

God Was Never Silent

Part 2

His Story from Malachi to Matthew

Important Words From Nehemiah

Jewish Life During the Times of The Gentiles

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ As we continue our study, we find ourselves toward the end of the Old Testament period (about 444 B.C. – approx. 14 years after Ezra's return) and we'll see the completion of the walls surrounding Jerusalem. All of this is for the purpose of fulfilling the promises that God made to the people of Israel
- ✓ Things could have been much simpler, but because they (the people of Israel) chose disobedience over obedience.....they suffered enormous consequences for those actions.
- ✓ It is by the grace of God that a way is provided for the people to return to their land and once again live obediently to the Mosaic Law, reject/turn from their idolatrous ways, and wait for the promised Messiah

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ The Lord will use a man named Nehemiah to not only lead a third return to Jerusalem, but to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem and teach the people to persevere and have faith in God
- ✓ Many commentators draw the conclusion that Nehemiah's great-grandparents were probably deported to Babylon during their siege of Jerusalem. It is believed that Nehemiah was born in Persia during the time of Zerubbabel.
- ✓ We are told that Nehemiah rises to a significant position within the Persian Empire and became the King's cupbearer
- ✓ The Book of Nehemiah is written (for the most part) in first person, and most conclude it was written by Nehemiah with an approximate date of 430 B.C.

Nehemiah examines the walls of Jerusalem

I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

(Nehemiah 2:11-16)

Nehemiah examines the walls of Jerusalem

Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: **Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire.** Come, let us **rebuild the wall of Jerusalem,** and we will no longer be in disgrace.” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?” I answered them by saying, “**The God of heaven will give us success**”. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it. (Nehemiah 2:17-20)

Opposition to the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.

(Nehemiah 4:1-5)

Nehemiah examines the walls of Jerusalem

“So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.
(Nehemiah 4:6-9)

Summary of the remainder of Nehemiah

- ✓ In order to complete the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem – half of the workers did the repair work while the other half defended themselves with spears, shields, bows and armor. (Nehemiah 4:10-22)
- ✓ During the course of rebuilding the walls, the opposition continued while life inside the walls also had its challenges. There was complaining, unfaithfulness, disobedience which required constant reminders from Nehemiah and the priests as to what the Lord expected of them. (Nehemiah 5-6)
- ✓ Eventually the walls were completed, and the people gathered together to listen to the words of Ezra and worship the Lord as they were instructed to do. (Nehemiah 7-8)
- ✓ Sins were confessed and the people agreed to living as God intended them to live. (Nehemiah 9-12)

Dedication of the walls of Jerusalem

“At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites, from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

(Nehemiah 12:27-30)

Preparations for Proper Worship

“At that time men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the contributions, firstfruits and tithes. From the fields around the towns they were to bring into the storerooms the portions required by the Law for the priests and the Levites, for Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites. They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did also the musicians and gatekeepers, according to the commands of David and his son Solomon. For long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. So in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, all Israel contributed the daily portions for the musicians and the gatekeepers. They also set aside the portion for the other Levites, and the Levites set aside the portion for the descendants of Aaron.

(Nehemiah 12:44-47)

Preparations for Proper Worship

So, I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits.

Remember me with favor, my God.

(Nehemiah 13:30-31)

Important Words From Malachi

*A Warning Against Willful Sin
&
Anticipating the Promised Messiah*

A prophecy: The word of
the Lord to Israel through
Malachi. (Malachi 1:1)

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ Malachi is considered to be the last Old Testament prophet in Israel
- ✓ Jewish tradition identifies him as a member of the Great Synagogue
 - ❖ The Great Synagogue (Great Assembly) was (according to Jewish tradition) established by Ezra and it was a council consisting of 120 members
 - ❖ They were instrumental in guiding the Jews concerning religious matters during the period between 450-200 B.C.
 - ❖ They were instrumental in collecting and preserving the Scriptures
- ✓ The timing of Malachi's prophecy was somewhere between 433-422 B.C.

