

Commentary on Malachi Chapters 3 and 4, by Chuck Smith 9.25.24

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September Memory Verse, 1 Thessalonians 4:15 (NKJV)

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

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Chapter 3

Now the promise of the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner to Jesus Christ. 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. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like the fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and in the former years (Mal 3:1-4).

Now here we have a co-mingling of both the first and the second comings of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist did come as the forerunner, proclaimed the coming of the Lord after him. "There's One coming after me mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I'm not worthy to unloose" (John 1:27). When he saw Jesus, he said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). He bore testimony of Jesus Christ. But Jesus was rejected. He did come to the temple. He did cleanse it. He drove out the moneychangers and those that were selling the doves. But He was rejected. But He is coming again, and before He comes again, Elijah shall come, precede Him, and prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of the Lord. So part of this was fulfilled in His first coming; much of it remains to be fulfilled in His second coming.

But with Malachi and so many of the others, they did not see the two aspects of the coming of the Messiah. So as they wrote, Peter said, "They wrote of things that they really didn't understand." Earnestly desiring to look into these things and to understand them. But they really didn't, and they didn't understand, really, the seeming ambiguity and contradictions of the prophecies that they were making. For they were prophesying that He would reign as King and Lord forever upon the throne of David and establish the

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kingdom forever, and yet, they were saying, "and He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief, cut off from the land of the living" (Isaiah 53:3). "The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" (Daniel 9:26), or without receiving the kingdom. So they were giving these prophecies that they could not themselves understand, because there was this seeming paradox, the differences. But yet, they wrote of them, honestly obeying the voice of the Spirit that was speaking to their hearts, though they themselves did not understand the things of which they wrote.

The Lord said,

And I will come near to you to judgment (Mal 3:5);

Now this is referring, of course, to the second coming of Christ; He's coming to judge the world. The first duty, the first activity of Christ when He returns to the earth is that of judgment, gathering the nations together for judgment.

and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers (Mal 3:5), Now the sorcerers are those... the word in the Greek is pharmakeia, from which we get pharmacology, which is the use of drugs... those that are using the drugs for hallucinogenic purposes, against the adulterers. against [those who are liars] false swearers [those who swear falsely], against those who are oppressing their [employers, or their] employees in his wages (Mal 3:5), Withholding, actually.

In James it says, "Go to now ye rich, weep and howl for the woes that have come upon you, for you have defrauded the laborer, you've been holding back his wages in order that you might live sumptuously." Now the Lord speaks of their being cut off. So those that are oppressing the hirelings holding back the wages, oppressing the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed (Mal 3:5-6).

God's promises to Jacob are sure, otherwise He would've consumed them; He would've consumed the people. But His promises He keeps, and He promised that to Jacob there would arise the star, the morning star. So God keeps His word, but God is here declaring that if it were not for His word, they would be consumed. "But I am the Lord, and I change not." This is what is called, from a doctrinal standpoint, the immutability of God. That is, God does not change. In the New Testament we read concerning Jesus Christ, "The same yesterday, today, and forever." He does not change. God's immutability--one of the divine attributes of God.

Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from my ordinances, and you've not kept them. Return unto me, and I return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But you said, Why should we return? (Mal 3:7)

So God is even now giving them the chance to turn. "Return to Me," God said, "I'll return to you." They said, "Why should we?" They were surely impudent people.

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Then the question:

Will a man rob God? Yet [the Lord said] you have robbed me. But you say, Where have we robbed you? [And God said] In the tithes and in the offerings ([Mal 3:8](#)).

The word tithe means a tenth. God claims that a tenth of the increase belonged to Him. For them to withhold it from God was robbing God, and God looked upon it as actually robbing from Him. This is under the Old Testament law. God said,

Ye are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation ([Mal 3:9](#)). Now, when Nehemiah came back the second time, the worship in the temple had been forsaken because the people were not bringing tithes and offerings into the temple. Thus, the priest had left the ministry in the temple and they'd gone out into the fields, and they were cultivating fields and they were working in order to provide for their own necessities for their own survival.

Thus, the temple worship was neglected when Nehemiah returned. So he called the people together and he rebuked the people for the fact that the priest had to leave the ministry of the temple and go out into the fields to work to support themselves. Nehemiah set this thing straight. So again, the book of Nehemiah helps give you background for what Malachi is saying.

God talking about the people robbing Him, and then God commands them, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out unto you a blessing, that you'll not have room enough to receive it ([Mal 3:10](#)).

Now, it is interesting to me that, as far as I know, this is the only place in the scripture where God has actually challenged a person to prove Him. For God says, "Prove Me and see if I'll not pour out upon you a blessing so great that you won't be able to contain it."

