

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

DECEMBER 4-10

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ZEPHANIAH 1-HAGGAI 2

"Seek Jehovah Before His Day of Anger"

(Zephaniah 2:2, 3) Before the decree takes effect, Before the day passes by like chaff, Before the burning anger of Jehovah comes upon you, Before the day of Jehovah's anger comes upon you, ³ Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, Who observe his righteous decrees. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you will be concealed on the day of Jehovah's anger.

w01 2/15 18-19 ¶5-7

Seek Jehovah Before the Day of His Anger

⁵ You might say: 'I am a dedicated, baptized servant of God, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Have I not already met those requirements?' Actually, more is involved than dedicating ourselves to Jehovah. Israel was a dedicated nation, but in Zephaniah's day the people of Judah were not living up to that dedication. As a result, the nation was eventually cast off. 'Seeking Jehovah' today involves developing and maintaining a warm personal relationship with him in association with his earthly organization. It means getting to know how God views matters and being attentive to his feelings. We seek Jehovah when we carefully study his Word, meditate upon it, and apply its counsel in life. As we also seek Jehovah's guidance in fervent prayer and follow the leading of his holy spirit, our relationship with him deepens and we are impelled to serve him 'with all our heart, soul, and vital force.'—Deuteronomy 6:5; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 4:6, 7; Revelation 4:11.

⁶ The second requirement mentioned at Zephaniah 2:3 is to "seek righteousness." Most of us made important changes so that we could qualify for Christian baptism, but we must continue to uphold God's righteous standards throughout our life. Some who started out well in this respect have allowed themselves to be sullied by the world. It is not easy to seek righteousness, for we are surrounded by people who view sexual immorality, lying, and other sins as normal. Yet, a strong desire to please Jehovah can overpower any tendency to seek the world's approval by trying to blend in with it. Judah lost God's favor because of mimicking her ungodly neighboring nations. Instead of imitating the world, then, let us be "imitators of God," cultivating "the

new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:24; 5:1.

⁷ The third point made at Zephaniah 2:3 is that if we want to be hidden in the day of Jehovah's anger, we must "seek meekness." Each day, we rub shoulders with men, women, and young people who are anything but meek. To them, being mild-tempered is a flaw. Submissiveness is considered a serious weakness. They are demanding, selfish, and opinionated, believing that their personal "rights" and preferences must be accommodated at all costs. How sad it would be if some of those attitudes were to rub off on us! This is the time to "seek meekness." How? By being submissive to God, humbly accepting his discipline and conforming to his will.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zephaniah 1:8) "On the day of Jehovah's sacrifice I will call to account the princes, The sons of the king, and all those wearing foreign clothing.

w07 11/15 11 ¶3

Highlights From the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah

1:8. Some in Zephaniah's day were apparently seeking the acceptance of surrounding nations by "wearing foreign attire." How foolish it would be for Jehovah's worshippers today to try to conform to the world by similar means!

(Haggai 2:9) "'The future glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Jehovah of armies. "'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares Jehovah of armies."

w07 12/1 9 ¶3

Highlights From the Books of Haggai and Zechariah

2:9—In what ways could 'the glory of the later house become greater than that of the former'? This was to be in at least three ways: the number of years the temple was in existence, who taught there, and who flocked there to worship Jehovah. Although Solomon's glorious temple stood for 420 years, from 1027 B.C.E. to 607 B.C.E., the "later house" was in use for over 580 years, from its completion in 515 B.C.E. to its destruction in 70 C.E. Moreover, the Messiah—Jesus Christ—taught in the "later house," and more people came to it than to "the former" in order to worship God.—Acts 2:1-11.

