

5 Studies on Malachi

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: Kerry Nagel's Bible study booklet on Micah, 4th term 2008; Burning Desire Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study on Obadiah/Malachi by Phillip Jensen and Richard Pulley, Now or Never Aquila Press booklet on Haggai and Malachi by Tim Foster, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S.Lewis, sermon from All Souls in 2009 called "Who can stand when appears" Mal 2:17-3:6 by Mark Meynell, sermon from St Andrews, Roseville on Mal ch 4 by John Dickson 4/12/2011, Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition.

Ed O'Connor

Abraham

called by God to be the father
of a special godly nation.



Abraham's Family

Abraham – Isaac – Jacob – Joseph. Jacob, whose name is changed to Israel, moves to Egypt (where Joseph is) and becomes a large tribe – the Israelites.

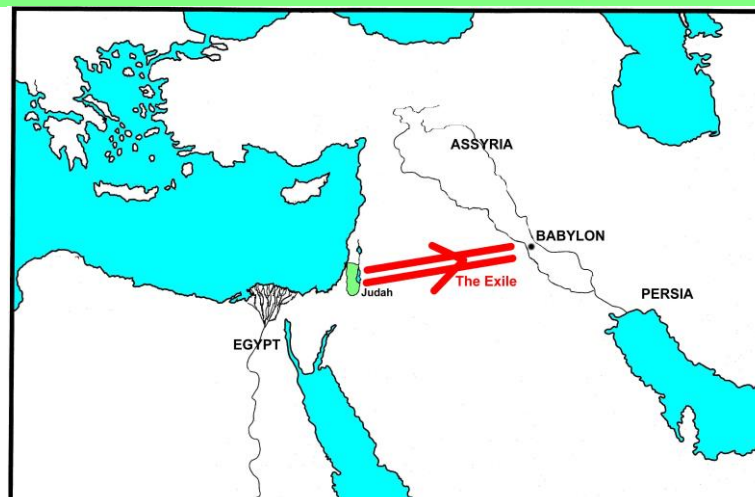
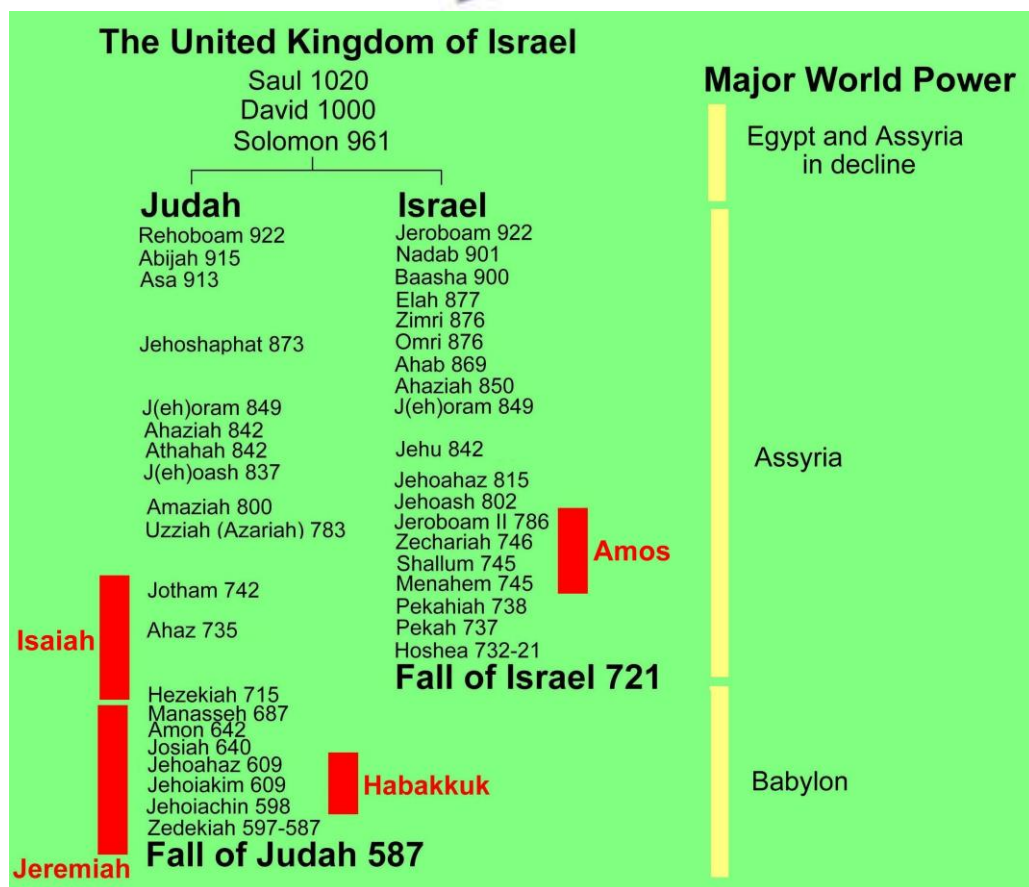


