

## **PROPHETS AFTER THE EXILE: HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI**

### **Some important historical background**

(a) Jeremiah preached just before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 or 586 B.C. This was a terrible disaster with the kings being usurped, the temple being destroyed, and most of the people going into exile. All the promises of God to His people looked like they were going to collapse in utter failure.

(b) Then the Babylonians collapsed before the Persians, and the Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jewish captives to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple (Dan.5; Dan.9:1-2; Ezra 1:1-4). So about the year 538 B.C. the Judeans made their way back to Jerusalem and began to rebuild the temple.

(c) All looked fine for a while, and the foundations of the temple were laid (Ezra 3:10-11).

(d) But then they ran into troubles as the Samaritans opposed the rebuilding of the temple, and the work stopped (Ezra 4:24). So for perhaps 16 or 17 years nothing was done on the temple, and the work languished. This is where Haggai comes in, during the second year of the reign of King Darius Hystaspes (522-486 B.C.).

### **THE BOOK OF HAGGAI**

The book of Haggai consists of only 38 verses, and is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, after Obadiah. We know very little about the prophet himself, except that his recorded ministry was very short - just four months. Haggai was one of the few prophets to see people respond favourably to his message, and to see some of his prophecies fulfilled.

#### **Reluctant Builders (Haggai 1:1-4)**

1. What happened in August 520 B.C.? (1:1) Who was the governor and who was the high priest? \_\_\_\_\_

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Zerubbabel was the governor - not the king - under the Persians.

2. Haggai is speaking yet who else is speaking? (1:2a, 3) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What weak excuses have the people been giving for not rebuilding the temple? (1:2b; see Luke 14:15-20) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is God's response to these weak excuses? (1:3-4) What does this tell us about the priorities of the Judean people? (see Isa.5:8, 12; Matt.6:33) \_\_\_\_\_

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In the late 1880s and into 1890 Hudson Taylor was gathering support in other countries, including Canada, the United States, and Australia, for his China Inland Mission. A man named Henry Frost and his wife had just settled in Attica, but their support of the Mission would have a far greater impact if they moved to Toronto. Mrs Frost at first did not want to leave her pleasant house in Attica and move to a less desirable location in Toronto. She was wrestling with this when she happened to read Haggai 1:4. That decided it for her, and the Frosts moved to Toronto.

Philip Doddridge:

*I would not breathe for worldly joy,  
Or to increase my worldly good;  
Nor future days or powers employ  
To spread a sounding name abroad.  
'Tis to my Saviour I would live,  
To Him who for my ransom died.*

**God Chastises His People (Haggai 1:5-11)**

The Anglican evangelical chaplain on the First Fleet, Rev. Richard Johnson, owed his presence on the Fleet to the influence of John Newton and William Wilberforce. The early governors - Arthur Phillip and Francis Grose - were so indifferent to the Christian faith that Johnson had to pay for the erection of the first church building in the colony out of his own meagre salary. The Christian faith was not openly denied so much as set to one side as not being of much significance. Those early days of European settlement in Australia were Haggai-like days.

1. What does the Lord call on the Judaeans to do? (1:5, 7; see 2:15, 18) \_\_\_\_\_

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Blaise Pascal: 'Since men are unable to cure death, misery, and ignorance, they imagine they can find happiness by not thinking about such things.'

2. What four things have the Judaeans been doing? (1:6) But what has resulted? What is the lesson? (Ps.127:1-2) What is God doing here? \_\_\_\_\_

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James Montgomery Boice cites a Dutch proverb: 'The hurrier I go, the behinder I get.'

3. What does God tell them to do, and for what purpose? (1:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What were the Hebrews doing and what was God doing? (1:9) What explains the frustrations in their lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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P. T. Forsyth: 'The age, and much of the Church, believes in civilization and is interested in the Gospel, instead of believing in the Gospel and being interested in civilization.'

5. What has resulted? (1:10-11) And what is the explanation for this result? (Lev.26:3-4, 18-20) \_\_\_\_\_

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Haggai engages in a word play here - the Hebrew word for ‘ruin’ is *hareb* (vv.4, 9), which is close to the Hebrew word for ‘drought’ which is *horeb* (v.11). Judah left God’s house desolate, so God left Judah desolate.

### **Obedient Builders (Haggai 1:12-15)**

Most of the true prophets were rejected by the general populace, but Haggai saw something like revival.

1. How did the remnant of the people, including Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, respond to Haggai’s message? (1:12) What does it mean here to fear the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What was Haggai’s declaration of comfort to the people? (1:13) How does this transform everything? (see Gen.31:3; Ex.3:12; Jer.1:8, 19; Isa.43:1-2; Matt.28:20) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What did the Lord do, and consequently what did the people do? (1:14) What difference does this make? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jonathan Edwards used to say that God does everything and we do everything.

4. When did all this take place? (1:15; see verse 1. That is a gap of just 23 days)

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Francis de Sales: ‘My test of the worth of a preacher is when his congregation go away saying, not, “What a beautiful sermon,” but “I will do something.”’

Sometimes it is a case of wearing down the opposition, as William Wilberforce did on the slavery issue.

### **The Coming Glory (Haggai 2:1-9)**

About three weeks after they first heard Haggai’s message, the people recommenced work on the temple, and about four weeks after that - about 17 October 520 B.C. - the people were feeling discouraged and disappointed.

1. How were the old-timers likely to view the second Temple? (2:1-3; recall that even when the foundations were laid, people were upset - Ezra 3:10-13) \_\_\_\_\_

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There were people old enough to remember Solomon’s temple when it was destroyed

in 587 B.C. It had stood for nearly 400 years, and it was a magnificent structure, overlaid with gold. The second temple built under Zerubbabel seemed paltry by comparison. It is easy to feel discouraged about the kingdom of God on earth.

2. How do we respond to a day of small things? (Zech. 4:9-10a) \_\_\_\_\_

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History ebbs and flows; what has been will be. There have been times of discouragement in the past and times of revival.

3. What does God call on the Judaeans to do and to be? (Hag. 2:4-5) Why are we told so often not to fear but to be strong? What is the covenant promise that God gives? (Ex.29:45-46; Lev.26:11-13) What does it mean to have the Spirit in the midst of God's people? (see John 14:17 for a possible indication of the difference between the Spirit's presence in the Old Testament and His presence after Jesus' death and resurrection) \_\_\_\_\_

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John Cennick:

*We are travelling home to God  
In the way the fathers trod;  
They are happy now, and we  
Soon their happiness shall see*

...

*Lift your eyes, ye sons of light;  
Zion's city is in sight;  
There our endless home shall be,  
There our Lord we soon shall see.*

4. What will God do? (2:6-7) What will come about as a result of this? (the ESV has 'treasures of all nations'; the NKJV has 'the Desire of All Nations') \_\_\_\_\_

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God will shake the nations, meaning the Persians, the Syrians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks.

Charles Wesley treats this as a prophecy of the Messiah in his *Hark! the herald angels sing* with its lines:

*Come, Desire of nations, come,  
Fix in us Thy humble home.*

T. V. Moore, however, points to other verses that emphasise riches coming to the temple (Hag.2:8; Isa.60:5; 61:6). So it was that about 20 B.C. Herod the Great began to renovate the temple, and so it became a more impressive building (Mark 13:1).

5. What does verse 8 say will happen? (2:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Ultimately, what is the prophecy of Haggai 2:9? (see Matt.12:6; Rev.21:22-27) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Defilement and Blessing (Haggai 2:10-19)**

Haggai speaks again, in December 520 B.C., just three months after the recommencement of the rebuilding of the temple (2:10). His message is that blessing will come despite Judah's defilement, not because of her holiness.

