the Little Flock—let us say, one in a million—the number of all the consecrated who have served acceptably with different degrees of zeal would vastly increase over a period of time. It has taken 2,000 years to get 144,000, but what about the Great Company, whose number we do not know? Based on certain Scriptures, this class seems to be quite large from a human standpoint. We know very little about only a few of even the most outstanding Christians, such as Arius, Waldo, Luther, and Tyndale. If we wrote down names of such Christians, perhaps our list would consist of 100 at most, and even then, the list might contain names of some God did not approve in the highest sense in the final analysis.

We believe that some sort of record has been kept of the names of the faithful down through the ages. For the lack of a better word, we will call it a “computer,” which is a medium of remembrance. The period of activity during one’s lifetime has been, and is being, recorded. In fact, the names of all who are born and have the breath of life have been recorded in the book of life (Rev. 3:5; 20:12). The remembrance of an individual is not that important until the time comes for his awakening from the tomb. First, the Little Flock and the Great Company will be resurrected. Then will come the general resurrection (or resuscitation) of mankind. With the latter, there will be different time periods for their coming forth from the tomb.

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). Jesus is present with the consecrated through the guardian angels, and no doubt the Lord himself listens to much that is said. However, whatever is said is recorded so that it can be recalled in an instant.

Mal. 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Christians who have already received their change are “jewels,” for they have made their calling and election sure. However, public recognition of the fact that they are the Lord’s jewels will come later. In the Kingdom Age, people will ask, “Where is so-and-so?” David supplied the answer in Psalm 87:5, “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.” In the antitype, the jewels on the high priest’s breastplate will be complete when the feet members finish their course. At that time, all who comprise the Little Flock will know who the members are. Thus the *public* office or display of the breastplate is different from the selection of the stones earlier and their being snapped into the breastplate. There will be 12,000 of each of the 12 jewel classes for a total of 144,000. When the Little Flock is complete, all 144,000 will be put in the breastplate; the antitypical High Priest, Jesus, will wear the breastplate; and the identification of the jewel class will be made known. The Father Himself saith, “They shall be mine ... in that day when I make up my jewels.”

Verses 16 and 17 also apply to natural Israel, but as Christians, we apply them to spiritual Israel, of whom it is said, “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3). The coronation of a king or queen, when someone sets the crown of authority on the head of the individual, is a *public* display. Of course the crowning ceremony for the Little Flock will not be seen down here on earth, for it will take place at the time of the wedding of the bride and the Lamb, but the repercussions of that ceremony will be “published” in the Kingdom Age.

Q: Do the jewels correspond to the stones in the foundation of the wall of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:19,20? “And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”

A: That text pertains to the time at the beginning of the Kingdom when the Little Flock will be made known to the world. The jewels in the breastplate are basically the same except that a transformation will take place. The breastplate jewels will be changed from silicon, or *semiprecious* stones, to corundum, a higher family, as *precious* stones. For example, the sard, a semiprecious stone, pictures the tenderness and mercy exemplified by the Judah class. When the sard is transformed into a higher and harder type of stone, it will be a ruby, a precious stone—it is really the same but changed to *glory*. The lesson is also illustrated by a diamond. Carbon is taken out of the coal pit, but when it is put in earth’s furnace, the carbon is changed to a diamond. The diamond is still carbon but radically different in appearance. The diamond seems to epitomize the change of all the stones on the breastplate, whereas in actuality, there will be variety among the stones. Stated another way, from one perspective, they will all be diamonds—hard, clean, and brilliant—but there will be variety. The miracle is the transformation that takes place.

Q: Is the thought, then, that verses 16 and 17 apply to *both* spiritual and natural Israel?

A: Yes, although the main application is spiritual.

The Ancient Worthies will include the faithful from the First Dispensation up to the Flood and also from the Patriarchal and Jewish ages in the Second Dispensation. For example, Abraham and Sarah were not Jews. Because they served God, Abram's name was changed to Abraham, and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah. Jacob came from a different background, and in time, his name was changed to Israel. With all three, it was like carbon being changed into a diamond—a radical difference. In other words, they became crystallized characters.

