

Conversations with
GOD

A Study in the book of Malachi

"A priest should teach what he knows, and people should learn the teachings from him, because he is the messenger of the Lord All-Powerful." Malachi 2:7 NCV

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CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

- I. INTRODUCTION-- In the Old Testament, God spoke many times.
- I. Sometimes it was directly to certain individuals. **Genesis 15:1** *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."*
- II. He often spoke through prophets. **Hebrews 1:1** *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,*
- III. When he spoke to all the children of Israel with his own voice, they were afraid to hear.
 - A. **Exodus 20:1-21** *Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." 21 So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. 22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: `You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.*
 - B. **Deuteronomy 5:22-31** *"These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. 23 "So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. 24 "And you said: `Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. 25 `Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. 26 `For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? 27 `You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.' 28 "Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: `I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. 29 `Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! 30 `Go and say to them, "Return to your tents." 31 `But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.'*
- IV. Yet, the Bible records a few *imaginary* conversations which God had with his people, through the prophets.
 - A. These conversations deal with *misunderstandings* of His will.
 - B. As we read them (from the **New King James version**), we should understand that these conversations were recorded to help us conform to the will of God.
 - C. Our thoughts are not like God's. **Isaiah 55:6-11** *Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the*

unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

V. LESSON--

I. Our first example of God's correction of a misunderstanding is **Ezekiel 18**. *The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2 "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: `The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge'? 3 "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. 4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.*

5 But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right; 6 If he has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife, Nor approached a woman during her impurity; 7 If he has not oppressed anyone, But has restored to the debtor his pledge; Has robbed no one by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing; 8 If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, But has withdrawn his hand from iniquity And executed true judgment between man and man; 9 If he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully--He is just; He shall surely live!" Says the Lord GOD. 10 "If he begets a son who is a robber Or a shedder of blood, Who does any of these things 11 And does none of those duties, But has eaten on the mountains Or defiled his neighbor's wife; 12 If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, Or committed abomination; 13 If he has exacted usury Or taken increase--Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him. 14 "If, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise; 15 Who has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife; 16 Has not oppressed anyone, Nor withheld a pledge, Nor robbed by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing; 17 Who has withdrawn his hand from the poor And not received usury or increase, But has executed My judgments And walked in My statutes--He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live!

II.

18 "As for his father, Because he cruelly oppressed, Robbed his brother by violence, And did what is not good among his people, Behold, he shall die for his iniquity. 19 "Yet you say, `Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. 20 "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. 21 "But if a wicked man

turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 "None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. 23 "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live? 24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. 25 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? 26 "When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. 27 "Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. 28 "Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 "Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair? 30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

III.

- A. The people of God had presumed that the guilt of sin could be passed from father to son (or from son to father).
 1. This presumption may have been based on **Exodus 20:4-6** "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Proper interpretation of this passage reveals that the iniquity of the fathers is passed on to his children, only if they do what their fathers did, and imitate them in "hating God.")
 2. This presumption also ignored the Law of Moses. **Deuteronomy 24:16** "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." (See the application of this law by King Amaziah. **2 Kings 14:5-6**)
- B. Jesus shows that children are born in innocence, and that they should be imitated in that innocence and humility.
 1. **Matthew 18:1-7** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are

converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

2. **Matthew 19:13-14** Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

3. The guilt of sin only comes to those capable of lust. **James 1:13-15** Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

C. Therefore, the doctrine of Inherited Total Depravity, taught by Catholics, Calvinists, and many Evangelicals, is an error.

IV. Our second conversation is found in **Ezekiel 33:7-20** "So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 "Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

10 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?"' 11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?' 12 "Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.' 13 "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. 14 "Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, 15 "if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 16 "None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live. 17 "Yet the children of your people say, 'The way of the LORD is not fair.' But it is their way which is not fair! 18 "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. 19 "But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live

because of it. 20 "Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways."

V.