Bible Reading

(Haggai 2:1-14) In the seventh month, on the 21st day of the month, the word of Jehovah came through Hag'gai the prophet, saying, ² "Please ask Ze-rub'ba-bel son of She-al'ti-el, the governor of Judah, and Joshua son of Je-hoz'a-dak, the high priest, and the rest of the people: ³ 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem like nothing in comparison?' ⁴ "'But now be strong, Ze-rub'ba-bel,' declares Jehovah, 'and be strong, Joshua son of Je-hoz'a-dak, the high priest.' " "And be strong, all you people of the land,' declares Jehovah, 'and work.' " "For I am with you,' declares Jehovah of armies. ⁵ 'Remember what I promised you when you came out of Egypt, and my spirit remains among you. Do not be afraid.'" ⁶ "For this is what Jehovah of armies says, 'Yet once more—in a little while—and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.' ⁷ " "And I will shake all the nations, and the precious things of all the nations will come in; and I will fill this house with glory,' says Jehovah of armies. ⁸ " "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,' declares Jehovah of armies. ⁹ " "The future glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Jehovah of armies. " "And in this place I will grant peace,' declares Jehovah of armies." ¹⁰ On the 24th day of the ninth month, in the second year of Da-ri'us, the word of Jehovah came to Hag'gai the prophet, saying: ¹¹ "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'Ask, please, the priests about the law: ¹² "If a man carries holy flesh in the fold of his clothing, and his clothing touches bread or stew or wine or oil or any sort of food, will it become holy?"'" The priests answered: "No!" ¹³ Hag'gai then asked: "If someone who is unclean from contact with a dead body touches any of these things, will it become unclean?" The priests answered: "It will become unclean." ¹⁴ So Hag'gai said: "'That is how this people is, and that is how this nation is before me,' declares Jehovah, 'and that is how all the work of their hands is; whatever they present there is unclean.'

DECEMBER 11-17

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ZECHARIAH 1-8

"Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew"

(Zechariah 8:20-22) "This is what Jehovah of

armies says, 'It will yet come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; ²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to those of another and say: "Let us earnestly go to beg for the favor of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I am also going." ²² And many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.'

w14 11/15 27 ¶14

"Now You Are God's People"

¹⁴ The flocking of many humans to worship Jehovah with his people in this time of the end was foretold by two ancient prophets. Isaiah prophesied: "Many peoples will go and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' For law will go out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem." (Isa. 2: 2, 3) Likewise, the prophet Zechariah foretold that "many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah." He depicted them as "ten men out of all the languages of the nations" who, symbolically speaking, would take hold of the robe of spiritual Israel, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people."—Zech. 8:20-23.

(Zechariah 8:23) "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people."'"

w16.01 23 ¶14

"We Want to Go With You"

⁴ If it is not possible to know with certainty the names of all spiritual Israelites on earth today, how can members of the other sheep "go with" them? Notice what the prophecy in Zechariah states concerning the figurative ten men. These ones would "take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: 'We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.'" Although only one Jew is mentioned here, in both instances the pronoun "you" refers to more than one person. This spiritual Jew must, then, be a composite person, not just one individual! So it is not necessary to identify every spiritual Jew and then go with him or her. Rather, we need to identify these ones as a group and then

support them as such. In no way do the Scriptures encourage us to follow an individual. Jesus is our Leader.—Matt. 23:10.

w09 2/15 27 ¶14

They “Keep Following the Lamb”

¹⁴ Jesus Christ considers the loyal support given to his brothers as being given to him. (*Read Matthew 25:40.*) In what way, then, can those who have the earthly hope support Christ’s spirit-anointed brothers? Principally by helping them with the Kingdom-preaching work. (Matt. 24:14; John 14:12) While the number of anointed ones on the earth has decreased over the decades, the number of the other sheep has increased. When those who have an earthly hope share in the witness work, serving if possible as full-time evangelizers, they support the spirit-anointed ones in fulfilling the disciple-making assignment. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Not to be overlooked are the opportunities to support this work by making financial contributions in various ways.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zechariah 5:6-11) So I asked: “What is it?” He replied: “This is the e’phah container that is going out.” He continued: “This is their appearance in all the earth.” ⁷ And I saw that the round lid of lead was lifted up, and there was a woman sitting inside the container. ⁸ So he said: “This is Wickedness.” Then he threw her back into the e’phah container, after which he thrust the lead weight over its mouth. ⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward, and they were soaring in the wind. They had wings like the wings of a stork. And they lifted up the container between the earth and heaven. ¹⁰ So I asked the angel who was speaking with me: “Where are they taking the e’phah container?” ¹¹ He replied: “To the land of Shi’nar to build her a house; and when it is prepared, she will be deposited there in her proper place.”

w17.10 25 ¶18

Visions of Zechariah—How They Affect You

¹⁸ However, the vision also reminded the Jews of their responsibility to maintain the purity of their worship. Wickedness cannot and will not be allowed to creep into and dwell among Jehovah’s people. After we have been brought into the protective and loving care of God’s clean organization, we have the responsibility to help maintain it. Are we moved to keep our “house” clean? Wickedness in any form does not belong in our spiritual paradise.

