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**The Sunday School Lesson**

SUNDAY, JUNE 18th, 1950

**WHOLEHEARTED RELIGION**

Golden Text: Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Mal 2:10

LESSON TEXT—Mal 2:10, 3:7-10, 4:5-6  
EXPOSITION—1. Love Thy Neighbour, 2:10

Malachi was a prophet sent from God to the restored remnant who had returned to Palestine after the seventy years' captivity in Babylon. His counsel and warnings called attention to the love of God and their lack of love toward each other. Although they had been chastened in the captivity yet as soon as they returned to the homeland they began to deal treacherously with each other. This shows how impossible it is to get an out of human relations without regeneration. (Ezek. 33:23-29, Jer. 4:4, Am. 7:28) Even professing Christians do not always treat their brethren right (1 Cor. 6:6-10). It is necessary to urge honesty and decency (Eph. 4:25, 1 Thes. 4:6). Unless men's mutual relationships are established on right attitudes toward God it is often certain that they will deal deceitfully with each other.

II. The Guilt and the Folly of Robbing God, 3:7-9

The Prophecy of Malachi was occasioned by the unfaithfulness of the people toward Jehovah. They were blind to their unfaithfulness, when Jehovah brought his charges, they constantly replied with "Wherein have we done this or that?" (ch. 1:6, 7; 2:14, 17, 3:7, 8, 15, RV.) Malachi was speaking for God. In the earlier part of this chapter God had declared that He would send His messenger to prepare the way for Himself and the character of the messenger and his work (vs. 1-5). The Lord was coming to execute judgment upon various classes of sinners and to be a swift witness against them (vs. 5). All through His dealings with Israel God had called them to repentance and promised them pardon (vs. 7, cf. Lev. 26:40-42; Deut. 4:29-31; 3:1-4; 1 Ki. 8:47-49; Neh.

1:8, 9; Isa. 55:6, 7; Jer. 3:12-14, 22; Ezek. 18:30-32; Hos. 14:1-4; Zech. 1:3, Ac. 3:19-21; Jas. 4:8).

From the days of their fathers, Israel had gone astray from God's ordinances, and from the days of the fathers God's constant cry was "Return unto me and I will return unto you" (v. 7). In the blind self-righteousness of their hearts the people asked, "Wherein shall we return?" With similar pretence of guiltlessness those who reject Christ today are saying, "Wherein shall we return?" It is a startling question that God puts in verse 8: "Will a man rob God?"

Then God goes on to tell how, "in tithes and offerings" the law of tithes in the letter of it belongs to the Old Covenant but we are under "moral obligations higher than the Jew, and the man who does not set a proper portion of his income apart for God's work is robbing God. Do you give as much as you ought for foreign missions? We rob Him in the use of our time talents, our strength, our use of the Lord's Day, etc. The result is appalling (v. 9).

III. "Bring ye All the Tithes into the Storehouse," v. 10  
When the whole tithe is brought into the storehouse, so the needs of God's work are fully supplied then the windows of heaven are opened and a blessing poured out that exceeds all our capacity to receive (cf. Matt. 6:33, 2 Cor. 9:8, 11th, 4:15, 19; Deut. 28:12, 1 Ki. 17:13-16,

1 Jno. 3:16-22). Let any one who doubts it prove God by trying Him. Destroying insects had been sent into their land destroying their harvests because of their forgetfulness of God (cf. Amos 4:9; 7:1-13; Hag. 1:5-11; 2:17).

If they repented, Jehovah promised to rebuke the devouring insects (cf. Joel 2:20); and promised them abundant harvests in field and vineyard, but the better reward was that all nations should call them blessed (v. 12, cf. Deut. 4:6, 7). The time is coming when Israel shall return and when all nations shall call them blessed (Isa. 61:9; Jer. 33:9; Zeph. 3:19, 20; Zech. 8:23); and the time is coming when their land "shall be a delightful land" (v. 12; cf. Deut. 8:7-10, 11-12; Dan. 11:41; Ezek. 36:33; Jer. 31:27; Zech. 8:3-5).

IV. The Day of the Lord, 4:5, 6  
All life is to be lived with a reverent sense of responsibility. God is the ultimate of our living in this world. We must all appear before Him. The sinner who rejects grace must sometime face God (Rom. 14:11, 12). Israel rejecting his Messiah must some day face Him. They shall look on Him they pierced (Zech. 12:10). The Church must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Thus the end of life is to bring us face to face with God. We can taste the joy of victorious reward even now if we will (1 Cor. 15:50). The reference is to Elijah as the forerunner of the returning Christ. Before His golden reign begins Israel will know a change of heart as was typified in the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17). John came in the spirit of Elijah, but he frankly declared to the Pharisees that he was not their prophet (Jno. 1:21). He did the work of another Elijah as stated on the authority of Jesus (Matt. 11:14). But there is a coming consummation when Elijah is to appear as the forerunner of the returning Christ. The Jews have always believed that it is a literal Elijah. Their saying is "Messiah must be anointed by Elijah" (Matt. 17:11). His mission will be to turn the hearts of the fathers and the children so that they will have a readiness to repent and accept their Messiah. Evidently the "curse" which means "a ban" used in relation to the extermination of the Canaanites must be lifted from Israel before the restoration of all things (Zech. 12:13, 14).