1. Who is the divine author and who is the human author of this portion of Scripture? (2:10) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the question that is asked the priests and what is the answer? (2:11-12) \_\_\_\_\_

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Holiness could be transmitted (Lev.6:27) but ceremonial uncleanness is spread easily.

3. What point is being made in Haggai 2:13-14? (note Num.19:22; Eccles.10:1) How does Christ reverse this in Mark 1:40-41? \_\_\_\_\_

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This is a Genesis 3 world - fallen, prone to sin, able to see sin in others before we see it in ourselves, unwilling to listen to reason, denying the obvious. A good person who spends too much time with corrupt people is more likely to become corrupt himself than the corrupt people are to become good. If I have the flu and shake your hand at the door, I am more likely to pass my germs on than you are to pass on your good health. If you find a fly in your cup of tea, it is no consolation that 99% of the cup is fly-free.

In Adam, sin is more powerful than holiness, but in Christ holiness overcomes sin.

4. What was the purpose of God's chastening of His people? (2:15-17) Had Judah learnt anything from this? (note Deut.28:22; Amos 4:9) When things go wrong, how can we tell whether it is because God is chastening us? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What has happened up until this time, but what will happen after the temple is recommenced? (2:18-19) \_\_\_\_\_

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**God's Chosen Builder (Haggai 2:20-23)**

Haggai finishes of his little book with a final word of prophecy to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. This is the second prophecy on the same day (2:10, 20).

1. What is God about to do in these troubled times? (2:20-22) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Persians had defeated the Babylonians, and had allowed Judah to return to rebuild Jerusalem, including the temple. Here was little Judah beholden to the might of Persia. But over 90 times in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi we find God referred to as the Lord of hosts, the one who rules the heavenly hosts (the NIV has 'the Lord Almighty' which is something of a paraphrase). In the two chapters of Haggai we find this expression 14 times.

2. Who rules? (Psalm 2:1-4; Rev. 19:15-16) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What will God do? (2:23) How does He describe Zerubbabel? How did he get to become governor? \_\_\_\_\_

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The signet ring was used to seal official documents. It was to authenticate decrees. Zerubbabel would ensure that God's decrees were carried out. Jehoiachin was Zerubbabel's grandfather (Jer.22:24). In all the turmoil God would preserve Zerubbabel the governor.

4. What promises had God given? (Jer.23:5-6; 30:9; Ezek.34:23) Did these look likely to be fulfilled? (yet note Matt.1:12) How do God's promises concern both the temple and the kingship? \_\_\_\_\_

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James Montgomery:

*The tide of time shall never  
His covenant remove;  
His Name shall stand forever,  
His changeless Name of Love.*

## **THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH**

Zechariah 1:1 dates the first message of Zechariah in the year 520 B.C. when King Darius (522-486 B.C.) ruled the Persian empire. The 70 years of exile were over, and the temple was being rebuilt, to be rededicated in 516 B.C. However, Judah was only a little place, about 55 kms by 65 kms, with a population of about 50,000. This was the kingdom of God on earth.

It was at this time in this little place that Zechariah preached his message of 'Your kingdom come'. Haggai preached about the same time, but Zechariah is the more difficult and more apocalyptic book. In fact, Jerome called it 'that most obscure book'. Zechariah 1-6 tells of eight visions, whereas the second half of the book gives us two oracles. Perhaps surprisingly, Zechariah 9-14 is, of all the prophets, the most quoted section in the Gospel narratives of Christ's sufferings and death. It tells of a greater figure who would come in the future - He would be humble and gentle (Zech. 9), a true shepherd (Zech.10-11) who would suffer (Zech.12-13), but the Gentiles would respond (Zech.14). Zechariah lived in a day of small things (4:10), but he saw wonderful things ahead.

### **Return to the Lord (Zechariah 1:1-6)**

1. What was the date? (1:1) Who was Zechariah? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How is God described? (1:2; compare with 1:15; 2 Chron.36:14-17) How do we understand the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and the fact that the temple was not rededicated until 70 years later? What is essential before we understand the promises of the gospel? (Rom.1:18) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is God's call to Judah, and His promise? (1:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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There are plenty of people outside of God's kingdom because they are too preoccupied with their own.

4. What lesson should the Judeans have learnt from their forefathers? (1:4) To whom did the forefathers not listen? (note Jer.35:15; Ps.137:1-6) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the lesson of verse 5-6? (note Ps.119:89) Can the Word of God ever fail or go out of date? What did the people come to realise? Who wins? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Horses, Horns and Hammers (Zechariah 1:7-21)**

Zechariah 1-6 consists of eight visions which were presumably all given on the one night in February 519 B.C. Zechariah 1:8-17 tell of a man on a red horse standing among some myrtle trees in a ravine, while 1:18-21 tell of four craftsmen triumphing over the four horns that had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.

1. When did these visions take place? (1:7) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What did Zechariah see at first? (1:8) \_\_\_\_\_

A myrtle tree is a short evergreen tree which apparently emits a rich fragrance when crushed. This perhaps points to Israel which has staying power despite its smallness.

3. What obvious question does Zechariah ask? (1:9) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What answer is given? (1:10-11) How does it seem like good news? \_\_\_\_\_

The man with the red horse is identified with the divine Angel of the Lord.

5. Why is God angry at this 'peace'? (1:12-15; see Ps.123:4) What is God about to do and why? What does this mean for Jerusalem and what does it mean for the nations around it? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are God's comforting words to His people? (1:13, 16-17) What is indicated by the surveyor's line? \_\_\_\_\_

In a Nazi prison cell in the dark days of May 1944, Dietrich Bonhoeffer contemplated the future. Perhaps surprisingly, he predicted renewal by the Word of God, and added: 'Till then the Christian cause will be a silent and hidden affair, but there will be those who pray and do right and wait for God's own time.'

7. What is the meaning of the second vision? (1:18-21) How can four craftsmen (rebuilding the temple) terrify the four horns? \_\_\_\_\_

Horns represent power (Dan.7:8). The four horns may mean that God's people had enemies in the north, the south, the east and the west. So there was Assyria, Babylonia, Edom, Philistia, Medo-Persia, and Egypt.

The Sunday School teacher is building the kingdom of God here on earth. The grandmother who opens up the book of Bible stories before the youngsters go off to bed is part of a great relay of truth, extending down through the ages. The Christian



who lends a Christian book to a neighbour or who invites an unsaved friend to hear the gospel is building the kingdom of God. The temple now is made of living stones (1 Pet.2:4-5).

Horns seem like they rule the world, but it is the kingdom of God that shall remain when earth's proud empires have passed away.

### **Measuring Jerusalem without Walls (Zechariah 2)**

This is the third vision that is given to Zechariah. To some extent, all this refers to the building of the second temple, which was set up before the walls around Jerusalem were built. But it goes far beyond that. All this points to a greater temple and a greater presence of God with His people.

1. Whom does Zechariah see? (2:1; note 1:16) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What does Zechariah ask, and what does the man reply? (2:2) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What does the second angel say to the original one? (2:3-4) Why is this most extraordinary? \_\_\_\_\_

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Ancient and medieval cities had walls to define the limits of the city and to give protection. With the development of gunpowder and cannons, and later aeroplanes, there became little point in building city walls. But in the ancient world, a city without walls was something that would not have been comprehended. But this will be a city with a huge number of people in it.

