

Bible Study # 74
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Minor Prophets Series—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

We are finishing up our Minor Prophets series this evening—particularly the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—the final portion of the Minor Prophets.

The first grouping of prophets who wrote the Minor Prophets all wrote in the same general time period. They wrote at a time prior to Israel's original captivity. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah—all of those—wrote within the same scope of years. They wrote at a time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel. Those, together with the prophet Isaiah, all prophesied at the same general time period. There was a focus there at the time prior to the captivity of Northern Israel.

Nahum prophesied a little bit later. He prophesied following the captivity of Northern Israel but prior to the rise of Babylon. Nahum prophesied the destruction and judgment that was going to come upon Assyria and the rise of Babylon.

Habakkuk and Zephaniah came down a little closer to the time of the Babylonian captivity and the circumstance prior to Nebuchadnezzar's taking the Jews to Babylon. They both prophesied in that general time period. They prophesied a little bit later than Nahum and prior to the time of the exile.

We have, beginning in 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem and subsequent reinvasion in 596 B.C. Finally, in 587 B.C., he came in, burned the temple, destroyed the city and took the Jews into captivity to Babylon. They were there for decades.

Then we come to a situation as recorded in the book of Daniel. The city of Babylon in 539 B.C. fell to the Medes and the Persians, almost 70 years after Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Jerusalem (Daniel 5:30-31). This was a period of 50 years after the final destruction of Jerusalem. Now 50 years is a long time. Fifty years ago would take us back prior to the beginning of the American involvement in World War II. A lot of things have happened since then. Some of you remember that event. But probably most sitting here would not remember that event at all. This is what we are looking at because as we come

down about 50 years after the final destruction of Jerusalem, Babylon fell.

The Medes and Persians came in. A short time after, a decree was issued that allowed the return of the Jews from Babylon. They returned under Zerubbabel who was appointed governor by the Persians. Joshua was the high priest. He was the grandson of the previous high priest in Jerusalem prior to the exile. Zerubbabel and Joshua led a remnant out of Babylon back to Jerusalem, and they came back for the purpose of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple. They had permission from the Persian governor to do that. They came back and problems arose.

You can read the account in Ezra 4:1-3 and you will see what happened. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, first came in and proposed that the Samaritans work with the Jews to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel said, 'They don't have anything to do with this. This doesn't pertain to them; these people are idolaters. We are not going to have them involved in doing the work of God.'

Verses 5-7, when Sanballat and the Samaritans could not get control of the situation by sort of "worming" their way on the inside, they then hired counselors and went before Artaxerxes. "Counselors" is equivalent of our word "lawyers." They hired individuals proficient in the law of the Medes and the Persians who were capable of representing them at the court of the king. They came before the Persian king with all sorts of accusations. It details those accusations in Ezra 4.

You might want to read verse 12 because it shows how you can make something that is harmless sound bad. 'You know, those Jews are building up the walls of that rebellious city and they are building up the foundations of it.' Boy, this sounds bad. That was what they came back for—that should have been no mystery. They were given permission to come back and rebuild the city. How are you going to rebuild the city if you don't rebuild the foundation? They said, 'They are rebuilding the walls and building up the foundations of that rebellious city.'—A little bit of innuendo and accusation to make that sound bad.

Verse 13, they went on to say, 'The only reason we are writing this to you, king, is we really are concerned that you won't get your full payment of taxes. We figure these people are going to rebuild the city and quit paying their taxes. You won't be getting all the money that's due you. And since we are such loyal, patriotic citizens,

we do not want to see a terrible thing like that happen.' Now, don't you know that was really their motive! Isn't it something how people can have all these accusations and impute motives? How did they know that the Jews were going to quit paying taxes when they rebuilt the wall? They didn't know that; it was an accusation.

Verses 23-24, they got an order by the court of the Persian king that ordered work on the city and the temple to cease and desist. He sent down a squad of soldiers and posted the notice that until further notice from the Persians, there was to be no further work. They wanted things stopped. This set the stage for the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are called "post-exilic" prophets. That is a fancy way of saying that they wrote their books after the Jews returned from exile to Babylon. They are the last three books of prophecy written for the Old Testament.

I want to read something that I think is a rather remarkable admission. I am reading this from the *Soncino Commentary*—their introduction to the book of Haggai. It is a Jewish commentary. It represents the traditional Jewish understanding of the books of the Old Testament.

"Both Haggai and Zechariah are mentioned in Ezra 5 and 6 as the prime movers in the restoration of the temple. According to Talmudic tradition [The Talmud is a record of Jewish thought.], Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the founders of the great synagogue. Haggai is quoted in the Talmud in various places. These three [Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi] were the last of the prophets. The Talmud declares that with the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel."

