

## **The Choice of a Nation** **Book of Malachi**

### **Historical Background**

The prophet Malachi ministered to the Jews who returned from the exile. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was utterly destroyed (see Lamentations), and the final deportations of captives were taken to Babylon. Some captives (about 50,000) began to return under the leadership of Zerubbabel (see Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah). However, the 70-year captivity was not over until the temple was rebuilt and worship resumed in Jerusalem, in 516 B.C. (see 1Ki 8:46–53; Jer 32:36-37; Dan 6:1-17). Many of the sins cited by Malachi were already prominent in the time of Nehemiah (cf. Nehemiah 13) and were corrected by his reforms.

The ancient Jewish rabbis called Malachi "the seal of prophecy." This was because he fulfilled the prophecy of Dan 9:24-25 up to that point, concluding the first "seven weeks" of the three-part timetable. The "command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" was given by Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. (cf. Nehemiah 2). From that point, the "seventy weeks" (490 years) was divided into "seven weeks (49 years), sixty-two weeks (434 years)," and the final "week" of the coming tribulation (cf. Dan 9:24-27). The first 49-year period covered the time from the return of Nehemiah in 445 B.C. to the time of Malachi's prophecy (396 B.C.).

### **Introduction**

The theme of Malachi is "the messenger of God and his message." There are five "messengers" in the book:

1. Malachi (1:1) whose name means "My messenger,"
2. The priests (2:7),
3. John, the Baptizer (3:1a),
4. Elijah (4:5), and
5. Jesus Christ Himself (3:1b, 4:2), the greatest of all.

The message of Malachi is a rebuke to Israel for rejecting the love of God (1:2) and a demonstration of the increasing reversion of the nation in six dialogues, where God states His case, only to be met by Israel's cynical response, "*Yet you say,*" Malachi, using both promise and warning, calls the nation to repent five times (Mal 1:9, 2:2, 2:10, 3:7, 3:10). Thus the book not only anticipates the ministry of John but also his message (cf. Mat 3:1-12).

### **Outline:**

- I.     Chapters 1-2.

The choices leading to national reversion and wrath: The sins of the nation exposed.

- II.    Chapters 3-4.

The only choice leading to peace and prosperity: The Savior of the nation expected.

Key verse:

Mal 4:2, "*But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings ...*"

## I. **Chapters 1-2: The Choices Leading to National Reversion and Wrath**

Nations, like individuals, must come to terms with their Creator. When sufficient numbers of people in a nation spurn the love of God, then that nation will drink from the cup of God's wrath (Gen 15:16b; Luk 21:20-22; Rev 18:6-8).

"Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;  
Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong;  
Though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."  
- *The Present Crisis*; James R. Lowell, 1845

### A. God's Love Rejected by the Nation, Mal 1:1-5

If you get a good concordance and look up the words "love" and "loved," you will find over twenty times God tells Israel that His relationship with them is a love relationship. A good summary is found in Deu 7:7-9.

#### 1. Explanation

The burden of this message is three-fold:

- It is a burden to Malachi, who must warn the nation of God's judgment.
- It is a self-imposed burden on the people, due to their hard-heartedness.
- Finally, it is a burden to God, which one day must be borne by Christ on the cross (Isa 53:4-6).

God demonstrates His love in three ways also:

- First, in that He sends His "messenger" Malachi to plead with the people.
- Secondly, by His revealed Word, in which He declares His love for them.
- Finally, through His many acts of deliverance throughout Israel's history.

The statement, "*Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated*" is quoted by Paul in Rom 9:13 with the same intent: to warn Israel of coming wrath due to their unbelief. The cynical response of Israel (Mal 1:2) echoes what I hear many believers saying today. The callous rejection of God's love is always the first step on the downward path of reversion—falling away from God's grace. These Jews had come out of captivity. The temple and the wall had been rebuilt (Ezra and Nehemiah). The worship of Jehovah had been reestablished. Yet they were ungrateful and gave in to murmuring and complaining. See the book of Obadiah in connection with God's curse on Edom.

## 2. Illustration

No better illustration to the disastrous effects of rejecting the love of the Father can be found than Jesus' story of the prodigal son (Luk 15:10). Here, Jesus was instructing the Pharisees—who considered themselves the custodians of God's Word—on the history of the nation (younger brother), their own hard-heartedness (elder brother), and the infinite, matchless love of God (the Father).

