

The Burden
of Malachi:



*God's
Unchanging Love for
His Unstable People*



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Introduction

Two of the great risks for the Church today are:

1. A loss of awe and joy in what God has done for us as a result of our historical ignorance (or disinterest) and our failure to take time to remember on a regular basis;
2. To mindlessly and lifelessly go through the formal motions of worship, discipleship, and life because we don't see an immediate benefit from any of it.

Malachi spoke to similar issues among the people of God in the mid-5th Century B.C. who were in similar circumstances to the Church today. John L. Mackay describes Malachi's context as,

“an age of widespread religious disillusionment and discontentment...(God's people) could see nothing wrong with the way they were living or with the way they approached God in worship. When challenged about their attitudes, there was no acknowledgment of wrong-doing on their part. Instead they were prepared to defend their behavior. Indeed, they more than hinted that what had gone wrong was that the Lord had not lived up to his side of the covenant. It was a time of religious cynicism.”¹

Mackay further observes “two deep-seated factors influencing their attitude. (1) They had lost any sense of wonder at what God had done for them....(2) Their religion had become formal....”² In loving grace and mercy, God places the burden of His word upon Malachi to deliver to the people while there was still time to repent and be restored to Him. Amazingly, He begins not with a list of all that they were doing wrong or fire-filled threats of judgment but instead chooses to declare yet again His unchanging love for His unstable people. Once this foundation is laid, God reveals their sin and His coming judgment if they fail to repent. Pieter A. Verhoef writes of this glorious truth: “The Lord is going to admonish and judge his people because of their sins in various spheres of their lives. **But before addressing them with the stipulations and obligations of the law, he confronts them with the gospel: 'I have loved you.'**”³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. captures this beautiful idea even more succinctly when he writes,

¹ John L. Mackay, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi: God's Restored People* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 2010), 323.

² Ibid., 332.

³ Peter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 195. Bolding and underlining of the last sentence are mine.

“...Malachi will not be sidetracked from his master theme: **God loves His people, however hypocritical and insincere they remain.**”⁴ Given the similarity of our circumstances, we too need to be reminded of God’s unchanging love for us and of His grace and mercy in confronting us with our sin so that we might repent and be restored to Him. Thus, Malachi contains relevant truth for us today.

We know nothing about Malachi personally other than that his burden closes the Old Testament canon in our English Bibles. His name means “My Messenger.”⁵ The book contains no date or clear historical proper names or referents to be able to come up with the exact time of its writing. However, the use of the term governor and the similarities with the issues addressed in Nehemiah suggest the burden was delivered in the mid- to late- 5th Century B.C.⁶ This means that the people of Judah had returned from exile and restored the temple, however, the glory of the nation had yet to return as they were still under Persian rule.⁷ Bruce K. Waltke describes the situation in this way: “Jerusalem and its temple continue to be nothing more than the backwater Persian sub-province. Instead of the nations bringing their wealth to Jerusalem, Jerusalem continues to pay heavy taxes to the Persians.”⁸ It appeared that God’s promises were either in vain or in ruins. Spiritual malaise and the questioning of God’s love and goodness dominated the hearts and minds of the people. This manifested itself in the heartless worship and self-serving ethics of the people. As Waltke puts it, “Their liturgy is a sham. For Malachi, the revitalization of the nation’s morality is a prerequisite for the revitalization of its liturgy.”⁹ The people had failed once again to be the priesthood to the nations to declare God’s glory and offer His peace to the ends of the earth that they had been formed to be. Using a disputational, interrogatory style, Malachi calls for their obedience to God’s mandates concerning worship, marriage, and societal interaction to rise from the unchanging, firm foundation of His love for them. While there are some hard questions and

⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Preacher’s Commentary, OT Vol. 23: Micah – Malachi* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 453. Bolding and underlining of the theme are mine.

⁵ Some scholars argue that the prophetic book is anonymous or connected to the burdens found in Zechariah. Others, like John Calvin, thought it was Ezra. We have no real way of knowing for sure, however, church history favors the view that Malachi is a personal name.

⁶ This reasoning and relative date (around 460 B.C.) are widely accepted among biblical scholars such as Joyce G. Baldwin, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., John L. Mackay, Eugene H. Merrill, Allen P. Ross, Douglas Stuart and Pieter A. Verhoef.