I think that is a rather remarkable admission. And the truth is, it did not reappear again in terms of any written record of God's work until the time of John the Baptist. There was not a direct succession of prophets after that. The Jews themselves recognized in their tradition, after these men died, that was the end of it. That's why there were no other books accepted into the canon because they recognized that God simply no longer worked through them the way He had. There was no longer a succession of prophets. Even though there were many other books written, there were no books after Malachi that was accepted into the canon because even the rabbis understood that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel and the canon was sealed up.

God raised up John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah after an interim of about 400 years—the time between the testaments. I think it is an interesting statement. It's a remarkable admission that they would acknowledge. But, nevertheless, they do.

This evening we are taking note of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. They wrote in the context of the work on the temple having been shut down for over 50 years. When the Persian soldiers came in and served the injunction from the Persian king, that enjoined work on the temple and the city work stopped. People got sidetracked on various other things. They began to get absorbed in building up their own homes and rebuilding their own businesses. Here were people who had left Babylon and had come back to Judea because their heart was in doing the work of God. They got there and trials, obstacles and problems arose. They became discouraged and got sidetracked. They lost the original commitment that they had.

We pick up the story in **Haggai**.

Haggai 1:1, "In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, ..." God raised up Haggai, which we would date approximately 520 B.C. God's word came by Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious leaders of the Jews.

Verse 2, "'Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.''" People had excuses as to why it wasn't time to rebuild the temple. They had gotten sidetracked and had just never gotten around to really getting back to it.

Verses 3-6, "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?' Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.'"

Verses 8-10, "'Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,' says the Lord. 'You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?' says the Lord of hosts. 'Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you

runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.”

The point was the people had their priorities wrong. They were planning on getting around and returning to the work of God, but they were going to do it when it was convenient. They said, ‘Well, you know, we are going to get back to doing it again, but things are “tight” right now and we can’t really afford to do God’s work. But once we get a “handle” and get on top of things, we will get back to it.’ Haggai said ‘You have it backwards. You know, the harder you struggle to get ahead, the further behind you’ve gotten.’

Verse 6 gives a pretty good description of inflation. It described them as earning money to be put in bags with holes in them. Have you ever felt like you were putting your money in a bag and it was going through holes in the bottom? It’s like pouring water through a sieve—it just rolls out. They kept thinking, ‘When I get enough collected in here, I’ll get back to doing what I need to do.’ Well, here is what Haggai told them. He said, ‘You are never going to get ahead this way.’

From Genesis to Revelation, one of the most important principles that always comes out of the Bible is nobody ever really gets ahead by putting God last. It’s a very basic principle; you simply don’t get ahead by putting God last. The Jews, here, needed to understand that principle.

There’s much in the book of Haggai that relates to the work of God. The work of God in the days of Haggai and Zechariah had to do with rebuilding a literal temple—the second temple. It was called Zerubbabel’s temple. It was the temple to which Jesus Christ came when He came to earth. There are many principles that apply very directly to the work of God. There are principles that can be derived as a message for us. **Haggai’s message is not only for us at this point in time right now, but also a message for God’s people through the centuries in terms of what should be our priorities and in terms of finishing the job God has set before us.**

This was a book that many of us (Mr. Herbert Armstrong included) gave very special note to back during the period of 1979, ’80, ’81 and even back during the 70s prior to that. It seemed that there were very many parallels that we encountered in terms of some of the things that are mentioned.

Haggai 2:1, he continues, “In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, ...” —On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Verses 2-3, “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: “Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?”” The second temple was not nearly as magnificent and impressive as the temple that Solomon built.

Verses 6-9, God goes on to say, “For thus says the Lord of hosts: “Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [a reference to Jesus Christ], and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the Lord of hosts. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord of hosts. “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the Lord of Hosts. “And in this place I will give peace,” says the Lord of hosts.”

People were making a comparison that the temple of Zerubbabel was not nearly as impressive as the temple of Solomon. Haggai said God’s message is, ‘Look, the thing that really is significant is not the silver and the gold—all that belongs to Me anyway—but the Desire of All Nations was going to come and the glory of the latter house was going to be greater than the former.’ In other words, Jesus Christ the Messiah was going to come during the period when the second temple was standing. He would come into the second temple, and as God in the flesh, He certainly brought with Him greater glory than all of the things with which Solomon filled the first temple.

Haggai 1:14, we find as a result of Haggai’s message, “So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God...”

God stirred up the Jews and stirred up their leadership to get back to doing the work. He stirred them up to get their priorities straight and not to wait until it was comfortable to do the work. If you wait until you get ahead, it’s convenient and you have time, you will never get around to it. It’s sort of like waiting until you have time to pray. You notice how you somehow don’t get around to it? You get up and you don’t concentrate on it at the beginning. You think, ‘Well, I’m going to wait until I really have a

convenient time.’ Somehow, things get filled up and it gets hard to find that time. Or you get your check and you think, ‘Well, when I get everything else caught up and finally situated, I am going to start tithing and being diligent with God.’ If you leave God for last, you never find a way to fit Him in. The only place God will fit in is the first place. When God comes in first, He makes every thing else fit. When we leave God out, somehow, there is never enough left for God. So, that’s an important principle.