## 3. Application

- To see how reversion begins with rejecting the Father's love, consider the case of the Galatians (Gal 5:1-7);
- The warning to the Ephesians (Eph 4:17-19 in contrast with Eph 5:1-2); and
- Lastly, the final end of the Ephesian church (Rev 2:4).

To reject God's love is to reject His very essence (1Jo 4:8, 16). Do we—as believers in this present day—truly “abide in” the love of Christ (Joh 15:4, 7, 9)? Or, have we in fact left our first love?

## B. God's Grace Perverted by Spiritual Leaders, Mal 1:6-2:9

In this section, the priests—Israel's spiritual leaders—are confronted and rebuked for their part in leading the nation away from God. They had done this by perverting the grace of God and corrupting the worship offered to Him.

### 1. Explanation

In this extended section, we see the error of Israel's spiritual leadership in three stages:

- Their dishonor of God as evidenced by defiled offerings, Mal 1:6-8.  
God is both Father and Master of the nation, yet the priests despised Him by offering defiled offerings; the lame, sick, and blind.
- Their refusal to respond to the call to repentance, Mal 1:9-14.  
Repentance begins with humility, and a willingness to “*call upon the name of the Lord*” (Rom 10:13). Yet confession of need alone is not enough. We need to follow confession (1Jo 1:9) with honest correction (2Ti 3:16-17; 1Jo 1:7). No priest could be found who would “*shut the doors*” (Mal 1:10) of the temple, refusing to offer unfit offerings. To them, the service of God had become a boring ritual (Mal 1:13), thus they are forewarned of the Gospel being sent to the Gentiles (Mal 1:11, 14; Rom 11:7-13).
- God's warning of judgment coupled with the ideal of the priesthood, Mal 2:1-9.  
The thrust of the rebuke is that they—like so many pastors today—cater to the whims of the people and barter their high and holy calling for popularity. To them, the service of God had become a weariness (Mal 2:13). They are warned of the coming Gospel reception by the Gentiles (Mal 1:11, 14), and their shoddy worship practices are set in glaring contrast with the ideal of the priesthood (Mal 2:5-7).

## 2. Illustration

In the fourth verse of the book of Jude, we are warned of those who “*turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” This condemnation fits much that passes for “church” in America today. As goes the pastor, so goes the church. As goes the church, so goes the nation. Is it any wonder America is beginning to feel the wrath of God?

The ideal of the priesthood can be found in Phinehas (Num 25:10-13) and in Ezra (Ezr 7:6, 10). The contrast of hirelings with true shepherds can be found in Eze 34:1-16, which Peter may have had in view when he wrote 1Pe 5:1-4.

## 3. Application

Paul’s instructions to Timothy (1Tim 4:11-16) are of great value for every pastor and teacher of God’s Word to read, ponder, and diligently apply. There will never be another spiritual awakening or revival in America until it begins with a humbling and repentance among pastors.

### C. God’s Blessings Despised by the Populace, Mal 2:10-17

The course taken by the nation at large combined with the corruption of the priesthood results in total spiritual decline throughout the land until decay and deception are the norm in every relationship. Betrayal and heartache rule as personal interaction spirals down into “treachery” and “violence.”

#### 1. Explanation

Now we see the impact of corrupt spiritual leadership on the common people. Note the movement here in five stages of national decay:

- They treat the covenant community with contempt (Mal 2:10). God called them to be one people, having care for one another, just as in the church.
- They then aligned themselves knowingly with idolatrous nations through intermarriage with heathen women (Mal 2:1-12).
- This resulted in the altar of God being covered with the tears of divorced wives (Mal 2:13-14, cf. 1Sa 1:7). Their prayers were hindered (1Pe 3:7).
- This decline in the marriage covenant brings the destruction of the family (Mal 2:15-16) in violation of God’s original intent (cf. Gen 2:21-24 with Mat 19:4-6). The preservation of marriage has in view the sanctifying effect on children (1Co 7:14), for a “*godly [believing] offspring.*”
- The final nail in the national coffin is unbalanced extremism in one of two areas; the first having lost all sense of absolute values, calls good evil and evil good (cf. Isa 5:20), the other demanding that the “*God of justice*” take action (Mal 2:17). The problem with this last position is that those who pose the question think that

only others (not themselves) need judgment! Both sides are oblivious to their own corruption and need for repentance.