⁷ See **Appendix A: Historic Table of Post-Exilic Israel** for Malachi’s relationship to the historical and redemptive events in the post-exilic community.

⁸ Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 847.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 847.

answers in Malachi, ultimately, God's love sovereignly governs them and His people. James A. Fischer captures this idea when he writes, "The loving relationship of Israel to Yahweh was a condition, not a cause. The cause was only God."¹⁰

We need to be reminded today of God's unchanging love for us and the call to walk in obedience as a reflection of our gratitude for His redeeming love. Our stated beliefs need to be challenged if we fail to practice them to the glory of God and the joy of our neighbors. Mackay articulates this challenge in this way:

"There can be no doubt about God's love. He has irrefutably demonstrated it by sending his Son. We then wonder why when we have received the ultimate gift, the church is not vibrant, attracting crowds and being effective in its moral and spiritual impact on our country. Why is there not revival? We must be careful not to fall into the way of thinking that is because of some deficiency in God's love. The fortunes of the church are blighted by the lack of Christ-centeredness in the thinking and acting of those who are in the church. **We ought to examine ourselves and expose what warps our thinking and respond with that total self-dedication that flows from recognizing what his love has given us** (Eph. 5:8-20)."¹¹

While this quote contains some strong, hard words, we must hear them through the promise of God's unchanging love and provision of every gift necessary to live for His glory, our joy, and for the life of the world! We must hear the questions and answers from Malachi through this same eternal truth throughout this sermon series.

We will continue to seek nourishment from our historic faith and the Old and New Testaments for our weekly devotion and worship. The calls to worship will come from **the book of Deuteronomy** which serves as the critical foundation for **the Burden of Malachi**. It too calls for the people of God to acknowledge through their covenant obedience the unchanging love of God bestowed so graciously upon them. We will confess together each week a confession from **Deuteronomy 7:6-9** to remind us of who and whose we are in Redemptive History as a result of God's unchanging love. Our assurances of pardon will come from **Paul's letter to the Ephesians**. Paul addresses many of the same key issues that were important to the people of God in Malachi's day from the firm foundation of God's electing love and grace. Our benedictory blessings each week will come from **2 Peter 3:8-13** to remind us of the blessing of God's loving patience toward us His children and the promise that He is going to make all things new some day. The goal of these various elements is to show us that

¹⁰ James A. Fischer, "Notes on the Literary Form and Message of Malachi," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 34 (1972), 319.

¹¹ Mackay, 337-8. Bold and underlining of the last sentence are mine.

God's unchanging love serves as the firm foundation from which we can love Him and our neighbor to His glory.

This devotional is designed to encourage daily meditation and prayer in personal devotions and/or family worship. You are encouraged to use it the week prior to the associated sermon so that you and your family are prepared for worship. In addition to the Scriptures and associated questions, there are opportunities to pray for the various aspects of the Church. On Wednesdays, we will pray for the various missionaries, church plants, and missional ministries that we support at CCC through Faith Promise. We also have the opportunity to pray on Saturday for God to draw various people near in worship to hear and experience His unchanging love for their joy and peace both now and in eternity. If we have the Lord's Table, we will prepare to receive this evidence of His unwavering love for us in Christ. On Sunday, the Lord's Day Sabbath, we will pray for the means of grace to bear specific fruit in our lives. Our desire is to continue to facilitate and grow in our dependence on the Lord through prayer.

May God bless our time in personal devotion, family worship, and corporate worship as we seek to for the Church to grow in knowing God's unchanging love and living in a way that reflects our gratitude and His glory!

Soli Deo Gloria!