The people were stirred up to return and to finish the work of God. A lesson was to be learned.

Haggai 2:11-12, “‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, ‘If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?’” Then the priests answered and said, ‘No.’”

If somebody brought in a sacrifice offering, the priests were carrying it in a garment and if somehow the edge of the garment touched something else, was holiness transmitted to what they touched?

Verses 13-14, “And Haggai said, ‘If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?’ So the priests answered and said, ‘It shall be unclean.’ Then Haggai answered and said [here’s the point], ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”

It was a matter of priorities. Could the people live their lives in any old sinful way, and did the fact that they were coming into contact with the work of God (building the temple and doing God’s work) transmit holiness to them and make it okay regardless of what they were doing?

It’s sort of the premise that you can go out and live like the devil the rest of the week, warm a seat in church on Saturday and somehow be better off for it. Some people have the idea that it doesn’t matter what you do as long as you show up at church. Somehow, it’s like some of God sort of rubs off on you and it’s okay. Well, he lies, steals, fornicates, gets drunk and does this “stuff” all week, but he goes to confession every Sunday morning. He’s a good fellow. It does not work that way.

The point God was making through Haggai was that the people were not to operate under the illusion that they could live any way they wanted to live. Just because they were involved in doing God’s work of building the temple and doing something holy, that did not make up for the

other “stuff” they weren’t doing. It didn’t work that way. Holiness didn’t transmit itself to everything in which it came into contact, but uncleanness did. If they came in and they were unclean, then everything they touched was unclean. The point is that if we are going to do the work of God, we are to be clean.

It ties in with the admonition of one of the other prophets.

Isaiah 52:11, “...be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.”

We can’t think that our involvement in doing the work makes us holy. There have been people who have operated that way in the local Church. They have sort of equated their spirituality with the fact of doing certain works of service. They were spending all the time serving and helping in this or that way and used that as though it made up for a lack of personal prayer, Bible study and personal Christianity in their own lives. Well, it doesn’t work that way. It’s not that the good of what we are doing sort of rubs off and rubs out everything else.

If we are not right and our heart’s not right, it has a contaminating effect. If we are unclean spiritually, then that has a contaminating effect on our service. When there is corruption that exists, just because it exists within the scope of God’s people, God’s Church or God’s work, it doesn’t excuse it nor can you make up for it. In fact, it has a contaminating effect. That’s the point that Haggai brought out here. If the people were really going to do God’s work and have God’s blessing, then they needed to straighten up.

Haggai 2:14, “Then Haggai answered and said, ‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’” Our sacrifice, our service, is unclean if our attitude and our conduct is not what it ought to be. So, first, God wants *us* more than He wants just simply our money, our time or something we can do. God doesn’t need the things that we can do. We need God. **God can take us and use us if we yield to Him first and foremost. We have that emphasis here in the book of Haggai.**

As we come to the book of Zechariah, we find that he was contemporary with Haggai. In fact, according to Zechariah 1:1, his prophecy begins two months after Haggai begins his prophecy. Zechariah covers a little broader scope of things. Haggai dealt primarily with the work of God and there certainly are prophetic implications for the end time work of God. You can go through

Haggai and notice there are a number of references that tie in clearly to a time beyond simply the rebuilding of the second temple. There are references that deal with the time of the Messiah's coming and events that are connected in that way. Haggai 2:21-22 talks about a time when God shakes the heavens and the earth, overthrows the thrones of kingdoms and does these things, so there certainly are very direct prophetic implications of the message of Haggai applying to the work of God.

But while Zechariah has implications of that, it is a more general prophecy. **It deals with more prophetic subjects.** It is a longer book. **Zechariah opens up with ten visions that are described in the first six chapters.** We want to briefly note these ten visions. In Zechariah, we will see a little bit of what they mean and some things that very directly tie in to the time where we are today. Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai.

Zechariah 1:8, the **first vision** that Zechariah sees, "I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were [three other] horses: red, sorrel, and white."

Zechariah asked the same question you and I would have asked.

Verses 9-12, "Then I said, 'My Lord, what are these?' So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, 'These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.' So they answered the Angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.' Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, 'O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?'"

By that time, it had been a period of almost 70 years since destruction had come there. We have this vision of these four individuals.

Hold your place and go back to Revelation 7. You will find four horsemen are mentioned back there in Revelation 6.

Revelation 7:1-2, "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels

to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea..." These four angelic beings that are described here tie in with Zechariah.

We find the first vision Zechariah had in chapter 1. When we go to Zechariah 6, he ends up with pretty much the same thing.

Zechariah 6:1-3, "Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled [grizzle or speckled] horses—strong steeds."

Verse 5, "And the angel answered and said to me, 'These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.'"

It talks about the various directions.