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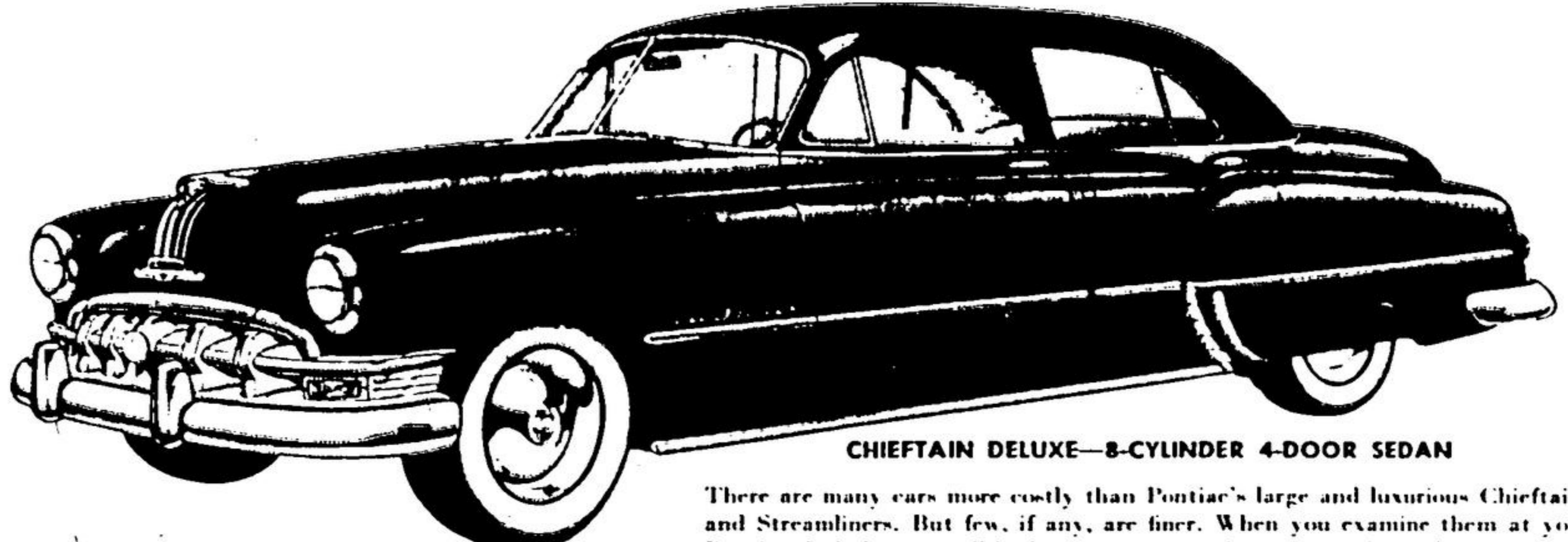


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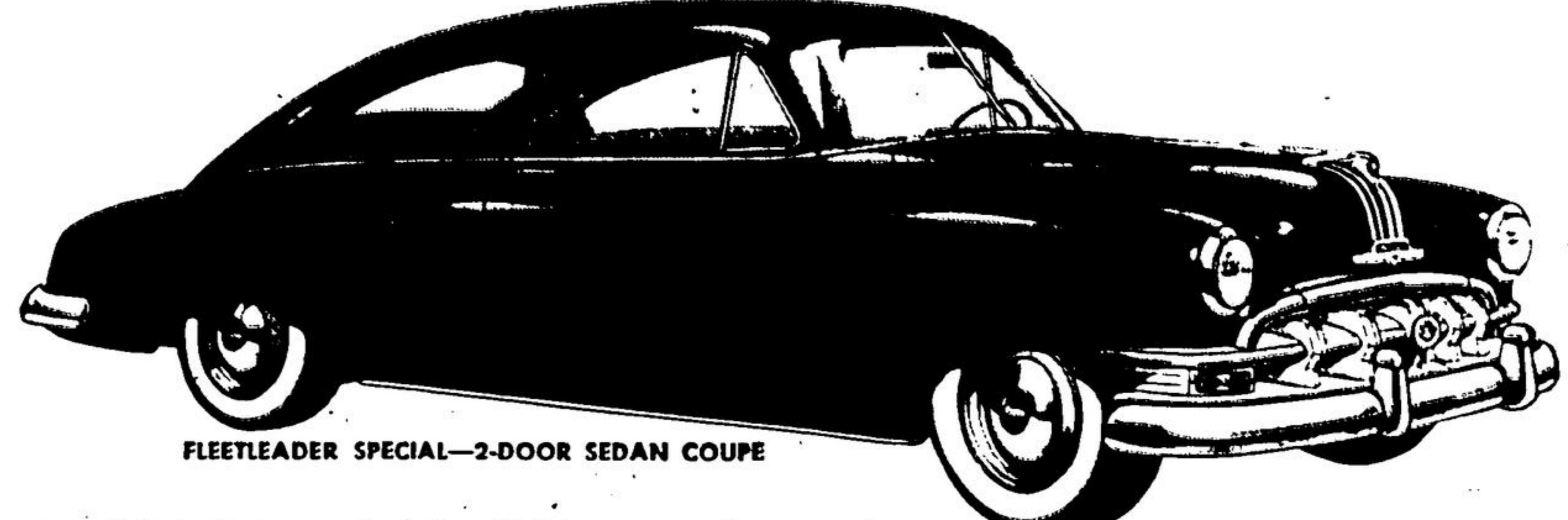
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