

Conflict Resolution



Summing Up the Law and the Prophets

Our journey through the conflicts and resolutions revealed in the sacred text have considered numerous settings and circumstances. The majority of the conflicts were on a large scale. These involved Jehovah's conflicts with mankind, or mankind's conflicts with one another, i.e., nation against nation. We also noted inter-personal relationship conflicts that grew over time, and affected families, tribes, and nations. Every possible conflict among men, and in man's relationship with his Creator, are addressed in the scriptures because conflict of any kind stems from the inward man as he attempts to deal with outward circumstances of life, and motivated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life. The truth of Jesus of Nazareth's admonition is applicable in any Conflict and Resolution scenario, saying, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). There are many factors that can challenge the peacemaker in their efforts to resolve the issues that plague mankind in their relationships with one another, and with their God. The difficult part for the peacemaker is to look beyond what the senses might reveal, and look beyond the faces, look beyond the economics, look beyond the

physical, and deal with the facts of a matter, i.e., collect all of the facts before arriving at one's conclusion. This, as we know, is what's contained in the phrase to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The scale of the conflict, whether big or small is of little concern in relation to a successful resolution. The opponents in every conflict want their side upheld, whether it be siblings that bring their grievances to a father, or nations that bring their grievances to a world court. The subsequent consequences vary in degree, but the resolutions themselves necessitates an acceptance of a standard of righteousness. Although the truth of Jeremiah's affirmation: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23), is self-evident, it is also self-evident that Solomon's affirmation: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes" (Proverbs 16:2), is also true. The problem with the latter is that "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

The conflicts of our inquiry have dealt with a relatively small portion of the sacred writing, albeit some three thousand years of man's history. The remaining record of Israel's history, from the writings of Samuel to that of Malachi reveal man's continual wrestling with himself, his dealings with others on a personal, family, societal, or national level, as well as with his Creator.

This final observance of the Conflicts and Resolutions contained in the Law and the Prophets will direct our attention to the writings of Malachi, who was the last literary prophet recognized in the Hebrew canon. What we will focus on is a small, but revealing portion of Malachi's writing and Jehovah's Conflict with Israel and her priests.

Israel had a Conflict with Jehovah that manifested itself in ingratitude. Jehovah reveals the source of the conflict, saying, "I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" The ingratitude of Israel will be addressed as it relates to their conduct. In answer to, not what Israel expressed verbally, but what they expressed in the question, "Wherein hast thou loved us," Jehovah said, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother, saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I

hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus saith Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and men shall call them The border of wickedness, and The people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Jehovah be magnified beyond the border of Israel” (Malachi 1:1–5).

In further consideration of Israel’s lack of gratitude, as is seen in the conduct of the priest, Jehovah said, “A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honor? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith Jehovah of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of Jehovah is contemptible. And when ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! and when ye offer the lame and sick, it is no evil!” (Malachi 1:6–8).

Whereas the priest would deny they failed to honor Jehovah, and/or despise His name, Jehovah indicates such to be the case as is manifested in the “left-overs,” if you will, of their offerings, saying, “Present it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee? or will he accept thy person? saith Jehovah of hosts.”

Thus, the Conflict: “And now, I pray you, entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he accept any of your persons? saith Jehovah of hosts. Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Malachi 1:9–10).

The Resolution: “From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah 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. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts” (Malachi 3:7–12).

There are numerous lessons to be gleaned from the writing of Malachi, and you are encouraged to take the time to read. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul said, “For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:1–12).

In our next segment we will be considering Conflict Resolution set forth in the gospel dispensation.