Moses

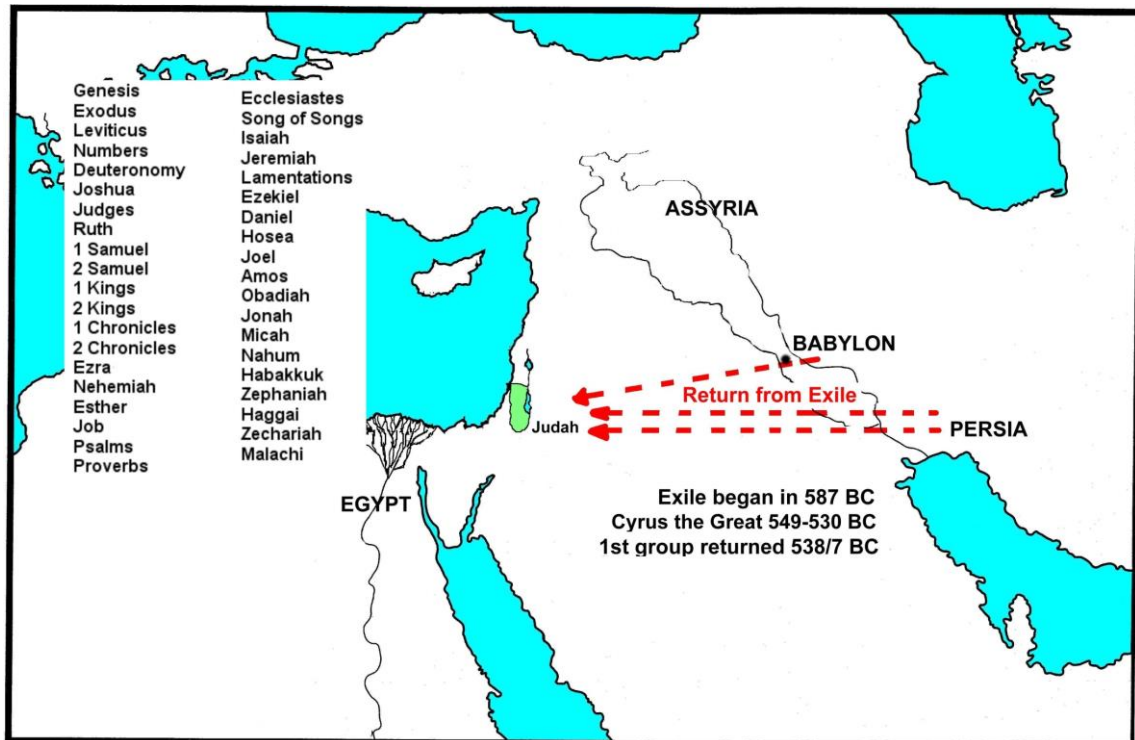
leads the Israelites out of Egypt, back to Canaan (1290 BC).