(Zechariah 6:1) Then I looked up again and saw four chariots coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were of copper.

w17.10 27-28 ¶7-8

Chariots and a Crown Safeguard You

⁷ In the Bible, mountains can represent kingdoms, or governments. The mountains in Zechariah’s account are similar to two mountains described in Daniel’s prophecy. One mountain represents Jehovah’s universal and eternal rulership. The other mountain represents the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus. (Dan. 2:35, 45) Since Jesus’ enthronement in the autumn of 1914, both mountains have been present and have played a special role in the fulfillment of God’s will on earth.

⁸ Why are the mountains made of copper? Like gold, copper is a metal that is highly valued. Jehovah directed that this shiny metal be used in the construction of the tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. (Ex. 27:1-3; 1 Ki. 7:13-16) Appropriately, then, the copper of the two symbolic mountains reminds us of the excellent quality of Jehovah’s universal sovereignty and of the Messianic Kingdom, which will provide stability and blessings to all mankind.

Bible Reading

(Zechariah 8:14-23) “For this is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘“Just as I had determined to bring calamity on you because your forefathers made me indignant,” says Jehovah of armies, “and I felt no regret, ¹⁵ so at this time I have determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not be afraid!”’ ¹⁶ ““These are the things you should do: Speak the truth with one another, and the judgments in your gates must promote truth and peace. ¹⁷ Do not scheme calamity against one another in your hearts, and do not love any false oath; for these are all things that I hate,’ declares Jehovah.” ¹⁸ The word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: ¹⁹ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month will be occasions for exultation and joy for the house of Judah—festivals of rejoicing. So love truth and peace.’ ²⁰ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘It will yet come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; ²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to those

of another and say: “Let us earnestly go to beg for the favor of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I am also going.” ²² And many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.’ ²³ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: “We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.”’”

DECEMBER 18-24

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | ZECHARIAH 9-14

“Stay in ‘the Valley of the Mountains’”

(Zechariah 14:3, 4) “Jehovah will go out and war against those nations as when he fights in the day of a battle. ⁴ In that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in half, from east to west, forming a very great valley; and half of the mountain will move to the north, and half of it to the south.

w13 2/15 19 ¶10

Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

¹⁰ When the symbolic mountain splits, half to the north and half to the south, Jehovah’s feet remain set upon both mountains. “A very great valley” comes into existence beneath Jehovah’s feet. This symbolic valley represents divine protection, by which Jehovah’s servants find safety under his universal sovereignty and his Son’s Messianic Kingdom. Jehovah will make sure that pure worship will never be snuffed out. When did this division of the mountain of the olive trees take place? It occurred when the Messianic Kingdom was established at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914. When did the flight of true worshippers to the symbolic valley begin?

(Zechariah 14:5) You will flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains will extend all the way to A’zel. You will have to flee, just as you fled because of the earthquake in the days of King Uz-zi’ah of Judah. And Jehovah my God will come, and all the holy ones will be with him.

w13 2/15 20 ¶13

Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

¹³ If we stick to Jehovah and stand firm in the truth,

he and his Son, Jesus Christ, will do their part, and God will not allow anyone or anything to ‘snatch us out of His hand.’ (John 10:28, 29) Jehovah is ready to extend whatever help is needed so that we may obey him as the Universal Sovereign and remain loyal subjects of the Messianic Kingdom. It is imperative that we remain in the valley of protection, for that valley will take on even greater meaning for true worshippers during the fast-approaching great tribulation.