A. The first misunderstanding in this passage was based on the reluctance of God's people to warn the wicked. **Vs. 8-9**

1. It is every Christian's duty to warn sinners.

a) **Galatians 6:1** *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

b) **James 5:19-20** *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (Compare **James 4:17**.)*

2. It is the duty both of the offender, and the offended, to begin the process of reconciliation.

a) **Matthew 5:23-24** *"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

b) **Matthew 18:15** *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."*

B. The second misunderstanding has to do with enforcing the need for repentance on sinners. **Vs. 10-20**

1. Men often justify themselves, short of repentance, and need correction.

a) Righteous Job complained to God about his misfortune, and God answered with a rebuke. **Job 40:1-14** *Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: 2 "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." 3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4 "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." 6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 7 "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: 8 "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? 9 Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? 10 Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty. 11 Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him. 12 Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place. 13 Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden darkness. 14 Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you."*

b) The workers in the vineyard, on the other hand, complained about the ultra-generous mercy of God. **Matthew 20:1-15** *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his*

vineyard. 2 "Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 "and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 7 "They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' 8 "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' 9 "And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 "But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 "And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 12 "saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' 13 "But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14 'Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?'"

- c) The "one talent man" presumed that preservation of the Lord's talent was all that was required of him, in view of his master's austerity. **Matthew 25:24-30** "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Compare **Luke 19:20-26**.)
2. It is foolish bravery to question the wisdom of God's judgments.
- a) **Romans 9:17-21** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. 19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

- b) **1 Corinthians 2:14-16** *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*
3. People fail to learn the true source of justification. **Luke 16:13-15** *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." 14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. 15 And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God."*
- C. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge comments on Ezekiel 33 this way, *"The impenitent Jews seem to have charged the prophet's messages with inconsistency, for whilst he warned them to repent, and assured the penitent of forgiveness, he also predicted that the people "would pine away in their transgressions." The prediction, however, merely implied that God foresaw that the people in general would be impenitent, though some individuals would repent and be pardoned."*
- D.
1. Repentance is an essential element in obtaining salvation.
- a) **Acts 17:30-31** *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*
- b) **2 Peter 3:9** *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*
2. Though we should "consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (**2 Peter 3:14**), we should not presume that it will last forever.
- a) This was the message sent through Ezekiel in the context of the passage above (Section II., B.). **Ezekiel 33:21-29** *And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has been captured!" 22 Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute. 23 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 24 "Son of man, they who inhabit those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one, and he inherited the land. But we are many; the land has been given to us as a possession.' 25 "Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You eat meat with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land? 26 "You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and you defile one another's wives. Should you then possess the land?" 27 "Say thus to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "As I*

*live, surely those who are in the ruins shall fall by the sword, and the one who is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and caves shall die of the pestilence. 28 "For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. 29 "Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed." (Compare Vs. 24 to **Matthew 3:7-9**.)*

b) These Israelites did not realize that God's longsuffering was exhausted. **2 Chronicles 36:11-17** *"Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. 13 And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. 14 Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. 15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. 16 But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. 17 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand."*

3. Lack of repentance was a continuing trait of the Jews, even into the times of the Apostles. **Romans 2:1-11** *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. 3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness- indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.*

VI. Our third conversation is found in God's indictment of the priests of Israel in the period after their return from captivity in Persia. There are several examples of misapprehension on the part of the priests to be found in **Malachi 1:1-4:6**.

- A. The first was their failure to appreciate the evidence of God's love for Israel. **Vs. 1:1-5** *The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. 2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; 3 But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." 4 Even though Edom has said, "We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the desolate places," Thus says the LORD of hosts: "They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, And the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. 5 Your eyes shall see, And you shall say, 'The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel.'*
1. The work that a loving God had done in saving Israel, and making them secure in their homeland, was often forgotten. Compare **Psalm 78**.
 2. The works of God in saving us from our sins should make us appreciate the love of God. **Romans 5:1-8** *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
- B. The second was a failure to bring God an offering that showed a respect for His ability to discern our motives. **Vs. 1:6-14** *"A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' 7 "You offer defiled food on My altar. But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the LORD is contemptible.' 8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. 9 "But now entreat God's favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. 10 "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. 11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts. 12 "But you profane it, In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' 13 You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the LORD of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the LORD. 14 "But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a*

male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished--For I am a great King," Says the LORD of hosts, "And My name is to be feared among the nations."