## 2. Illustration

Three passages in the New Testament show these effects at work in Jesus' time:

- First, the plight of the woman at the well (Joh 4:1-26)—though she is a Samaritan—illustrates the kind of woman who may have “*covered the altar of the Lord with tears*” (cf. Hannah, 1Sa 1:6-8).
- Then, the attitude prevalent among the Pharisees that divorce was permissible “*for any reason*” (Mat 19:3-6).
- And finally, those who call for “justice” are illustrated by the corrupt Pharisees in their condemnation of the adulterous woman (Joh 8:1-5).

## 3. Application

Let's apply the stages of Israel's spiritual decline to the United States. The corruption of America's spiritual leadership began in the early 20th Century with two factions and the following results:

- First, those who followed the German “higher critics” and compromised the conviction of the absolute veracity of the Scriptures.
- Second, by the beginnings of the charismatic movement out of Asuza, California, resulting in our modern “Laodicean” form of “health, wealth and prosperity” Gospel (cf. Rev.3:16-17).
- The resulting amalgamation into the church of worldly business and social practices, until today we have churches and denominations once noted for their devotion to the Word of God holding classes on Buddhist meditation and tennis classes for singles! And, all the while hiring unbelieving “financial officers” to head up an aggressive public relations program.
- As a result, the divorce rate in the churches has gone from a small percentage in the 1960s to equal that of the unbelieving world today. This is not to slam those believers who have suffered the traumatic event of divorce, but simply to state that God still hates divorce, and divorce has lasting, harmful effects on children.
- As stated in Mal 2:15-16, a casual attitude toward divorce violates God's original design (covenant), has spiritually damaging effects on the children, and is considered by God an act of “*violence*,” which disrupts the “*peace*” (1Co 7:15) of the marriage, the family, and—eventually—the nation.
- Is it difficult for any of us to clearly see the divergent views of Mal 2:17 at work in America at present? On the one hand, we have a large portion of the populace that holds to no objective absolute standards. The recent arrest of the abortion clinic doctor who made millions murdering children is but one example. In the same vein, our so called “Department of Justice” is a travesty! On the other hand,

there is arising an extremist “justice” faction which cloaks some of the most vile ambitions under the name of “patriotism.”

## II. **Chapters 3-4: The Only Choice Leading to Peace and Prosperity**

Whereas the first two chapters reveal the shame of Israel’s defection and its consequences, the last two chapters set before Israel the hope of the coming Messiah, and the steps necessary for national restoration. In these chapters, we see how genuine repentance is an exact reversal of the stages of national or personal decline.

### A. God’s Love Received in the Messiah, Mal 3:1-7

Jesus Christ is the key and cornerstone of all Scripture. In Him, all prophecy is fulfilled and to Him, all promises belong. No passage of God’s Word can be rightly interpreted without taking Him into account. All of the Old Testament points to His first coming, and all of the New Testament points to His return. Truly, *“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,”* (Rev 19:10).

#### 1. Explanation

Remember that the theme of Malachi is “God’s messenger.” In chapter one, we have Malachi (Mal 1:1), in chapter two the priests (Mal 2:7), and in chapter four we have Elijah (Mal 4:5). In each case, the real issue is not the messenger, but the message they convey. However, here in chapter three, the messenger is the message! Actually we have two messengers here, the first, “My messenger” being John the Baptizer (see Mat 11:10; Luk 1:76-79). He would imitate Malachi’s call to *“Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand”* (Mat 3:2), and thus prepare for the coming King.

Only Jesus Christ Himself could be the Message of God, for He is the Living Word (Joh 1:1-4, 14). As the author of Hebrews stated (Heb 1:1-3), Jesus is God’s final Word to mankind. Jesus Christ was the living example of the Word that He taught. There was a time when I used to believe and teach that, “the important thing is the message, not the man.” I have come—by much chastening and correction—to realize that every man who teaches God’s Word is to aim at being a living example of what is taught. Though we may never arrive fully, it is always our goal, as Paul said, to call men to *“imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”* (1Co 11:1).

The coming of Messiah is seen in four aspects.

- Its suddenness, Mal 3:1.

