



# World Christian Fellowship

[www.wcflondon.com](http://www.wcflondon.com)  
[wcflondon@gmail.com](mailto:wcflondon@gmail.com)

## Endurance!

### Back in Jerusalem.

Many of the Jewish people had been sent into exile between the years **597 to 582 B.C.**



In **539 B.C.**, **Cyrus of Persia** conquered Babylonia. He gave the Jewish people permission to return to their homeland of Judea.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah talk about the hundred-year period that followed the time of the exile.

The books of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah also come from this time.

Sometime between **500 and 425 B.C.** the priest named Ezra encouraged the people to return to their Jewish traditions and to obey the Law of Moses.

He went so far as to force Jewish men to give up their foreign wives (Ezra 9,10).

Two religious issues were most important to the people who had returned from exile:

1. Worship of the God of Israel in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.
2. Study of the Law of Moses to see how God's people were to live in the present situation.

Also in this period, Nehemiah served for a time as governor of Judea and helped supervise the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

Though the people had the freedom to worship as they wished, their land was still under control of the Persians.

When the prophet Malachi stepped off the earthly stage around **450 B.C.**, no genuine prophetic voice was heard again for about **500 years**.

The temple in Jerusalem, finally rebuilt by **515 B.C.**, once again became the centre of Jewish worship.

Because the Jews rejected the Samaritans' offer to help reconstruct the temple, the Samaritans built an alternate

temple in the late fourth century on Mount Gerizim, some 40 miles (64 km) north of Jerusalem.

Thus, the worship of and belief in Jehovah fragmented between the new temple at Mount Gerizim and the Jerusalem temple because they offered competing claims of priesthood authority (**John 4:20**).

But this revival did not last long. After Malachi, as the prophet Amos had prophesied, the Lord sent a famine.

**Amos 8:11**, *“famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord”*

This pivotal change had major consequences as people attempted to understand and live the law without a prophet’s authoritative teachings and interpretations.

### **Post-Exilic Period (537 to 430 BC)**

Rebuilding the temple and walls of Jerusalem.

Malachi, last book of the Old Testament, written about 430 BC.

1. **Ezra,**
2. **Nehemiah,**
3. **Haggai,**
4. **Zechariah, and**
5. **Malachi.**

All five of the books were written in Judah during what is known as the Post-Exilic Period, that is, the hundred years or so that follows the return from exile in Babylon that began about **537 BC**.

A quick overview:

### **Return to re-build the Temple (Ezra 1-6).**

This historical passage covers the period from Cyrus's proclamation and includes the return of the first group from Babylon about **537 BC**, the rebuilding of the temple, work stoppages due to enemies, and the completion and dedication of the temple in **515 BC**.

### **Re-aligning Priorities (Haggai 1-2).**

This is a short prophetic book of four prophecies given about **520 BC** designed to encourage the Jewish leaders to get started again on rebuilding the temple.

### **Encouragement for the Builders (Zechariah 1-6).**

Zechariah is a longer prophetic book. The prophecies given about **520 BC** designed to encourage the Jews to complete the temple project. Zechariah's prophecies come with some rather bizarre images to interpret.

### **Prophecies of the Messiah (Zechariah 7-14).**

The second half of Zechariah contains four prophecies without a specific date. These point to the coming Messiah, a call to

righteousness, an indictment of false shepherds, the final battle, and the New Jerusalem.

### **Confession and Repentance (Ezra 7-10).**

Ezra leads a new caravan of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem about **458 BC**. How Ezra deals with the people's sins of intermarrying with non-believers.

### **Nehemiah's Prayer (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8).**

Nehemiah hears of the plight of Jerusalem and offers a prayer to God that can serve as a model for us of a prayer of confession and intercession. We see a tough, spiritual leader in action.

### **Restoring the Wall (Nehemiah 2:9-7:73).**

Jerusalem's wall has been broken down.

Nehemiah organizes resources and teams, then completes the task in **52 days**. In the midst stiff opposition from Judah's enemies. But Nehemiah must deal with intermarriage with non-Jews again.

### **Repentance and Revival (Nehemiah 8-13).**

Now Ezra takes centre stage again by reading and explaining God's law to the entire nation. The result is a genuine spiritual revival, and a final celebration of the completion of the wall.