The Structure of Malachi

Opening:

1:1: *Malachi's Burden*

The First Dispute: The Foundation of Covenant Relationship:

1:2-5: *A Question of God's Love*

The Second Dispute: The Foundations of Worship:

1:6-14: *A Question of God's Honor*

2:1-9: *A Question of Religion*

The Third Dispute: The Foundation of Society:

2:10-16: *A Question of Marriage and Divorce*

The Fourth Dispute: The Foundation of Ethics:

2:17-3:5: *A Question of Justice*

The Fifth Dispute: The Foundation of Generosity:

3:6-12: *A Question of Provision*

The Sixth Dispute: The Foundation of Identity:

3:13-18: *A Question of Benefit*

4:1-3: *A Declaration of the future*

Concluding Postscript: The Foundation of Discipleship:

4:4-6: *A Call to Remember the Law and Behold the Prophets*

Sermon Schedule

Date	Call to Worship	Assurance of Pardon	Benediction	Sacrament
<i>Sunday, 4/15:</i> Malachi 1:1	Deuteronomy 4:5-9	Ephesians 1:3-10	2 Peter 3:8-13	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 4/22:</i> Malachi 1:2-5	Deuteronomy 6:4-15	Ephesians 2:1-10	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 4/29:</i> Malachi 1:6-14	Deuteronomy 7:6-11	Ephesians 2:11-16	2 Peter 3:8-13	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 5/6:</i> Malachi 2:1-9	Deuteronomy 8:1-10	Ephesians 2:17-22	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 5/13:</i> Malachi 2:10-16	Deuteronomy 8:11-20	Ephesians 5:22-33	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 5/20:</i> Malachi 2:17-3:5	Deuteronomy 10:12-22	Ephesians 3:14-21	2 Peter 3:8-13	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 5/27:</i> Malachi 3:6-12	Deuteronomy 11:8-17	Ephesians 4:1-7	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 6/3:</i> Malachi 3:13-18	Deuteronomy 28:1-6	Ephesians 4:17-24	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 6/10:</i> Malachi 4:1-3	Deuteronomy 30:19-20	Ephesians 5:1-14	2 Peter 3:8-13	
<i>Sunday, 6/17:</i> Malachi 4:4-6	Deuteronomy 32:1-9	Ephesians 5:15-21	2 Peter 3:8-13	<i>The Lord's Table</i>

Weekly Congregational Confession

For we are a people holy to the Lord our God. The Lord our God has chosen us to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because we were more in number than any other people that the Lord set His love on us and chose us, for we were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves us and is keeping the oath that He swore to our fathers, that the Lord has brought us out with a mighty hand and redeemed us from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. We know therefore that he Lord our God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.

Confession from Deuteronomy 7:6-9¹²

¹² Given that we as Christians are all descendants from Adam in sin, Abraham in promise, and Jesus Christ in redemption, it is important for us, the Church, to maintain a historical and spiritual connection with the Old Testament and the people of God throughout history. **Deuteronomy 7:6-9** was specifically about Israel, however, God's pattern of electing grace based on no work or quality in His children who are weak and unable to save themselves remains the same. Paul evidences this continuity in **Galatians 6:16** when he refers to the Church as "the Israel of God."

Malachi 1:1

The Week of April 15th

Monday, 4/9: **Deuteronomy 4:5-9:** What helps you to take care and keep your soul diligently in obedience to the Lord? When do you take time to remember God's goodness?

Tuesday, 4/10: **Ephesians 1:3-10:** What are some the spiritual blessings that you have been blessed with in Christ?

Wednesday, 4/11: Pray for the Robertsons serving with MTW in Chile as they have a burden for planting and supporting Gospel preaching churches in South America.

Thursday, 4/12: **Malachi 1:1:** Pray for the word of God's unchanging love to continue to come to His people in history through this burden of Malachi.

Friday, 4/13: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Give thanks to God for the blessing of His patience and longsuffering towards you and those you love.

Saturday, 4/14: Take time to read the preparatory letter and pray to prepare for the Lord's Table. Give thanks for God's provision of His Word to reveal His salvation to us.

Sunday, 4/15: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to stir a passion in us for those who are lost, wounded, or wandering.

Malachi 1:2-5¹³

The Week of April 22nd

Monday, 4/16: **Deuteronomy 6:4-15:** What helps you to cultivate your love for the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and might?

Tuesday, 4/17: **Ephesians 2:1-10:** Meditate on and give thanks for God being rich in mercy to save you by faith and not according to your works.

Wednesday, 4/18: Pray for the Caltons serving with RUF at KSU as they have a burden to reach college students with the truth of God's unchanging love for them.

Thursday, 4/19: **Malachi 1:2-5:** How has God shown His love for you in the past year or so?

Friday, 4/20: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Praise God for His desire that none of His children should perish.