The crystallization of character that God is looking for in the Little Flock takes time, but it has to occur before death for one to be faithful unto death. Then will come the radical change into robes of actual righteousness; that is, the same person will have changed outer adornment.

Comment: Verses 16 and 17 can also be used to encourage the Holy Remnant, who will not be those who try to repent suddenly, at the last minute, when they see Gog actually coming down into Israel. Rather, the Holy Remnant will develop the proper repentant, contrite character earlier. Therefore, Christians (and especially the Great Company subsequently) can use verses 16 and 17 to encourage and admonish the Jews, for to be part of the Holy Remnant, they must fear God and think upon His name earlier.

Reply: That is true with regard to the end of the end time. The “book of remembrance” has been going on for a long time, ever since Adam, but the principles in back of it can be used in different ways depending on what age or time a person lives in. The Bible was written for all of God's people in the various categories from relatively time immemorial, but of course from a prophetic standpoint, the Scriptures become more and more meaningful. The Ancient Worthies, the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the Holy Remnant are all called classes.

Comment: Ultimately the Little Flock are Jehovah's jewels, not Jesus' jewels. God is the One who calls us and determines our destiny.

Reply: Jesus is our brother. God is our Father, so we are His children. God begot us with the Word of truth and called us to His Son, through whom we have a vital relationship. In the next age, Jesus will become the age-lasting Father and Life-giver of a regenerated human race.

Mal. 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Who will return and from what? The application can be both natural and spiritual.

Comment: The Ancient Worthies will return in resurrection at the beginning of the Kingdom Age and discern “between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

Reply: The Holy Remnant will not necessarily be of the same rank as the Ancient Worthies, but they will be loyal and true. Even babies and children who have not yet come to the age of reasoning will be included in the Holy Remnant class because of their parents.

The fulfillment of verse 18 will eventually include everyone, for it pertains to what God has been doing. When the Kingdom is set up, all kinds of educational media will enlighten the generation who survive the Time of Trouble, whoever and wherever they are. The world will be apprised of the reason for the permission of evil, namely, that God has been calling out a class from ancient times to relatively modern times. God's purposes will be made known.

Comment: The Pastor applied the first part of verse 18, “Then shall ye return,” to the world of mankind when Christ’s Kingdom is inaugurated, which will be “after the polishing of the jewels is complete and they have been set in the great crown.” He said, “There shall be a turning point, a change in the divine administration, though not a change in the divine plan. There will be a grand reversal of the present order of things.”

Reply: Chapter 4 tells how that reversal will be brought about.

For a moment, we will consider Isaiah 52:7, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” Generally speaking, this verse is given a current application in the Truth movement. The Apostle Paul quoted many Old Testament texts that have their real fulfillment in the Kingdom Age, but he extrapolated the principles behind the Scriptures and applied them to the Gospel Age. Unfortunately, some have seen this extrapolation as the real interpretation. For instance, when Jesus cast out the money changers at the end of his earthly ministry, he said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13). Clearly that Scripture refers back to Isaiah 56:7, which is talking about the Third Temple, the Temple to be built in the Kingdom as a “house of prayer for all people.” People from all nations will come to that Temple in Jerusalem. “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” Thus Jesus gave a current application at the First Advent to a text that has not yet been fulfilled.

To show that the fulfillment of Isaiah 52:7 is future, to be fulfilled when the Kingdom is established, we will read Nahum 1:15, “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.” The wicked will be utterly cut off at that time, and the Temple will be built. This proclamation will be made in Jerusalem, for at that time, Jews in other nations will hear about the establishment of the Kingdom. This announcement will be most important to those outside of Israel, for to the Jews in Israel, the establishment of the Kingdom will be obvious. The destruction of Gog from the land of Magog and the purging out of the rebels from among the Jews will have to be announced, for there will be no newspapers at that time or normal media (as we know it today) because of the severity of the trouble. Jews who find themselves as part of the spared Holy Remnant in lands other than Israel will be awakened by this announcement to realize that the God of Israel has finally introduced the Kingdom and that Messiah has come.

