

Malachi

Chapter 3

“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. ⁵ “So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁶ “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’” ⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹³ “You have spoken arrogantly against me,” says the LORD. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’” ¹⁴ “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’” ¹⁵ But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.” ¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. ¹⁷ “On the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

3:1 SEE - hane – Lo, behold. Pay attention or “now hear this.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The people are tired. The preacher, the prophet, is tired. They say: “Wait. Wait again, etc. No matter how much we serve the Lord, yet the Gentiles have it better

than we.” But He says: “Have confidence. Behold, your salvation is now at the door and that kingdom will be changed. Your murmurings and the complaints of the prophets will cease, who believe that they are preaching in vain. The righteous will be separated from the wicked, and the wicked will no longer be more powerful, more fortunate.” But He is saying all this in a spiritual sense and especially in regard to His teaching and accomplishment. Where the pure Gospel is, there Christ rules. There are excluded the heretics, the antichrists, the wicked, the hypocrites, those who remain in sin and death. In the old synagog there were more wicked teachers than good ones. Two men who teach contrary doctrines cannot stay at the same time. The people want one true and steadfast teacher whom they can trust. Here the Lord promises one who would give his hearers a sound and secure mind in all their tribulations. He says, “I will send you the genuine Malachi, that is, a messenger, who is John the Baptist.” (Luther)

my messenger. The Hebrew for these words is *mal’aki*; it is normally used of a priest or prophet (see Hag 1:13 and note). This is fulfilled in John the Baptist (see Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 1:76). (CSB)

Not Malachi, but a promise that the Lord would send an extraordinary messenger; this was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Luth: “[The Lord] says, ‘I will send you the genuine Malachi, that is, a messenger, who is John the Baptist’ ” (AE 18:408). (TLSB)

This was fulfilled with the coming of John the Baptist. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Mark 1:2-3 “It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”

who will prepare the way. When the Lord comes, it will be to purify (v. 3) and judge (v. 5), but he will mercifully send one before him to prepare his people (see 4:5–6 and notes; see also Isa 40:3 and note). (CSB)

John prepared the way for Christ by “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mk 1:4). (TLSB)

These are Christ’s words, even though He Himself quotes them differently. A prince who is about to enter a city sends messengers ahead to prepare for him whatever is necessary as well as others to clear a path for him lest he be hindered by thronging people. הַפֶּתַח means to empty, to make room, or even to provide a reputation. John, therefore, will see to it that the appearance of the way would look beautiful and unencumbered. After all, there are many things which hinder the “way,” that is, the work of the Lord. Those things must be removed, especially human reason, self-love, one’s own wisdom, one’s own righteousness, etc. That preparing, then, is to make humble and to arrange things so as to allow

God to work in one. You see, the way of the Lord is where He Himself walks. The prophet mentions nothing about our ways except that we should abstain from them. After all, our works lie in His way, so that Christ cannot work or enter. John told all the Jews and those doing very fine works “Repent!” as if he were speaking to sinners. He is saying: “Let the Lord enter. He Himself will justify you and will do the will of the Lord. Neither you nor your works will do this.” This is what it means to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, etc. Those who believe, then, are those who are prepared to meet the Lord and to receive Him. In them He is able to work, that is, in those who have been brought back to a knowledge of their sins. (Luther)

God always wants his people to be ready for him so that they will get the full benefit of what he brings with him. (CSB)

THEN SUDDENLY – He will come suddenly, unexpectedly, immediately after His messenger. He says in John 1:26–30: “Among you stands One whom you do not know ... even He who ranks before me.” That is, He was ordained to preach and to save. (Luther)

the Lord you are seeking ... whom you desire, will come. See Hag 2:7 and note. (CSB)

Jesus is the God of justice whom the people desired (2:17). (TLSB)

“You seek Him to free you from the wicked, to be both your Priest and your protecting King, the Messenger of the covenant, that is, the Messenger of the agreement and the glorious King. Unlike David, He will not rule physically but in the preaching of the Word. He is the Messenger, the Minister of the living Word.” The covenant is the promises of God, which all point to Christ, even the temporal promises. The covenant required death. Therefore, He is here identified not only as God but also as the Man who suffered, died, and even now rules. The distribution of the [inheritance of the] covenant is eternal life. (Luther)

coming. John and Jesus were born approximately 400 years after the time of Malachi. (TLSB)

messenger of the covenant. The Messiah, who as the Lord’s representative will confirm and establish the covenant (see note on Isa 42:6). (CSB)

