

MALACHI—LESSON FOUR

CHAPTER THREE: VERSES EIGHT—FIFTEEN

Tithes—the gifts to the Lord that the Law required. There were three: Two that were given annually and one that came every three years. These offerings supported the priests and Levite's, and also widows, orphans, and foreigners.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

““At the end of every third year, bring the entire tithe of that year's harvest and store it in the nearest town. Give it to the Levites, who will receive no allotment of land among you, as well as to the foreigners living among you, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, so they can eat and be satisfied. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all your work.”

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 NLT

1. DO NOT ROB GOD.

God charges Israel with having robbed Him of tithes and offerings. Such activity brought on their cursing by God.

A. Isaiah 1:17-20—“Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. “Come now, let's settle this,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. If you will only obey me, you will have plenty to eat. But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the Lord, have spoken!””

Isaiah 1:17-20 NLT

Exodus 19:4-6—“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.’ This is the message you must give to the people of Israel.””

Exodus 19:4-6 NLT

1. PUNISHMENT FOR ROBBING GOD

A. Poor production from their land

B. Poor production from their animals

Deuteronomy 28:15-48—““But if you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and do not obey all the commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you: Your towns and your fields will be cursed. Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be cursed. Your children and your crops will be cursed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be cursed. Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be cursed. “The Lord himself will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in everything you do, until at last you are completely destroyed for doing evil and abandoning me. The Lord will afflict you with diseases until none of you are left in the land you are about to enter and occupy. The Lord will strike you with wasting diseases, fever, and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, and with blight and mildew. These disasters will pursue you until you die. The skies above will be as unyielding as bronze, and the earth beneath will be as hard as iron. The Lord will change the rain that falls on your land into powder, and dust will pour down from the sky until you are destroyed. “The Lord will cause you to be defeated by your enemies. You will attack your enemies from one direction, but you will scatter from them in seven! You will be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your corpses will be food for all the scavenging birds and wild animals, and no one will be there to chase them away. “The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, scurvy, and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The Lord will strike you with madness, blindness, and panic. You will grope around in broad daylight like a blind person groping in the darkness, but you will not find your way. You will

be oppressed and robbed continually, and no one will come to save you. “You will be engaged to a woman, but another man will sleep with her. You will build a house, but someone else will live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will never enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be butchered before your eyes, but you will not eat a single bite of the meat. Your donkey will be taken from you, never to be returned. Your sheep and goats will be given to your enemies, and no one will be there to help you. You will watch as your sons and daughters are taken away as slaves. Your heart will break for them, but you won’t be able to help them. A foreign nation you have never heard about will eat the crops you worked so hard to grow. You will suffer under constant oppression and harsh treatment. You will go mad because of all the tragedy you see around you. The Lord will cover your knees and legs with incurable boils. In fact, you will be covered from head to foot. “The Lord will exile you and your king to a nation unknown to you and your ancestors. There in exile you will worship gods of wood and stone! You will become an object of horror, ridicule, and mockery among all the nations to which the Lord sends you. “You will plant much but harvest little, for locusts will eat your crops. You will plant vineyards and care for them, but you will not drink the wine or eat the grapes, for worms will destroy the vines. You will grow olive trees throughout your land, but you will never use the olive oil, for the fruit will drop before it ripens. You will have sons and daughters, but you will lose them, for they will be led away into captivity. Swarms of insects will destroy your trees and crops. “The foreigners living among you will become stronger and stronger, while you become weaker and weaker. They will lend money to you, but you will not lend to them. They will be the head, and you will be the tail! “If you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and to obey the commands and decrees he has given you, all these curses will pursue and overtake you until you are destroyed. These horrors will serve as a sign and warning among you and your descendants forever. If you do not serve the Lord your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received, you will serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. The Lord will put an iron yoke on your neck, oppressing you harshly until he has destroyed you.”

Deuteronomy 28:15-48 NLT

DIVINE COMPLAINT

A. The charge of apostasy—the people had gone away from God’s ordinances. All sin is an apostasy—departure from the ordinances of God.

B. The charge of dishonesty—their dishonesty consisted of their withholding from God what was due to Him. The people had robbed or defrauded God.

C. The charge of insensibility—they had lost all sense of their obligation in relation to the tithes and were now indifferent to God’s divine claim to them.

DIVINE INVITATION

Repentance—Renewal—Restoration

A. To divine friendship—Return unto me and I will return unto you”, sayeth the Lord of hosts. Return here means to begin again to bring the tithes unto the storehouse. Render to God what belongs to God!

B. To honest service—bring tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house—meat offerings, frankincense, vessels

C. To test me—“try Me”—I will open the windows of heaven—this is blessings in abundance

DIVINE PROTECTION

A. Rebuke the devourer—the forces that caused destruction are referred to collectively as the devourer. God promises to reprimand, scold, keep at bay those forces of destruction intent on destroying His people.

B. Their vines shall be productive—in their season as expected they will produce abundantly.

Observation: All nations shall call you blessed for they know from whence you have come.

COMPLAINT OF PEOPLE TOWARD GOD

A. Religion delineated and depreciated—the people secretly entertained doubts about the value of following the Lord. Their experience of captivity left them wondering about God’s faithfulness rather than accepting the fact that their trouble was because of their disobedience.

B. Calling the proud blessed—the word proud means godless or rebellious. This is a case of the wicked seemingly being blessed and affirming their wickedness.

THOSE WHO REMEMBERED

A. God is never without a remnant. In the midst of the worst of circumstances, God will maintain a remnant or raise us a family/clan to follow Him while bringing Him glory. This is in New Testament Matthew 16:18-19:

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.””

Matthew 16:18-19 NKJV

B. Book of Remembrance—God never forgets His promises. He teaches us to value the good that people do. Those who meditate on His Word fear/reverence the Lord, think highly of Him, and ponder His significance as it relates to their lives.

C. I shall make them jewels—this is rendered or translated “special treasure”. In New Testament language, this reminds us of Paul’s declaration in 2Corinthians 4:7

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

Yet, this term is used in the Old Testament only, in regard to the people of Israel.

CONCLUSION: SERVING GOD

A. Serving God means putting Him first, obeying His commands, and finding one's chief joy in life as the advancement of the glory of His Name.

NONE OF THIS IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT A REVERENCE FOR GOD AND HIS WORD!