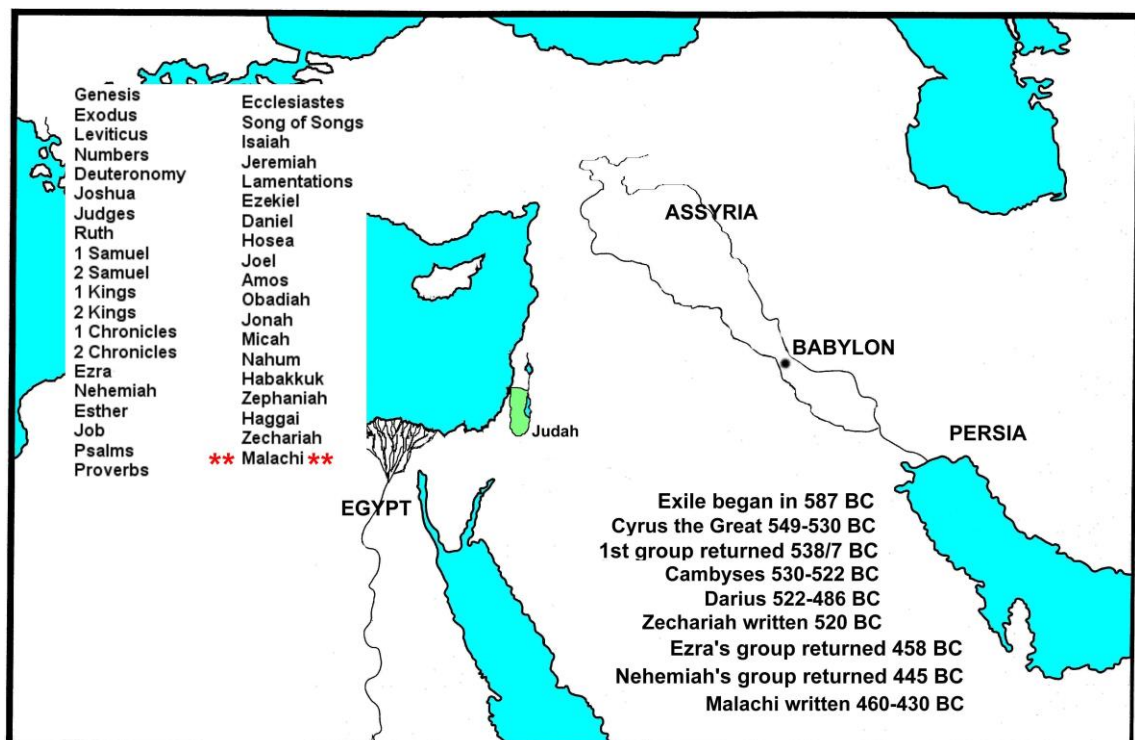
Settled in Canaan, under **Joshua's** leadership. Then the Israelites are led by a series of **Judges**, the last of whom is **Samuel**. The Israelites ask Samuel to appoint a king so that they will be like the surrounding nations.



Judah was defeated by the Babylonians and taken into exile in 587BC. The Persians became the next major world power and defeated the Babylonians. King Cyrus allowed God's people to return from exile in 538/7 BC.



God's people didn't all return at once. In fact, some preferred to stay in Persia as the book of Esther testifies. Over the years more of God's people returned to Judah – with Ezra in 458 BC and with Nehemiah in 445 BC. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament written somewhere between 460 BC and 430 BC.



Study 1, Malachi 1:1-5

Getting started

To refresh our thinking on the Old Testament I thought it would be fun to read some quotes and listen to some sound bites. Your job is to say where the quote is from and its context in the Bible. Some of these are easy and some are quite hard. Some of these will be relevant to our study of Malachi. See how you go.

1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Where? Gen 1:1

Context? creation

2. "The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Where? Gen 12:1-3

Context? God promises Abram that he will become a great nation and lead them to the Promised Land.

