

## Book of Malachi

### Chapter 2:17 – 3:18

<sup>17</sup> *You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”*

**Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”** > This segment opens and closes on the same topic > the sin of man and the righteousness of the Lord. It has been proven again and again that those living in sin are the most angry at the Lord for allowing *other* people to live in sin. I don't know how we become so blind and stupid to the sins very evident in our own lives.

**Utley** > They assert that not only is YHWH apathetic toward covenant disobedience, but He approves and is delighted by it!

**Blaising** > The apparent prosperity of the wicked (All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD) and the suffering of the righteous is an age-old problem.

The prosperity of the wicked was equally perplexing and was discussed by at least five biblical writers (Job 21:7-26; 24:1-17; **Ps. 73:1-14**; Ecc. 8:14; Jer. 12:1-4; Hab. 1). Though answers to this problem are not given in these passages, in each case questions about God's justice are removed by a futuristic perspective.

We need to skim through **Psalm 73** as it is an excellent illustration of this issue.

<sup>1</sup> *God certainly is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!*

<sup>2</sup> *But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped.* <sup>3</sup> *For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

<sup>4</sup> *For there are no pains in their death, and their belly is fat.* <sup>5</sup> *They are not in trouble like other people, nor are they tormented together with the rest of mankind.* <sup>6</sup> *Therefore arrogance is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them.* <sup>7</sup> *Their eye bulges from fatness; the imaginations of their heart overflow.* <sup>8</sup> *They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high.* <sup>9</sup> *They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore his people return here, and abundant waters are drunk by them.* <sup>11</sup> *They say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?”*

<sup>12</sup> *Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth.*

<sup>13</sup> Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; <sup>14</sup> For I have been stricken all day long, and punished every morning.

<sup>15</sup> If I had said, "I will speak this way," behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.

<sup>16</sup> When I thought of understanding this, it was troublesome in my sight ... <sup>17</sup> Until I entered the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

<sup>18</sup> You indeed put them on slippery ground; You dropped them into ruin. <sup>19</sup> How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors! <sup>20</sup> Like a dream when one awakes, Lord, when stirred, You will despise their image.

<sup>21</sup> When my heart was embittered and I was pierced within, <sup>22</sup> Then I was stupid and ignorant; I was like an animal before You.

<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.

<sup>24</sup> You will guide me with Your plan, and afterward receive me to glory.

<sup>25</sup> Whom do I have in heaven but You? And with You, I desire nothing on earth.

<sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

<sup>27</sup> For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

<sup>28</sup> But as for me, the nearness of God is good for me; I have made the Lord God my refuge, So that I may tell of all Your works.

<sup>1</sup> "Behold, I am sending **My messenger**, and **he will clear a way before Me**. And the Lord, whom you are seeking, will suddenly come to His temple; and **the messenger of the covenant**, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of armies.

**John 1:2-3** > <sup>2</sup> just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I am sending My messenger before You, who will prepare Your way; <sup>3</sup> The voice of one calling out in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!'"

**Isaiah 40:3** > The voice of one calling out, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

**Luke 1:17** > <sup>17</sup> *And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

**John 1:21** > <sup>21</sup> *And so they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*



**Malachi 4:5-6** > <sup>5</sup> *"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with complete destruction."*

**Matthew 17:10-113** > <sup>10</sup> *And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>11</sup> And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; <sup>12</sup> but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.*

**Matthew 11:12-15** > <sup>12</sup> *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been treated violently, and violent men take it by force. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. <sup>15</sup> The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

**He will clear a way before Me** > (McKay) The imagery is drawn from the practice of ancient kings, who would inform their subjects in a province of their empire that they were about to come on a state visit, so that adequate arrangements might be made. This would include 'preparing the way' for the royal procession, by removing from it anything that would impede progress. It would thus be straight, level and free of obstacles. The preparations that had to be made before the coming of the LORD were, of course, spiritual rather than physical. This was achieved through John's ministry, which called for repentance because the kingdom of heaven was near (Mt. 3:2).

**The messenger of the covenant** > (Stuart) > Perhaps most intriguing of all the issues raised by the fourth disputation is its implicit identification of the "messenger of the covenant" as Yahweh himself. No other passage in the Old Testament so clearly assigns divine prerogatives and nomenclature to the figure of the Messiah (though the term *masiah* is not itself employed by Malachi). When one examines how this disputation describes the identity and actions of the "messenger of the covenant," one can only conclude that he is divine.

