

# DEEP DIVE

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

May 2026 - June 2026

REV. AARIF G. BRADLEY, M. DIV

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## LESSON 6

SUNDAY JUNE 7, 2026

# RETURN TO ME

Malachi 3:6–12

### KEY VERSE

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#### | KJV

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Malachi 3:7

#### | NIV

Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return? Malachi 3:7

### LESSON AIMS

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As a result of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Understand God’s unchanging nature in contrast to human instability
2. Recognize what true repentance looks like in practice
3. See how obedience and trust are tied together in returning to God

### KEY TERMS

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- Return (Repent) – To turn back, realign, or restore direction toward God 180 degree turn
- Robbing God – Withholding what belongs to Him (worship, obedience, resources)

- Tithes – A tenth portion given to God as acknowledgment of His provision
- Offerings – Voluntary gifts given in worship
- Covenant – A binding relationship established by God
- Devourer – Symbol of loss, destruction, or wasting of resources

## INTRODUCTION

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Malachi now shifts from confrontation to invitation. After exposing corruption, injustice, and misplaced worship, God does not abandon His people, He calls them back.

This is one of the most powerful movements in Scripture that God addresses brokenness not only with correction, but with a path forward. But the people's response reveals something important: they do not think they have moved away from God. That is why they ask, "How shall we return?" This question exposes a deeper spiritual danger that you cannot return to God if you do not believe you have left Him.

### | Analysis of the Biblical Text

#### GOD DOES NOT CHANGE (MALACHI 3:6)

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##### | KJV

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

##### | NIV

I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

God begins with His own character and the reality therein that He is unchanging, He is consistent, and He is faithful even when they are not. The only reason they still exist as a people is not because of their faithfulness, but God's. The text presents a powerful reality that human inconsistency does not cancel God's faithfulness.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does it mean for your life that God does not change even when your circumstances do?

### A MISDIAGNOSED DISTANCE (MALACHI 3:7)

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#### | KJV

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?

#### | NIV

Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’

God’s invitation is relational, not transactional. The distance has not been created by God. He has remained faithful. The distance has been created by Israel’s ongoing departure from God’s commands. Yet their response exposes their condition: “Wherein shall we return?” The question itself reveals the tragedy. They are already away from God, but spiritually unaware of it. This is the sobering danger the passage exposes that a heart can drift so far from obedience that it no longer recognizes its own distance from God, while still assuming everything is right between them.

### ROBBING GOD WITHOUT REALIZING IT (MALACHI 3:8–9)

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#### | KJV

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

## | NIV

Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings.

The accusation is startling because Israel is not intentionally denying God, they are genuinely unaware of their offense. Yet God names their withholding as robbery. This immediately shows that the issue is deeper than finances. While tithes and offerings are in view, the root problem is spiritual. They have disconnected provision from God’s covenant faithfulness. In withholding what God required, they are not merely failing in generosity, they are failing to acknowledge His ownership over all they have.

This becomes a question of trust and dependence. Tithes were never simply “donations”; they were a visible confession that everything belongs to God and that His people live by His provision, not their own control. To withhold them is to act as though they are self-sufficient owners rather than covenant stewards.

That is why the charge is described as robbery. It is not because God lacks anything, but because their actions deny what is true about their relationship with Him. What they keep back reveals what they assume is theirs to control. And that exposes a deeper spiritual reality that what we refuse to surrender to God often shows what we believe we own apart from Him.



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Where in your life might you be treating God’s provision as your personal possession instead of His entrustment to you?

### THE RESULT OF WITHHOLDING (MALACHI 3:9–10)

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## | KJV

- 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.
- 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

The issue is not merely an individual issue it is covenantal and communal. God addresses this whole nation, showing that their spiritual drift has affected the entire community, not just isolated people. When worship is distorted and giving is withheld, it reflects and reinforces a broader breakdown in covenant faithfulness across the community. God’s command to “bring the whole tithe into the storehouse” is therefore not simply a financial correction, it is a call to reorder life under His lordship. The “storehouse” was the place where the people brought their tithes and offerings in the temple system. It served as a central place of collection and distribution. These offerings were used to support the priests and Levites, who led worship and maintained the temple, since they did not have land or regular income like the other tribes. The storehouse also helped provide for the needs of the wider community connected to temple life.

In simple terms, the storehouse was God’s appointed place where offerings were gathered so that worship could continue and those who served in the temple, and depended on it, could be provided for. To restore it is to restore worship itself to its proper place, where God is acknowledged as the true source of life and provision.

This is why the emphasis is not on God’s need but on their need for realignment. God does not lack resources; He is restoring a people who have become disordered in their priorities. Obedience, in this sense, is not a transactional payment to earn blessing it is the act of returning life to its proper orientation under God’s covenant care.

Thus, obedience becomes the pathway of restoration. It reestablishes right relationship, reorders misplaced trust, and brings God’s people back into alignment with His presence and provision, not because He has moved away, but because they have.

### | KJV

- 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.
- 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

### | NIV

- 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty.
- 12 Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

This is one of the rare moments in Scripture where God invites His people to “test” Him, not in doubt of His character, but in trust of His covenant promise. God is not asking them to question whether He is faithful, He is inviting them to act in obedience and see that He will prove faithful in response. The testing is not skepticism toward God, but an opportunity to experience the reliability of His word.

The language used is intentionally vivid and expansive. “The windows of heaven” or “floodgates” pictures God’s provision as abundant and overflowing, something not limited, withheld, or barely sufficient, but poured out beyond expectation. In contrast, “I will rebuke the devourer” speaks of God actively restraining forces that waste, destroy, or diminish what they have, whether agricultural loss, economic instability, or unseen depletion. At the same time, “all nations will call you blessed” shifts the focus outward, showing that their restored faithfulness will become visible evidence to others that God’s favor rests upon them.

Taken together, the promise is not merely material increase, but reordered life under God’s covenant care that includes provision that is sustained, protection that is active, and witness that is public. The central point is that obedience is not loss or deprivation. It is alignment with God’s designed order, where trust replaces anxiety and God Himself becomes the source and sustainer of what His people need.

## | A Closing Thought

Return to Me is not a demand it is an invitation to God's covenant people. The people assumed they were already near God. God reveals they have drifted through their disobedience, distrust, and misplaced priorities. But instead of ending the relationship, God calls them back into it. This passage reveals something essential about God's heart that He does not merely expose distance, but He provides a way back.

## | Your Life

Ask yourself these questions. Where have I grown distant from God without realizing it? What areas of my life have I withheld from Him? Am I trusting God fully or selectively? Practical steps to return to God are to realign your priorities with obedience to God's word, trust God with what you tend to hold tightly as an owner instead of a steward, and return in the areas you've drifted, not just in words but in action. A return to God is not satisfied symbolically it must be practical in your choices and desires.

## | Your World!

We live in a culture that values independence and self-sufficiency. But Malachi challenges that mindset by showing that life flourishes not in independence from God, but in alignment with God. Faithfulness impacts more than individuals, it shapes communities, it influences provision and stability, and it becomes a witness to others. When people live in alignment with God, their lives become evidence of His faithfulness.



### Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for being unchanging even when we are inconsistent. Search our hearts and reveal where we have drifted from You. Teach us what it means to truly return, not just in words, but in obedience and trust. Help us to surrender what we have held back and to walk in alignment with Your will. Restore our hearts, our minds and our wills to You fully that we may be totally committed to you!

In Jesus' name, Amen.



**MOUNT SINAI**  
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