Verse 6, "The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." We have described here four angelic creatures, four angelic beings, which are sent out into the four quarters of the earth, so to speak. They go forth from God's throne and go back and report to Him.

Zechariah's set of ten visions opens with something that is related to that and closes with something that is related to that. We see a reference back in Revelation 7:1 to these four angels standing on the four quarters of the earth. Zechariah opens up with a vision. There is quite a bit of correlation between some of Zechariah and some of Revelation. We will go into greater detail in some of that in a later Bible study when we cover the book of Revelation.

The question comes up as to how much longer God's punishment upon Judah will last.

Zechariah 1:17, the answer is given, "..."The Lord will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem."""

Verse 18, the **second vision** begins, "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns." Horns generally symbolize kings or kingdoms. Zechariah wondered what these were.

Verse 19, "And I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these?' So he answered me, 'These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.'" These specific four are not cataloged as to what they were, but the Jews have traditionally reckoned them as the four kingdoms that destroyed and scattered Israel and Judah: Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Syrians. Those were the empires or kingdoms

that warred against and scattered either Israel or Judah.

Verses 20-21, the **third vision** is, “Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen [KJV, “carpenters”]. And I said, ‘What are these coming to do?’ So he said, ‘These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.’”

These represent those whom God used to restore Judah. There are implications of end-time fulfillment, some of which may not be entirely clear to us because we are not at that particular point. The Jews have traditionally applied the four horns to the four kingdoms that made war against Israel and Judah. And they have often tied in the four carpenters with the Maccabees who led the Macadaean revolt and restored independence by driving out the Syrians who were the successors of the other kingdoms that had warred against Judah. That may have historical application, but I am not persuaded that’s the only application. There is perhaps some end-time fulfillment in it, but there is at least a certain amount of historical correlation of kingdoms that scattered their power and individuals that God used to bring about a restoration.

Zechariah 2:1-2, the **fourth vision** begins, “Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.’”

You can compare that with Revelation 11 and you will see that there is a distinct connection.

Revelation 11:1, “Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.’”

Then it discusses the two witnesses.

Verses 3-4, “‘And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands standing before the God of the earth.’”

Zechariah 2:2, “So I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.’”

You can also compare that with Ezekiel 9 where God describes setting a mark as he passed through the city.

Ezekiel 9:4, “...‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a

mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’”

Zechariah 2:4-5, “...‘Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,’ says the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’” Part of the message here is descriptive of the Millennium.

Verse 8, “For thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.’” God says, ‘I will deal with that.’

Verse 9, “‘For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.’”

Zechariah 3:1, the **fifth vision** is a vision of Joshua the high priest, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.”

Verse 3, “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.”

He is described as being cleaned up.

Verses 4-5, “Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him He said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.’ And I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head.’ So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.”

He was representative of the priesthood. He was the religious leader and high priest of the Jews that had been regathered. There is a vision concerning his being cleaned up, forgiven and made clean.

Zechariah 4:2-3, the **sixth vision** is given, “And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lamp stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.’”

Verse 11, “Then I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees, one at the right of the lamp stand and the other at its left?’”

Verse 14, “So he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.’”

If you tie that in with Revelation 11, you find a picture, a prophetic description which ties in with the two witnesses. Zerubbabel, the governor

of Judah, together with Joshua, the high priest, represented the leadership of God's people at that time. They are used as types of the two witnesses that God will use at the end time. When you go through Zechariah 3 and 4, this is made plain. The point is God works through human instruments.

There are certainly parallels to the way in which God has worked through His servants at one time in history and the way He works through servants at other times. Many of God's servants that He has used in His work in times past, in the things that He has done and the way that God has used them, have served as a type or as a representative of something that God is going to do yet future, particularly at the time of the end.

The reference in verse 9 was a message to Zerubbabel, the governor, who God had used to begin His work of rebuilding the temple. God would use him to finish the job that God had used him to start. Certainly, others came along and continued the work of God, but Zerubbabel was used to finish what he had been used to start.

That principle was a parallel that many of us focused on (and Mr. Herbert Armstrong himself focused on) back at a period in the aftermath of Mr. Herbert Armstrong's heart attack in 1977 and his subsequent restored involvement in the work in the spring of '78. Much of the 70s were in many ways very lean years. Certainly, God used him to finish up the phase of His work that He had used him to begin. That doesn't mean that one particular servant of God lasts forever, but certainly there are parallels. At that particular point in time, Mr. Armstrong said, 'I know how long I will live. I will live as long as God wants me to live and as long as the job that God wants me to do is still there.' That's the case with all of God's servants down through time. God has a particular phase of His work that various individuals may have been used by Him to do.

Here was an encouragement to Zerubbabel to go ahead and finish up the temple and to do the things that God was inspiring Haggai and Zechariah to tell him. God would use him to finish what he had been used to start—that particular phase of God's work. These two leaders of God's work at this particular point in time (the two anointed ones in Zechariah 4:14) are parallels with the two witnesses that are mentioned in Revelation 11.