This violent invasion of the Creator/Redeemer is clearly seen in the first appearance of Jesus and His cleansing of the temple (Joh 2:13-21). On this occasion, Jesus predicts His death and resurrection, the eighth sign of the Gospel of John. In so doing, He declares both the power to cleanse and His right to judge, as grounded in His work at the cross.

- Its cleansing power, Mal 3:2-4.

The rhetorical question “*Who can endure the day of His coming?*” expects a negative answer, “No one!” As Jesus declared, He is the “chief cornerstone” of God’s temple, and we will either fall upon that stone and be broken, or it will fall on us and grind us to powder (Mat 21:42-44). In other words, absolutely no one will be left intact as a result of His coming! His refining in the believer’s life is depicted well in 1Pe 1:3-9 and 2Pe 1:4-11. Ultimately, His work of redemption will make the offering of Israel acceptable to the Lord (Rom 11:26-29; 12:1-2).

- Its prelude to wrath, Mal 3:5.

The two aspects of redemption and wrath in our Lord’s coming were made clear by John (Mat 3:9-12). In His ministry of mercy, He would baptize believers with the Holy Spirit. But on those who chose to reject Him, He would rain unquenchable fire. It is essential for each of us who have trusted Him to realize that our Lord has declared unceasing war on all that is of the world, the flesh, and the devil (1Jo 2:15). He will not rest until we stand complete in His glorious presence (1Jo 3:2).

- Its merciful appeal, Mal 3:6-7.

It is by the immutable character of God that Jacob (and we ourselves) have not been consumed (see Rom 9:29). From the time of their deliverance from Egypt, Israel had never really obeyed wholeheartedly. Therefore, Malachi sounds the cry of all the prophets for Israel to repent, “*Return to Me, and I will return to you*” (cf. Jam 4:8). Yet tragically, Israel sees no area of need, saying “In what way?”

## 2. Illustration

In Luk 3:7-14, we see John echoing the message of Malachi, calling on the people to “*bear fruits worthy of repentance.*” As the people ask “*What shall we do then?*,” he sets before them practical actions and evidences of repentance that are

- relevant to each person’s station in life,
- within each person’s capability to perform,
- beneficial to those within each person’s sphere of influence, and
- simple in execution.

These are in glaring contrast to most people’s idea of what repentance should look like. Most people want public remorse, extended grieving, showy religious practices, and some form of penance and self-flagellation. So far are God’s ways above ours (Isa 55:6-9 with 1Pe 3:10-12). Truly, “*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart*” (1Sa 16:7b).

## 3. Application

It is my conviction that the true spiritual life is a state of perpetual repentance. I do not mean by this a perpetual morbid introspection, nor a pseudo-humility of self-denigration. Rather, true repentance is a joyful disregard of self as one

becomes lost in the love of God for us, and the unceasing desire to reflect that love to those around us in practical ways. If biblical repentance is one “*coming to himself*” (Luk 15:17), then it is the dawning realization of just how self-centered we have become, and a turning away, a denying of self (Luk 9:23), so as to “*return to the Father*” and to become absorbed in and motivated by the love of Christ for others (2Co 5:14-21). Isn’t this what Paul meant, ultimately, when he said, “*I die daily*” (1Co 15:31)? In this light, repentance is transformed from some grim form of even greater pre-occupation with self and sin, to a healing and liberating release into the fullness of life as we draw near and drink of the fountain of life (Joh 7:37-39) and live joyously in His presence (Joh 15:7, 9; Luk 19:6).

## B. God’s Grace Realized by True Repentance, Mal 3:8-15

Here we see the outworking of everything written above. To those who will—in simple faith and humility—adjust their lives to display true gratitude to God for His grace, there will be an outpouring of blessing. And if this occurs in sufficient numbers, the blessing of God will be evident upon the entire nation.

### 1. Explanation

God charges Israel with robbery of what is rightfully His (Mal 3:8-9). Stop and think about this: you cannot be charged with stealing what rightfully belongs to you. Therefore, if withholding offerings is theft, it’s because all that we have belongs to God already. We tend to think we are being generous in our giving, when in reality we rob God. Such twisted thinking brought cursing—not only on the individual believer, but on the entire nation.