Those Jews will want to return to Israel, but how will they get there? The Gentiles will assist, feeling it is their responsibility. Instead of being anti-Semitic at that time, the Gentiles will be pro-Semitic; they will provide the transportation and send the Jews back with gifts, even carrying them in their arms. Thus the announcement of declaring to Zion, “Thy God reigneth!” will be not so much in Israel itself but in the other nations. The announcement will serve the double purpose of informing not only the Jews outside of Israel but also the Gentiles. God will make His holy name known in the midst of His people Israel and say, “I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel” (Ezek. 39:7). In other words, His name will be made known and honored in the sight of the Gentiles as well as among His people. Only one sixth of Gog will survive Jacob’s Trouble, but they will have to get back to their homelands to give an eyewitness account of the events. The communications media will have been destroyed, and computers will temporarily be nonfunctioning. Moreover, people will be concerned with their own problems in this dark period of silence. During such worldwide conditions, the Gentile survivors of Jacob’s Trouble will return to their homelands with news. Gentiles who hear the news will know it is the truth

because of the very multiplicity of such accounts. Thus the declaring of the “good news” by word of mouth will be primarily outside of Israel. Its filtering out into all the world will constitute the publishing of peace.

Comment: With the power grid down, regular communications will be disrupted.

Comment: For brethren who feel that the feet members on this side of the veil declare, “Thy God reigneth!” the question would be, Who is giving such a message at the present time?

Reply: It is reasoned that the declaration goes out to spiritual Zion. The Apostle Paul applied the text this way in the sense of the *principle*, but the *reality* is another matter. Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15 are speaking of the reality. Nahum 1:15 says the wicked are “utterly cut off”—and that is *future*. Even among the Jews, only a humble, chastened people will be left in Israel and in other lands—those whose names are “written in the book” (Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16).

Mal. 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

The Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament, written about three centuries before Christ, does not make a break between the third and fourth chapters, for the fourth chapter is really a continuation of the third, and the verses are numbered accordingly. There seems to be some justification for this rendering, and of course the original manuscripts contained no numbered verses. The ending of chapter 3 harmoniously blends in with this first verse. “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven” is figurative language. “All the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble”; that is, they shall be consumed by the figurative fire.

In Malachi’s day, verse 1 was primarily directed to natural Israel, showing that a judgment was coming as a result of the people’s failure to at least try, to the best of their ability, to obey God’s commandments. From this standpoint, we can appreciate John the Baptist’s message of repentance to those who came to him at the river Jordan. When he appeared from the desert, clothed in raiment of camel’s hair with a leather girdle, some thought he was the reincarnated Elijah, and they associated his presence with the “great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal. 4:5). Thus we can see why even the scribes and Pharisees came to John to be baptized, but he was reluctant to baptize them because he felt they were acting out of expediency, not sincerity.

When the nation read Malachi at the First Advent, they thought the prophecy of a future judgment coming on Israel was directed to them, for the book focuses on moral issues and wrong behavior and the need for reformation. Although the Jews of that day received lessons, the real judgment is Jacob’s Trouble in the near future. At that time, all of Daniel’s people (Israel) will be purged except those whose names are written in the book. Secondary lessons apply to the Christian Church, but the primary application is to Israel and even the world.

“The day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” We will now go out on a limb. In treating these subjects in the past, we could go only so far, but actually there are three applications. The application we will now consider pertains to a time element, and a subsequent verse will help to enlighten us along that

line. Quite a lot of information is compacted in six verses. We will come back to verse 1 later.

Mal. 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Instead of “wings,” a better translation would be “beams” or “pinions of a feather.” When we think of the carrying aspect of the wings, the riblike portions become more significant.

The “Sun of righteousness” is primarily Jesus, but the term can refer to The Christ. Jesus himself helped to inform us of the application to his body members (Matt. 13:43). Just as a bride is related to her husband and shares in the honors, so that will be the case in the Kingdom with Jesus and the Church.