### **Love, Worship, and Marriage (Malachi 1-2).**

Prophet Malachi, who writes sometime between **460 and 430 BC**. His first three prophecies concern the need for sincere worship, and faithfulness to a covenant of marriage, rather than easy divorces.

### **Justice, Tithing, Purifying, and Judgment (Malachi 3-4).**

Malachi's last three prophecies concerning purifying God's people, faithfulness in tithing, and the future Day of Judgment when the wicked are punished and the righteous vindicated.

A final promise looks forward to John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah.



### **Backsliding:**

The spiritual climate of the people had grown cold, and Malachi

rebukes them for their religious and social compromise. He directs his message to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security in their privileged relationship with God.

By way of questions and answers Malachi probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. Nevertheless, if they return to God with sincere hearts, they will be blessed.

How encouraging that is, that even though they have sunk this far in sin God is still willing to forgive them.

The book of Malachi is a prophecy that reveals to us the condition of the Israelite nations today.

The people that Malachi warns were so sinful that God's words no longer had any impact on them.

Malachi especially relates to the mainstream Christian churches today in that the people commit the same sins that plagued ancient Israel and Judah just prior to their captivity.

Sadly, many of these same sins plague the greater churches of God today because people do not resist the influence of the world, and they maintain the world's way of thinking in their lives. This prophecy is like viewing this age in a mirror.

The book of Malachi is located at a point of transition. It has been placed at the end of the Old Testament, but it anticipates the New Testament.

Malachi returned to Judah from Persia between the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of **Artaxerxes Longimanus**, about 432 BC and 424 BC. when Artaxerxes died.

Consequently, Malachi prophesied approximately **100 years after Haggai and Zechariah**, the two writers who immediately precede him in our Bibles.

## Silent Years



The 400 years of silence refers to the time between the Old Testament and New Testament, during which, so far as we know, God did not speak—no Scripture was written.

The 400 years of silence began with the warning that closed the Old Testament.

**Malachi 4:5-6**, *“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse”*

Old Testament ended with the coming of John the Baptist, the Messiah’s forerunner.

At the time of Malachi’s warning, about 430 B.C., the Jews had returned to Israel from the Babylonian captivity (as merchants, not shepherds).

The **Medo-Persian Empire** still ruled Israel, and the temple had been rebuilt.

Both the Law and the priesthood of Aaron’s line had been restored, and the Jews had given up their worship of idols. Nevertheless, Malachi’s warning was not without cause. The Jewish people were mistreating their wives, marrying pagans and not tithing, and the priests were neglecting the temple and not teaching the people the ways of God.

In short, the Jews were not honouring God.

In **333 B.C.**, Israel fell to the **Greeks**,

In **323 B.C.** it fell to the **Egyptians**.

Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire about **532–332 BC**.

The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion with little interference. They were even allowed to rebuild and worship at the temple (**2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4**).

Alexander the Great defeated Darius of Persia, bringing Greek rule to the world. Alexander was a student of Aristotle and was well-educated in Greek philosophy and politics.

Alexander wanted the Greek culture to be promoted in every land that he conquered. As a result, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, becoming the translation known as the Septuagint.

Most of the New Testament references to Old Testament Scripture use the Septuagint phrasing. Alexander did allow religious freedom for the Jews, though he still strongly promoted Greek lifestyles.

This was not a good turn of events for Israel, since the Greek culture was very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.

After Alexander died, Judea was ruled by a series of successors, culminating in the **Selucid king Antiochus Epiphanes**.

The Jews generally were treated well throughout those reigns, and they adopted the Greek language and many of the Greek customs and manners, and in Egypt the Old Testament was translated into Greek. That translation, the Septuagint, came into widespread use (and is quoted frequently in the New Testament).

Jewish law and the priesthood remained more or less intact until **Antiochus** the Great of Syria captured Israel in 204 B.C. He and his successor.

**Antiochus Epiphanes** persecuted the Jews and sold the priesthood, and in **171 B.C.** Epiphanes desecrated the Holy of Holies.

This desecration resulted in an uprising by **Judas Maccabeus** of the priestly line of Aaron, and in **165 B.C.** the Jews recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the temple.

However, fighting continued between the Jews and the Syrians until the **Romans** gained control of Israel in **63 B.C.**, at which time Pompey walked into the Holy of Holies, once again shocking and embittering the Jews.