4. What two things are promised to Jerusalem? (2:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are the Judeans told to do? (2:6-7) How will there be safety in Jerusalem but not in Babylon? \_\_\_\_\_

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'Come! Come!' (NIV) or 'Up, up!' (NKJV, ESV) is an interjection; it is often translated as 'Ho!' as in Isaiah 55:1.

6. What will be the fate of the Babylonians? (2:8-9) What is said of Zion? (see Deut.32:10) How are we to understand Zion in this passage - literal or in the light of John 2:19-21; 4:20-21; Gal.4:26; Rev.21:2? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is to be the response of the daughter of Zion? (2:10) What does the Lord promise? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What other promises are given in verse 11? How can you explain the two Jehovahs or Yahwehs there, that the Lord of hosts sends the Lord to His people? What will the people of God know? (see John 17:26) \_\_\_\_\_

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T. V. Moore says that this 'unquestionably refers to the incarnation' (see John 1:1, 14).

9. What else is promised? (2:12) \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What should be our response? (2:13; see too Hab.2:20; this is not to be our only response - note Zech.2:10 which is hard to do in silence!) To whom is Zechariah 2:13 addressed? How is this appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_

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These prophecies are only fulfilled in Christ, the new temple. He will call the nations in, He will protect His people, He will come as God incarnate to save His people.

### **A Cleansed High Priest (Zechariah 3)**

On 9 February 1709 a fire broke out in the Epworth Rectory. Young John Wesley was only six years old, and he ran to the window to peer out, just as the roof was about to collapse. Thankfully, a man in the village was resourceful enough to know what to do. He bade another man climb on his shoulders and reached young John only seconds before the roof crashed in. The relieved father, Samuel Wesley, invited all to join him in prayer: 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down. Let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough.' John never forgot this experience, and each year he would observe the anniversary of that dramatic night. He referred to himself in terms of Zechariah 3:2, and when he came to sit for his portrait by George Vertue, the background was a house in flames, with the words underneath: 'Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?' That is an apt description of anyone who is saved, and it is based on Zechariah's fourth vision.

1. Whom did Zechariah see next? (3:1) Who is the angel of the Lord? What is Satan doing? (note Rev.12:10) \_\_\_\_\_

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Joshua is the high priest and as such he is the representative of the people of Israel. Satan is only mentioned four times in the Old Testament (here; Gen.3: Job 1-2; 1 Chron.21:1).

2. What the Lord say to Satan? (3:2) Is the angel of the Lord the Lord? (3:1-2) What has the Lord done with Jerusalem? How is Jerusalem described? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How was Joshua dressed? (3:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What takes place in verse 4? Of what is it a sign? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What takes place in verse 5? Of what is it a sign? (see Isa. 64:6; 61:10) \_\_\_\_\_

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Verse 8 says that Joshua and his associates are 'symbolic of things to come' (NIV). They are a sign (ESV), indeed a wondrous sign (NKJV). T. V. Moore calls them 'men of omen'.

Count von Zinzendorf:

*Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress!  
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed  
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

He goes on:

*O let the dead now hear Your voice,  
Let those once lost in sin rejoice!  
Their beauty this, their glorious dress:  
Jesus, Your blood and righteousness.*

Charles Wesley:

*No condemnation now I dread,  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living head,*

*And clothed in righteousness divine.*

6. What does the angel of the Lord do next to Joshua? (3:6) \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is promised to Joshua? (3:7) What is the condition for this promise to be fulfilled? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Of what are Joshua and his friends a sign? (3:8) What is the coming one called? (note Jer.23:5-6) \_\_\_\_\_

‘Joshua’ is Hebrew for Jesus. Moses could not lead the people into the Promised Land, but Joshua-Jesus did. Now, Joshua-Jesus is the high priest taking the place of His people.

The Branch is kingly but the context here is largely priestly.

9. What will the Lord of hosts achieve through the Branch? (3:9) How long will this take? (note Heb.10:12-14) Contrast this to the Old Testament sacrifices. \_\_\_\_\_

At Calvary on one Friday in A.D. 30 He removed sin forever from His people. He offered up a perfect atonement for sin. 'Full atonement - can it be?' asked Philip Bliss. Yes, 'Hallelujah! What a Saviour!'

Evil Friday is Good Friday; the greatest crime of human beings becomes the means of the greatest act of grace by God.

10. What will be the result of this? (3:10) \_\_\_\_\_

This is a proverbial expression concerning peace and prosperity. Sennacherib the king of Assyria used it - 2 Kings 18:31. Sennacherib promised it, but that was a lie. Christ promises it and delivers. Micah promised it back in the 8th century B.C. - Micah 4:4. Now, Zechariah in 519 B.C. is repeating that promise.

#### **By My Spirit: The Golden Lampstand (Zechariah 4)**

Zechariah 4 deals with the fifth vision given to the prophet. It tells of a golden lampstand with two olive trees. Zechariah is particularly intrigued about the two olive trees, and asks three times about them (vv.4, 11, 12). No wonder Zechariah felt somewhat bewildered. The vision certainly has its difficulties, but it is an encouraging vision, which tells of the building up of God's community here on earth.

1. What was Zechariah doing? (4:1) Who came to him again? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What does Zechariah see? (4:2) What does the lampstand represent? (Isa.62:1; Luke 12:35; Rev.1:20) \_\_\_\_\_

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Solomon's temple had ten golden lampstands, but there is only one in Zechariah's vision.

3. What else does Zechariah see? (4:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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The two olive trees are 'sons of oil', anointed ones. They are Joshua the high priest whom we met in Zechariah 3, and Zerubbabel, the Davidic prince who was not a king but a governor, but was of the line of David (Matt.1:12; Luke 3:27). So there is a priestly anointed one and a kingly anointed one.

Christ is both king and priest - see Zechariah 6:12-13.

4. What is the natural question to ask? (4:4) What does Zechariah know? (4:4-5; see too 4:11-14; also Dan.12:8) Is this encouraging? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the Lord's message to Zerubbabel? (4:6) What is this telling us today? \_\_\_\_\_

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James Hudson Taylor: 'All God's giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them.'

6. What will become of the great mountain? (4:7) What is the shout associated with the capstone? (4:7) \_\_\_\_\_

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It looks like a mountainous task, but the mountain shall become a plain. The 'capstone' (NIV, NKJV) is not the foundation stone but the top stone. This shows that the building is near completion.

7. What is said about Zechariah's message? (4:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What will Zerubbabel achieve? (4:9-10a) How is the present described, but what shall come? How should this help us to think straight and spiritually? \_\_\_\_\_

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The NIV, ESV and the NKJV all have 'plumb line' but it could be what John Mackay calls 'the separate stone'. Jerusalem was living in a day of small things - a small population, consisting of only two tribes, just recently returned from 70 years in exile, a half-completed temple, no king, but a governor answerable to the Persian empire. Hardly momentous! Yet the day of small things is not to be despised and sneered at.

9. What does God see? (4:10b) What does this tell us about the attributes of God? \_

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10. What questions does Zechariah ask twice? (4:11-3) What is the answer? (4:14) How are the two anointed ones described? How is this vision fulfilled in the coming of Christ? What is one of the things that is remarkable about a priest-king? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **The Flying Scroll and the Woman in a Basket (Zechariah 5)**

Chapter 5 contains visions number 6 and 7. The first five visions could be seen as generally encouraging - an unjust peace will not last; craftsman will overcome horns (ungodly powers); Jerusalem will become a city without walls; Joshua the high priest is cleansed; and the governor Zerubbabel will rebuild the temple. Visions 6 and 7, however, deal with judgment and purification.