(Zechariah 14:6, 7) “In that day there will be no precious light—things will be congealed. ⁷ And it will become one day that is known as belonging to Jehovah. It will not be day, nor will it be night; and at evening time there will be light.

(Zechariah 14:12) “And this is the scourge with which Jehovah will scourge all the peoples who wage war against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot away while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot away in their sockets, and their tongues will rot away in their mouths.

(Zechariah 14:15) “And a scourge like that scourge will also come against the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and all the livestock that are in those camps.

w13 2/15 20 ¶15

Stay in Jehovah’s Valley of Protection

¹⁵ On the day of God’s warring, what will be the situation of those outside the “great valley” of protection? They will have “no precious light” of divine favor shining upon them. In that coming day of fight, “the horse, the mule, the camel, and the male ass, and every sort of domestic animal”—symbols of the nations’ military equipment—will be affected. Such equipment will be “congealed,” put out of operation as if stiffened by cold. Jehovah will also use pestilence and “the scourge.” Whether literal or not, the scourge will silence terrifying threats. On that day, “one’s very eyes . . . and tongue will rot away” in that the attackers will be able to strike out only blindly and their defiant speech will be silenced. (Zech. 14:6, 7, 12, 15) No section of the earth will escape destruction. The forces lined up on Satan’s side in the battle will be tremendous. (Rev. 19:19-21) “Those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end.”—Jer. 25:32, 33.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Zechariah 12:3) In that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone to all the peoples. All those

who lift it are sure to be severely injured; and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her.

w07 12/15 22-23 ¶9-10

No Weapon Formed Against You Will Succeed

⁹ Zechariah's prophecy sheds light on the reason why the nations take their stand against true Christians. Note what Zechariah 12:3 says: "It must occur in that day that I shall make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all the peoples." To which Jerusalem does this prophecy point? Zechariah's prophecy concerning Jerusalem applies to "heavenly Jerusalem," the heavenly Kingdom to which anointed Christians have been called. (Hebrews 12:22) A small remnant of these heirs of the Messianic Kingdom are still on earth. Along with their companions, the "other sheep," they urge people to turn to God's Kingdom while there is yet time. (John 10:16; Revelation 11:15) How have the nations reacted to this invitation? And what kind of support does Jehovah give to true worshippers today? Let us find out as we further examine the meaning of Zechariah chapter 12. Doing so, we can gain the assurance that 'no weapon will succeed' against God's anointed ones and their dedicated associates.

¹⁰ Zechariah 12:3 indicates that the nations receive "severe scratches." How does this happen? God has decreed that the good news of the Kingdom must be preached. Jehovah's Witnesses take seriously the obligation to preach. However, the heralding of the Kingdom as mankind's only hope has become "a burdensome stone" to the nations. They try to lift it out of the way by interfering with the Kingdom preachers. In so doing, the meddling nations have received "severe scratches for themselves," getting all cut up. Even their reputations have been hurt as they meet with humiliating failure. They cannot silence true worshippers, who cherish the privilege of proclaiming the "everlasting good news" of God's Messianic Kingdom before the end of this system of things. (Revelation 14:6) When seeing the violence done to Jehovah's servants, a prison guard in one African land said, in effect: 'You are wasting your efforts in persecuting these people. They will never compromise. They just increase.'

(Zechariah 12:7) "And Jehovah will save the tents of Judah first, so that the beauty of the house of David and the beauty of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be too great over Judah.

w07 12/15 25 ¶13

No Weapon Formed Against You Will Succeed

¹³ *Read Zechariah 12:7, 8.* In ancient Israel, tents were a distinctive feature in the land, at times being used by shepherds and agricultural workers. Such people would be the first affected and would be in need of protection if an enemy nation came to attack the city of Jerusalem. The expression "the tents of Judah" indicates that the anointed remnant in our time are out in the open field, so to speak, not in fortified cities. There they fearlessly defend the interests of the Messianic Kingdom. Jehovah of armies will save "the tents of Judah first" because these are in the direct line of Satan's attack.