Now, we often hear the objection, "Well, there is no mention of tithing in the New Testament. It is a part of the Old Testament law. It is not something that is applicable to the church age." This, for the most part, is true. There is only one mention of tithing as such that I can think of, and that is when Jesus was speaking about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and how they had twisted so many things, "straining at a gnat, swallowing a camel" kind of thing. He said, "You paid tithe of your anise, your mint, and your cummin." Now these are spices; they're little spice gardens that they would grow. They would take these little anise seeds and count out, "Nine for me, one for God. Nine for me, one for God." Little tiny seeds, and they were very careful that God got His tenth part of this spice from their herb gardens. He said, "You pay tithes for these things, but," He said, "you totally overlook the more important things of fairness and honesty. You know, you're crooked in your dealings, yet you're so careful that God gets His tenth part, even

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of your spices." Now God said, Jesus said, "This you ought to have done," in the reference of their tithing, "You ought to do that," but He said, "You shouldn't leave the other undone."

You know that oftentimes I have spoken to you of the grace of God, and that God will never be a debtor to any man, and how that our blessings from God are not predicated in this covenant of grace upon our obedience to the law, our faithfulness in devotions, our faithfulness in tithes, or whatever. Where the people at one time related to God through the law, God has chosen that we should relate to Him in love.

God has chosen to bestow upon us His blessings on the basis, not of our obedience or faithfulness to the law, but upon the basis of His grace towards us. So that all of God's blessings are bestowed upon my life not because I merit them, not because I deserve them, but because God just loves me, and I just can't help that. I am so thankful for it. That God just loves me so much He wants to give to me.

Now, wouldn't it be rather stupid for me to say, "Oh, God, don't do that, you know. Don't do that. You're too good, Lord!" I often say, "You're too good," but I don't say, "Stop." I appreciate the goodness of God. I thank God for His grace, and I thank God that I can relate to Him in love, not the law. I feel sorry for people who have a legal relationship with God. Oh, how I thank God for this love relationship that I have. I love Him, He loves me, and it's just a neat deal. Because He loves me more than I love Him, and He is always showing to me how much He loves me. Quite often He is showing me how much He loves me right after I have failed so miserably, just so I won't get discouraged. By His grace He just sort of says, "Hey, I know you're frame. I know you're but dust. I still love you anyhow, and I want to show it to you." God just is constantly overwhelming me with His love.

However, there is a divine law involved in giving. I would be derelict as a minister if I did not point out to you a divine spiritual law that God has enacted in this universe. The law is basically expressed in the New Testament in these words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you. Measured out, pressed down, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" ([Luke 6:38](#)). Now that's a spiritual law of God. The more you give, the more you will receive. Paul the apostle expressed it by saying, "He who gives sparingly will receive sparingly, but he who gives bountifully will receive bountifully" ([II Corinthians 9:6](#)). It's a divine spiritual law.

Now, we're quite conscious of the natural laws that govern our universe. Though we don't fully understand them, we are aware of them. And we live in accordance to them, and we take advantage of them. Now, I'm certain that none of us really understand how gravity works; we just know that it does work. We know that an apple falls down not up. Just how the principle of gravity may work, how mass attracts, we don't really know, but

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we know that there is an attraction by mass. So we learn to respect the law of gravity and abide by the law of gravity.

Now, just as there are laws of gravity, laws of electricity, laws of aerodynamics, and these basic laws of nature that we have learned to live with and to use, so there are spiritual laws in the universe that God has inaugurated that you can use for your benefit. God has established these laws. They are just as powerful in their cause and effect as is the law of gravity or any of the other laws of nature which we have learned to live with. One of the laws, the spiritual laws, involves the giving to God, and that is, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; measured out, pressed down, running over." The more you give to the Lord, the more you will receive from Him. That's just a basic spiritual law. You say, "Well, how does it work?" I don't know. All I know is that it does work. God, only in this area, challenges people to prove Him. "Just prove Me," God says, "just see if I will not pour out unto you blessings that you won't be able, you won't have room enough to contain."

Now, you want to take God's dare? God's challenge to you, try it. Prove the Lord. See if He will not pour out unto you blessings that you cannot contain. There will not be room enough to receive it. For the Lord says, I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, 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. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts. And your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against you? (Mal 3:11-13)

Every time God tells them something is wrong, they challenge, "Where, why, when, how?" "You said that it was vain to serve God. It doesn't pay to serve the Lord. That's what you're saying," the Lord said, "Saying it was vain to serve God, doesn't pay to try and be good." what profit it is that we have kept his ordinance, that we have walked mournfully before him? (Mal 3:14)

"God, it doesn't pay. God does not respond to us. There's nothing, you know. The Lord hasn't done anything. Doesn't pay to serve the Lord." How many times Satan tries to throw that little trip on us. "Doesn't really pay. What profit is it that I've tried to be good? Look, they've took advantage of me. It doesn't pay to serve God."

And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness they are (Mal 3:15); Voted into office many times. Thank God we've got some good Christians in some of the areas of government. I think that it is the duty of every Christian to really know the position of a candidate on spiritual things. I really feel that that's our obligation. That we really can't complain about bad government if we are not exercising our privilege of voting, and if we are not using diligence in determining those that we vote for.

