1:4 Edom (Esau) was zealous to return and rebuild the ravaged land which God had once given him, whereas Israel wasn’t, for the most part, zealous to return from Babylon to rebuild the land God had given them. And yet God still loved Israel above Edom, by pure grace. So often those who aren’t God’s people are more zealous for their causes than God’s people are for His.

1:7 ‘The table of the Lord’ refers to the altar. At the breaking of bread service, we eat of “the table of the Lord” (1 Cor. 10:21), the same phrase used here in the Septuagint. By breaking bread we are therefore like the priests of Israel eating at the altar. His work hasn’t been delegated out to a group of specialists; *we* are all the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

1:8 One doesn’t give sub-standard service to their employer. One didn’t bring him a defective animal as a gift. And yet Israel gave their God the lame and the blind animals, they only served Him as far as it didn’t hurt them. They gave Him what cost them nothing. And yet they should not only have served Him as they served their earthly masters; but, because He is the “great God”, they should have given Him even more. And so we must ask: the time we give to our careers and development in them, the thought we give to our secular lives, the respect we pay it… how does this compare to our attitude to Divine things?

1:10 There was nobody to even shut the doors of the temple; there was nobody willing to fulfil Ezekiel’s prophecy / command about the temple doors being shut (Ez. 44:1,2; 46:1,2,12), and so the potential situation prophesied by Ezekiel didn’t come true because God’s people in Malachi’s time just couldn’t be bothered. So much potential was wasted at the return of Judah from Babylon, and it is in our age too.

1:13 *Weariness* - The repetitive nature of priestly work led them to treat it as "a weariness". They got bored with the things of the Kingdom, as in 2:10,11. Familiarity can so easily lead to our not grasping the awe of being in relationship with God.

2:7 The duty of the priests under the Old Covenant was to maintain true understanding of God's word, witness this to the world around them, and teach it to their brothers and sisters in Israel. Although there was a special priesthood, it was clearly God's intention that all Israel should be like priests; they were to be a "Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), and we are to be likewise (1 Pet. 2:5,9), not assuming others will care for us spiritually, but each of us taking real responsibility.

2:10,11 This may be a reference to how at the time of the restoration from Babylon, the Jews married unbelievers. This is described in the same terms used here- a breaking covenant with Him (Ezra 10:2,10; Neh. 13:27,29). Their marriage to unbelievers led them to accept the gods of their wives- and in this lay the sin of what they did.

2:15 *Make you one*- a reference to how God joins together husband and wife in the course of their married life, not just on their wedding day. The intention is that our children will be “Godly”. If we are not united, not companions with each other, or if our partner is an unbeliever, it will be so much harder for us to raise Godly children.

3:6 God does change, as witnessed by men like Moses changing His stated intentions through prayer and intercession. What is unchangeable about Him is His grace to His sinful people.

3:14 Nehemiah, seeking for Israel’s obedience to Ezekiel’s temple vision, tried to get them to ‘follow His instructions’ (s.w. Neh. 7:3; 12:9,45; 13:20). For Ezekiel had prophesied that in the restored temple, God’s instructions would be followed (Ez. 40:46; 44:8,14-16). But now, Judah complained that there was no benefit to them from having kept the charges (Mal. 3:14 s.w.). Partial obedience discouraged them from any further effort, because the fullness of blessing can only come from a way of life conformed to God’s Kingdom vision and life. This is why people get disillusioned with religion and lose the faith- because they seek for immediate benefit as a result of keeping a few highly specific aspects of God’s law, rather than willingly devoting their whole way of life to the realisation of His vision.

3:16 If we truly love God, we will naturally want to find and communicate with others who also do.

3:17 We are so very valuable to God- His jewels, His “very own”. We can take comfort that we are not alone in this world, He is so intensely with us.

4:2 *The sun*- A prophecy of Christ’s return. He will be like the dawn, chasing away the darkness which is now on the earth.

4:5 It seems that ‘Elijah’ will come to convert some in Israel to Christ before His second coming. John the Baptist was an Elijah prophet (Mt. 11:14); this prophecy of ‘Elijah’ may therefore not necessarily require literal Elijah to appear on earth, but the work of converting some in Israel could be fulfilled by others.