1. What is the sixth vision? (5:1-2) How big is this flying scroll? What is the significance of the scroll's flying? \_\_\_\_\_

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It is twenty cubits by ten cubits, which the NIV gives as 30 feet long (a little shorter than the length of Luke's gospel) by 15 feet wide (much wider than usual). This is the size of the porch of Solomon's temple from which the law was usually read (1 Kings 6:3). That may be significant.

2. What is the declaration of this flying scroll? (5:3-4) Why are these two sins - of stealing and swearing falsely - singled out? What will happen to the house of the thief and the perjurer? \_\_\_\_\_

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Barry Webb calls this 'one of the most terrifying warning passages in the Old Testament.'

These two sins may have been very common in Zechariah's day, so there may have been specific reasons for God to single out these two sins. But they are probably representative sins.

Zechariah's proclamation goes out to the whole land (NIV) or the whole earth (NKJV). There will be no thieves or hypocrites in heaven (Rev.22:15).

3. The seventh vision concerns a woman in a basket, in an ephah barrel, which was not large, and would normally contain not much more than five gallons. A woman would not be expected to fit into it. What does the angel tell Zechariah to do? (5:5)

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4. What is the basket doing, and what does it represent? (5:6) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What was the cover made of? (5:7-8) What was in the basket? Of what is she the personification? What does the angel do then? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What happens to the woman in the ephah basket? (5:9-11) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Hebrew word for 'wind', like the Greek, is the same as that for 'spirit'. Two women with the wind in their wings - or the Spirit in their wings - took the basket with the woman in it, and flew it to Shinar (Babylon) to be housed there.

T. V. Moore sees Shinar as the symbol of all the evil idolatry of Israel's enemies. Hence he views this as a prophecy of the war between the Jews and the Romans which broke out in A.D. 66 and finished with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70. That may be so but it is probably a more general statement that God will purify His people by removing wickedness from them. God removes sin from His people (Ps.103:11-12).

Ralph Erskine: 'If you would have righteousness, you must have it in and from Christ. He has to give you both an imputed righteousness for justifying you, and an imparted righteousness for sanctifying you.'

Horatius Bonar: 'Judicial and moral cleansing was what man needed. We have both the imputed and imparted righteousness; the former the root or foundation of the latter. Not the one without the other; both together, inseparable; but each in its own

order.'

7. What do the two visions in Zechariah 5 tell us about how God deals with sin? \_\_\_

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### **The Four Chariots: Judgment and Building (Zechariah 6)**

This is the eighth and final vision that Zechariah experienced that night back in 519 B.C. This is the vision of the four chariots coming out from between two mountains. The chariots were drawn by different coloured horses - red for the first chariot, black for the second, white for the third, and the fourth was dappled. Some identify the two mountains as Mount Moriah where the temple was and the Mount of Olives, but verse 1 says that the mountains were of bronze, so we are probably not meant to identify them.

1. What did Zechariah do, and what did he see? (6:1) What is strange about the mountains? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is said about the four horses individually and collectively? (6:2-3) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is the natural question that Zechariah asks? (6:4) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where have the four chariots been? (6:5) Where are they going? \_\_\_\_\_

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The four chariots represent the four spirits of heaven. Four signifies universality. The four spirits go out from the Lord of the whole world into the whole world.

5. Where does each chariot go? (6:6) What is missing? Can you guess why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Barry Webb thinks that this has accidentally dropped out of the manuscripts. That may be so. We have to say that it is something of a mystery.

6. What is the mission of the horses? (6:7) What does this mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. More particularly, what does it mean for the north i.e. Babylon? (6:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Medo-Persians defeated the Babylonians twenty years before this vision, in 539 B.C. This was a work of God. Go back to Zechariah 1:11; that was a false peace because God's work was not finished. But here it is finished at least in the north for a time.

The God of the Bible is the God of the whole earth. All history is in His hands.

8. What happened next to Zechariah? (6:9) What was he told? (6:10-11) \_\_\_\_\_

We have no idea who these four men are, but their names are Jewish, so they are presumably Jews in exile. The same men, with Josiah being called Hen, are found in verse 14.

9. What happens in verses 12-13? What two offices are combined? To whom does Joshua point? Why is Joshua crowned? Who is the Branch? (Jer.23:5-6; 33:15) What will the Branch do and what will the priest do? (see Zech.3:8; 4:14 Psalm 110:1, 4) How is this very different from Old Testament kings and priests? (1 Sam.13:7-14; 2 Chron.26:16-21) \_\_\_\_\_

Joyce Baldwin: 'Nowhere else in the Old Testament is it made so plain that the coming Davidic king will also be a priest.'

Verse 13 says that there will be harmony or peace between the two. James Montgomery Boice says that this refers to God and sinners being reconciled, but the context favours peace and harmony between the two offices of king and priest.

10. What is the point of the crown in verses 10,14? Why does the Messiah have more than one crown? (Rev.19:12) \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew Bridge and Godfrey Thring:  
*Crown Him with many crowns,*

*The Lamb upon His throne.*

11. Who shall come to help to build the temple? (6:15; see too Zech. 2:11; 8:20-23) How is this picked up in the New Testament? (Acts 2:38-39; Eph.2:17) What is the temple in the New Testament? (Eph.2:21) \_\_\_\_\_

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**True Repentance (Zechariah 7)**

The eight visions given in one night and recorded in Zechariah 1-6 have dealt with the coming of the priest-king, the calling in of the Gentiles, the city without walls, and cleansing from sin in one day. This chapter is dated nearly two years after these night visions, in December 518 B.C.

1. What date is given for this next episode? (7:1) What question is raised? (7:2-3) What does this indicate about their thinking? \_\_\_\_\_

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Old Testament law only commanded fasting for one day of the year, which was the Day of Atonement (Lev.16). But the question raised here is over and above that. It concerns mourning and fasting in the fifth month. This is to remember that it was in the fifth month of the Jewish calendar that King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8). Zechariah 8:19 tells us that the Jews fasted in order to remember the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (fourth month; Jer.39:2), the governor Gedaliah's assassination (seventh month; 2 Kings 25:25), and the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (tenth month; 2 Kings 25:1-2). This is leading to the practice of the Pharisees (Luke 18:12).

2. What is God's response to this question? (7:4-5) What is the issue here? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What was their motive in eating and drinking? (7:6) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. To whom is verse 7 referring? (cf. Isa.58:3-5) Why do religious things? Why come to church? 'Because it makes me feel better.' Is that the point? \_\_\_\_\_

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Muslims fast for a month, during the day, in Ramadan. Fasting is right in its place,

but without grace it achieves nothing.

5. What does God expect of His people? (7:8-9) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What can be added to the list? (7:10) What is the biblical perspective? (Isa.1:17, 23; Amos 5:14-15, 21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Matt.23:23) \_\_\_\_\_

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Dr Johnson's advice was not to fast if it made one cranky and difficult to get on with. This goes further than that. The real fasting is abstaining not from food but from sin.

7. How had the Judeans lived? (7:11-14) What is the explanation for the seventy years of exile? Nebuchadnezzar or God? What is the main explanation for the weakness of the Church in the West today? What should be her response? Look too at the history lesson in Nehemiah 9:29-30. \_\_\_\_\_

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They had turned a stubborn shoulder to the Lord, they made their ears heavy, their hearts were like adamant ('flint' says the NIV, or 'diamond-hard' as the ESV says).