Zechariah 5:1-2, the **seventh vision** is given, "Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, 'What do you see?' So I answered, 'I see a flying scroll. Its

length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.'" Here is a scroll floating in the air. Its length is about 30 feet and width about 15 feet.

Verse 3, "Then he said to me, 'This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: "Every thief shall be expelled," according to what is on this side of the scroll; and "Every perjurer shall be expelled," according to what is on that side of it.'"

It is a curse that goes out. The scroll is symbolic of containing this curse that God sends on those who have dealt treacherously with lying and stealing. It has to do with an end-time curse that is going to come about. Actually, it is the end-time curse that is going to come upon Babylon the Great.

Verses 4-5, "'I will send out the curse,' says the Lord of hosts; 'It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones.' Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, 'Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.'"

Verse 6, the **eighth vision** is, "So I asked, 'What is it [What does it symbolize?]' And he said, 'It is a basket [KJV, "ephah"] that is going forth.' He also said, 'This is their resemblance throughout the earth...'" This was the symbol of the sinners mentioned above who had been involved in lying and stealing. It was something that had economic implications because the symbol is a vessel, an ephah-like vessel, which is a large vessel that would hold about eight gallons. This big vessel that was used to hold or collect grain was a symbol of international commerce. It was a vessel by which grain was traded back and forth. We are told here that there's a curse that goes forth for those involved in lying and stealing.

We are told in the next vision this great eight-gallon measure of grain that was symbolic of international commerce and trade was symbolic of the sinners mentioned above. In other words, those who were involved in lying and stealing and, verse 6, "this is their resemblance throughout the earth."

In Amos 8:5, we read of those who 'make the ephah small and the shekel great'—in other words, economic manipulation, selling less and less for more and more.

We are dealing, right now, with some of the implications of that. We are on the brink of seeing some major financial scandals (that are worldwide in their implications) of banks and trading companies and all sorts of things. I don't

think it is going to unravel in terms of people really realizing where the “buck stops” until it gets to the end.

You read in Revelation 18 of Babylon the Great, the great end-time economic combination. Babylon is an economic combine as well as a religious, military and political combine. The economic implications are emphasized. All the merchants weep and lament or mourn (Revelation 18:11) because of this tremendous commercial endeavor. Even the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17; 14:11) has economic implications and is tied in with participating in economic activity.

Here is an indictment of those who have manipulated through lying, stealing and manipulating the world’s economy. That ties in with Babylon the Great from the economic standpoint, and there is a curse that is going to come forth. The curse is the destruction of Babylon the Great. If you read Zechariah 5 and then read Revelation 18, it sort of ties in.

Revelation 18:16-18, “and saying, “Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.” And every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What is like this great city?”” Everything has gone up in smoke.

Here is the curse that goes forth, and it ties in with this symbol of economic activity.

Zechariah 5:6-7, we are told, “...‘This is their resemblance [of their iniquity] throughout all the earth: here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket’...” They had this vessel that was the symbol of economic activity (this eighth vision), but when he lifted up the weight, instead of it being filled with grain, what’s inside? –A woman. And the woman is the personification of lawlessness (wickedness).

Verse 8, “then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.”

Verse 9, the **ninth vision** is the woman being transported back—removed from Palestine to Shinar—to the bottomless pit. The woman was lifted up in this vessel and transported.

Verses 10-11, “...‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket [ephah, the symbol of such sinners and their guilt] will be set there on its

base.’” The woman who’s actually inside (at the heart and core) you read about in Revelation 17.

Revelation 17:5, “...MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

In Revelation 18, you read about some of the same things, but you read it from a different slant. The emphasis in Revelation 18 is on the economic aspect. Revelation 17 deals more with the religious and, to an extent, military and political aspects. But you see it is one big new world order (to coin a phrase). The phrase is not original on my part, but one that is being handed about. I think some are going to find that this new world order is not exactly what they had in mind. Zechariah described it a long time ago.

Zechariah 6:1, finally, the **tenth vision** is, “Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze.” This is a tie-in with the first vision. It sort of ends up where we started.

Verses 2-5, “With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ And the angel answered and said to me, ‘These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.’” It describes that.

Verse 12-13, “Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man [Christ] whose name is the BRANCH [In my Bible that’s all capitalized and probably is in yours, too.!] From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord; yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.’”” He’s talking about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Coming down a little further, Zechariah 8 describes a little bit of insight into Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Zechariah 8:3-6, “Thus says the Lord: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of hosts, the Holy Mountain.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in

his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” Thus says the Lord of hosts: “If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?” says the Lord of hosts.”

God says that time is going to come, the time of restoration (Acts 3:21).

Jerusalem is not yet a place that’s safe for little children to be out playing and for old men and women to be able to walk down the street. You have terrorism going on. Certainly, this is descriptive of no city I know. Now, you’d better be off the streets or you would get run over, knocked in the head, mugged or something.