1. The offering of blemished animals was forbidden by the Law of Moses. **Leviticus 22:18-25** *"Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: `Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the LORD as a burnt offering-- 19 `you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats. 20 `Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. 21 `And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. 22 `Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the LORD. 23 `Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. 24 `You shall not offer to the LORD what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land. 25 `Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf."*
2. The responses of the priests show the attitudes which make worship vain.
 - a) They profaned the table of the Lord.
 - (1) The basic definition of the word, "profane," as found in the Bible is: "To cross the threshold," or to go beyond what is acceptable.
 - (2) This type of profanity is seen in Esau's foolish sale of his birthright. **Hebrews 12:14-17** *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."*
 - b) They were bored with the need to worship God correctly.
 - (1) The generation of Malachi was not the first to grow weary of serving the Lord. **Matthew 13:10-15** *"And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: `Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their*

eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." (Compare **Isaiah 6:8-12**.)

- (2) **Galatians 6:7-9** *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."*(See **2 Thessalonians 3:13**.)

3. God reveals through Malachi that he will seek Gentiles who will give him the proper respect in their offerings.
- a) Several prophecies speak of the enfranchisement of the Gentiles under the New Covenant, such as **Isaiah 49:5-6**. 5 *"And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), 6 Indeed He says, `It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."*
- b) The response of the Gentiles to the Gospel was exactly what God expected. **Acts 13:44-48** *"On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 "For so the Lord has commanded us: `I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'" 48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."*
- C. The third example was the failure of the priests to walk in the ways and covenant of their forefather, Levi. **Vs. 2:1-9** *"And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name," Says the LORD of hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart. 3 "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants And spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts; And one will take you away with it. 4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, That My covenant with Levi may continue," Says the LORD of hosts. 5 "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity. 7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8 But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi," Says the LORD of hosts. 9 "Therefore I also have made you*

contemptible and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law."

1. There were several periods during the history of Israel in which the priests failed to present a worthy model of righteousness for the people.

- a) In the days of Samuel's youth, the sons of Eli implicated their father by their wickedness. **1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-30** *Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. 13 And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.....22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. 25 "If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them. 26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men. 27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: `Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28 `Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? 29 `Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' 30 "Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: `I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: `Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.*
- b) Also, during the decline of the kingdom of Judah. **Jeremiah 5:30-31** *"An astonishing and horrible thing Has been committed in the land: 31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their own power; And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"*
- c) Also, during the time of Ezra's reformation. **Ezra 9:1-3** *When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the*

lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 "For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass." 3 So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.

2. To be a role model, the model should be righteous.
 - a) Paul invited people to imitate him. **1 Corinthians 11:1** "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."
 - b) He also instructed Christians to imitate worthy men. **Philippians 3:17-19** "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things."
 - c) The writer of Hebrews urged the same thing.
 - (1) **Hebrews 6:11-12** "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
 - (2) **Hebrews 13:7** "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct."
 - d) The ultimate model is Christ. **Philippians 2:5-13** "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
- D. The fourth correction by God deals with the sin of treachery. **Vs. 2:10-17** *Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers? 11 Judah has dealt treacherously, And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned The LORD'S holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god. 12 May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to the LORD*

of hosts! 13 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. 14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously." 17 You have wearied the LORD with your words; Yet you say, "In what way 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?"

1. Treachery and unfaithfulness are identical in effect, but treachery is intentional, while unfaithfulness can happen through carelessness.
2. The treachery in **Vs. 10-13** refers to those who are traitors against God and His will.
 - a) **Psalm 119:158-160** "I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, Because they do not keep Your word. 159 Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. 160 The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."
 - b) **Hosea 6:4-7** "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, And like the early dew it goes away. 5 Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; And your judgments are like light that goes forth. 6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. 7 "But like men they transgressed the covenant; There they dealt treacherously with Me."
 - c) Traitors are listed among other sinners in **2 Timothy 3:1-5**. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 **traitors**, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"
3. The treachery of **Vs. 14-16** is an example: husbands against wives.
 - a) Solomon warned his sons against such treachery. **Proverbs 5:15-20** "Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. 16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. 19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. 20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?"
 - b) But he also reveals that treachery is not confined to men. **Proverbs 2:11, 16-17** "Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you.....16

To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words, 17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God."