**Glorious Things for Zion (Zechariah 8)**

This is a reassuring chapter with ten promises of blessing. Each promise begins with 'Thus says the Lord of hosts' (vv.2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 18, 20, 23).

1. How does God describe Himself, and what does this mean? (8:1-2) In the light of 7:14, how is this extraordinary and surprising? \_\_\_\_\_

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God is very jealous (NIV) or zealous (NKJV) for Jerusalem.

2. What does God promise with regard to Jerusalem? (8:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What will this mean for the community? (8:4-5) How is this all described? (8:6) \_

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The most vulnerable members of the community - the aged and the young - will be out and about.

4. What will God do, and what will this mean for His people? (8:7-8) \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Why does God call upon His people to let their hands be strong? (8:9; see too 8:13) What does it have to say to us? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What had happened before? (8:10) Who had brought about this unsettlement and dislocation, and why? \_\_\_\_\_

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There was poverty, insecurity and broken relationships.

7. What does God promise about the bad old days? (8:11) To whom is He speaking?

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8. What does God promise in verse 12? To whom? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Where has Israel come from? (8:13) What is promised regarding her future? What is to be her response? Why should we not be afraid? What does fear do to us? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Again, what had God done, what does He promise to do, and what is the appropriate response of His people? (8:14-15) \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What does God promise next? (8:18-19; a contrast to the fasting in Zechariah 7) What should the people do in response? (recall 7:9-12) Can you fit this in with Mark 2:18-20? \_\_\_\_\_

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'We have been silent witnesses of evil deeds. We have been drenched by many storms. Experience has made us suspicious of others and kept us from being truthful and open. Are we still of any use?'

George Orwell became disillusioned with the political left during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9. He hardly knew what to believe after that, and in *Homage to Catalonia* he records (p.234): 'I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, not even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie. I saw great battles reported where there had been no fighting, and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed. I saw troops who had fought bravely denounced as cowards and traitors, and others who had never seen a shot fired hailed as the heroes of imaginary victories; and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that had never happened.' That is what happens at such times. Zechariah tells of what restoration will mean.

12. What great blessing is prophesied in 8:20-23? \_\_\_\_\_

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T. V. Moore, writing in 1856, saw the probable restoration of Israel (which happened in 1948) and further blessing. Certainly, this section here is going beyond what ever happened after the exile. The prophecy is that the Gentile believers will outnumber the Jewish believers. Has this happened? \_\_\_\_\_

*Glorious things of thee are spoken,*

*Zion, city of our God;*

*He whose word cannot be broken*

*Formed thee for His own abode.*

John Newton could write that because God promised it, and fulfilled it.

### **The Righteous King (Zechariah 9)**

Zechariah 9-14 consists of two oracles which are prophecies given in an apocalyptic form.

1. Whom will God conquer? (9:1-8) Why will they be cut down? What will happen to the remnant of the Philistines? (see Luke 6:17; Acts 8:40; Azotus is the Roman name for Ashdod) \_\_\_\_\_

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God will conquer Syria, Tyre and Sidon, and the Philistine cities.

Then comes a clear prophecy of the Messiah (9:9-10; the paragraphing of the NIV and ESV, i.e. vv.9-13 is probably unhelpful). Verses 9-10 are cited in the New Testament - Matt.21:1-5; John 12:14-16.

2. How is the coming King described? (9:9) How is He righteous? (see Isa.11:4-5) How can He be said to have salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

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Joyce Baldwin understands this in the sense of having been delivered. So Christ Himself was delivered from death especially. He was raised from the dead. That is possible, but it is surely better to understand it in the sense of possessing it.

3. On what is He riding? (9:9) What does this indicate? To whom does He come and how will they respond? \_\_\_\_\_

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Here is a king riding peacefully on a donkey. Joyce Baldwin says that kings rode on donkeys, but that was only true in the early period (Judges 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam.16:1-2). It was not true later on, and the horse was regarded as a more appropriate animal. There is an obvious contrast in verses 9-10 between the donkey in verse 9 and the war-horses in verse 10. One is unlike the other.

4. What will God do with the instruments of war? (9:10) What is God's message? To whom is it addressed? (Col.1:20; Isa.52:7) How widespread is His rule? (see too Ps.72:8-11) \_\_\_\_\_

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Alexander the Great tried to rule the world. When he reached the Indus River, he is supposed to have burst into tears because there was nothing left for him to conquer.

5. What shall God do to protect His people? (9:11-17) Who is their special enemy? (9:13) How should the people respond? \_\_\_\_\_

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We know of no war between the Greeks and the Jews, but after Alexander the Great's death, his kingdom split into four, and the Seleucids of Syria certainly attacked Judah. The Maccabean priest-kings won a series of remarkable victories over the Seleucids, and that seems to be what is being spoken of here. God will conquer His enemies and protect His house.

### **Renewed Israel and a New Exodus (Zechariah 10)**

Calvin says that this chapter only refers to a spiritual restoration. T. V. Moore, whose work is very helpful, sees a literal restoration of Israel, which in Moore's day (1856) had yet to take place, and a spiritual restoration. James Montgomery Boice points to the re-establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, but also seems to think that the text points beyond that. There is certainly language here which goes beyond simply a restoration of Judah after her 70 years in exile.

1. What is our greatest inducement to pray? (10:1) To what is prayer compared? \_\_\_\_\_

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The latter rain is the spring rain.

2. What is the characteristic of idolatry? (10:2-3) What does it lead to? Why is God so angry with the shepherds of Judah? How are the people described? What is missing? How does God contrast with the false shepherds? (see too Jer.23:16-17, 32) \_\_\_\_\_

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The shepherds are leaders - prophets, priests, kings, princes, those who have

responsibilities in directing the covenant people of God. Sheep without a shepherd wander about as lost sheep.

In 1740 Gilbert Tennent preached his famous - or infamous - sermon *The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry*. This created a storm.

3. What does God promise in 10:3b-5? Who is the cornerstone from Judah? (Isa.28:16) \_\_\_\_\_

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This speaks of stability and victory. Remember that shepherds were expected to be able to fight.

The language seems rather excessive in describing the post-exilic situation.

4. God's promises a renewed Israel and a new exodus. There will be jubilation and restoration (10:6-12). What will God do?

(a) 10:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

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It will be as though 722 B.C. never happened and 587 B.C. never happened. The expression is not used, but this is a new Israel, or a renewed Israel.

(b) 10:8a, 10-11 (note Ex.20:2) \_\_\_\_\_

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God will whistle for them. This is a shepherd image.

(c) 10:10 \_\_\_\_\_

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Somehow they will be greater than they were before. That does not fit the events of 1948. Surely that refers to the calling in of the Gentiles. Israel as the people of God is redefined as the new body consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers.

(d) 10:12 \_\_\_\_\_

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God through God will strengthen and convert His people!

What God has done in the past, He will do in a greater way in the future.

**The Rejection of the Good Shepherd (Zechariah 11)**

Here is the people's rejection of the good shepherd and their acceptance of the wicked shepherd who only brings them judgment.

1. What is God's judgment of the proud cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan? (11:1-3) What do they represent? What is their main characteristic? \_\_\_\_\_

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Zechariah has mixed up all his metaphors here, but there is a condemnation of the proud cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan, meaning the false shepherds. The shepherds will wail because they and the people who followed them will be judged.