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ By the time Malachi writes these words:
 - ❖ It had been nearly a century since Haggai and Zechariah were actively rebuking the Jews for their complacency and disobedience
 - ❖ Although the temple had been rebuilt, the sacrificial system was renewed, and the godly influence of Ezra and Nehemiah was still evident, the fact remains that the Jews once again became hard hearted toward God and many of them (both people and priest) departed from faithful worship
- ✓ Malachi's purpose was to condemn the abuses of unfaithfulness (both people and priest) and call the people to a life of repentance and faith.

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ In many ways the Jews (by the time Malachi writes these words) had sunk to the depths of sin even greater than those that brought about the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians and the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and deportation of the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon.
- ✓ The Jews (by the time Malachi writes these words), because of their disobedience, seemed to have lost all opportunity to receive God's favor.
- ✓ Although the Jews found themselves "out of favor" with God, Malachi speaks of a future time when they would once again repent (due in large part to the preaching of John the Baptist), the Messiah would be revealed, and God's covenant promises would be fulfilled.

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ In similar manner to the words of Jesus to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation (the last book of the New Testament) in which he rebukes the people for their sin and unfaithfulness, God rebukes His chosen ones for their sin and unfaithfulness in the last book of the Old Testament (Malachi)
- ✓ The love relationship that God seeks from His people is an internal one of faith that produces obedience and not an external one of works (ritual) alone if those works generate anything less than obedience and faith. In other words, God wanted their sacrifices to be genuine and not fake!
- ✓ Willful sin (choosing disobedience intentionally) is never the right path for a follower of God.

Willful Sin #1 – Denying God's Love

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.” Edom may say, “Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.” But this is what the Lord Almighty says: “They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord. You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!’ (Malachi 1:2-5)

Willful Sin #2 – Dishonoring God's Requirements

“A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’ “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ “By saying that the Lord’s table is contemptible. (Malachi 1:6-7)

But you have turned from the way and **by your teaching have caused many to stumble**; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the Lord Almighty. “So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.” (Malachi 2:8-9)

Willful Sin #3 – Despising God's Faithfulness

“Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another? Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 2:10-12)

Willful Sin #4 – Disdain for God's Righteousness

“You have wearied the Lord with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask. **By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”.**
(Malachi 2:17)

“So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 3:5)

Willful Sin #5 – Depriving God of His Blessings

I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. **Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,**” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you? “In tithes and offerings” You are under a curse—your whole nation—because **you are robbing me.** Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty (Malachi 3:6-12)

Willful Sin #6 – Distorting God's Grace

You have spoken arrogantly against me,” says the Lord. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’ “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? **But now we call the arrogant blessed**. Certainly, evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.’” (Malachi 3:13-15)

A Word to the Faithful Remnant

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence **concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name (Malachi 3:16)**

On the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. **And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.**

(Malachi 3:17)