- c) Another type of treachery (not mentioned by Malachi) was forbidden in the Law of Moses. **Exodus 21:12-14** *"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. 13 "However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. 14 "But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die."* (There is an example of the application of this law in **1 Kings 2:5-6, 28-33**.)
- 4. Malachi ends this section in **Vs. 17** by showing another form of perverse logic found in people.
 - a) **Proverbs 17:15** *"He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD."*
 - b) **Isaiah 5:20** *"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"*
- E. God shows what he intends to do in response to the failures of the priests. **Vs. 3:1-5** *"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts. 2 "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. 3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years. 5 And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien-- Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts.*
- F. In a final conversation, God turns his attention to faults of the whole nation of Israel. **Vs. 3:6-15** *"For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. 7 Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; 12 "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts. 13 "Your words have been harsh against Me," Says the LORD, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' 14 You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What*

profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts? 15 So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free."

G.

1. The first failure of Israel was in "robbing God" in the tithe. **Vs. 6-12**
 - a) Israel was commanded to tithe. **Leviticus 27:30-32** *'The tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S. It is holy to the LORD. 31 'If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. 32 'And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD.*
 - b) Even the priests were to pay a tithe of the tithe. **Numbers 18:26** *"Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe."*
 - c) Christians are not commanded to give a specific amount, like the Jews, but cannot escape the truth that God requires them to be liberal in their giving.
 - (1) **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*
 - (2) **Romans 12:6-8** *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Compare **James 1:5**.)*
 - (3) **2 Corinthians 9:7** *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*
2. The second fault of Israel, in **Vs. 13-15**, was in failing to see the "profit" in serving the Lord.
 - a) Others had complained about the prosperity of the wicked.
 - (1) **Job 21:7-16** *Why do the wicked live and become old, Yes, become mighty in power? 8 Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes. 9 Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God upon them. 10 Their bull breeds without failure; Their cow calves without miscarriage. 11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, And their children dance. 12 They sing to the tambourine and harp, And rejoice to the sound of the flute. 13 They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment go down to the grave. 14 Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. 15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?' 16 Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand; The counsel of the wicked is far from me.*

- (2) **Jeremiah 12:1-3** *Righteous are You, O LORD, when I plead with You; Yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? 2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; They grow, yes, they bear fruit. You are near in their mouth But far from their mind. 3 But You, O LORD, know me; You have seen me, And You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of slaughter.*
- b) Yet, God's promise to condemn the wicked is confirmed by others.
- (1) **Psalms 11:5-6** *The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. 6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind Shall be the portion of their cup.*
- (2) **Isaiah 13:11** *"I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."*
- (3) **Matthew 13:49-50** *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*
3. Those children of God who did not have these faults are given a promise of great reward. **Vs. 3:16-18** *Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. 17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him." 18 Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.*

VII. CONCLUSION-- The final words of Malachi's prophecy are the final words of the Old Testament, and hold out the promise of the coming of Christ, and of his herald, John the baptizer. **Vs. 4:1-6** *"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. 3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this," Says the LORD of hosts. 4 "Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And 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."*

I. Jesus is identified in this prophecy as the "Sun of Righteousness."

A. **John 1:1-13** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might*

- believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*
- B. **John 8:12** *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*
- C. **Matthew 17:1-2** *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*
- II. John the baptizer came in a semblance of Elijah.
- A. The announcement of John's birth to his father hinted at this role. **Luke 1:13 17** *But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, `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."*
- B. John, himself, denied that he was actually Elijah, risen from the dead. **John 1: 19-23** *Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said: "I am `The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD,"' as the prophet Isaiah said."*
- C. Yet, Jesus identified John as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy.
1. **Matthew 11:7-15** *As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 "But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 10 "For this is he of whom it is written: `Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

2. **Matthew 17:1-13** *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" 6 And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." 8 When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. 9 Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." 10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 12 "But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

III. ADDENDA-- In view that we can learn many principles from the Old Testament (**Romans 15:4**), and in view that Christ is now King and Judge, we should take these lessons to heart, and make certain that we do not repeat them in our dispensation