In **47 B.C.**, **Caesar installed Antipater**, a descendant of Esau, as procurator of Judea, and Antipater subsequently appointed his two sons as kings over Galilee and Judea.

As the New Testament opens, Antipater's son, **Herod the Great**, a descendant of Esau, was king.

The priesthood was politically motivated and not of the line of Aaron. Politics also resulted in the development of two major factions, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees.

The Sadducees favoured the liberal attitudes and practices of the Greeks. They held to only the Torah as regards religion but like most aristocrats they did not think God should have any part in governing the nation.

The Pharisees were conservative zealots who, with the help of the scribes, developed religious law to the point where the concerns and care of people were essentially meaningless.

Additionally, synagogues, new places of worship and social activity, had sprouted up all over the country, and religious and civil matters were governed by the lesser and the greater **Sanhedrins**, the greater Sanhedrin being comprised of a chief priest and seventy other members that handed out justice, sometimes by 39 lashes administered with full force.

Between the time of Malachi and the coming of the Messiah, several prophecies were fulfilled, including the 2,300 days of desecration between 171 and 165 B.C. (**Daniel 8:14**).

However, the people did not put to good use either the fulfilled prophecies nor the 400 years the nation was given to study Scripture, to seek God (Psalm 43-44), and to prepare for the coming Messiah.

In fact, those years blinded and deafened the nation to the point where most of the Jews could not even consider the concept of a humble Messiah (**Zechariah 9:9; Isaiah 6:10; John 12:40**).

Almost 2000 years have passed since the New Testament canon was completed, and though the Word is full of grace and truth, and though the birth, life, and death of Jesus fulfilled a staggering array of prophecies, the Jews as a people have yet to open their eyes and ears.

The time between the last writings of the Old Testament and the appearance of Christ is known as the “intertestamental” (or “between the testaments”) period. It lasted from the prophet Malachi’s time (**about 400 BC**) to the preaching of John the Baptist (**about AD 25**).

Because there was no prophetic word from God during the period from Malachi to John, some refer to it as the “**400 silent years.**”

The political, religious, and social atmosphere of Israel changed significantly during this period. Much of what happened was predicted by the prophet Daniel. (Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11.)

## **Are we living in Malachi’s Day?**

In Palestine **433-424 B.C**

No, we are in a place where-

- Despite God’s grace- religious ritual
- Despite God’s instruction - moral perversity

### **Q 1: How have you loved us?**

**A:** “I chose (and blessed and delivered and protected and spoke to) you

### **Q 2: How have we despised our name?**

**A:** “You are presenting defiled food upon my altar.”

### **Q 3: How have we despised our name?**

**A:** “in that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is to be despised.’ ”

**Q 4: How have we wearied Him?**

**A:** “In that you say, . . .(two really wrong things!)

**Q 5: How shall we return?**

**A:** Return to me, and I will return to you.

**Q 6: How have we robbed You?**

**A:** “In tithes and offerings.”

**Q 7: What have we spoken against You?**

**A:** “It is in vain to serve God, and only the proud and wicked prosper.”

**Seven Questions One Answer:** Completely

**Observations:**

- There was no voice from the Lord.
- There was no prophetic word from the Lord.

But there was a worship service is happening everyday morning and evening.

- o Sacrifices were offered.
- o Temple was decorated.
- o Festivals observed.

How easily people have deceived themselves thinking they are worshipping God whereas they were just deceiving themselves.

Take a moment and think.

- Not one day,
- Not one week,
- Not one month,
- Not one year,
- 400 long years!!

**How could they?**

How easily they have forgotten about the deliverance by God?  
How easy it is for them and to us to become lethargic in our daily walk?

**Application:**

**How can we avoid such a life?**

### **1. Consistency**

**Psalms 92:1-2**, *It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; <sup>2</sup>To declare Your*

*lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night,*

The Christian life is not like driving through a city with stop lights along the way. Some turn green not hindering our travel while some glare red stopping us on our journey.



No, the Christian life is not lived with such spurts of stop and go activity.

Nor is the Christian life a 100-yard dash lived out with a burst of quick energy on a fast track. It is a marathon of a slow walk in a clear direction.

Yet all of us at times in our Christian experience know the inconsistency of spiritual green and red lights. Those times when we are doing well, unhindered in our walks, but suddenly encounter the “red lights” of spiritual laziness, neglect, and lack of self-discipline.