A Word to the Faithful Remnant

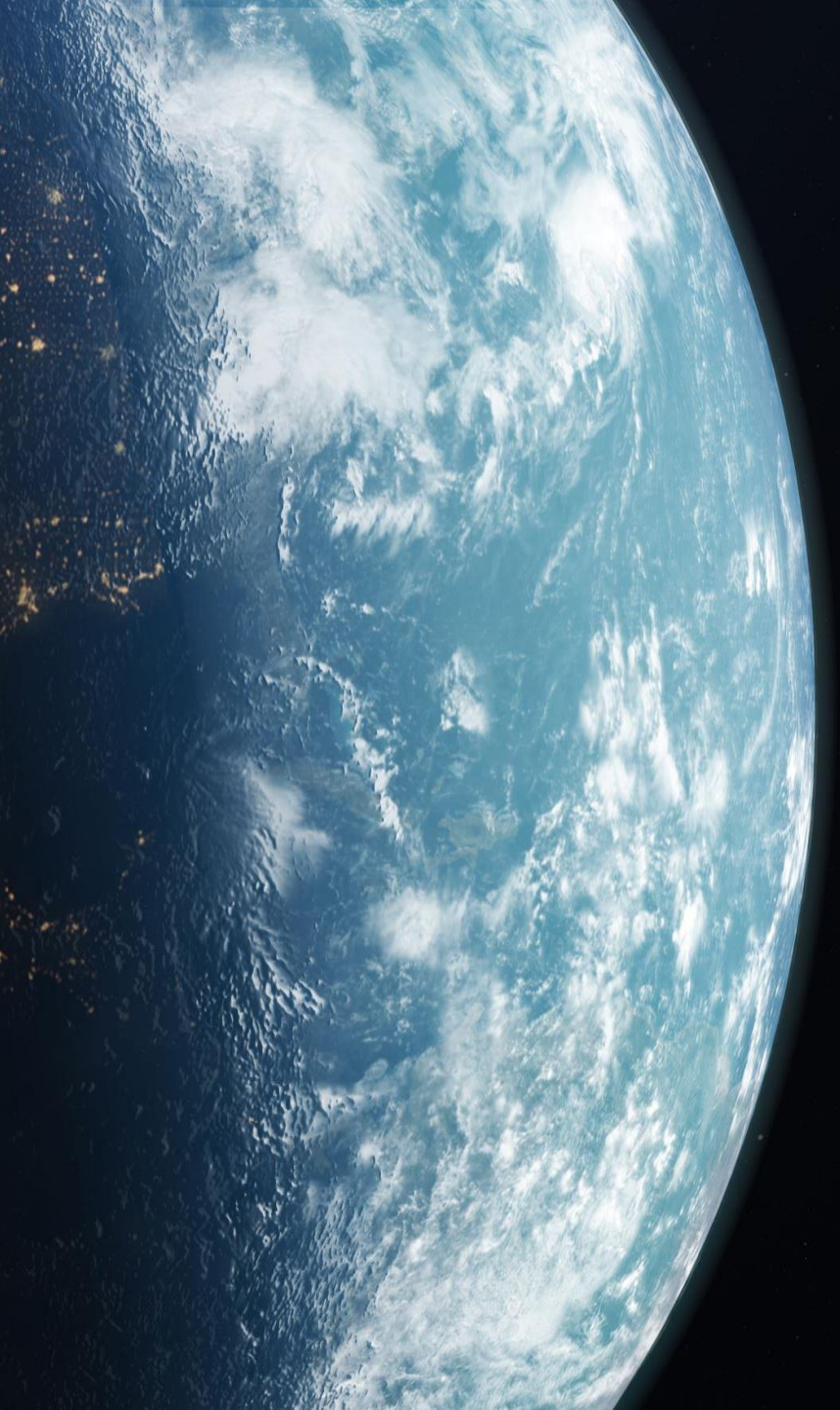
Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty (Malachi 4:1-3)

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. “See, **I will send the prophet Elijah** to you **before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes**. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction. (Malachi 4:4-5)