It’s descriptive of what it’s going to be like. Streets are going to be a safe place. Children are going to be able to play; elderly people will be able to walk not having to fear being molested, attacked, robbed or in any way dealt with in that way.

Verses 7-8, God talks about regathering His people.

Verse 13, ““And it shall come to pass that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel [there is a distinction], so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong.””

Verse 23, ““Thus says the Lord of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”” People are going to want to learn God’s truth. They are not going to be prejudiced against the Jews or anybody else at that time. In fact, they are going to want to learn God’s ways and will be seeking out God’s people.

Zechariah 9:9, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” We find the fulfillment of this prophecy back in the New Testament. Matthew 21:4-11 is Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It talks about God saving His people.

Zechariah 10:3, “My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the Lord of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle.”

Verse 6, “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They

shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them.”” Again, there is the distinction between Israel and Judah.

Verses 9-10, “I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember Me in far countries; they shall live, together with their children, and they shall return. I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, until no more room is found for them.”

Zechariah 11:7 is a description of two staffs that are called Beauty and Bands, “So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds [KJV, “Bands”]; and I fed the flock.”

These are symbolic references with what God is going to do. The reference has to do with the covenant that God has made. The staff that is called “Bands” (or Union) had to do with covenants that God had made and God’s working with His people. We find the reference having to do with shepherds. “I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staffs: the one called Beauty, and the other called Bonds [or Bands], and I fed the flock.”

Verses 10-13, “And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. Then I said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.”

This first staff has to do with Jesus Christ and His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The second one, verse 14, has to do with the national covenant that God made with Israel and Judah and breaking the band of brotherhood between Judah and Israel. One has to do with the spiritual aspect and the other with the physical aspect of God’s covenant with His people. It has to do with the sacrifice of the Messiah, His betrayal and then also the captivity of Israel and Judah.

As we come down into chapter 12, we get into some things that really tie in with the headlines in today’s newspapers.

Zechariah 12:2-3, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [KJV, “trembling”] to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy [KJV, “burdensome”] stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”

He talks about Jerusalem becoming a cup of trembling (or a cup of poison) and a burdensome stone for all people. Everybody who gets tangled up with it is going to get cut. This has been the case since God has been regathering Judah to Jerusalem.

Verse 5, he talks about the governors of Judah. They’re the ones who have been gathered to Jerusalem.

What are we having right now? The focus of things in the Middle East has to do with Jerusalem. They are talking about getting together and negotiating in the Middle East. Well, the real issue, and the issue that is not going to be resolved, is the issue of Jerusalem. The Jews told the Arabs, ‘We will sit down and talk with you. We will meet, but nobody in your delegation can have been born in Jerusalem.’ You know why they said that? They wanted nobody there that could even begin to remotely say, ‘We have a claim; I’m from there. I was born there.’ The Jews say, ‘We are not even going to talk to any Arabs that were born in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is ours and there is nothing to even negotiate about. We will discuss with you some of these other things.’

That is not going to be satisfactory. But anybody who has followed the situation knows that is one issue that is simply not negotiable.

Verse 6, “In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a fire-pan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.” That’s pretty descriptive of what’s been going on over there since 1948.

KJV, “...the governors of Judah have been like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf;” Have you ever seen a stubble field burn? It goes pretty fast. That’s the way most of those wars have been over there. The governors of Judah have been like somebody set fire to the stubble. Poof, it’s gone! That’s very descriptive of the six-day war back in 1967 that saw the recapture of Jerusalem—after almost 1,900 years of Jewish exile from

Jerusalem, their recapture of the old city. Anybody who saw on television the filmed reports of the first Jewish soldiers to pour into the old city and to reach the wailing wall knows there’s no way in the world they will ever, ever, ever voluntarily turn loose of it. For 1,900 years, they would close every Passover service with the prayer, “next year in Jerusalem.” They didn’t do that for all those centuries simply to turn around and give it away. God talked about the fact that Judah was going to be regathered there in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12 is descriptive of the end time. The events that have occurred over there had to occur because there was a time period when there weren’t Jews in Jerusalem. The Jews didn’t control Jerusalem. Zechariah 12 describes the time when they do.

Verse 7 talks about when Christ returns, how he will save the tents of Judah first.

Verse 9 is how He will deal with the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:10, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” There will be great mourning in Jerusalem when Jesus Christ returns to intervene and save.

Of course, at that time, all nations will have been gathered to Jerusalem. He will destroy the armies there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and save the people. At that point, the scales are going to fall from their eyes.

He says, ‘I am going to pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication.’ Then He is going to begin to deal with them spiritually, and they are going to come to repentance. They are going to look upon Him whom they have pierced—the One for whom centuries earlier they yelled, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him, His blood be upon us and upon our children forever’ (Mark 15:13-14; Matthew 27:25). They are then going to mourn and grieve and deeply repent. They are going to realize that their Messiah had come centuries earlier only to be rejected and crucified. But this time they are going to understand! Then God is going to begin to deal with them.

