

READ Malachi 3:6-12

What – Malachi wrote his prophecy for several reasons. After the exile, when the new Persian rulers allowed the Jews to return from captivity in Babylon, the Jews found themselves facing many of the same problems that had initially caused their exile. They were highly motivated at first, but quickly fell into their old habits of disobeying God and neglecting their spiritual life. God reminded them in several books that take place after the exile (Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah) that they must return to Him or the same fate would befall them again. We know from history that they do not receive God's message, and there are 400 years of silence that end with the announcement of Jesus' impending birth. That does not mean, however, that we can not learn from their mistakes. One of the areas that the Jews struggled with was offering. God reminded the Jews that their giving was tied to their faith. They wanted to return to God in speech, but their actions were not following suit. God says that if He was blessing them, but they refused to see it, they were robbing Him. He challenges the Jew's, and us in the process, to test Him in this area and see if we can out give Him. Obviously, we cannot out give God, and He reminds us of just how well we could have it if we align our wallets with our faith.

Why – This scripture is as important to us as it was to the Jews, and for the same reason. Very few things in our modern culture stand between us and God like our money and possessions. One of our greatest heresies today is the health and wealth gospel. These preachers claim that God's purpose is your literal financial prosperity. I do believe that God will bless those who give, but your prosperity is not His purpose. Furthering His kingdom is His purpose. So long as your wealth is going to that end, He will bless it. The problem, as laid out in Malachi, is our perspective. Is our perspective and priority with our wealth to give God glory? That is what God meant when He said, "You are robbing me." Our purpose, in all we do, should be to give God glory. We often trust Him with one part of our life and not with another. This terrible mistake was made by the Jews and is being repeated by us on a mindboggling scale. How can we not trust God with our money? After all, He created the universe, saved us on the cross and continues to act in our lives. Our money should be easy for Him to manage. Worse yet is the result of our financial self service. Our lack of faith in this area acts like a cancer and usually, if left unchecked, will drag our whole faith into the tank. It did for the Jews.

WOW – God started out this section with the statement, "I the Lord do not change, so you have not been destroyed". This amazing statement is meant to clue us in on several important factors. God is a God of grace. Why does this matter? It matters because it is not too late to change. God is always waiting for us to return to Him. His greatest joy comes from blessing us, but He cannot bless what does not coincide with His way. Obedience and blessing always go together, not because God is random or mean, but because He is Holy, because He made us, and because He knows what is best. Again, faith is at the core of our giving and God's blessing. It must be that way. It matters so much to God, that he says an amazing thing in verse 10. He tells us to "test Him". This is the only place in scripture where God says this. It is so important to Him that we understand that He is willing to put up with our lack of faith to prove Himself to us. We are not worthy of His patience, but He knows how difficult the lure of wealth is (It was,

after all, Lucifer's wealth of beauty that caused him to fall – see Ezekiel 28). Because of this His promises are specific, not generic. He told the Jews that He would bless their vines and their crops. Not just increase their wealth in general, but specifically protect the very things they needed most for survival. It's amazing that these are the same items they had put their faith in rather than God. Finally, He reminds us that providing for ourselves should not be our final purpose. Verse 12 said that all the nations would take note of the blessings God will provide. Your obedience will lead to others realizing the goodness of God. Is God using you in that way? Remember what Malachi reminded the Jews. He wants to!