This is an even more distinguished Messenger, our Lord Jesus Christ, who brought the new covenant in His blood. (TLSB)

3:2 WHO WILL ENDURE - kool – To be able to withstand, to be able to bear or stand up under. To measure up. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

When the God of justice appears, all will be found guilty (Rm 3:23). (TLSB)

Literally stated says, “Who can take this in?” Who can comprehend what is going to happen, the process that must be completed before God’s children stand pure and holy before His throne to begin the eternal celebrations? (PBC)

day of his coming. The day of the Lord (see 4:1; see also note on Isa 2:11, 17, 20). Malachi announces the Lord’s coming to complete God’s work in history, especially the work he outlines in the rest of his book. His word is fulfilled in the accomplishments of the Messiah. (CSB)

In Hebrew this reads: “Who will regulate or control the day, etc.?” or, “Who will provide?” It is as if he were saying: “Remain in your fear, then. Stay humble. Let that Messenger prepare you. You see, He will not come in royal garb, as the kings of the world do. He will come before any man will be able to foresee when and how He will come. He will fulfill all things, and no one will know that He is the Christ.” With this the prophet reveals the very great humiliation of the Word and of the Son of God. Still today His coming is like this, unexpected. (Luther)

Who can stand ... ? Those who desire the Lord’s coming must know that clean hands and a pure heart are required (cf. Ps 24:3–4; Isa 33:14–15). (CSB)

awmad – To be able to remain in an upright position.

With this the prophet is speaking about the stumbling block which is in Christ. “He will appear to be of such lowly character that, unless you will have listened to the voice of that previous messenger and will have followed his pointing finger, none of you is going to receive Him. None of you will believe in Him. Rather you are going to say, ‘Ah, here is a king who has no place to lay his head, who is crucified and dies.’” Because of this, Christ Himself says (Matt. 11:6): “Blessed is he who takes no offense at Me,” that is, “Blessed is the man who does not measure Me according to his reason.” Therefore His messenger also is sent ahead so that the light of reason may be extinguished and the carpenter’s Son may be recognized as the Messiah. Many who were looking were not seeing, for who will stand firm in the faith? (Luther)

refiner’s fire. See Isa 1:25; Zec 13:8–9 and notes. (CSB)

Fire was used to remove impurities from metals. Everlasting punishment is compared to a lake of fire (Rv 20:14) (TLSB)

Blazing, or purifying. That is, “He will condemn all your works and enthusiasms. All your attitudes will have to be mortified, just as a fire melts and purifies silver and separates it from all impurities.” תַּרְיָב means a sharp cleaning agent or soap

that washes great stains out of garments. This is how Christ will condemn all things and demand only spiritual qualities. In spite of his scales, Satan has a very difficult time enduring this. The Jews kept puffing themselves up with their own righteousness. From this it is very difficult to pull them away to follow Christ. The kingdom of Christ is a mystical smelting furnace that purges out the impurity of the old Adam. Here the prophet seems to be speaking about the white linen cloaks which eastern people wore most commonly. These are washed with soap. Christ is not merely the Purifier but also the purifying Agent. He is not only the Blacksmith but also the Fire; not only the Cleaner but also the Soap. He does not sit indolently at the right hand of His Father. Rather He is always working among us vitally, effectively, and uninterruptedly as He is spread abroad over His mystical body, as fire is applied to metal. So He is elsewhere called Salvation, and not just Savior. That is, He is Salvation itself and the Laboratory of salvation. This is what Christians sense. They have less affection for wealth; they are less afraid of death; they disregard everything secular. The power to do this is the “fire” and the “soap.” (Luther)

Isaiah 1:25 “I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.”

launderer's soap. See Isa 7:3 and note. White clothes signified purity (cf. Mk 9:3; Rev 3:5). (CSB)