2. What do the shepherds do to the sheep? (11:4-6) Why do the people praise the Lord? Yet what will happen to them? \_\_\_\_\_

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This is somewhat contentious but in the context this seems to be referring to the events leading up to the Roman-Jewish war of A.D. 66-70. The people of the covenant followed the wrong shepherds, whether Pharisees, Sadducean high priests or Zealots. The result was slaughter and destruction.

3. What role does the prophet adopt? (11:7) What are the names of his two staffs? Whom does he prefigure? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What does this prophet-shepherd do? (11:8) How does the flock respond? \_\_\_\_\_

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Joyce Baldwin calls these words 'probably the most enigmatic in the whole Old Testament'. The commentaries list over forty interpretations. In 1856 T. V. Moore suggested that the three shepherds are the three anointed offices of prophet, priest and king. Christ does away with these three offices - He is the Prophet above all prophets, the Priest above all priests, the King above all kings. That is a compelling solution to a difficult problem.

5. What is the shepherd's response to the bitterness of the flock? (11:8b-9) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What does this lead to? (11:10-11) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Shepherd breaks the covenant of Favour with all the peoples (not the NIV's 'nations').

7. What do they pay the shepherd? (11:12; Matt.26:15) To what does this point? \_\_\_\_\_

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This was the cost of a slave who was killed but not murdered (Ex.21:32). The

people say that the shepherd is worth the cost of a dead slave.

8. What did the shepherd do with the thirty pieces of silver? (11:13: Matt.27:5-10) \_\_\_\_\_

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This was probably where the pots were made for some of the temple vessels (e.g. Lev.6:28).

Matthew attributes this to Jeremiah when it is really a combination of Jeremiah 18-19 and Zechariah 11. He refers only to the major prophet, as Mark 1:2-3 refers to Malachi and Isaiah under the heading of 'Isaiah'.

9. What other part of the covenant is broken? (11:14) \_\_\_\_\_

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Some see this as referring to the Samaritan schism in 325 B.C. but it is referring to the break-up of the nation. Favour and Union will be broken, the Shepherd sold for thirty pieces of silver, and the blood money thrown into the temple. The Shepherd will come to fulfil the covenant, but His people will break it.

10. If we reject the good shepherd, whom do we get in his place? (11:15-17) What is the result? \_\_\_\_\_

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To reject Christ as your shepherd will not mean that you have no shepherd but that you will serve a foolish and worthless shepherd.

### **Mourning for the One They have Pierced (Zechariah 12)**

In Zechariah 12-14 there are 16 references to the phrase 'on that day', so God is pointing to a day that is coming.

1. How does God identify Himself? (12:1; see Isa.42:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Using the images of a cup and a stone, what is God going to do to Jerusalem? (12:2-3) What will result from this? \_\_\_\_\_

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God's enemies will charge at Jerusalem and be rebuffed. James Montgomery Boice is premillennial and applies this to Armageddon, but Jerusalem could represent the people of God. God will destroy those who try to destroy His people.

3. What will God do to protect His people? (12:4) What will the clans of Judah realise because of this? (12:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What are God's plans for Judah and Jerusalem? (12:6) What effect will they have on the surrounding peoples? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. From where shall salvation come? (12:7) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How surprising are the promises of this salvation? (12:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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The feeblest saint will like King David who defeated Goliath, and house of David will be like God, or like the Angel of the Lord. David is described as like an angel of the Lord in many places (1 Sam.29:9; 2 Sam.14:17, 20; 19:27).

Isaac Watts:

*Now let my soul arise,  
And tread the tempter down:  
My Captain leads me forth  
To conquest and a crown:  
A feeble saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.*

7. What will God do to the enemies of Jerusalem? (12:9) \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What will God do to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem? (12:10a) \_\_\_\_\_

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This is new covenant language - Ezek.36:26-27. God promises to pour out the Spirit (not 'spirit' as in NIV and ESV) of free undeserved favour and of prayer. This was especially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

9. What will God's people do to God? (12:10; see John 19:37) \_\_\_\_\_

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Zechariah 9 says the king will come riding humbly on a donkey, Zechariah 11 says that the good shepherd will be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, and Zechariah 12 says the people will pierce God. The divine shepherd-king will become a servant and be pierced.

10. What will the people do in response? (12:10) How deep is this grief? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What else is prophesied about this grief? (12:11-14; see Acts 2:36-37) \_\_\_\_\_

Hadad Rimmon is a place in Megiddo where the last good king, Josiah, was killed in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29). The people of God grieved for what happened that day (2 Chron.35:25). As the old spiritual asks: *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

### **The Shepherd Struck, the Sheep Scattered (Zechariah 13)**

Zechariah is looking ahead: 'On that day', he says, 'God will do something extraordinary' (13:1, 2, 4).

1. What is promised for the house of David and Jerusalem (13:1; Ezek.47:1-7, 12) \_\_

Augustus Toplady:

*Foul, I to the Fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.*

William Cowper:

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.*

*E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.*

2. What three things will be banished? (13:2-3) \_\_\_\_\_

3. What will happen to the false prophets? (13:4-6; Deut.13:6-9; they will be ashamed to dress like Elijah; cf. 2 Kings 1:8) \_\_\_\_\_

The false prophet will deny that he is a prophet and say that he is a farmer.

4. What will happen to the shepherd and to the sheep? (13:7; Matt.26:31) Who strikes the shepherd? \_\_\_\_\_

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James Montgomery Boice says that verse 7b is referring to blessing, not cursing. The context seems to be against that view. Zechariah is saying that there will be persecution and refining ahead for Israel. Israel will put to death her Messiah, and God will punish most of Israel.

5. What will happen to Israel? (13:7b-9) Who will be cut off? Who will be refined? Who will be tested? What will be the result? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Our Lord Reigns (Zechariah 14)**

Martin Luther on Zechariah 14: 'Here, in this chapter I give up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about.' James Montgomery Boice argues for a literal view all the way through the chapter. I think that becomes impossible in some parts. T. V. Moore says that we await clearer light in the future. Barry Webb says that 'The chapter oscillates between the negative and positive aspects of the day of God's final intervention, but comes to rest on the positive.' That is true. It is quite possible that some of this refers to Christ's first coming, and this is perhaps repeated in some way at His second coming.

1. What will the nations do to Jerusalem? (14:1-2) What will be the result? \_\_\_\_\_

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This cannot refer to 587 B.C. when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, because that had already happened. Nor can it refer to the days of the Maccabees, as Calvin thinks, because the language goes beyond that. Surely it applies first to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in A.D. 70.

2. Who will be preserved? (14:3-5) What will God do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Verse 4 is often seen as a prophecy of Christ's ascension (Acts 1:11). But that does not seem to quite fit. As people fled from the earthquake in Amos' day, so they will flee from the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt.24:16-21).

3. How is there a new creation? (14:6-7; see Isa.60:19-20; Rev.21:23-25; 22:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What is said about the remnant? What will happen, beginning in Jerusalem? (14:8-9; John 7:37-39) What will be revealed? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is promised for Jerusalem? (14:10-11) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What will happen to Jerusalem's enemies? (14:12-15) \_\_\_\_\_

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T. V. Moore takes this as a picture of hell: 'Hell shall be hate, in its fiercest and hatefulest forms.'

7. To whom shall blessing come? (14:16-19) Describe the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (see Deut.16:13-17). \_\_\_\_\_

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The enemies of Israel will be called to live as pilgrims on the way to the new Jerusalem.