Saturday, 4/21: Pray for the Lord to draw people to worship on Sunday to hear and experience His unchanging love for them as His children.

Sunday, 4/22: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to remind us of and renew us in God's unchanging love for us.

¹³ An email with **Appendix B: An Excursus on Jacob Loved and Esau Hated** will be sent out the week before to help equip us with how to engage this jarring and difficult text to the glory of God.

Malachi 1:6-14

The Week of April 29th

Monday, 4/23: **Deuteronomy 7:6-11:** On what basis did the Lord your God choose you to be His child?

Tuesday, 4/24: **Ephesians 2:11-16:** What dividing walls did Christ bring down to reach you to reconcile you to God in peace?

Wednesday, 4/25: Pray for Chris Foglesong and Mountain City Church who have a burden to welcome the lost to the table of the Lord in Jasper, Georgia.

Thursday, 4/26: **Malachi 1:6-14:** What is the quality or heart behind your regular offerings to the Lord? Do you expect Him to take what He can get from you and be satisfied?

Friday, 4/27: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Meditate on what a blessing it will be to have all things purified by God's holy fire in preparation for life in the new Heavens and new Earth.

Saturday, 4/28: Take time to read the preparatory letter and pray to prepare for the Lord's Table. Give thanks for God's provision of the perfect sacrifice in Christ on our behalf.

Sunday, 4/29: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to produce broken and contrite hearts within us.

Malachi 2:1-9

The Week of May 6th

Monday, 4/30: Deuteronomy 8:1-10: What are some ways that the Lord has led you over the years? Give thanks for Him sustaining you along the way.

Tuesday, 5/1: Ephesians 2:17-22: What are some ways that you are being built up in Christ as a dwelling place for God through the ministry of the church?

Wednesday, 5/2: Pray for Morgan Rogers serving as an intern with CO at KSU who has a burden to disciple students who will reflect God's glory as disciple makers.

Thursday, 5/3: Malachi 2:1-9: Is there anything that keeps you from seeking instruction in discipleship from the leaders of the church? If so, what will you do to reconcile it?

Friday, 5/4: 2 Peter 3:8-13: Give praise to God for providing all that you could ever need to grow in holiness and godliness that is pleasing to Him.

Saturday, 5/5: Pray for the elders, deacons, and staff at CCC who have been called to serve the Lord by serving to help you grow in your knowledge of Him.

*Sunday, 5/6: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:** Pray for the means of grace to help you grow in your knowledge and experience of your Abba Father.

Malachi 2:10-16

The Week of May 13th

Monday, 5/7: Deuteronomy 8:11-20: What are some things that tempt you to forget the Lord your God? What are you doing to address these things?

Tuesday, 5/8: Ephesians 5:22-33: Give thanks to God for the godly marriages that have impacted your life for His glory. Share your gratitude with those couples if you have a chance.

Wednesday, 5/9: Pray for the Mills serving through MTW in Thailand who have a burden for the lost to join the bride of Christ and be welcomed at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Thursday, 5/10: Malachi 2:10-16: If God wants all the nations to be blessed according to the Abrahamic Covenant, then what is the real issue with Israelites marrying foreign wives?

Friday, 5/11: 2 Peter 3:8-13: What role can your marriage or someone else's marriage play in shaping you into the person you ought to be as you await the day of the Lord?

Saturday, 5/12: Pray for the marriages at CCC to reflect the enduring beauty of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Sunday, 5/13: The Lord's Day Sabbath: Pray for the means of grace to bear fruit in our relationships to the glory of God.

Malachi 2:17-3:5

The Week of May 20th

Monday, 5/14: **Deuteronomy 10:12-22:** What are some ways in which you being obedient to the commands of the Lord have been for your good and the good of others?

Tuesday, 5/15: **Ephesians 3:14-21:** Pray Paul's prayer for those in your spheres of influence. Who would most benefit from a deeper understanding of the love of Christ?

Wednesday, 5/16: Pray for Avery Mayes serving as an intern through RUF at KSU who has a burden for students to know God's justice in and through Christ.

Thursday, 5/17: **Malachi 2:17-3:5:** How has God revealed His justice to you? What impact has it had on you becoming more just for His glory?