<sup>2</sup> *“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like launderer’s soap*

**Who can stand when He appears** > (Utley) > This is a military term for "holding one's ground"

**Refiner’s** > (Strong’s) A primitive root; to fuse (metal), i.e. Refine (literally or figuratively)

**Keil** > As a smelter purifies gold and silver from the dross adhering to it, so will the Lord refine the sons of Levi, by whom the priests are principally intended.

**Launderer’s soap** > The **Septuagint** translates this phrase as > *and as the herb of fullers*. **Benson** relays > according to St. Jerome, was an herb growing in Palestine, which the fullers used to take spots out of clothes,

<sup>3</sup> *And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old, and as in former years.*

**Silver** > (Alan Robinson) There is a dramatic moment when [the refiner] knows that all dross has gone from [the silver]. Peering over it, the silver suddenly becomes a liquid mirror in which the image of the refiner is reflected. Then he knows that his task is done

**So that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness** > (Benson) So it happened after the ministration of Jesus Christ: a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith > **Acts 6:7** > <sup>7</sup> *The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.*

**Then** > (Barnes, Septuagint) “and”

<sup>5</sup> *“Then I will come near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, those who oppress the wage earner in his wages or the widow or the orphan, and those who turn away the stranger from justice and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of armies.*

**Then I will come near to you for judgment** > If we look back at how we opened this lesson (Malachi 2:17) we’ll find this question concluding that verse > **Where is the God of justice?** They saw the evil in *other* people but not in themselves.

**Sorcerers** > (Strong’s) A primitive root; properly, to whisper a spell

**Adulterers** > (Strong’s) A primitive root; to commit adultery; figuratively, to apostatize

**Swear falsely** > (Strong's) A primitive root; propr. To be complete, but used only as a denominative from sheba' (seven); to seven oneself, i.e. Swear

**Oppress the wage earner** > (Strong's) A primitive root > to press upon, i.e. Oppress, defraud, violate, overflow

**(Oppress) the widow or orphan** > (Strong's) A primitive root > to press upon, i.e. Oppress, defraud, violate, overflow

<sup>6</sup> ***"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, the sons of Jacob, have not come to an end.***

**The sons of Jacob** > (Constable) By calling the Jews "sons of Jacob," the Lord was connecting their behavior with that of their notorious patriarch. Promises are only as good as the person who makes them, so the fact that Yahweh does not change strengthens the certainty of their fulfillment

**Come to an end** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to end, whether intransitive (to cease, be finished, perish) or transitive (to complete, prepare, consume)

<sup>7</sup> ***"From the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of armies. "But you say, 'How shall we return?'"***

**Barnes** > "I am not changed from good; ye are not changed from evil. I am unchangeable in holiness; ye are unchangeable in perversity."

**Precept Austin** > Ezra declares "*Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder and to open shame, as it is this day.*" (**Ezra 9:7**)

**Return** > (Kaiser) The message of all the previous prophets could be summarized in the single word "return", the Old Testament word for repentance.

**How** > (Strong's) how long, oft, what end, good, purpose, thing

**But you say, 'How shall we return?'** > If you have lived a life in sin you understand this blindness. If not ... trust me ... it is a very definite blindness to your personal sin and a clear awareness of all the wrong around you

**Merrill** > How should we return?" is not an earnest entreaty for information but a self-serving declaration of innocence. The people, in effect, are saying, "What need do we have to return since we never turned away to begin with?"

<sup>8</sup> **“Would anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.**

**Utley** > There were three separate tithes taken in different years. It is related to both the needs of the Temple and the priests and also the special needs mentioned in v. 5. (widows and orphans) ... The NT speaks more of sacrificial, joyful, regular, proportionate giving than percentage giving (cf. II Cor. 8 and 9).

(In other words > we need to look at our heart. Why are we giving or not giving.)

**Utley** > The whole issue of tithing is contentious in the church because OT texts are being used as threats or greed to promote financial giving to the local churches.

**Constable** > In harmony with the principle of grace that marks the present dispensation, the Lord leaves the amount we give back to Him unspecified and up to us. Christians who sit under a steady diet of preaching that majors on God’s grace often give far more than 10 percent.