8. How is God's kingship described? (14:20-21) Is this figurative? \_\_\_\_\_

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'Holy to the Lord' was engraved on the high priest's turban (Ex.28:36). But the prophecy in Zechariah is that this inscription will be found on the bells of horses and on cooking pots. This surely is saying that all of life will be holy to the Lord.

9. Who will be excluded from the house of the Lord? (14:21b; Matt.21:12-13) \_\_\_\_\_

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This can be translated as 'Canaanite' (NIV, NKJV Holman) or as 'trader' (ESV). The former seems much more appropriate.

This chapter finishes on world wide victory and world wide holiness. God's people will be preserved from both the Jews and the Gentiles. God's enemies will be dealt with. The new Jerusalem will be repopulated and will dwell in safety. God will reign forever.

**MALACHI: GOD'S MESSENGER**

The word 'Malachi' means 'my messenger', and some scholars have suggested that the book was given this name because the author was unknown. Calvin speculated that it may have been the surname of Ezra. That is guesswork, but Malachi did live about the same time. Ezra came to Jerusalem to teach God's law in 458 B.C. That was about the time when Malachi was prophesying in Judah. Malachi raises four areas of failure - in worship, amongst the priests, in marriage relationships, and in giving to the Lord's work. He also prophesies the coming of the messenger who would prepare the way for a greater Messenger. After Malachi there was 450 years of prophetic silence until the coming of John the Baptist.

**God's electing love (Malachi 1:1-5)**

1. In what capacity does Malachi speak? (1:1) Whom are we rejecting if we reject what Malachi says? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What does God declare to Israel, and what is Israel's response? (1:2) \_\_\_\_\_

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These 'What has God ever done for me?' types live life with a chip on their shoulder. If something goes wrong in their lives, that is always God's fault, never their own. They are accused of sins, and are bewildered.

3. What is God's initial reply in 1:2b-3a? \_\_\_\_\_

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Isaac had twin boys, but the promise went to Jacob, not Esau, who became the father of the Edomites.

The Bible often uses 'to hate' to mean 'to love less' (Luke 14:26).

4. Did Jacob choose God or God choose Jacob? (Gen.25:21-23; Rom. 9:10-13) Why? (Deut.7:7-8; Jer.31:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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T. V. Moore: 'The apostle Paul saw as deeply as any other man the difficulty of making salvation depend on the elective love of God, but he saw more deeply the difficulty of making it depend on anything else.'

5. How did this work in history? (1:3-5) \_\_\_\_\_

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Edom, just east of the Jordan River, had become a place for jackals. Israel was being restored, and Edom was trying to restore itself. For a while Edom looked to be getting the better of the deal (Obadiah 10-14). All looked bad news for Judah, but see Ezekiel 35:15. Edom was to be attacked by Nabateans (Arabs). By the first century Edom no longer existed. Judah was chastened but Edom was destroyed.

John Benton cites a poem by Allan Ahlberg about a naughty boy:

*I did a bad thing once.*

*I took this money from my mother's purse.*

*For bubble gum.*

*What made it worse,  
She bought me some  
For being good, while I'd been vice versa,  
So to speak - that made it worser.*

To sin and be ungrateful against such love is terrible.

Judah questioned the love of God, but it is as the hymn-writer put it:

*Father, 'twas Thy love that knew us  
Earth's foundations long before;  
That same love to Jesus drew us  
By its sweet constraining power,  
And it will keep us  
Safely now, and evermore.*

### **Second-rate service (Malachi 1:6-14)**

1. How much self-awareness does Judah have? (1:6-7) How was David opposed to sin, but still failed to see that he was a sinner? (2 Sam.12:1-7a) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What were the Israelites offering to God? (1:7-8) What was commanded concerning the sacrificial animals? (Lev.1:3, 10; 22:20-25) Why? (John 1:29; 2 Sam.24:21-25) Would the governor accept such offering? (1:8) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why does God say that it is better to have no sacrifices than profane sacrifices? (1:10) What is Israel's view of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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Better to say nothing than to blaspheme, better to be an atheist than a hypocrite; better a club than a liberal church.

T. V. Moore: 'God will not despise the widow's mite, but he will despise the miser's mite.'

4. What is prophesied here? (1:11) \_\_\_\_\_

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A. W. Tozer: 'The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God.' He adds: 'Before the Christian Church goes into eclipse anywhere there must first be a corrupting of her simple basic theology. She simply gets a wrong answer to the question, "What is God like?" and goes on from there.'

5. Will God accept these offerings? (1:12-13) What is the attitude of the Israelites to the sacrifices? (1:13) \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you enjoy the faith?

In Bonhoeffer's terms, grace is free but it is not cheap.

6. What is Israel doing and what does God promise? (1:14) \_\_\_\_\_

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*What shall I offer to the Lord  
For all His benefits to me?  
How shall my soul, by grace restored,  
Give worthy thanks continually?*

*I take salvation's cup of bliss  
And with it call upon God's Name;  
Before His saints I pay my vow  
And here my gratitude proclaim (Psalm 116)*

### **Corrupt priests (Malachi 2:1-9)**

The priests in the Old Testament had two main tasks: to offer the sacrifices to God for the sins of Israel, and to teach the law of God to God's people. God had spoken to them earlier for the corrupt sacrifices that they had offered (1:6). Now he turns to them again (2:1).

1. Of what does God accuse the priests? (2:2) What would this mean for Israel and what is it saying to us? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is God's curse on these priests? (2:3) How is this appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_

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'I will rebuke your seed' means 'I will rebuke your harvests,' says E. B. Pusey. But 'seed' means their 'descendants'. The priests will not render others clean before God; they themselves will be rendered unclean.

3. Will the priesthood continue? (2:4; Jer.33:20-21) \_\_\_\_\_

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John Wesley, Thomas Scott, Thomas Chalmers, and Abraham Kuyper were not converted when they entered the ministry.

4. Was Levi faithful in the beginning? (2:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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The priests were to offer the Aaronic blessing (Num.6:23-27) but in Malachi's day God threatens to turn it into a curse. When the non-Christian prays 'Thy kingdom come', he is praying that Christ will come in power. Will that be a blessing to the unbeliever? Hardly!

5. What sort of messages were the priests preaching? (2:5-8) What happens when the

clergy do not know God's Word? (Hos.4:6) \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What did Levi achieve in his day through his teaching? (2:6) What about in Malachi's day? (2:9) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. How does God judge? (Lev.19:15; Deut.1:17) What happens when that is not followed? \_\_\_\_\_

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Ambrose was the bishop of Milan in the fourth century. In 389 there was a massacre by imperial troops at Thessalonica after a mob had killed the local army commandant. Some 7,000 died in the massacre, which had been ordered by the emperor Theodosius. Theodoret records that 'Crowds were mowed down like ears of corn in harvest time.' Ambrose told Theodosius that he had a zeal for the Faith, but also 'a natural temper'. For eight months Theodosius was excommunicated until he agreed to grant the suspension for thirty days of all sentences inflicting death or confiscation. When Theodosius died in 395, Ambrose declared: 'I really loved this man because he listened more willingly to criticism than to compliments.'

### **Profaning the covenant (Malachi 2:10-16)**

1. What three rhetorical questions does Malachi ask? (2:10) What does marriage breakdown imply regarding the covenant with God? \_\_\_\_\_

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Calvin thinks that the father is Abraham, but it is surely God. Malachi is not referring to the creation of the world, but the creation of the covenant people of God (Isa.43:1)

Charles Simeon: 'The test of a man's religion is not what he is abroad, but what he is at home.'