What Christian has not experienced outbursts of energetic zeal in following the Lord but soon find exhaustion, fatigue, and a “cutting corners” on the spiritual disciplines like daily time in the Word and prayer settling into our lives?

Yes, we are weak and prone to wander when it comes to a life of consistency in following the Lord.

But there is hope.

We can progress to a more disciplined and consistent spiritual experience with the Lord.

Here are two things to consider as spiritual aids to help build consistency in our journeys with the Lord Jesus.

1. Christian life is not lived by a flurry of activities, busyness in Christian things, or an overly extended schedule of Christian service.

Nor is it propelled by extraordinary spiritual experiences like concerts, conferences, seminars, or books. These have their

value, but the Christian life is a walk, a journey, and that at a pace that is not to be marked by burnout and stress.

We walk, not run, with the Lord that is supposed to be cultivated daily by sitting at His Feet, enjoying His Presence, and conforming slowly, but surely, into His image.

This cultivated Christian life occurs over a lifetime, and it depends on daily feeding from His Word and communing with Him in prayer.

However, none of those things defining the Christian life will occur if we are looking for “instant spirituality”, “drive-through spiritual maturity”, and live lives at a frenzied pace where we are overwhelmed by a too full schedule and give God our leftover time after the world has taken up the best of our time.

## 2. Start and end the day with God.

As we read from Psalmist rises in the morning, he reminds himself of and then proclaims God’s steadfast love.

He orients his thinking heavenly on the God who is love before he enters into the fray of his day. Then before he turns the lights off at night, and lays his head on the pillow, he reminds himself of God’s faithfulness.

He looked back over the day and saw how his God was so faithful to protect him, use him, forgive him, strengthen him, and all the other marvellous workings of God's grace in his life.

Maybe that is why he started his Psalm with thanksgiving?  
His pattern is a good one to follow.

We want consistency in our walks with the Lord.  
We can get there.

Begin with seeing the Christian life for what it is, then start and end the day remembering God in His steadfast love and faithfulness to us. Such disciplines will build a life of spiritual consistency.

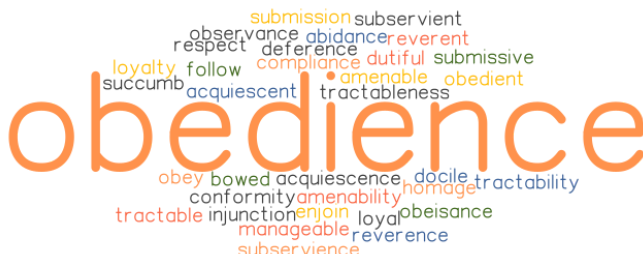
## 2. **Obedience**

### **Definition**

The general concept of obedience both in the Old and New Testament relates to hearing to a higher authority.

One of the Greek terms for obedience in the Bible conveys the idea of positioning oneself under someone by submitting to their authority and command.

Another Greek word for obey in the New Testament means "to trust."



Thus, biblical obedience to God means to hear, trust, submit and surrender to God and his Word.

## Why obedience to God is important?

### 1. Jesus Calls Us to Obey

In Jesus Christ, we find the perfect model of obedience. As His disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love:

**John 15:14**, *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*

**1 John 5:2-3**, *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. (ESV)*

**2 John 1:6**, *Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning. (NLT)*

## **2. Obedience Is an act of Worship**

While the Bible places a strong emphasis on obedience, it's critical to remember that believers are not justified (made righteous) by obedience.

Salvation is a free gift of God, and we can do nothing to merit it. True Christian obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord.

**Romans 12:1**, *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. (NLT)*

## **3. God rewards Obedience**

Repeatedly we read in the Bible that God blesses and rewards obedience:

**Genesis 22:18**, *"And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me." (NLT)*

**Luke 12:28**, *"But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice."* (NLT)

**James 1:22–25**, *But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.* (NLT)

#### **4. Obedience is better than Sacrifice**

The phrase "obedience is better than sacrifice," has often perplexed Christians. It can only be understood from an Old Testament perspective. The law required the Israelite people to offer sacrifices to God, but those sacrifices and offerings were never intended to take the place of obedience.

**1 Samuel 15:22–23**, *But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."* (NLT)

## **5. Disobedience leads to Sin and Death**

The disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world. This is the basis of the term "original sin."

But Christ's perfect obedience restores fellowship with God for everyone who believes in Him.

