

“Faithful God” (Malachi 2:17-3:6)

For the week of May 21, 2017

Background for Malachi 2:17-3:6

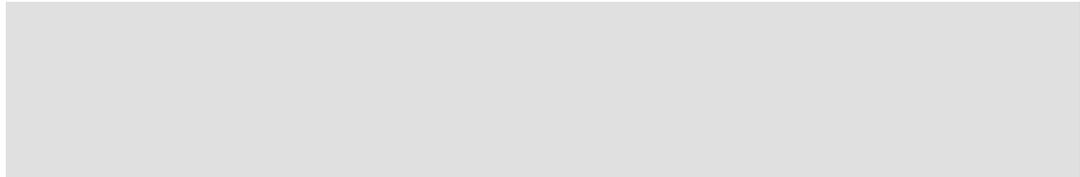
Two age-old questions are “Why do the wicked prosper?” and “Why do the righteous suffer?” It is tough when you have done right and you get penalized, while the guy who did wrong prospers. You pray but it doesn't turn out the way you had expected. You begin to ask, “If there is a God of justice in heaven, why doesn't He do something about all the injustice in the world?”

Many of the Jewish people in Malachi's day were struggling with this problem. They were under the thumb of the godless yet prosperous Medo-Persian Empire. Many of the Jews were disappointed with God because He had not done what they had hoped. So they grumbled. Some even went as far to doubt that a just God even exists. This passage in Malachi addresses these complaints.

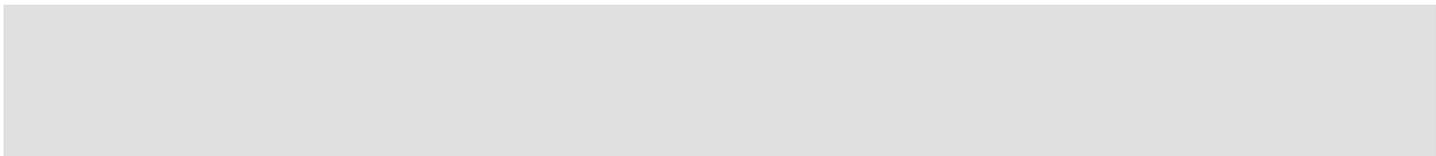
I. Be careful when you ask God for justice (2:17)

Again, the people of Israel are accusing God of not being just. This is serious. There are ways to humbly approach God and ask Him why He is acting in ways that we don't understand (remember our study of Habakkuk?), but that is not what is taking place here. These accusations attack the very character of God. How do the following passages describe the character of God?

- a) Hebrews 13:8:
- b) 1 John 4:8:
- c) Deuteronomy 32:4:
- d) Isaiah 6:3:
- e) Exodus 34:6-7:

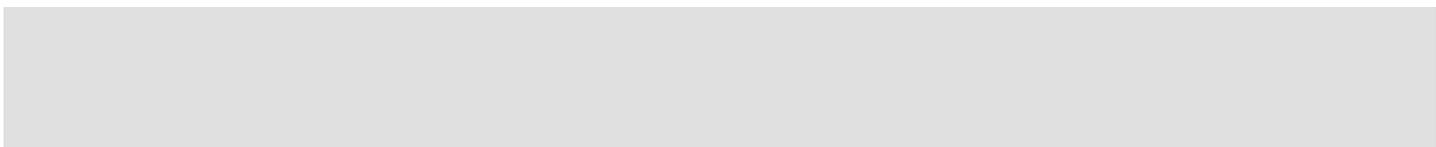


Malachi says, “You have wearied the Lord with your words.” Was God literally tired? Does God feel emotions? To help with your response here is what Christian author Wayne Grudem says: “God is unchangeable in His being, perfections, purposes and promises, yet God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.”

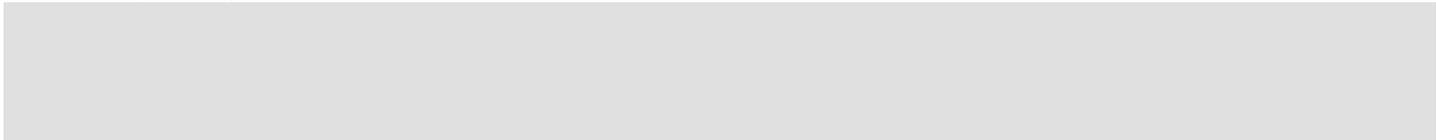


II. God's justice is satisfied in the coming of Jesus (3:1)

Two different messengers are mentioned in this verse. Who is the messenger that is referred to in the first part of 3:1? See Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 11:7-14.



The second messenger is our Lord and Savior Jesus. He is the One in whom God's people delight (who they were asking for) and He is coming, just like they asked. But He wouldn't come in the way they expected. Christ has that impact on us today. Describe how Jesus is doing something in your life right now that you weren't expecting.



a) 1st coming – purifying and cleansing (3:2-4)

Is this the way they wanted their God of justice to come? Why or why not?

“...who can stand when He appears?” There are only two responses to the coming of Jesus. What are they?

“...He is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap.” Refiner’s fire melted the ore down and separated the silver from the dross (waste) so that only the precious metal remained. Fuller’s soap was a strong lye soap after which clothes would be placed on rocks and beaten. Jesus will purify and cleanse us. It may not be pleasant now as God turns up the heat in our lives or scrubs filthy areas but it will benefit us in the future. What area of your life is God purifying and cleansing you? How can you praise God for the heat right now, not because it is pleasant, but because it is purposeful to make you more into the image of Christ?

b) 2nd coming – judgment (3:5)

Verse 5 refers to the future. The coming of the Messiah is dual-purposed, twofold and two distinct events separated by thousands of years. The passage identifies six categories of people He is coming against. List the six categories.

How would you answer a person who says, “My God is a God of love; He doesn’t judge anyone?”

III. God’s faithful love is satisfied in the coming of Jesus (3:6)

How does verse 6 bring you comfort? How does this verse address that God is a God of justice? How does this verse validate the character of God?

Pray

Pray and thank God that He is trustworthy, that He is love, that He is righteous, that He is holy, and that He is merciful.