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Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another (Mal 3:16):

The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The Bible says that to fear the Lord is to hate iniquity, or is to depart from iniquity. The fear of the Lord is not a phobia type of fear that debilitates a person. The fear of the Lord isn't even a healthy cautionary type of fear that is so important for our survival. But the fear of the Lord is a reverential awe as we stand in the presence of His greatness, of His glory, of His majesty, and of His power. We think of the greatness of the God who created this vast universe. We think of the wisdom of God who created all of the life forms, and we just sort of stand in awe of that greatness and power, and wisdom. That's what the fear of the Lord is.

"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another," always talking about the Lord. Isn't it glorious to be around people who want to talk about the Lord all the time? You know, whenever you get around them, the conversation comes up, "Oh, the Lord is so good. Oh, let me tell you what the Lord's done. Let me tell you what the Lord did for me today." Just so full of the Lord, they speak often one to another about it. As they speak about the Lord, the LORD hearkens unto them, and hears it (Mal 3:16),

The Lord eavesdrops on every conversation concerning Him. Isn't that neat? God just loves you to talk about Him. We used to sing a chorus, "Let's talk about Jesus, the King of kings is He, the great I Am, the way, truth, the life, the Lord." It's just a... what better conversational piece can you have than the Lord? Isn't it interesting how the world says, "Well, you want to open a conversation, just start talking about the weather." Sort of a, you know, "Well, the sun did come out today, didn't it? I wondered if it was going to come out. Typical May weather." You know, talk about the weather. Yeah, well, the weather is such a changeable thing, yet isn't it sad that people have nothing better to talk about than the weather?

"They that feared the Lord spake often concerning Him one to another. The Lord hearkens, He hears," and he's keeping a book of remembrance for them who feared the LORD, and thought upon his name (Mal 3:16).

"They who thought upon His name, they who revered the Lord and thought upon His name." God keeps this book of remembrance, their names are written in the Book of Life, in His book of remembrances. And [the Lord said,] they shall be mine (Mal 3:17), I get so excited when I think of God speaking about me in the personal, possessive pronoun. When God speaks of me as, "My son, My child, My servant." Oh, how I love God to speak about me with a personal, possessive pronoun. I belong to Him; I'm His. "They shall be mine," the Lord said. and in that day when I make up my jewels (Mal 3:17);

You are His treasure, Peter said, "for we are His peculiar treasure." The Lord speaks of you as a treasure that was hid in the field, that He bought the whole field that He might

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take the treasure out of it. Paul in writing to the Ephesians prayed that God might open up their understanding, that they might know what is the exceeding riches of His inheritance in the saints. Now in another place he said, "Oh, I wish you knew what God has in store for you, the riches, and the glory of God's kingdom." But then he is praying, "Oh, God help them to understand the riches of His inheritance." In other words, God help you to understand how much God values you. We're so often putting ourselves down. "Oh, I'm not worthy. Oh, I'm nothing. Oh, I'm just so miserable." And we're oftentimes putting ourselves down, and God looks upon you as a valuable gem, as a treasure. "And in those days when I make up my jewels," the Lord says. He treasures you and He values you so highly that He was willing to send His Only Begotten Son to take your sin and to die in your place that He might redeem this world, in order that He might claim you as "My child." All possible because Jesus paid the price of the redemption for the world, that you might be saved. "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 spares his own son that serves him (Mal 3:17).

Chapter 4

So the Lord has promised to spare us from what, and when? The Lord will spare us when His day of judgment comes. Chapter 4, verse 1:

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

The great day of God's judgment that is coming, but those who fear the Lord, those who think upon His name, those who talk of the Lord, they will be His, His jewels, written in His book of remembrance, spared from the day of judgment that is coming to destroy the wicked.

Now wickedness is contrasted with the lack of the fear of the Lord, or is associated with a lack of the fear of the Lord, and is contrasted with those that fear the Lord. So in verse 2:

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

So the glorious promise of the coming of Jesus Christ: the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings to establish God's glorious kingdom upon the earth.

And you will 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. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all of Israel, with statutes and judgments. And behold, I will send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,

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and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse (Mal 4:3-6).

So the promise of the coming again of Elijah before the great and noble day of the Lord. That causes me to be convinced that in Revelation, chapter 11, as God sends His two witnesses to witness for a period of time here upon the earth while the antichrist is in power, that one of the two witnesses will indeed be Elijah. "Behold I will send Elijah." Now John the Baptist was not Elijah. They came out and said, "Are you Elijah?" "Nope." "Who are you?" "I'm the voice of one in the wilderness crying, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

But Jesus said of John the Baptist, "Of all of the women born of men, there's not been a greater prophet arise than John. And yet, he who was least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And this, if you're able to take it, is Elijah, of whom the scripture spake" (Matthew 11:11, 14). A partial fulfillment when Zechariah's father was accosted by Gabriel the angel and told that his wife Elizabeth in her old age was to have a son. He said, "And he shall go forth in the spirit and in the power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children unto their fathers" (Luke 1:17). Coming in the spirit and the power of Elijah, a type of the actual coming of Elijah before the second coming of the Lord.