

MALACHI: CALL TO OVERCOME SPIRITUAL APATHY
VII: Overcoming Arrogant Insubordination Against God
(Malachi 3:13-18)

I. Introduction

- A. About 100 years after the Hebrew exiles had returned from Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, their “initial enthusiasm had worn off,” with life and worship becoming mere routines. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the Book of Malachi: The Times,” p. 1325)
- B. God raised up Malachi to call the people to repentance from spiritual apathy, and Malachi 3:13-18 addressed Israel’s sin of arrogant insubordination against the Lord. We view this passage for our insight and application:

II. Overcoming Arrogant Insubordination Against God, Malachi 3:13-18.

- A. In Malachi 3:13-15, the prophet Malachi voiced God’s charge against the people of arrogant insubordination against Him, for they treated the Lord as One who was meant to meet their needs rather than submitting to Him to fulfill His calling for them in their lives:
 - 1. In spite of the fact that the people of Israel had robbed God in their tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:7-11), and in spite of the fact that the people had cheated Him by offering polluted offerings (Malachi 1:6-8), God charged that they had arrogantly said harsh things against Him, Malachi 3:13a NIV.
 - 2. When the people asked what harsh things they had said against the Lord, He replied that they had said that it was futile to serve Him since by carrying out His requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord, they had not experienced financial profit, Malachi 3:13b-14. In other words, if “material prosperity did not result, there was no point in serving the Lord,” Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Malachi 3:14.
 - 3. The people had thus treated God as a talisman, a kind of charm, believing that the Lord was supposed to submit to their wishes to meet their desires in blatant, arrogant insubordination against Him.
 - 4. Also, the people complained that sinners had not been punished, that the proud were blessed and evildoers prospered, and those who confronted God escaped judgment, v. 15; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1586.
- B. To demonstrate the contrasting correct attitude of respectful submission that God desired from Israel, at Malachi 3:16-17, the Lord revealed His welcome response and blessing for the remnant who revered Him:
 - 1. A godly remnant in Israel in Malachi’s day contrasted sharply with the majority who were arrogantly insubordinate toward God, for they revered Him and spoke often to each other about it, Malachi 3:16a.
 - 2. What those who revered the Lord said to each other is not stated, but “it probably concerned a renewed perspective of God’s faithfulness as was true in other similar struggles over these issues” as in Psalm 73 or Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 where the upright realize that they must live righteously since God in time will bring every deed of every person into divine judgment, Ibid.
 - 3. The conversations of the godly were so precious to the Lord that He hearkened unto their words, and a “scroll of remembrance” (NIV) was written in God’s heavenly presence as “a permanent remembrance of their faithful and reverent response” to be kept in heaven for those who revered the Lord and who thought honorably upon His name, Malachi 3:16b NIV; Ibid.
 - 4. God said that this remnant would be His in the day that He made up His treasured possessions, and He would spare them from punishment as a man spares his own son who serves him, Malachi 3:17 NIV.
- C. Thus, Israel would finally discern the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between him who served the Lord and him who did not, Malachi 3:18. Those who did not serve the Lord arrogantly and insubordinately performed external acts meant to elicit from God what they wanted for themselves with no regard for God’s sovereignty over them where the godly revered God for Who He was and humbly served Him and expressed gratefulness for His goodness while they waited upon Him to administer justice for them.
- D. “Some of the people who made the complaint (3:14) were guilty of the myopic legalism that eventually led to Jewish pharisaism in the first century A. D. This legalism concentrated on performing certain rigorous activities and not doing other things as the means of vindicating themselves before God. But they actually stifled the full expression of inner righteousness required by God (Matt. 5:20-48; 23:1-36),” Ibid.

Lesson: Many in Israel proudly viewed God as their servant Who was to meet their wishes where a godly remnant revered Him, humbly serving Him and speaking to each other about it. God prized this remnant and would make them His prized possessions in the Kingdom that Israel might discern who pleased Him and who did not.

Application: May we walk humbly before God and respectfully serve Him to be His prized possessions in eternity.