2. What has Judah done? (2:11-12; note Ex.34:12-16) \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezra describes the situation in Ezra 9:1-2.

3. How are the Judean husbands treating their wives? (2:13-16; see 1 Peter 3:7) What is this teaching us? \_\_\_\_\_

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Verse 16 refers to his covering his garment with violence. That is a Semitic image for marriage (Ruth 3:9). That is a proposal of marriage, from Ruth to Boaz. A man would cover his wife with a garment to signify protection and love. But in Malachi's

day it had become a garment of violence and rejection. The Israelite men were divorcing their wives to marry pagan women. God has made them one, either in terms of the marriage covenant of Genesis 2:24 (as Calvin thinks) or the covenant of Malachi 2:10 (as T. V. Moore thinks).

The ESV says that it is the man who hates and divorces, but the meaning would be the same.

4. What has God placed us in families? (2:15) What is this teaching us? \_\_\_\_\_

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Henry Venn (who died in 1797) told one of his grandsons: 'Remember, little John if anything could make heaven not heaven to me, it would be the not having you with me there.'

William Grimshaw only ever had two children. His daughter died at the age of twelve when at Wesley's Kingswood School in 1750. His son, John, was careless about spiritual matters but came to see his father as he lay dying in 1763. The father bluntly told the son that he (John) was not fit to die. This startled the son so much that he was quite upset. As a result, he sought after God and was soon converted. But he was to die himself just three years later, and as he was dying, he asked: 'What will my old father say when he sees I have got to heaven?'

*Happy the home where Jesus' Name*

*Is sweet to every ear;*

*Where children early lisp His fame,*

*And parents hold Him dear.*

...

*Lord, let us in our homes agree,*

*This blessèd peace to gain;*

*Unite our hearts in love to Thee,*

*And love to all will reign (Henry Ware).*

### **The coming Messenger (Malachi 2:17-3:5)**

Prophets in the Old Testament were involved in both forth-telling and fore-telling. Malachi tells us about his own day, and prophesies the coming of the Messenger of the covenant.

1. In what way was Judah sinning? (2:17; see Isa.5:20) \_\_\_\_\_

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Max Lucado was sitting in a plane next to a woman, and he asked her what was her hope of heaven. She was confident that she would get there. Her profession was: 'Well, I'm basically good. I don't smoke more than a pack a day. I exercise. I'm dependable at work and I made my boyfriend get tested for AIDS.' It is not just that people are not Christian, but that so many do not have the faintest idea what Christianity is saying.

When Rev. Bill Crews met the Dalai Lama, Crews called the Dalai Lama 'a good Christian' and the Dalai Lama called Crews 'a good Buddhist'.

2. Were the people in Malachi's day looking forward to the coming of the Lord?

(3:1) Were they prepared for His coming? Who would come first, and who would come next? How does Jesus explain this verse? (Matt.11:7-10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27-28; Hebrews 12:24 and Isaiah 40:3) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What two things will the second Messenger do to Judah? (3:2-4; see 1 Pet.4:17; Amos 5:18) \_\_\_\_\_

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The Messiah will be like a refiner’s fire. The metal is heated until it melts, then the impurities float to the top and are blown away. Or He is like a launderer’s soap or alkali that will purify and purge and refine. He will begin with the priests, the sons of Levi.

Jesus cleansed the temple not once but twice, at the beginning of His public ministry and again at the end (John 2:13-16; Matt.21:12-13).

Verse 4 does not refer to the eucharist, but to ourselves (Rom.12:1).

4. Whom will the Messenger judge? (3:5) Judah had asked: ‘Where is the God of justice?’ (2:17) What is the answer? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Will you rob God? (Malachi 3:6-12)**

1. How was the system of tithing meant to work? (Deut.14:28-29) What was actually happening? (Nehemiah 13:10-11) \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What can be said about God? (3:6-7; James 1:17) And Christ? (Heb.13:8) What lessons can we draw from this? \_\_\_\_\_

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As Augustus Toplady put it:

*Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things below nor above,  
Can make Him His purpose forgo,  
Or sever my soul from His love.*

3. How did Judah need to change? (3:7-8) \_\_\_\_\_

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In one sense, God owns everything in the universe, and He cannot be robbed (Ps.50:7-14).

John Bunyan:

*A man there was, tho' some did count him mad,  
The more he cast away, the more he had.*

4. What challenge does God issue? (3:10-12; also 2 Chron.31:2-6, 7-10; Prov.11:24) \_\_\_\_\_

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John Benton quotes the biographer of the Duke of Wellington who became all excited when he discovered some of the Duke's cheque stubs. This biographer commented: 'When I saw how he spent his money, I knew the man.'

5. What has the Old Testament teaching on tithing to say to us today? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Life revealed in words (Malachi 3:13-18)**

1. How does Jesus connect what we do to what we speak? (Matt.12:36-37) \_\_\_\_\_

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Thomas Watson: 'The tongue is the index of the heart.'

2. How has Judah been speaking of God? (3:13) Does Judah see this? \_\_\_\_\_

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Literally, it is 'strong words'.

3. What really drives Judah? (3:14-15) What do the people really want? \_\_\_\_\_

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Augustine: 'The good make use of this world in order to enjoy God, whereas the evil want to make use of God in order to enjoy the world'.

At the beginning of June 2007 the five top-selling non-fiction books in Melbourne were:

- (a) Christopher Hitchens' *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*;
- (b) Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*;
- (c) Raimond Gaita's *Romulus, My Father*;
- (d) Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*;
- (e) Michel Onfray's *Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*.

Three of these are militantly atheistic, and Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* is militantly New Age. Oprah Winfrey has endorsed this self-help book to end all self-help books. It challenges us: 'Here's the question I want you to consider - do you treat yourself the way that you want other people to treat you?' It is the ultimate in self-centredness. The book teaches that your thoughts are magnetic, and attract all the good and the bad that happens to you. If you get appendicitis, that is your fault, and if you win the lottery, that is to your credit.

4. What characterises the other group? (3:16) \_\_\_\_\_

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Thomas Watson: 'I believe that one main reason for the decay of the power of godliness is a lack of Christian conference.' There is a place for small talk, but these are not people obsessed with what is in fashion and what is not, or with the next eviction on *Big Brother*, or with the winner of *Australian Idol*.

5. Explain the two destinies set before the whole world in 3:16-18. \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Looking to the great and terrible day (Malachi 4:1-6)**

1. What is coming? (4:1-3; Matt.3:7-12) How is this day described? \_\_\_\_\_

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Calvin says that this refers to Christ's first coming, and so it does, but it seems more comprehensive than that.

For the 'sun of righteousness', note Charles Wesley:

*Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace!*

*Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!*

*Light and life to all He brings,*

*Risen with healing in His wings.*

Others understand it in a less personal way, as in Psalm 37:6.

2. Who will come first? (4:5) \_\_\_\_\_

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Note Malachi 3:1.

It is John the Baptist, but he is not literally Elijah returned to earth (John 1:19-21). The angel told Zechariah what his son John would do (Luke 1:16-17).

3. If John the Baptist is Elijah in this sense, who is Jesus? (Matt.11:10-15; 17:10-13)

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4. How ought we to respond to this? (4:4, 6) \_\_\_\_\_

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There is some debate here about what exactly verse 6 means. Joyce Baldwin says that it refers to social harmony as the fifth commandment is obeyed, people repent and home life is transformed. Keil and Delitzsch say that the fathers are men like Abraham and David.

5. How does the Old Testament finish? \_\_\_\_\_

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