3. Play Bob Dylan's first verse of "Highway 61".

Translation: God said to Abraham "Kill me a son."
 Abe said "Man, you must be putting me on."
 God said "No."
 Abe said "What?"
 God said "You can do what you want to but, the next time you see me coming you better run."
 Well Abe said "Where do you want this killing done?"
 God said "Out on Highway 61."

Bible: Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
 "Here I am," he replied.
 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

Where? Gen 22:1-2

Context? Bible: Abraham & Sarah finally have a son in their old age but God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son as a test of Abraham's faith.
 Bob Dylan: You can get away with anything in America, out on Highway 61.

4. "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Where? Ex 20:12-17

Context? 10 Commandments made at Mt Sinai while God's people were on their way to the Promised Land.

5. As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Where? 1 Sam 17:48-49

Context? David kills Goliath, the Philistine champion. Israel has a king, Saul, but David will be the next and greatest king besides Jesus.

6. When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

Where? 2 Sam 7:12-16

Context? God's line of kings, through David, will be established forever.

7. Play "Redeemer liveth" from Handel's Messiah.

Translation: I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

Bible: I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Where? Job 19:25-27

Context? Bible: Job defends himself against accusations that he has deserved the terrible things that have happened to him. His innocence will ultimately bring him to see God in the flesh.

Handel's Messiah: Comes immediately after the Hallelujah Chorus

8. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want."

Where? Ps 23:1

Context? Ps of David. Even in the most difficult of circumstances David trusts God to rescue him and bring him goodness and mercy.

9. Play "Rivers Of Babylon" by Boney M.

Translation: By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down. Yeah we wept when we remembered Zion. (twice)
When the wicked carried us away in captivity, required from us a song. }
Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land. } (twice)

Bible: By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

Where? Ps 137:1-4

Context? God's people are in exile in Babylon and living in misery.

10. Play "His Banner Over Me Is Love" from Scripture in Song.

Bible: He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

Where? Song of Songs 2:4

Context? Multiple meanings have been suggested for Song of Songs.
The 2 main ones are that it is an allegory for God's love for Israel/the church
OR a poem about the love of a man and a woman.

We studied this passage when we did Study 2, How do I trust the Bible, from the Life Under God booklet.

11. Play scene from "Chariots of Fire" where Eric Liddell reads the lesson in church.

As read from KJV: Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket and are counted as the small dust in the balance. All nations before him are as nothing. They are counted to him as less than nothing and vanity.
He bringeth the princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the earth as a vanity. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no strength he increaseth might. But they that waiteth on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.
They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Bible: v 15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;

V 17 Before him all the nations are as nothing, they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

V 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

V 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary,

V 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

V 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Where? Isaiah 40:15-31

Context? Bible: God is bringing his people out of exile in Babylon and back to the Promised Land.

Chariots of Fire: Eric Liddell reads from Isaiah in church before he competes in the 1924 Olympics in Paris.

12. "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."

Where? Mal 3:1

Context? Malachi was written about the time Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem. The people are back from exile and the Temple has been re-built but the people are disillusioned because things have not turned out as well as the prophets had promised.

Bible

13. Read Mal 1:1-5.
"I have loved you", says the Lord (v2). How has the Lord shown his love for the Israelites?

14. (a) How does God's treatment of Jacob and Esau show God's love (read Gen 25:19-34)?

- (b) Why do you think God would use the example of Jacob and Esau?

15. Read Rom 9:1-16.
(a) According to what criteria did God choose some of Abraham's descendants over others?

- (b) What does Paul conclude regarding God's children from these words and events?

To finish

16. Is our situation similar to Israel's? Why/why not?

17. How has God shown his love for you?

18. Is this all about choice or mercy?

Study 2, Malachi 1:6-2:9

Getting started

1. Think of people that you like. What are the characteristics of those people that endears them to you?

In the first study we looked at God's love for his people using the example of Jacob and Esau. In this study we will look at the priests of Malachi's time. Priests and the priesthood may not seem relevant to us except that there are a couple of quotes in the New Testament that say *all* Christians are priests.