A fuller used strong soap made of lye to clean wool and make it white. Luther: “Christ is not merely the Purifier but also the purifying Agent. He is not only the Blacksmith but also the Fire; not only the Cleaner but also the Soap” (AE 18:410). (TLSB)

His aim is the destruction of our sinful nature, and the raising of life to a new nature by grace. His messianic mission is to purify and cleanse. Incidentally, if you have ever had your mouth washed out with soap, you know it is strong medicine. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

The picture of a launderer is also used, one who cleans by rubbing and kneading and beating to make cloth soft and clean and pliable. This would be the Old-Rubbed-Washboard-School-Of-Hard-Knocks in which God makes His children bed easily and quickly to His will. (PBC)

Psalm 24:3-4 “Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”

3:3 HE WILL SIT – The “seat” has the force of teaching and of judgment. This, then, is a strange kingdom, established not on external armor but on the

cleansing of people, on the renewing of souls which are then brought back to salvation and eternal life. To be sure, this is a magnificent situation. It is, however, a spiritual kingdom. Outwardly it offends all flesh. (Luther)

AS A REFINER - *tsawraf* – To melt or purge away any impurities and make something much stronger.

One who puts silver through fire until all the impurities are burned away. (TLSB)

In Ps. 12:6 we have this: “The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, [silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times].” To be sure, the Word of God is completely pure in itself, but it is purified in us daily because it purifies us. Scripture is a very bright light, but to a wicked man it is pure darkness. God is very well known, but if you don’t know Him, that is your fault. These words are light. Christ is the Purifier; He is Righteousness, Redemption, Life, etc. I say, these words are light which we never look at enough and which becomes clearer every day. The matter lies not in the sound of the words but in the inmost depths of the heart. The sun is darkness to the blind. That is not the fault of the sun but of blind or closed eyes. (Luther)

This messenger will “sit” at task to melt down our pretensions and reform us in a whole new mold. Especially will he “cleanse the sons of Levi,” pointing to the priesthood of all believers in Christ, but especially indicating the necessity of God’s ministers being pure by grace. The purpose is so that “they will present a righteous offering to the Lord.” Proper worship begins with “divine service,” in which God first “serves” His people by imparting His righteousness through the means of grace. Only then can God’s people serve Him in righteousness. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

purify the Levites. Those who are supposed to be “messengers” of the Lord and who serve at the altar will be purged of their sins and unfaithfulness—such as the Lord has rebuked in 1:6–2:9. (CSB)

A prophecy referring to Christians, the “royal priesthood” (1Pt 2:9) who will replace the Levitical priesthood. (TLSB)

“He will purify, elevate, cleanse them. He will remove the dross of false doctrine to reveal the light of divine truth through the Word by which they themselves will be led. The kingdom of Christ is the exercise of Word and faith because of the perpetual harm of the wicked. Whoever, therefore, wishes to become a Christian must give himself over to being purified. (Luther)

Before the Levites could serve God at his altar they needed to be made pure of their sins. Before we can serve the Lord he needs to forgive us our sins and make us acceptable in his sight.

OFFERINGS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS – A sacrifice in righteousness is a sacrifice of the new covenant. After all, what need would there have been to promise sacrifices that they were already making? The things they were doing then, however, were all impure because impure priests were making the sacrifices. Moreover, the sacrifices of Christians are pure and right, because they themselves are pure and right, as we read in Ps. 132:9: “Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, etc.” In this way, then, the prophet describes first the justification of the person, and then the righteous work. Our sacrifice is the mortification of the flesh, signified by the tearing away and destruction of that old flesh. But by the fire of the Spirit and of love a fragrance very sweet to the Lord is kindled. (Luther)

In contrast to the disgraceful sacrifices of the priests in Malachi’s day, God will create a people who are genuinely righteous in faith and who offer Him spiritual sacrifices (Rm 12:1; 1Pt 2:5). “This passage clearly requires the sacrifices of the righteous, and so does not favor the opinion about the outward act (*opus operatum*). But the sacrifices of the sons of Levi, that is, of those teaching in the New Testament, are the preaching of the Gospel and the good fruit of preaching” (Ap XXIV 34). (TLSB)

3:4 *be acceptable*. See 1:8 and note. (CSB)