Beginning in Mal 3:10, we have the fifth and final call to repent in the book (cf. Mal 1:9; 2:2, 10; 3:7b). God challenges Israel to “*put Him to the test.*” This is not meant in the sense of Israel’s provocation in the wilderness (Heb 3:7-11). Rather, it is a proving of His promised, gracious provisions for obedience, as seen in 2Ch 31:10 and Neh 13:10-12. God promises to “*Open ... the windows of Heaven and pour out for you blessing.*” We need to take care to distinguish this from the perverted prosperity gospel, “name it and claim it” mentality of today. God never promises to make you wealthy because you give, or plant your “seed faith.” His blessings are most often not financial or material, but have to do with much more valuable things that pertain to fullness of life and joy, in spiritual enrichment on one’s marriage, family, and impact upon others for good.

America could once be described by the words of Mal 3:12, but not any longer. We have gone from being richly blessed by God, to being under the wrath of God. Why? The answer is given in Mal 3:13-15. We have chosen as a nation—from political leaders, to spiritual leaders, to heads of households—to speak against God. By our anti-Christ laws, our Bible-hating schools, our corrupt and dishonest business practices, our churches where everything but Christ and His Word are



honored, we have said, “It is vain to serve God!” Instead, we believe that “those who do wickedness” are the ones who prosper.

## 2. Illustration

As a contrary illustration, we have Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-11), who brought cursing on themselves through their deceitful giving practices. The example of biblical giving goes to the Thessalonian believers commended by Paul in 2Co 8:1-5. It was not the size of their offerings, but their love and gratitude to God that made the difference.

## 3. Application

The practice of “tithing” is really an Old Testament concept. I do believe it can be of value to us today, so long as we take the ten-percent principle as a bottom standard of giving. I believe for most American believers, our giving should exceed this. Why not give twenty or even thirty percent? To those who say they can’t afford such extravagant giving, I would suggest two questions:

- a. How extravagant has God’s grace been to you?
- b. How much of what is rightfully His do you squander on yourself?

## C. God’s Blessings Bestowed on the Remnant, Mal 3:16-4:6

In this final section, we see the remnant of faithful believers identified and instructed to live in light of Messiah’s coming. This is certainly pertinent instruction for us today, “*on whom the ends of the ages have come*” (1Co 10:11).

### 1. Explanation

Two paragraphs make up the conclusion of the book. In the first, Mal 3:16-18, we see the remnant identified. The concluding paragraph (Mal 4:1-6) gives to this remnant essential instruction for the duration (i.e., four centuries from Malachi to Christ). The marks that identify the remnant are significant. Three primary qualities stand out:

- their evident spiritual devotion,
- their eternal glorification, and
- their impact on future history.

### The remnant identified, Mal 3:16-18

- By their spiritual devotion, Mal 3:16. These believers are known in that:

- They have true reverence, the fear of the Lord (Pro 1:7; 9:10). This is a quality of faith quite rare today, which recognizes God’s holiness and our ultimate accountability before Him (2Co 5:7-11).
- They are committed to a ministry of encouragement and edification, in that they “*spoke to one another,*” a very similar statement to that of Paul describing those who are filled by the Spirit (Eph 5:18-21; Col 3:16-17). No believer is an island (Rom 14:7), and a life lived in the power of God’s Spirit recognizes that we all are gifted for the edification of other believers (1Co 12:4-7; Eph 4:11-16).
- They meditate on His name, that is, they are deeply concerned for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are attentive that their lives matter, their decisions have great import, and one day the records will be revealed.
- They are heard by God; their prayers are effective (Joh 15:7; Jam 5:16; 1Jo 5:14-15). They are fully aware that, as stated by Oswald Chambers, “*Prayer is not preparation for the work of God; prayer is the work of God.*”
- Their names are recorded in Heaven. This “Book of Remembrance” may give new meaning to Jesus’ words to His disciples (Luk 10:20), “*Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.*” It may well be that Jesus was not speaking merely of the fact that they were believers, but rather that they were faithful and effective believers!

• By their eternal glorification, Mal 3:17. All through God’s Word, we have promises of the eternal blessings prepared for those who serve God faithfully (note the contrast with v.14). Here we have three eternal rewards:

- First, they will be known as a personal prized possession of God (cf. Tit 2:11-14).
- Second, they will become His “jewels,” speaking of both worth and usefulness. Jewels to a king were his bank account, which he could use to further his purposes. One of Heaven’s greatest rewards will be that of usefulness in His kingdom.
- Third, they would be “*spared.*” In the figure of the New Testament, I would take this to be deliverance from a wasted life, the “*bonfire of vanities*” spoken of at the Bema Seat of Christ (1Co 3:11-15).