“The Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with healing in his wings.” The healing process is associated with the “wings,” which in Scripture are the Old and New Testaments. Under the Law, birds could not be severed. When the butcher cleaved the bird, he did not cut completely through but fractured the bird so that it could be laid open. The antitypical reason is that the Old and New Testaments are connected. It is true they are two different divisions, but they are not separate. Ezekiel 3:13 reads, “I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched [*kissed, were in harmony with*] one another [*in a beautiful and sensitive fashion*].” Christians who have a tendency to major in the historical aspect of the Bible give more attention to the Old Testament, feeling that the New Testament must be translated in harmony with the Old Testament. Other Christians think that the New Testament is the real standard, especially the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5–7 and 1 Corinthians 13. However, the Old and New Testaments are *equally important*, for one cannot subsist without the other.

With regard to “healing,” certainly the Word of God has a healing effect for us as Christians. For example, we are admonished to go before the throne of grace to repent and confess when we sin. The Bible instructs us and provides the remedy from Jesus, the Physician. In fact, both God and Jesus furnish the medicine. In addition, the “wings” have a sheltering and a sustaining effect (Rev. 12:14).

“Healing in his wings [or beams—*plural*]” suggests that the riblike aspect, particularly of an eagle’s wing, represents the *promises and instructions* of God that are contained in the Old and New Testaments. Christians are to search the Scriptures daily for the healing effect. Although verse 2 is not directed to the Christian, invaluable lessons can be gleaned from reading about God’s dealings with those He is interested in.

“And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” In the primary application, Malachi was talking to the Jew, but Romans 2:10 says, “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,” so both will benefit. The Hebrew, which is much more forceful and delightful than the King James wording, reads something like, “Ye shall be frisky [with joy], and grow up [quickly] as calves of the stall.” There will be a feeling of life and youth and joy in movement, as with a newborn colt, which has long legs and jumps around shortly after birth.

In regard to the Sun of righteousness arising, the emphasis is on the healing and the joyous aspect. Other Scriptures speak about the transit of the sun and the universality of its light, which enlightens mankind. Darkness, dampness, and cold are associated with nighttime, whereas sunrise is a delightful experience. Moreover, there is an exhilarating, oxygenating influence to the morning air. The “Sun” arising emphasizes the glory, the expectancy, and the reward that are involved in beholding the sunrise. One sees not only beauty and grandeur but also the healing aspect. In contrast, our disposition seems to be adversely affected on a rainy and cloudy day. A clear, sunny day with a few birds singing is conducive to a bright, cheerful

outlook. As humans, we are emotional creatures.

Comment: Verse 2 mentions growing up “as calves of the stall.” Habakkuk 3:17 says, “There shall be no herd in the stalls.” Is there a connection between the two texts?

Reply: The contexts are different, but the principle is there, as follows. The Habakkuk Scripture refers to more mature animals, the Ancient Worthies in antitype. However, at the end of the Kingdom Age, those of mankind who grow in health, stature, and obedience will be just like the Ancient Worthies from both a physical and a moral standpoint.

Mal. 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

Mostly Israel, the Ancient Worthies, will “tread down the wicked.” How many Ancient Worthies lived before the Flood? All we know about during a long 1,656-year period is a relative handful of individuals such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Methuselah. In the Patriarchal Age, the number was again small, but many Ancient Worthies lived in the Jewish Age.

The New Covenant will be a Jewish covenant (Jer. 31:31,32). Therefore, in the Kingdom Age, Gentiles will have to come into the Jewish faith in order to get life, and the bulk of the earthly rulers will be children of Abraham in one sense or another. The population back there multiplied tremendously in different periods of time, but it was also decimated. For instance, the population of the First Dispensation was reduced to only eight people at the time of the Flood. In addition, millions have died in plagues and wars, with literally hundreds of thousands being slain on some occasions. In fact, many people do not give much credence to the Old Testament because of the great numbers of slain that are recorded. Today people do not realize how populous the Middle East was in ancient times. The point is that the population swelled and was decimated periodically due to various circumstances.

“Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.” Certain Scriptures include the Holy Remnant, but primarily the leadership of the earth, the princes, the Ancient Worthies, will be the mouthpieces of judgment. The people will look up to these princes as the executive and legislative bodies combined. Scattered throughout the earth, the Ancient Worthies will be the mouthpieces of the Church in glory, the kings and priests of the Kingdom Age.

Mal. 4:4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Verse 4 ties in with the thought that the New Covenant will be made with the Jews and that it is a Law Covenant. The world will have to be indoctrinated like Israel of old but in a much more meaningful way. The Mosaic Law was related to Horeb, which is Mount Sinai. That Law, which was given to natural Israel, will eventually be given (as the New Covenant) to the world of mankind, who will have to come into harmony with its statutes and judgments.

Mal. 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Who is “Elijah the prophet”? Let us review the history of this expression. Jesus likened John the Baptist to Elijah: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias [the Greek form of Elijah], which was for to come” (Matt. 11:12-14). The Pastor proved in the “Elias Shall First Come” chapter of the *Second*

Volume that Elijah the prophet represents the Church in the flesh during the Gospel Age. That is the first coming of the antitypical Elijah. Of course a literal Elijah the prophet lived and died in the past, but verse 5 refers to the future work of the “Elijah the prophet” class who first comes.

When Jesus asked his disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” the answers were Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist, or one of the prophets (Matt. 16:13-16). However, right away Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Thus the identity began to narrow down.

As an individual, John the Baptist was a type of the Church in one sense in the first coming. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus appeared in vision in resplendent robes of glistening white. Moses and Elijah were in the vision as well, one on each side of Jesus. Moses, who had faith in the *coming* Messiah, represented the Ancient Worthies, whereas Elijah represented the Church, who *look back* to Christ. One purpose of the vision was to break ground with new thinking, for Jesus wanted to introduce another thought.

Elijah went through different experiences in his life. During the Gospel Age, repentance has been a cardinal theme of the gospel Church. Even Jesus began his ministry with the words “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). In other words, repentance is a cardinal step before one can begin to understand God’s will. Stated another way, knowing God’s will is based on repentance and the recognition of Jesus, one’s sins, and the need for a covering. The meek and the humble are the ones Jesus teaches his way. Therefore, during the Gospel Age, Elijah tried to convert the world by preaching repentance and the gospel, but the effort was a failure. Only a relative few obeyed Elijah in the Gospel Age.

However, Jesus also said that Elijah would be successful in the future: “Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Matt. 17:11). At that future time, he would turn the hearts of the fathers to a childlike state of contriteness, humility, and meekness with listening ears.

Mal. 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The general thinking is that John the Baptist announced Jesus and that he also predicted the future time of trouble on the Jewish nation. Referring to the holocaust in AD 69-73, John said that for those who did not repent and get baptized in the Jordan and prepare their hearts to receive the Messiah, a fire would occur. Because the nation crucified Jesus, the trouble did come as predicted. The multitude even said, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25).

As a mini-picture, the holocaust on the Jewish nation has a larger application of predicting, first, the experience of the French Revolution. People were very frightened at that time. The gospel had been preached during the Gospel Age, and Christians living back there thought the French Revolution was Armageddon, the end time (Dan. 12:5-7). However, the French Revolution prefigured the greater Time of Trouble yet future, as referred to in the clause “lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

Reconsideration of Verses 1-6

Now we will go back and consider verses 1-6 again. In doing so, we will have a different and more explicit situation that fits all of the component parts.

Verse 1:

“The day” will leave “neither root nor branch.” The “root” is below the ground, and the “branch” is above the ground. With branches that have been cut off in past history up to the

present day, the root has been left because the individuals will get an awakening from the tomb. However, when the wicked are cut off, the root will not be left underground. There are three steps of fulfillment, and Jehovah will be involved with this destruction.