Bible

2. Read 1 Peter 2:9.
Context: Peter is writing to Christians to give them advice on how to live as God's people, especially in the face of persecution.
What does this verse say about Christians?
3. What do you know about priests?
- Old Testament priests?

- priests as we know them today?
4. Read Mal 1:6-14.
What aspects of the priests' character is God critical of?
5. It's not in the passage, but where do you think the priests got the animals that they used for sacrifices?
6. What should the priests have done when they were given an animal for sacrifice but found it was blind or crippled or diseased (v8)?
7. God's disgust with the 'worship' of the priests moves him to make an astonishing statement in verses 10-11. What does he say, and what makes it so remarkable?

8. Read Mal 2:1-9.

(a) Why is God admonishing the priests?

(b) In contrast to the bad characteristics of the priests (see your answer to question 4) what does this passage tell us about the characteristics of true priests of God?

(c) Which of these characteristics apply to Christians as priests?

(d) What other characteristics or qualities should Christians have (see your answer to question 1)?

(e) What importance does obedience have in appealing to others?

To finish

9. Obedience is the flip side of sin i.e. if you are not obedient then you are sinning. Churches today are pre-occupied with sin/obedience. The emphasis should be on character not sin/obedience. Agree or disagree? Why/why not?

Study 3, Malachi 2:10-16**Getting started**

1. (a) What promises have you made in your life?

(b) Have you had to break any of those promises?

(c) What were the consequences of those broken promises

The story so far . . .

Malachi consists of a series of questions that the people put to God.

In Mal 1:2 the question is how has God loved us? And the answer is that God has chosen and blessed his people like he chose and blessed Jacob instead of his twin brother, Esau.

In Mal 1:6-7 the question is how have we dishonoured God? And the answer is that the animals given for sacrifice have been injured or diseased. The priests get most of the blame for this.

Bible

2. Read Mal 2:10-16.
What are the themes of this passage?
3. Why should Israel, in particular, be a nation of unity (v10)?
4. Why does God ignore their sacrifices (v13)?
5. In what ways have the Israelites broken faith?

To finish

6. (a) Was God's love for Israel unconditional?

(b) Is God's love for us unconditional?

Study 4, Malachi 2:17-3:18

Getting started

1. Do bad people get away with it?
2. Are Christians good or bad?
3. Do Christians get away with it?

The story so far . . .

Malachi consists of a series of questions that the people put to God.

In Mal 1:2 the question is how has God loved us? And the answer is that God has chosen and blessed his people like he chose and blessed Jacob instead of his twin brother, Esau.

In Mal 1:6-7 the question is how have we dishonoured God? And the answer is that the animals given for sacrifice have been injured or diseased. The priests get most of the blame for this.

In Mal 2:10 the question is how have we broken the covenant with God? And the answer is that by divorcing your wives and marrying women who follow pagan gods they have broken covenants with their wives and God.

Bible

4. Read Mal 2:17-3:18.
How have the Israelites wearied the Lord (2:17)?
5. What might have prompted them to say what they did in the second half of 2:17?
6. Play MonkeysPawMarkMeynell.mp3.
(a) What is the message of this story?

(b) How does this message relate to Mal 2:17-3:18?
7. Read Mal 3:1.
(a) From your knowledge of the New Testament who is the messenger?

(b) Why are they seeking the Lord?

The Lord will come to his temple and soon we will look at when that actually happened in Mk 11:15-19.

8. Read Mal 3:2-5.
(a) What do the first 2 questions in v2 mean?

(b) Why do you think the Levites get a special mention in v3?

(c) What does v5 tell you about God?

(d) Why should we fear God (v5)?

The children go through the wardrobe and enter the forest. There they have a series of adventures and meet Mr and Mrs Beaver.