Bible Reading

(Zechariah 12:1-14) A pronouncement: "The word of Jehovah concerning Israel," declares Jehovah, The One who stretched out the heavens, Who laid the foundation of the earth, And who formed the spirit of man within him. ² "Here I am making Jerusalem a cup that causes all the surrounding peoples to stagger; and there will be a siege against Judah as well as against Jerusalem. ³ In that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone to all the peoples. All those who lift it are sure to be severely injured; and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her. ⁴ In that day," declares Jehovah, "I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness. I will keep my eyes on the house of Judah, but I will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵ And the sheikhs of Judah will say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a strength to me by means of Jehovah of armies their God.' ⁶ In that day I will make the sheikhs of Judah like a fiery pot among wood and like a fiery torch in a row of cut grain, and they will consume all the surrounding peoples on the right and on the left; and Jerusalem will again be inhabited in her place, in Jerusalem. ⁷ "And Jehovah will save the tents of Judah first, so that the beauty of the house of David and the beauty of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be too great over Judah. ⁸ In that day Jehovah will be a defense around the inhabitants of Jerusalem; in that day the one who stumbles among them will be like David, and the house of David like God, like Jehovah's angel who goes before them. ⁹ And in that day I will be certain to annihilate all the nations that

come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰ “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of favor and supplication, and they will look to the one whom they pierced, and they will wail over him as they would wail over an only son; and they will grieve bitterly over him as they would grieve over a firstborn son. ¹¹ In that day the wailing in Jerusalem will be great, like the wailing at Ha-dad-rim’mon in the Plain of Me-gid’do. ¹² And the land will wail, each family by itself; the family of David’s house by itself, and their women by themselves; the family of Nathan’s house by itself, and their women by themselves; ¹³ the family of Le’vi’s house by itself, and their women by themselves; the family of the Shim’e-ites by itself, and their women by themselves; ¹⁴ and all the families that are left remaining, each family by itself, and their women by themselves.

DECEMBER 25-31

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | MALACHI 1-4

“Does Your Marriage Please Jehovah?”

(Malachi 2:13, 14) “And there is another thing that you do, which results in covering the altar of Jehovah with tears and with weeping and sighing, so that he no longer pays attention to your gift offering or looks favorably on anything from your hand. ¹⁴ And you say, ‘For what reason?’ It is because Jehovah has acted as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously, although she is your partner and your wife by covenant.

jd 125-126 ¶4-5

Contribute to Family Life That Pleases God

⁴ During Malachi’s day in the fifth century B.C.E., divorce was rampant among the Jews. Malachi told them: “Jehovah himself has borne witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you yourself have dealt treacherously.” Because of treacherous dealings on the part of husbands, the altar of Jehovah was covered with the tears of betrayed wives, “with weeping and sighing.” And corrupt priests condoned such cruelty!—Malachi 2: 13, 14.

⁵ How did Jehovah view the deplorable attitude toward marriage in Malachi’s time? “‘He has hated a divorcing,’ Jehovah the God of Israel has said,” wrote Malachi. He also affirmed that Jehovah ‘has

not changed.’ (Malachi 2:16; 3:6) Do you see the point? God had earlier taken a position against divorce. (Genesis 2:18, 24) He did so in Malachi’s day. And he still does today. Some people may decide to walk out of their marriage simply because they are not satisfied with their mate. Treacherous though their heart may be, Jehovah searches through it. (Jeremiah 17:9, 10) He is aware of any deceit or malicious scheming behind a divorce, however one may rationalize it. Yes, “all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting.”—Hebrews 4:13.

(Malachi 2:15, 16) But there was one who did not do it, for he had what remained of the spirit. And what was that one seeking? The offspring of God. So guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and do not deal treacherously with the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ For I hate divorce,” says Jehovah the God of Israel, “and the one who covers his garment with violence,” says Jehovah of armies. “And guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and you must not deal treacherously.