Friday, 5/18: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Meditate on the blessing of God's justice in dealing with the sin and brokenness in the world when Christ returns to make all things new.

Saturday, 5/19: Take time to read the preparatory letter and pray to prepare for the Lord's Table. Give thanks for God's patience and eventual justice.

Sunday, 5/20: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to transform our hearts and ethics to better reflect God's justice.

Malachi 3:6-12

The Week of May 27th

Monday, 5/21: Deuteronomy 11:8-17: Give thanks for God's consistent provision for you over the years.

Tuesday, 5/22: Ephesians 4:1-7: What are the regular challenges to your humility and gentleness in Christ? What are you doing to address them?

Wednesday, 5/23: Pray for First Care Women's Clinic in Marietta who has a burden to see pregnant women be provided with every resource necessary to decide to have their child.

Thursday, 5/24: Malachi 3:6-12: What best evidences outwardly the inward condition of your heart and orientation to God according to this text? What is being evidenced in you?

Friday, 5/25: 2 Peter 3:8-13: Praise God for His provision of the new Heavens and new Earth in which you will dwell with Him and His people for eternity.

Saturday, 5/26: Give thanks for God's generous provision to our church through the tithes and offerings of His people.

Sunday, 5/27: ^{The} Lord's Day Sabbath: Pray for the means of grace to help you grow in your gratitude for God's provision and your generosity with His gifts.

Malachi 3:13-18

The Week of June 3rd

Monday, 5/28: **Deuteronomy 28:1-6:** What are some ways that God has blessed you in your obedience to Him?

Tuesday, 5/29: **Ephesians 4:17-24:** What are some ways that your mind has been renewed in union with Christ?

Wednesday, 5/30: Pray for Joehann Guadalupe who serves through CO at Dalton State who has a burden for many students' to come to fear the Lord and esteem His name.

Thursday, 5/31: **Malachi 3:13-18:** Have you ever wrestled with feeling like your service to the Lord was in vain? What helped you to see that serving the Lord is never truly in vain?

Friday, 6/1: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Does it matter in the end how we live now? In what ways does it matter?

Saturday, 6/2: Pray for the Lord to bring those who think serving Him is in vain to worship tomorrow to have their eyes, ears, and hearts opened to the joy of serving Him.

Sunday, 6/3: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to remind us of and refresh us in the knowledge that we are God's treasured possession.

Malachi 4:1-3

The Week of June 10th

Monday, 6/4: **Deuteronomy 30:19-20:** Are you regularly choosing life by loving the Lord your God as evidenced by your obedience to Him?

Tuesday, 6/5: **Ephesians 5:1-14:** What are some ways that you are being an imitator of God and walking in the love of Christ?

Wednesday, 6/6: Pray for the Larsens who serve through MTW with NEXT who have a burden for youth all over the world to come to know the great joy of God's redeeming love.

Thursday, 6/7: **Malachi 4:1-3:** Do you fear the coming of the last day of the Lord? If so, why so? If not, why not?

Friday, 6/8: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** What do you most look forward to in the new Heavens and new Earth?

Saturday, 6/9: Pray for the Lord to bring those who need healing and renewal to worship tomorrow to experience the grace and mercy of the Great Physician.

Sunday, 6/10: *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to bring healing and renewal in union with Christ to our hearts, minds, and souls.

Malachi 4:4-6

The Week of June 17th

Monday, 6/11: **Deuteronomy 32:1-9:** Give thanks to the Lord for His perfect works, His just ways, and His redeeming faithfulness toward His people.

Tuesday, 6/12: **Ephesians 5:15-21:** What are some ways that you are walking in wisdom and making best use of your time in Christ?

Wednesday, 6/13: Pray for those who serve at the Women's Extension who have a burden for the women there to grow in Christ who fulfill all the law and the prophets.

Thursday, 6/14: **Malachi 4:4-6:** How has the Old Testament shaped your understanding of God and His purposes in this world?