**Romans 5:19**, *For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous.* (ESV)

**1 Corinthians 15:22**, *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* (ESV)

## **3. Aim for the Prize.**

God in Christ is the price and the prize of the Gospel.

The prize of the gospel is the Person who paid the price, God in Christ.



The gospel is the good news that God in Christ paid the price of suffering, so that we could have the prize of enjoying Him forever.

God's good news for the world.

**Romans 5:6–8**, *While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

The price of the gospel is the death of Christ.

**V 6**, “Christ died for the ungodly.”

**V 8**, “Christ died for us.”

**V 10**, while we were enemies Christ died for us.

God loved us while we were sinners and paid a price so that we might have an infinite prize. That price was the death of his Son.

**What did God purchase for us by the price of his Son?**

**Romans 5:9**, *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

**What do we need to be saved from?**

The wrath of God.

The end of the gospel is “we rejoice in God.”

The highest, fullest, deepest, sweetest, good of the gospel is God Himself, enjoyed by His redeemed people.

God in Christ became the price (Romans 5:6–8),

God in Christ became the prize (Romans 5:11).

The gospel is the good news that God bought for us the everlasting enjoyment of God.

**1 Corinthians 15:1–4**, *Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,<sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*

### **1. The gospel is a divine plan.**

*“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

In accordance with the Scriptures written centuries before He died. Which means, the gospel was planned by God long before it took place.

### **2. The gospel is a historical event.**

*“Christ died.”*

The gospel is not myth.

It is not mere ideas or feelings.

It is an event.

Without the event, there is no gospel.

### **3. God accomplished in the death of Jesus long before we ever existed.**

“Christ died for our sins.” “For our sins” means, this death had design in it. It was meant to accomplish something.

- The covering of our sins (Colossians 2:14),

- The removal of God's wrath (Romans 8:3; Galatians 3:13),
- The purchase of eternal life (John 3:16).

#### **4. The gospel is a free offer of Christ for faith.**

**V 1–2**, *“The gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.”*

The good news of God's achievements in Christ become ours by faith, by believing, by receiving. Not by giving a performance or by deserving or working. What God has done is free to all who will have it. It is received by faith. Without the free offer of Christ for faith, there would be no gospel.

#### **5. The gospel is the enjoyment of fellowship with God Himself.**

What is the highest, deepest, most satisfying, all-encompassing good of the good news?  
God Himself known and enjoyed by His redeemed people.

**1 Peter 3:18**, *“Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”*

All the other gifts of the gospel exist to make this one possible.

- o We are forgiven so that our guilt does not keep us away from God.
- o We are justified so that our condemnation does not keep us away from God.
- o We are given eternal life now, with new bodies in the resurrection, so that we have the capacities for enjoying God to the fullest.

**Why do you want forgiveness?**

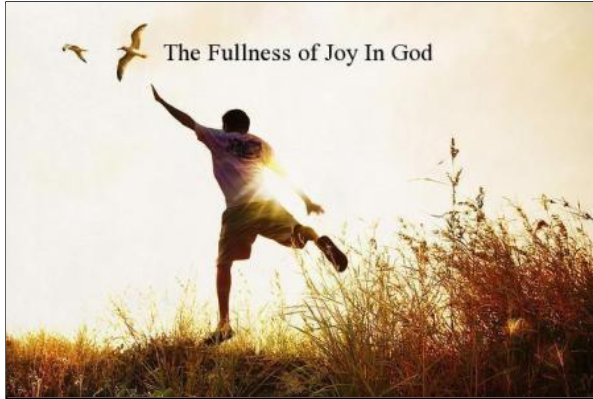
**Why do you want to be justified?**

**Why do you want eternal life?**

Because want to enjoy God

The prize of the gospel is the Person who paid the price.

**Psalms 16:11**, *“In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore”*



## **Conclusion/Prayer:**

I remember one of the well-known Puritan authors says that 'I want to be where God is, my aim is not to go to heaven. I am willing to go to hell if that is where God is'

**Will that be your aim?**

**Will you long to be with Him to enjoy Him and He will enjoy with you??**

If that is what your prayer, then your journey to heavenly Jerusalem where our Lord dwells will be your dwelling.

**Deuteronomy 11:21**, *that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.*

**Matthew 6:10**, *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*



Amen!

**Welcome to the Journey 2 Jerusalem!!**