Zechariah 13:1 talks about cleaning away the sin and the uncleanness.

Zechariah 13:4, “And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision

when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive.”

Verse 5 is a little bit funny. It talks about the false prophets and how they are going to be ashamed, ““But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’”” In that time, nobody is going to want to claim or admit, ‘Oh, yeah, I used to be a priest or a preacher; I used to be on television.’ No, you are not going to get them to admit it. ‘No, I’m a farmer. That’s all I am. I am not a prophet. I’m nothing but a farmer.’ They are not going to want to admit to the fact that they deceived people for years. They will be doing something constructive for a change.

Zechariah 14:1-2, “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” The issue involves half the city, the old city. That’s what they are fighting about. There is going to be a multinational force that will ultimately come against Jerusalem.

Verses 3-5, but when that occurs, “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.”

Verses 8-9, “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The Lord is one,’ and His name one.”

Verse 11, “The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.” That’s certainly not true now, but it will be true in the Millennium.

Verse 16, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to

year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”

Verses 17-19, if anybody doesn’t want to keep the Feast, God’s going to convince them, and they are going to want to do it. There is a description that certainly shows the Feast will be kept in the Millennium. God’s festivals are going to be observed. The Feast of Tabernacles is clearly a time that looks forward to the time when Christ is going to rule over all the earth.

Malachi was written a little later than Haggai and Zechariah. He was a much younger contemporary of Haggai and Zechariah. He would have been contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. Haggai and Zechariah were evidently young men as prophets. Malachi came along perhaps 40-50 years after Haggai and Zechariah had begun their prophecy. Tradition retains record that they were contemporary, so we would conclude from that that they must have been fairly young at the time.

It’s just the same as we have those who were around and in various positions in World War II. Now we are at a later point and some of those people are still in prominent positions—President Bush was in the military service during World War II. It is not impossible to have an overlap where you can have a separation of 40-50 years.

Malachi comes along contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. There was sort of a lull after the completion of the temple. We really don’t read anything else of what transpired. We pick up the story later in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. You will find that if you read through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and notice the chronology carefully.

When we pick up the story again, we find that attraction to the world around had sort of sapped the spiritual strength and fervor of the people of God.

Ezra and Nehemiah were together with Malachi. Nehemiah was the governor; Ezra was the priest. Malachi was the prophet. God raised them up to restore His work. Malachi represents sort of a concluding or a summing up in terms of the prophets. The work that God did, you can tie in a great deal of it to sort of the aftermath of some of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. There certainly are things that we can glean from it.

“Malachi” means “my messenger.” **It has to do with the return of Jesus Christ and preparing the way for that.**

The book of Malachi opens up in chapter 1 by **focusing in on the sovereignty of God.** God chooses. He elects and makes choices. He indicts

the priesthood for showing disrespect for God by treating God's service casually and carelessly, by not being strict in their obedience to God and by having a casual, careless attitude that shows a lack of respect for God—an attitude of people who are not zealous for God and for not doing things exactly the way God says.

Malachi 2:1-2, “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,” says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart.’”

He describes the responsibility of the priesthood. Verses 6-7, “The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” That's the job of God's ministry, and it was the job of the priesthood anciently. They should be a source of the knowledge of God's way. They should teach the people God's law and should be God's messenger.

The priesthood of Judah was indicted.

Verses 8-9, “But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law.’” They have dealt treacherously, have compromised and have not been as they ought.

Verse 11, “Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord's holy institution which He loves: he has married the daughter of a foreign god.” God is going to deal with that.

Verse 14, “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

Verse 16, “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce,” There had developed sort of a compromising, carnal attitude of trying to elevate self-will far above God's will.

Verse 17, “You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and

He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of justice?’” ‘You have made excuses for those who do evil. You feel like God is way off somewhere and you don't have to worry about Him.’

Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.” John the Baptist came as a messenger.

You can go to Mark 1:1-14 and Luke 1:13-17.

Mark 1:3, “...‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight.’”

Christ came as the messenger of the covenant. Malachi 3:2-3, He came as the messenger of the covenant and He is going to come back to complete the New Covenant and to refine, purge and to come to judgment.

Malachi 3:5, “And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and the fatherless, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts.”

The term “sorcerers” is used two or three other places. There are several different words that are used in the Hebrew language referring to sorcerers and magicians. This particular word is not really a word that means “magician” in that sense. It comes from a root word in the Hebrew that means, literally, “to shred,” as in one who shreds drugs into a potion. The quote from the Hebrew Lexicon on this is sort of interesting. If you are looking in terms of ‘Christ coming back for judgment and to be a swift witness,’ and to deal with the problems of society, who's He coming back to deal with? Is the worse thing going on some little tiny obscure thing where somebody is practicing and muttering incantations somewhere?