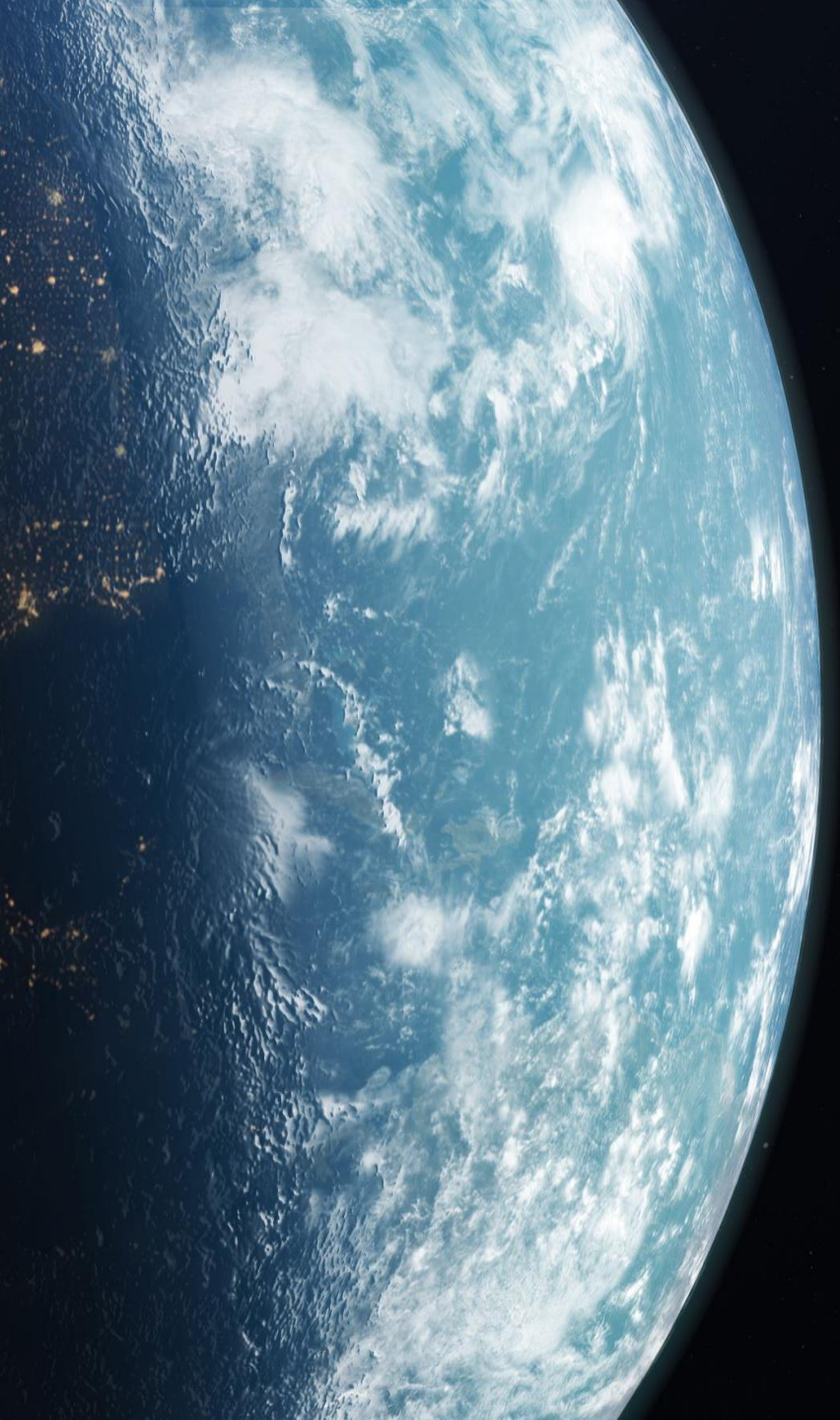
What would have been the Prophetic Expectations of that Day?

- Judaism (as it would come to be known) would have taught (based on the words of the prophets) that they would one day be delivered from their Gentile Rulers
- Their expectation was that a Messiah would come and establish the “eternal kingdom” of righteousness, justice and peace that was promised to David and his descendants



The Jews were living under Gentile rule and this would continue for centuries

- Babylonian Empire – starting in 586 B.C.
- Persian Empire – Starting in 539 B.C.
- Greek Empire – 331 B.C.
- Roman Empire – 63 B.C.