The offerings of God’s NT priests will fulfill His purpose in instituting the OT sacrifices (cf Ps 51:17). (TLSB)

When the persons are pleasant and pleasing, their sacrifices, too, are pleasant and pleasing. (Luther)

We can’t do a thing on our own. God must act first and make us acceptable. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

Revelation 3:5 “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”

days gone by. Probably the time of Moses and Phinehas (see note on 2:5). (CSB)

That is, as in the days before the Law had been given. You see, all this has been said in reproach of the Law. After all, hypocrites started when the Law was given. Before the Law, sacrifices were sanctioned through faith. But the same faith, the same Spirit, the same grace which existed in the days before the Law will be in the kingdom of Christ. Faith makes voluntary offerings, while the Law compels them against the will. (Luther)

3:5 When he comes, the Lord will both purify the Levites (vv. 3–4) and judge the people. (CSB)

I WILL COME NEAR TO YOU FOR JUDGMENT – After the prophet has described how it will be with the saints in the kingdom of Christ, he now reveals what will become of the wicked, who will be separated⁵ from the righteous. Purity of doctrine will remain with the righteous. Those who are befouled with manifest wickedness will not be tolerated in that new kingdom. He says: “I will come through the Word for judgment. I will excommunicate, condemn, cut off.” (Luther)

Final judgment, when God will gather all nations before His glorious throne (Mt 25:32; Rm 14:10). (TLSB)

TESTIFY AGAINST – “one who blames, censures. I will not leave anything hidden. Poisoners and evildoers abuse the Word of God. Therefore they will be excluded.” (Luther)

One of several biblical catalogs of sins to which the Lord of hosts will testify on the Day of Judgment (Mk 7:21–22; 1Co 6:9–10; Rv 21:8). (TLSB)

WHO OPPRESS – that is, who rob them. (Luther)

He is the God of the underdog championing the cause of the defenseless. He calls the wicked to justice because they do not fear him; and it is this very lack of fear that makes them bold to perpetuate their lies and their evil deeds. (PBC)

sorcerers. Common in the ancient Near East (see Ex 7:11; Dt 18:10). (CSB)

DEPRIVE ALIENS – A guest or stranger. (TLSB)

2:17–3:5 The people in Malachi’s day ask, “Where is the God of justice?” (cf 2Pt 3:4). The Lord makes it very clear that the Day of Judgment is coming. He wants all people to be prepared for that day. That’s why He sent the Messenger of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Christ will come again, “not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Heb 9:28). • Blessed Lord and Savior, help me to wait and pray for Your reappearing with confidence and hope. Amen. (TLSB)

Robbing God

⁶ “I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ ⁸ “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—

because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹³ “You have said harsh things against me,” says the LORD. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’” ¹⁴ “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’” ¹⁵ But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.” ¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. ¹⁷ “They will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

3:6 *do not change.* See Jas 1:17. Contrary to what many in Malachi’s day were thinking, God remains faithful to his covenant. (CSB)

This fifth part of Malachi begins with the Lord’s assertion that He will never change. He continues to condemn sin, but His mercy also endures forever. (TLSB)

“I do not lie. I do not revoke the promises I have made through so many prophets. So, have no doubt! Your unworthiness will not hold back My truth. I have promised freely. I will redeem those promises freely. It is for this that I brought you back out of captivity, to fulfill My promises. The entire matter, therefore, must be credited to divine goodness and not to any⁶ merits of any men, for you have always sinned against Me.” That He says “From the days of your fathers” (v. 7) corresponds to that earlier statement (Mal. 2:17): “Everyone who does evil is a good man, etc.” He turns the blame back onto them. It is mercy, then, that they have not been destroyed. (Luther)

Even though God comes in judgment of His people He does not destroy them or reject them. He remains faithful to His covenant of grace. .” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 1)

DESCENDANTS OF JACOB – In 1:2, the Lord assured Jacob’s offspring of His love, which remains constant. (TLSB)

not destroyed. In contrast to Edom (1:3–5) and in spite of Israel’s history of unfaithfulness. (CSB)

The Lord refrained from doing what He had every right to do. (TLSB)