"Is – is he a man?" asked Lucy.

"Aslan a man!" said Mr Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion – *the* Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs Beaver; "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

From The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe p 75 by C.S.Lewis.

9. Let's see what happens when the Lord comes to his temple. Read Mark 11:15-19.
What is Jesus doing that fits in with Mal 3:2-3?

In the gospels Jesus gives his harshest criticism to the religious leaders of his day just as Malachi's harshest criticism is for the religious leaders of his day.

10. Read Mal 3:3b-4 again.
(a) Jumping to 21st Century us, what offerings do we bring to the Lord (see Rom 12:1-2 and Matt 10:37-39)?

(b) Why are they called "offerings in righteousness"?

11. Read Mal 3:6-12.
(a) What was tithing in the Old Testament?

(b) Is tithing relevant today?

(c) Considering your answer to 10 (a) why do we put money in the plate at church?

12. Read Mal 3:13-18.

(a) From v14 the people were suggesting they hadn't gained anything by serving God. What have we gained by being Christian?

(b) What will happen on "the day" v17?

To finish

13. From Mal 3:7 (a) Do Christians need to return to God?

(b) How would you do that?

Study 5, Malachi 4:1-6

Getting started

1. What do you find most difficult about living your Christian life?

2. What do you find easiest about living your Christian life?

The story so far . . .

Malachi consists of a series of questions that the people put to God.

In Mal 1:2 the question is how has God loved us? And the answer is that God has chosen and blessed his people like he chose and blessed Jacob instead of his twin brother, Esau.

In Mal 1:6-7 the question is how have we dishonoured God? And the answer is that the animals given for sacrifice have been injured or diseased. The priests get most of the blame for this.

In Mal 2:10 the question is how have we broken the covenant with God? And the answer is that by divorcing your wives and marrying women who follow pagan gods they have broken covenants with their wives and God.

In Mal 2:17 the question is where is the God of justice? God answers with another question: who can endure the day of his coming? (Mal 3:2).

In Mal 3:8 the question is how do we rob God? And the answer is that they have not given their whole tithes.

Bible

3. Read Mal 4:1-6.
 - (a) What do you understand about the idea of God's judgement?

 - (b) Why use the image of fire to describe God's judgement?

4. What ideas come to you by the words "the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings" (v2)? This is an image just like fire was an image for judgement.

5.
 - (a) Have you ever seen calves leaping when they are released from a stall?

 - (b) What emotions are suggested by that expression?

6. What does trampling the ashes of the wicked (v3) suggest?

7. Read Mal 4:4 again.

The first 4 verses of ch 4 are about judgement (fire image), salvation (sun of righteousness image) and judgement again (trampling ashes image) and then v4 is about the Mosaic laws. How does law fit in with the judgement/salvation process?

8. Read Mal 4:5-6 again.

(a) What do you think it means to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers (v6) – see Prov 1:8-9?

(b) Elijah has been dead for 300 years when Malachi was written. How do you think Elijah fits in with this prophecy (see Luke 1:13-17)?

Near the end of v6 the NIV has “or else” as in “or else I will strike the land with a curse”. A better translation for “or else” is “lest” but the NIV won’t use a word like “lest” because it is archaic and the NIV rule is to only use conversational English. “Lest” means “so that not”. So verse 6 is better translated as “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers **so that I will not** come and strike the land with a curse” (i.e. come in judgement). The use of “or else” sounds like a threat by God but using “lest” means that v6 is a statement of God’s mercy.

From John Dickson’s sermon from St Andrews, Roseville on Mal ch 4, 4/12/2011.

To finish

9. Elijah will come and lead the people back to God (v6) but Elijah will come *before* the day of the Lord. When is that “great and dreadful day of the Lord”?

God does everything he can to avert judgement.

“Because of Jesus it is harder to fall under judgement than it should be and easier to receive God’s mercy than you deserve.”

From John Dickson’s sermon on Mal ch 4.