• By their impact on future history, Mal 3:18. Whether we take this as referring to future earthly history or the eternal kingdom, the meaning is the same. They will stand—as all the great saints of biblical history stand—as examples of the blessing of those who choose to set themselves aside for the service of Almighty God. In the end, the proposition that “*it is vain to serve God*” (Mal 3:14), will be thoroughly and finally refuted.

The remnant instructed, Mal 4:1-6. The instruction of the remnant, designed to sustain them during the intertestamental period, can be summarized by four propositions:

- God is a God of justice, Mal 4:1.  
Rather than questioning His delayed judgment (Mal 2:17b; 2Pe 3:4-14), it is an act of faith to trust His perfect timing and rest in His promises.
- God is a God of infinite grace, Mal 4:2-3.  
Although Christ's coming—both in first and second advents—is filled with wrath for unregenerate men, yet for God's children, Christ, "*The Sun of Righteousness*" comes with "*healing in His wings.*" It is an Old Testament figure that safety is found "*under His wings*" (Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7; 91:4, etc). This was the "*refuge of mercy,*" as illustrated by the "*mercy seat*" situated beneath the wings of the golden cherubim (Heb 9:5). It is the rightful place for every believer to "*abide,*" having found eternal refuge in Jesus Christ (Joh 15:4, 7, 9; Heb 6:17-20).
- God is immutable, Mal 4:4.  
What amazing comfort to know this! Our God never changes! Only in His immutability can we find assurance of all His promises. People change, circumstances change, ultimately even the heavens and earth will change, but He remains the same (Lam 5:19; Heb 1:11, 13:5,8).
- God is, above all, a God of family, Mal 4:5-6.  
This final statement of the book is a fitting summary of the whole. The prophecy of Elijah has a two-fold application. First, to the ministry of John the Baptizer, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Mat 11:11-14, 17:10; Luk 1:17). Before the second advent of Christ, Elijah will personally come to the earth, I am convinced, as one of the two witnesses of Rev 11:3-12, the other being Moses (cf. Mat 17:1-5 with Zec 4:3, 11-14).

It is the anticipated work of Elijah that puts its seal—not only on the book of Malachi—but on the entire Old Testament. "*He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*" Our God is a family, made up of Father, Spirit, and Son. From the harmony and peace of this family, God sent His Son to perform the great work of reconciliation by His cross. By faith in Him, man is restored to God and to his fellow believers. The work of Christ is to bring peace and harmony to a broken, divided world. The most visible effects of this are seen in the shattered families and broken lives of our present age. It will fall to Elijah, who in his earthly life restored the child to his mother and father (1Ki 17:17-24) to play the final prophetic role of bringing reconciliation to the families of this earth. This will not come until Israel—regathered into their families—mourns for Jesus Christ "*as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn*" (Zec 12:10-14). Our God is a God of family, and His redemptive work will not be done until the family is all He intended it to be!

## 2. Illustration

No better example can be given than that set before us by Paul in Eph 5:22–6:4. The greatest living example of Christ is not to be found in the pastor, nor the

missionary, but rather in a spiritual, biblical marriage and family. What an exciting challenge this gives to every husband, wife, and child. A unit of imperfect people, yet empowered by God's Spirit and Word to be a picture of the heavenly family!

### 3. Application

The little book of Malachi is filled with rich instruction and grave warning. Every believer should read it, ponder on its message, and pray by God's grace to do as the book exhorts in the final chapter: live in anticipation of the coming of our King! (Tit 2:13-14; 2Pe 3:8-14).

### Summary/Conclusion

America is very much like the cynical, hardened people to whom Malachi had to minister. By God's matchless mercy and compassion, we have been preserved to this present hour. However, our present national course can only end in the wrath of God. Each of us—as part of this nation—are either contributing to the problem, or are part of the solution. Though we may not change the course of this nation, we have the power to change the course of our own lives, and by doing this will surely have impact on some around us. The choice of a nation begins and ends in the choices of her people. The words of Joshua to Israel at the beginning of her history are a fitting conclusion to our study: *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* (Jos 24:15).