Literally, "and ye, the Sons of Jacob, ye are not yet consumed," that is, the Lord will keep the true spiritual Israel safe while He sends His judgment upon the wicked in their midst. Even so the Church of Christ in the New Testament is preserved in the midst of hypocrisy and deceit, and the wicked will finally be destroyed. (Kretzmann)

3:7 TURNED AWAY – Hbr *shub*, “to turn off a path, to the right or left.” God’s people walked in directions contrary to His intended course. (TLSB)

Return ... and I will return. If the Lord is to come for Israel’s redemption, she must repent. (CSB)

A play on the Hbr term *shub*, “to turn, turn around, return”; often translated “repent.” (TLSB)

These words seem to support the free will of man. They are, however, words of the Law, upon which the ability to obey does not immediately follow. After all, He has already said that they had never kept the Law, even if they were eager to keep it. To be sure, God is a good Lawgiver, but we are lazy doers of it. The Law tells us what we should do. He says, “Return to obey Me, and I will return to you to bless you. I will be your kind Father of mercies.” (Luther)

They did not realize that the real service of Jehovah must be a growth from within, from a heart which lives in His fear. Therefore the prophet asks, in turn, in order to arouse them to a consciousness of the true meaning of worship. (Kretzmann)

3:8 *Will man rob God?* Rhetorical question from God, which should be answered no. The question acts as an accusation. (TLSB)

tithes and contributions. The Lord had commanded His people to give a tenth of their income for the support of the Levites “as a contribution to the LORD” (Nu 18:24). Ne 13:10 records that this was not being done. The people were stealing from God by failing to support the ministry of the Levites. Luther: “Certainly God does not say this as if He really cared about tithes, etc. Rather He says it to preserve the ministry of the Word” (AE 18:414). The Lord demanded support for the Levitical priesthood even though the priests were derelict in their duties (1:6–2:9). (TLSB)

3:9 *curse.* See 2:2 and note. (CSB)

God intensified His condemnation by combining a verb and noun form of the same root word. Previously He had cursed the priests. Dt 28:15–68 gives examples of how terrible it is to be cursed by God. (TLSB)

3:10 *full tithe*. Entire 10 percent. (TLSB)

storehouse. The treasury rooms of the sanctuary (see 1Ki 7:51; 2Ch 31:11–12; Ne 13:12). (CSB)

Levites maintained places to store the offerings the people brought (Ne 12:44). (TLSB)

food in My house. Priests lived off the tithes of food that were brought as they served in the Lord's house. (TLSB)

put Me to the test. God's challenge to the people is unusual—in fact, it is the only example in Scripture of God giving humans permission to test Him. He forbids such testing in Dt 6:16 and Mt 4:7, and He condemns those who do test Him (Ps 95:8–11); He does invite a request for a sign in Is 7:11. (TLSB)

floodgates of heaven. Elsewhere the idiom refers to abundant provision of food (see 2Ki 7:2, 19; Ps 78:23–24). (CSB)

May refer literally to rain (Gn 7:11), but more likely it indicates the abundance of blessings God promised to Jacob's children. (TLSB)

pour out ... blessing. The promised covenant blessing (see Dt 28:12; cf. Isa 44:3). (CSB)

3:11 *pests ... cast their fruit*. Examples of the threatened covenant curses (see Dt 28:39–40). (CSB)

3:12 *call you blessed*. In fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (see Ge 12:2–3; see also Isa 61:9 and note). (CSB)

. Dt 28:1–14 details the blessings that the people of God could expect. (TLSB)

3:13 SAID HARSH THINGS – Harsh, critical. Examples of their hard words are found in 1:2; 2:17; and 3:14–15. On the whole, the children of Jacob continued to resist the Lord's Word. (TLSB)

YET YOU ASK – The periscope really begins with verse 13, with a statement by God and a rather sarcastic rejoinder in the form of a question by the people, a combination that structures the entire book.

3:14 *It is futile to serve God*. Because the redemption they longed for had not yet been realized. (CSB)

The people said that serving God did no good and offered no benefits. (TLSB)

Some people try to keep God's commands in order to get something in return. We cannot make bargains with God. He has done it all and he wants us to accept his love. Our service is a response to his great love not a ploy to strike a deal with him.