Comment: Jude 12 is a confirmation that leaving “neither root nor branch” refers to Second Death: “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, *plucked up by the roots.*”

Reply: The application is different, but the same principle and language are used because the Heavenly Father, in His thinking and in His expression to us, has to curtail His own vocabulary to suit the extent of our feeble minds down here.

Verse 2:

The people will “grow up as calves of the stall,” but as shown in Psalm 51:19, they will also grow up as steers, or bullocks. Those of mankind who get life will be kings; that is, the earthly portion of restitution is that all mankind will no longer be children and men at the end of the Kingdom Age, but they will be kings. The Lord’s Prayer will be answered at that time.

Chapter 4 is telling about the second coming of Elijah, when he will successfully convert the world. Jesus spoke about the first coming of Elijah, which was a picture of the Gospel Age work. When the scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, “We are children of Abraham,” he replied, “Ye are children of your father the devil” (John 8:39,44 paraphrase).

When Jeremiah frequently told his generation how wicked they were, he said, “You are just like your fathers—your father, your grandfather, your great grandfather, etc.” Similarly, Jesus said at the First Advent that the scribes were of their father the devil. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Those of all generations who did not receive Jesus were primarily the leaders, the so-called fathers, the representatives of the nation. However, those individuals will come out of the tomb—the priesthood and the false prophets—because no man can be judged with Second Death until he first knows Jesus, who tasted death as a ransom for every man (1 Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 2:9). Therefore, in either the present life or the next age, everyone is guaranteed to come to the knowledge of the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the one sent of God.

Judas went into Second Death because he originally believed in Jesus but later succumbed to his greed and avarice—*after seeing Jesus’ miracles and hearing him preach.* There are different ways of showing that Judas was very advanced, yet he failed. Verse 1 is saying that not even the root will be left of those who go into Second Death.

Growing up as calves of the stall is telling about the sunrise, but inferentially, the “Sun” will go all the way through the Kingdom Age, for all mankind must be enlightened, whether they are on the surface of the earth, underneath the earth, or in the sea. They must come forth from the grave and get this instruction.

Verses 3-6:

“And ye [the Ancient Worthies] shall tread down the wicked,” that is, *crush* the heads of the wicked, “for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet.” At the end of the Kingdom Age, another (or second) Gog and Magog, comprising a great many people, will go up to Jerusalem, to the “camp of the saints,” to voice their opposition (Rev. 20:9). No violence will be tolerated during the Kingdom with either animals or humans, for there will be rigid control. Therefore, feeling that the rod-of-iron Kingdom rule and the Law were too rigid, the Gog and Magog element will think they should now be given their liberty.

One way of explaining why this element will have such boldness is that Satan is to be loosed in the end time of the Kingdom Age. When he is loosed, he will be so successful with his tremendous knowledge that people will begin to believe and like him. Why? Because those who like him will have the *same* feelings, and they will want to have a *fulfillment* of those feelings. Amos 8:5,6 indicates that the rebellion will be along business lines. The attitude will be, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?” But the rebellion will also be along sexual lines. A lot is involved here.

What will happen to the great number who go up and encompass the camp of the saints? They will become ashes. When they go up to Jerusalem, “fire” will come down from God out of heaven and “devour,” or consume, them (Rev. 20:9). The dramatization will take place in Israel. Although not all of the disobedient will go to Jerusalem, many will go there to voice their discontent to the Ancient Worthies. However, just as nations now have an embassy in each country, so the princes in all the earth, the Ancient Worthies, will have their places of authority, and those of Gog who do not go to Jerusalem will go to these other places, where the same fate of fire will occur. The Scriptures focus only on the fire in Jerusalem, but just because Jerusalem is center stage does not nullify other things happening.

There will be a Time of Trouble at the end of the Gospel Age, which Christians all recognize, but the real end time will be at the end of the Kingdom Age. Only the righteous will survive and live into the ages of ages. All of the wicked will be thoroughly purged out. Therefore, the second coming of Elijah the prophet will be the Second Advent of the Kingdom Age. Spiritually speaking, that work of instructing throughout the Kingdom Age will be successful in converting the world, for those who do not bend the knee and conform will all be rooted out.