**Constable** > Since God owned the land and its produce in the first place (cf. Malachi 1:12-14; Leviticus 25:23), withholding tithes when He commanded the Israelites to give them amounted to robbing Him. (Failure to adequately support the priests and Levites resulted in the breakdown of priestly service)

Nehemiah references this in Nehemiah 13:10 > *I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.*

**Precept Austin** > The Levites received the tithe from the people who themselves gave a tenth to the priest (Nu 18:28).

**Precept Austin** > They were asking "How can we return, when we have never departed." God said "Look at your check books!"

**Constable** > The issue in Malachi 3:7-12 is not tithing but apostasy.

<sup>9</sup> **You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation of you!**

**You are cursed with a curse** > (Barnes, Utley) Literally, "the curse," this is related to the cursing and blessing section of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

**You are cursed with a curse** > (Barnes) They were impoverished by His curse, and so they could not afford to pay the tithes

<sup>10</sup> Bring the **whole tithe** into the storehouse, **so that there may be food in My house**, and put Me to the test now in this," says the LORD of armies, "if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and **pour out** for you a blessing until it overflows.

**So that there may be food in My house** > Not mansions, private jets, excess wealth, etc...

**Pour out** > (Barnes, Strong's) empty out

<sup>11</sup> Then I will rebuke the **devourer** for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor will the vine in the field prove fruitless to you," says the LORD of armies.

**Devourer** > (Utley) The word "devourer" is from the verb "to eat." It may literally refer to locusts or metaphorically to anything that destroys the crops (i.e., famine, desert wind, hail, etc.). The theological point (or Mosaic point, cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) is that YHWH controls nature for His purposes.

(Translate this into today ... car breakdowns, unexpected bills, etc.)

<sup>12</sup> "All the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a **delightful land**," says the LORD of armies.

**Delightful land** > (Barnes) literally "a land of good pleasure."

**Precept Austin** > "Delightful" is a masculine noun which means to take pleasure or find enjoyment in something. To feel great favor towards something. To experience emotional delight

<sup>13</sup> "**Your words have been arrogant** against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'"

**Arrogant** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to fasten upon; hence, to seize, be strong (figuratively, courageous, causatively strengthen, cure, help, repair, fortify), obstinate; to bind, restrain, conquer

**Your words have been arrogant** > (Precept Austin) > More literally this reads "your words are hard [or "strong"] against me.

<sup>14</sup> You have said, 'It is **pointless** to serve God; and **what benefit is it for us** that we have done what He required, and that **we have walked** in mourning before the LORD of armies?'

**Pointless ... Benefit ... Walked** > (Fee) All three verbals denote lifestyle faith. They viewed faith as "what is in it for me?" This is the spiritual plague of the modern western church

<sup>15</sup> *So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also put God to the test and escape punishment.*"

**Arrogant** > (Strong's) presumptuous, proud (a different Hebrew word than in verse 13)

**Constable** > It was those who practiced wickedness who got ahead and grew stronger materially (cf. Malachi 2:17). For them life was all about material prosperity, so it seemed better to be wicked than righteous.

<sup>16</sup> *Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened attentively and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and esteem His name.*

**Listened attentively** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to prick up the ears, i.e. Hearken -- attend, (cause to) hear

**Esteem** > (Strong's) A primitive root; properly, to plait or interpenetrate, i.e. (literally) to weave or (gen.) To fabricate; figuratively, to plot or contrive (usually in a malicious sense); hence (from the mental effort) to think, regard, value, compute

Here is some excellent advice from **Charles Dyer**:

- Vow to be faithful to God, even if those around you are not. Consider writing your own "scroll of remembrance."
- Surround yourself with a group of likeminded individuals for encouragement. This group "talked with each other" (Malachi 3:16) as they encouraged each other to remain faithful (see Hebrews 10:25).
- Remember that God's day of reckoning will come someday. Keep a long-range perspective (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)."

<sup>17</sup> *"And they will be Mine," says the LORD of armies, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will have compassion for them just as a man has compassion for his own son who serves him."*

**Possession** > (Precept Austin) > refers to a treasured possession, that which is valued personal property, that which is owned by someone and in which the owner has special affection or holds special value (Ex 19:5; Dt 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17).

**Compassion** > (Strong's) A primitive root; to commiserate; by implication, to spare

<sup>18</sup> *So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.*