WHAT DID WE GAIN – Rhetorical question implying that there was no gain for them in following the requirements of God's Law. Cf Ps 73:1–12. (TLSB)

like mourners. In sackcloth and ashes. (CSB)

Participating in rituals of repentance. (TLSB)

With all indications of deep sorrow and mourning over their sins. Their complaint was that it was poor business, that it did not pay. (Kretzmann)

3:15 *arrogant.* Evildoers—those who challenge God (see note on Ps 10:11). (CSB)

Those who do evil and despise the Lord seem to have His blessing (2:17). (TLSB)

blessed. In their unbelief, the Jews call blessed those whom the godly know to be cursed (see Ps 119:21)—but it is they who will be called blessed if they repent (v. 12). (CSB)

They had actually reached the stage when they praised the wicked, with their apparent happiness in matters of this world. (Kretzmann)

Evil doers prosper ... escape. Note the psalmist's struggle with the prosperity of the wicked in Ps 73:3, 9–12. (CSB)

Some notorious evildoers took up God's challenge by putting Him to the test, and they prospered. Though sinful, they escaped punishment. This dilemma is addressed in the next section. (TLSB)

They have no misfortune, they have everything that their heart desires. This is ever the accusation which the backsliders try to bring against the Lord. (Kretzmann)

By human standards good and evil seem to be rewarded in inverse proportion. What often forget that the real reward is spiritual and comes to those who trust in God even in difficult times.

3:6–15 Jeremiah’s complaint, “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?” (Jer 12:1), resounds in Malachi’s day. Many of Jacob’s children think nothing of robbing God by withholding their full tithes because it seems to them that evildoers prosper. It is true that the wicked often prosper in this life. Though God does promise that His people may enjoy worldly blessings, He also warns that they can expect suffering too. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, we can be certain of His eternal blessings (Eph 1:3, 11–14). “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rm 6:23). • Lord of heaven and earth, move my heart to honor You with my earthly offerings while keeping my eyes firmly fixed on Your eternal blessings. Amen. (TLSB)

3:16 The sixth part of the Book begins. (TLSB)

those who feared the LORD. Those who had not given way to doubts and cynicism.

talked with each other. In the face of the widespread complaining against God (vv. 14–15), they sought mutual encouragement in fellowship. (CSB)

One presumes that the God-fearing people could have had the same complaint because they, too, were not well off. But, see that what really matters is the righteousness of God.

LISTENED AND HEARD – The Lord was not pleased with many of the hard words spoken against Him (3:13), but He responded positively to the words of these believers. (TLSB)

scroll of remembrance. Analogous to the records of notable deeds kept by earthly rulers (see Est 6:1–3; Isa 4:3; Da 7:10; 12:1). (CSB)

This is comparable to the Book of Life (Rv 21:27). God will remember and deliver those who fear Him. (TLSB)

honored his name. Contrast the priests (1:12) and many among the people (vv. 14–15; 2:17). (CSB)

In contrast to the priests, who despised God’s name. (TLSB)

Those who fear God use his name among themselves in mutual consolation and encouragement.

3:17 *my treasured possession.* See note on Ex 19:5. (CSB)

Those whom God will protect and preserve eternally. (TLSB)

There is a shift in accent here from man's service to God's claim upon us as his treasured possession and his gracious compassion like that of a father to a son who serves him out of love.

spare them. In the day of judgment (see 4:1–2). (CSB)

The Lord rebuked those scoffers who claimed that “it is vain to serve God” (3:14). (TLSB)

who serves him. Cf. 1:6. (CSB)

3:18 *you will again see.* As they apparently do not now see; hence their cynicism. (CSB)

These distinctions had been denied by some in the community (2:17; 3:14–15). God makes His justice clear. (TLSB)

the righteous and the wicked. See 2:17 and note. (CSB)

3:16–18 The Lord assures those who fear Him that their service has not been in vain and that they will be spared on the Day of Judgment. God-fearing people know they are guilty according to God's Law, but they also know God's forgiveness leads them to love and trust Him all the more (Ps 130:4). • My soul magnifies You, O Lord, for showing mercy to those who fear You. Amen. (TLSB)