**Malachi: Bible Study**

**How Do We Return? (3:6-12): Refusing to Repent**

In light of the impending Day of the Lord, and the devastating judgment associated with the arrival of the God of justice, the people could lose hope. Malachi now offers hope: God's people can repent and God's presence and blessing will return.

**A. Assertion One: God and God's People Are Consistent (Mai 3:6-7)**
The primary assertion Malachi makes is that God does not change. The people had
questioned God's justice, thereby implying that God changed, since he had been a
God of justice. God does not change in his being, character, essence, etc. And yet, God can be moved by prayer and can change his mind in response to repentance.

What is central here is the consistency of Yahweh in his justice and the consistency
of his people in their disobedience. The thing that holds the two ideas together is the
call to repentance in 3:7: "Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord."

**B. Assertion Two: You Are Robbing God (3:8-9)**

Malachi takes the opportunity to challenge the commitment of the people to their
covenant obligations by raising their failure to bring the whole tithe, and, in effect,
doing the unthinkable: They were robbing God. As a result of robbing God, they were "cursed with a curse." This is the third reference to cursing in Malachi [1:14; 2:2). -The severity of the curse was evident in the economic and social conditions of the
people living around 450 B.C. It is clear from 3:11 that locusts were destroying the
produce of their soil. The vine in their fields was barren. On top of the crop failure,
drought, and locust invasion, the taxation they were required to pay the Persian
government would have been overwhelming. "The scope of the curse was "the whole nation." No one was exempt. Interestingly, the other three references to "nation" in Malachi refer to pagan nations [1:11,14; 3:12). Perhaps Israel's failure to keep up their end of the covenant placed them at risk of becoming nothing more than a pagan nation themselves.

**C. The Imperative: Bring the Full Tithe to the Storehouse and You Will Be Blessed (3:10-12)**

The bringing of the full tithe was a concrete action of repentance. The full tithe

would involve both agricultural goods and livestock. It was to be brought to the

"storehouse," literally in Hebrew, the "house of supplies." There was a room or

chamber that was part of the temple complex where goods were stored.

The invitation from God to "put me to the test" is rare indeed. In fact, in almost every

instance, testing God is something evildoers do. The only place where God says to

test me is with respect to tithing. In this one area, God says, "test me." God is

challenging them to test his willingness and ability to bless, rather than to curse

them. If the people will repent and show the concrete evidence of their repentance,

Yahweh will restore their land. If the people will show the fruit of their true repentance and bring the full tithe into the storehouse, Yahweh will open the
"windows of heaven."