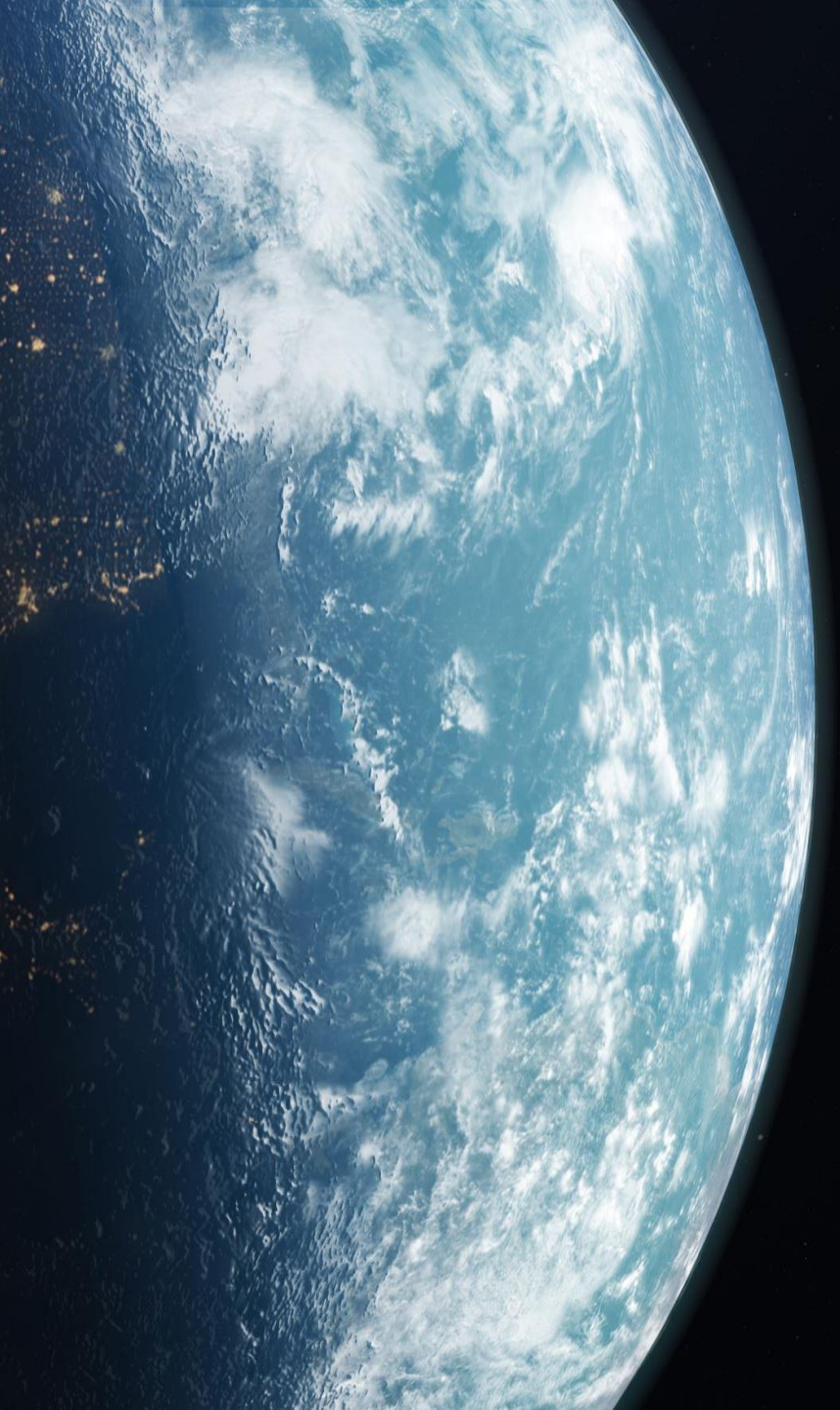


What were the Prophetic Expectations of that Day?

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

(Isaiah 9:6-7)



What were the Prophetic Expectations of that Day?

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will raise up for David a righteous
Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do
what is just and right in the land. In his days
Judah will be saved and Israel will live in
safety. This is the name by which he will be
called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior
(Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Closing Remarks

- ✓ Malachi emphasized the following:
 - ❖ The covenantal blessings of God required faithfulness and obedience
 - ❖ To neglect the Mosaic Law placed one in jeopardy of falling outside the covenantal promises
 - ❖ Be careful not to squander the spiritual heritage that was entrusted to you
- ✓ The timing of Malachi's prophecy was somewhere between 433-422 B.C. and the Old Testament closes out sometime during that period
- ✓ The Jews remain under Persian Rule until Darius III is beaten in battle by Alexander the Great (336-332 B.C.)
- ✓ We will pick up next week with the Greeks in control of the Jews and their land