One of the most pervasive problems that exists on the face of the earth right now is the problem with drugs—the international drug trade and all of the tragedy that occurs. Well, He says (in modern parlance), ‘I am going near you to judgment and I am going to be a swift witness against the drug dealers.’ That's what this term means. And He'll be swift against the adulterers. God says, ‘I am going to deal with those who have been involved with the drug trade. I am going to deal with immorality and its consequences. I will deal against false swearers and against those who have, through various means, taken advantage of and oppressed

through manipulation and all sorts of legal subterfuge, those who are least able to defend themselves—the wage earners, the widows and the fatherless.’

Who does some of the economic manipulation (the major bank failures, etc.) hurt the most? The wage earner, people on fixed incomes and the elderly are the ones hurting.

The point that God is making is that Christ comes back for judgment, and there are going to be some people who are going to have to give some answers. They are going to be called into account. Do you think that with all of the drug trade, pornography, the economic manipulation and mistreatment and taking advantage of people, there’s going to be no calling into account for that? You better believe it! There’s going to be a reordering of society and there are going to be some things that are going to have to be dealt with. When you go through and understand what’s being indicted here, it has to do with the way God views the major areas of problems in the end time and the major segments of society that are going to have to be confronted—everything from all of these various things.

Verse 6, “‘For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.’” God says, ‘I am consistent. That’s why you’re still here.’

Verse 8, “‘Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings.’” It discusses the subject of tithing. The place to start is to put God first and God will take care of things.

He indicts an attitude about those who may go through the motions of serving God, but they do it in a bad attitude and are envious of what the world gets by with.

Verses 14-15, “‘You have said, “It is vain to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; yes, those who tempt God go free.’”

People may go through the motions of serving God, but their attitudes stink. They sort of look enviously at what the world gets by with and say, ‘Boy, I wish I weren’t in the Church. Boy, I could really make some money. I could really do this or that.’ God says, ‘Fine, you are going to have to give an account because God takes that sort of an attitude personally.’

Verse 13, He says, “‘Your words have been harsh against Me,’ says the Lord, ‘yet you say, “What have we spoken against You?”’” Frankly, this is an attitude of people who are going to go through the tribulation.

Verse 16, on the other hand, talks about a book of remembrance being written for those who feared the Lord and meditated upon His name.

Verse 17, “‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’” It is clearly a distinction between those who serve God half-heartedly and in a bad attitude and those whose hearts are really in it.

Verse 18, God is going to return and discern between the righteous and the wicked.

Malachi 4:1 is proof that the hellfire of the Bible is not the hellfire of Protestantism and Catholicism. It is not an ever-burning hellfire that people are going to be tortured in forever. It is a hellfire that is going to burn up the wicked and leave them neither root nor branch.

Malachi 4:3, “‘You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,’ says the Lord of hosts.” It talks about destruction, about burning up.

Verse 4, then it ends up, “‘Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.’” The last thing the prophets tell us is to remember the law. People read their Bible straight through and the last thing they read in the Old Testament is “remember the law of Moses.” They turn the page and promptly think they are supposed to forget the Law of Moses. Makes a lot of sense, doesn’t it?

Why is it that the last thing God says is to remember the Law of Moses and all the statutes and judgments, and people then turn the page and say, ‘I’m sure glad we can forget all of that’? Isn’t it interesting! The Old Testament ends up with the admonition, “remember the Law of Moses My servant”; the New Testament opens up with, in Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17, “‘Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.’” So, people immediately forget the Law of Moses and think that Christ came to destroy it. He ends up by saying “remember” and starts off by saying He didn’t come to destroy any of what went before. People get all “balled up.” How plain does God have to get?

You and I read that and it is very simple. How many hundreds and thousands of scholars have gone through and debated the Hebrew of Malachi and the Greek of Matthew and never got the point—didn't keep the Sabbath, didn't keep the Holy Days, didn't do any of these things. They never got the point! So, remember the Law of Moses.

Verses 5-6, he ends up saying, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse [with utter destruction].”

Now, clearly, John the Baptist came, as Luke 1:17 shows, in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the first coming of Christ (Matthew 3:1-3). Christ is coming again, and if it was necessary that there be a forerunner to prepare the way for the first coming, certainly there is to be a forerunner to prepare the way for the second coming.

That, of course, is why God raised up Mr. Herbert Armstrong. This work, of which we are a part, represents a continuation of the work that God raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong, going back to the 1930s. He raised up this end-time work through him and used him as one who was to restore the knowledge of the true religion in Israel—just as Elijah and John the Baptist did.

We end up here in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. We end up with books that were written after the exile—**books that focused in on the importance of doing the work and reviving the work that God was doing through His people.**

There are many lessons and parallels that are applicable for God's people throughout all ages, and particularly here in the end time, as we look toward the culmination and completion of the great plan that God is working out.

Next Bible study we will begin a new series on the Writings, the third division of the Old Testament.