

RETURN UNTO ME

October 9, 2016

Malachi 2:17-3:15

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” Malachi 3:6

Through Malachi, God rebuked a remnant of Israel who had returned from captivity to their homeland. They were religious, but spiritually reckless. They accused God and disregarded His law. When He urged, “Return unto me,” they responded like a guilty schoolboy, as if they were faultless and God was mistaken, asking “Wherein shall we return?”

Our text presents three matters to be considered. First, the history of their departure from God’s law, beginning with their forefathers. Second, the gracious, longsuffering call of Jehovah, “Return unto me,” which includes the promise, “I will return unto you.” Third, the hardness of the human heart, which resists God’s gracious call and denies its guilt.

I. The history of their departure:

The captivity from which this remnant had returned was due to their forefather’s departure from God. Clear warning had been given, repeatedly. Moses wrote, “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: . . . The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. . . . Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand. . . . The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. . . . “And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25, 32, 36, 37).

II. God’s response to Israel’s departure:

A. “Return unto me”

B. “I will return unto you”

III. The hardness of the human heart: “Wherein shall we return?”

“For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death? . . . For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of

the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 31:27, 29).