We can see the rejoicing that will take place. If we were on earth at that time and saw all of these things happen and we were spared, we would know that we were in harmony with God. What a delightful thought that would be—to know we had made it! Similar joy is experienced by the Christian who is changed from the grave and sees Jesus and hears him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). Such individuals at the end of the Kingdom Age will then be cleansed with perfect being. Having been schooled and proven obedient, they will have heart content in a perfect body with everlasting life. The Little Flock will experience joy in a fuller sense, and the Great Company in a lesser sense. The reward of life on any plane is always contingent upon *obedience*.

In summary, there will be a second Gog and Magog and a second Time of Trouble, which is “the great and dreadful day of the LORD [Jehovah]” in a special sense. We have always stated that with regard to the holding of life and death of every individual in any age, the *Creator* decides who gets life. Jesus will make decisions where conditions are *obviously wrong*—where it can be plainly seen by the public that a person is incorrigibly wicked. But with secret sin, the Creator will “uncreate.” Matter cannot be created or destroyed *except by God*. That is one of His prerogatives which, to our understanding, will not be shared. The Heavenly Father will always be the Creator, and there are things He will do in the future. His creative works done thus far are only the beginning. His hands are not tied in the creation of new things.

Let us consider again the actions of those who will remonstrate against the Ancient Worthies at the end of the Kingdom Age. When fire comes down and destroys the wicked, it will be as though the Ancient Worthies make the decision, even though the decision will rest with God. His destruction of the incorrigible will vindicate the Ancient Worthies as not overstepping their prerogatives. God’s judgment will be done once and for all. When the Israelites crossed the

Red Sea and Moses and Miriam sang, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host pictured the destruction of Satan and his host at the end of the Kingdom Age. Following that destruction will come the Hallelujah chorus (Rev. 5:11-13).

Incidentally, the picture of the Red Sea crossing can be presented two different ways. A *preliminary* crossing of the Red Sea with rejoicing will take place earlier, but the *real* crossing is the final picture of mankind at the end of the Kingdom Age.

Q: Do Absalom's charm and cunningness in trying to steal his father David's kingdom picture Satan?

A: Yes. Absalom's beauty and wisdom consumed him; he felt very capable in his *own* strength. God's description of Lucifer could not contain greater praise, so he must have been unusual (Ezek. 28:13-15). What a great being he was originally, but destruction will be his end! People like a stiff neck, a proud look, and a handsome appearance, whereas God looks at the heart. We believe that Jesus Christ looked just as good. However, people seem to like leadership qualities, and Jesus humbled himself and was very submissive in doing his Father's will at the First Advent. Not only was he very careful not to overstep his bounds, but also he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane over whether he had done everything properly. Jesus will be elevated and glorified in the Kingdom Age, but in the meantime, he has been assured, ever since his resurrection, that whatever he does will be accomplished in a natural way with perfection. There is no more nervousness on his part that he could do anything amiss. In addition to being schooled and tested, he has been given the ability to perform perfectly. When Jesus is seen in his glory in the spirit realm, his composure, dignity, and majesty will be apparent.

Comment: The tree that was cut down in Daniel 4:14,15 still had the stump of its roots because the Kingdom promises will be fulfilled. Here in Malachi, we are talking about those who will *individually* lose their roots after the fruits of the Kingdom have been dispensed.

Comment: Ezekiel 28:18 is a second witness that Satan will be reduced to ashes: "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee *to ashes upon the earth* in the sight of all them that behold thee."

Reply: God tells many details about Himself in the Scriptures that people attribute to purposed hyperbole. If we could get the feel of such details, it would be very wonderful. In the present life, we are trying to know the Father and to love Him not out of compulsion or constraint but with a natural flowing adoration. We want to maintain that attitude in a freewill offering throughout life.