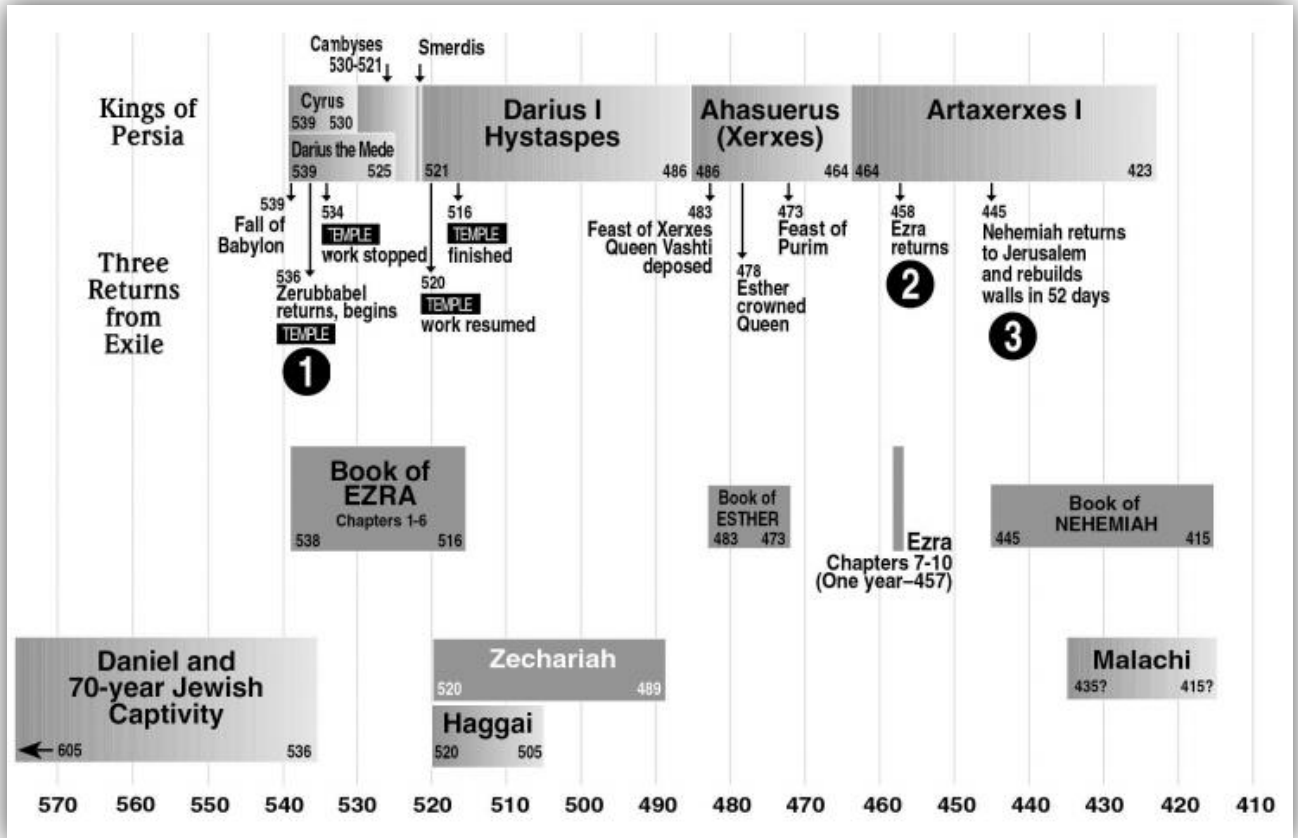
Friday, 6/15: **2 Peter 3:8-13:** Praise God for His redemptive patience and fixed promises culminating in the new Heavens and new earth.

Saturday, 6/16: Take time to read the preparatory letter and pray to prepare for the Lord's Table. Give thanks for God's provision of Christ to fulfill all of the law for us.

Sunday, 6/17: *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to bear fruit in our understanding of how the Old Testament points to Christ.

Appendix A¹⁴

Historic Table of the Post-Exilic Community¹⁵



¹⁴ For you sticklers, this IS Appendix A instead of being merely a lone Appendix, because there is an **Appendix B: Excursus on Jacob Loved and Esau Hated** coming for **Malachi 1:2-5** in the next week or so! Know that I would have stickled over the same thing, thus, like this Appendix, you are not alone or underappreciated in toto.

¹⁵ Precept Upon Precept, *Zechariah: They Shall Be My People and I Will be Their God* (Nashville: Precept Ministries International, 2011), 43.