

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan**MALACHI 3****Malachi 3**

The last book in the English versions of our Bible is Malachi, "My Messenger" in Hebrew. Malachi could have been a part of the priesthood as he is very familiar with the temple, sacrificial, and ceremonial rituals. The historical setting is in the same context as that of Nehemiah and Ezra, the earlier contemporary of Nehemiah. The people had gone into exile, beginning with the first wave of captives being taken in 605 B.C., the third and final wave of captives were taken to Babylon in 586 B.C., and the first temple was completely destroyed.

Cyrus the Great issued a decree in 538 B.C., allowing the people of Judah to return to their homeland. He supplied money and wealth to build and furnish the second temple. After three years, in 535 B.C., enough of the people returned, approximately 50,000, to begin the vital work of building the temple. After laying the foundation, the work was stopped. After fourteen years and the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, the second temple was completed and dedicated in 516 B.C., which was seventy years after the first temple was destroyed.

The people were back in the land and in the capital city of Jerusalem, but the walls were broken down, and the gates still lay in ruins. In 458 B.C., some fifty-eight years after the dedication of the temple, God sent Ezra, the priest and scribe, to bring the people back to their spiritual roots. Nehemiah came fourteen years later, in 444 B.C., and rebuilt the walls of the capital of Jerusalem. In chapter eight of Nehemiah, Ezra wrote the

account of the great revival that took place in Jerusalem as the Torah was read, explained by Ezra and the elders of the people, and acted upon and obeyed by the leaders and all the people.

Some of the same problems and issues that are called out in Malachi's prophecies are some of the same kinds of problems addressed by Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra, the priest.

Chapter three opens with a Messianic promise of hope and redemption in spite of the people's sins. The forerunner of Messiah, John the Baptist, is no doubt part of the prophecy. The prophet immediately speaks of the "refiner's fire" of judgment that is coming on the people for their sins. The list of sins includes sorcery, adultery, perjurers, and those who exploit helpless children and widows. The people had turned away from God and the covenant He had made with them. God implores them through the prophet to return! Return back to Him! The people had an even more specific sin that God called out, and that was the sin of "Robbing God!" The people had failed to give God first place in their lives, and because of that, they had failed to give God what He is due; the best of their lives and all they possessed. They had also spoken against God Himself and spread throughout the land with their speech that giving to God and serving God was to no "profit!" They disdained God and did not want to honor Him as God. But God promised in closing chapter three that He knew who belonged to Him, and He would honor them. They would be given supernatural discernment to determine what is of God and what is not, what is good and what is evil. God calls them His "Jewels."

Prayer and Action Steps

The God who made us and has given us our life, family, health, strength, and all we have, deserves the very first and best of all we have. He deserves the greatest of our time, talents, and treasure. Without God's gracious gifts and generosity, we would have nothing. May we honor Him with all we are and all we have. Amen