w02 5/1 18 ¶19

Jehovah Hates the Course of Treachery

¹⁹ On the positive side, Malachi shows that some husbands were not dealing treacherously with their wives. They ‘had what was remaining of God’s holy spirit.’ (Verse 15) Happily, God’s organization today abounds with such men who ‘assign honor to their wives.’ (1 Peter 3:7) They do not abuse their wives physically or verbally, do not insist on degrading sexual practices, and do not dishonor their wives by flirting with other women or by viewing pornography. Jehovah’s organization is also blessed by having an abundance of faithful Christian wives who are loyal to God and his laws. All such men and women know what God hates, and they think and act accordingly. Continue to be like them, ‘obeying God as ruler’ and being blessed by his holy spirit. —Acts 5:29.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Malachi 1:10) “And who among you is willing to shut the doors? For you will not even light my altar without charge. I find no delight in you,” says Jehovah of armies, “and I take no pleasure in any gift offering from your hand.”

w07 12/15 27 ¶1

Highlights From the Book of Malachi

1:10. Jehovah took no pleasure in the offerings of the greedy priests, who would charge a fee even for

such simple services as shutting doors or lighting altar fires. How important it is that our acts of worship, including what we do in the Christian ministry, be motivated by unselfish love for God and neighbor, never for monetary gain!—Matthew 22:37-39; 2 Corinthians 11:7.

(Malachi 3:1) “Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will clear up a way before me. And suddenly the true Lord, whom you are seeking, will come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant will come, in whom you take delight. Look! He will certainly come,” says Jehovah of armies.

w13 7/15 10-11 ¶5-6

“Look! I Am With You All the Days”

⁵ Centuries before Jesus gave the illustration of the wheat and the weeds, Jehovah inspired his prophet Malachi to foretell events that are reflected in Jesus’ illustration. **(Read Malachi 3:1-4.)** John the Baptizer was the ‘messenger who cleared up the way.’ (Matt. 11:10, 11) When he came in 29 C.E., a time of judgment for the nation of Israel had drawn close. Jesus was the second messenger. He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem twice—first at the start of his ministry and second toward the end. (Matt. 21:12, 13; John 2:14-17) Hence, Jesus’ cleansing work involved a period of time.

⁶ What is the larger fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy? During the decades leading up to 1914, C. T. Russell and his close associates did a work like that of John the Baptizer. That vital work involved restoring Bible truths. The Bible Students taught the true meaning of Christ’s ransom sacrifice, exposed the hellfire lie, and proclaimed the coming end of the Gentile Times. Still, there were numerous religious groups who claimed to be Christ’s followers. So a crucial question needed to be answered: Who among those groups were the wheat? To settle that question, Jesus began to inspect the spiritual temple in 1914. That inspection and cleansing work involved a period of time—from 1914 to the early part of 1919.

Bible Reading

(Malachi 1:1-10) A pronouncement: The word of Jehovah to Israel through Mal’achi: ² “I have shown love to you people,” says Jehovah. But you say: “How have you shown us love?” “Was not E’sau the brother of Jacob?” declares Jehovah. “But I loved Jacob, ³ and E’sau I hated; and I made his mountains desolate and left his

inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” ⁴ “Though E’dom says, ‘We have been shattered, but we will return and rebuild the ruins,’ this is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘They will build, but I will tear down, and they will be called “the territory of wickedness” and “the people whom Jehovah has forever condemned.”’ ⁵ Your own eyes will see it, and you will say: “May Jehovah be magnified over the territory of Israel.”’” ⁶ “‘A son honors a father, and a servant his master. So if I am a father, where is the honor due me? And if I am a master, where is the fear due me?’ Jehovah of armies says to you priests who are despising my name. “‘But you say: “How have we despised your name?”’ ⁷ “‘By presenting polluted food on my altar.’ “‘And you say: “How have we polluted you?”’ “‘By saying: “The table of Jehovah is something to be despised.”’ ⁸ And when you present a blind animal as a sacrifice, you say: “It is nothing bad.” And when you present a lame animal or a sick one: “It is nothing bad.”’” “Try presenting them, please, to your governor. Will he be pleased with you or receive you with favor?” says Jehovah of armies. ⁹ “And now, please, appeal to God, that he may show us favor. With such offerings from your own hand, will he receive any of you with favor?” says Jehovah of armies. ¹⁰ “And who among you is willing to shut the doors? For you will not even light my altar without charge. I find no delight in you,” says Jehovah of armies, “and I take no pleasure in any gift offering from your hand.”