

The Lord's Message Through Malachi

Malachi 1-4

Introduction: Let's take a moment to imagine ourselves on the other side of Bethlehem in the years B.C. (before Christ). We are people of the Old Covenant. We know well the old tale of woe, of Adam's Fall, Noah's Flood, the horrors of Egypt when Pharaoh sought the destruction of our nation.

We keep our yearly Passovers, rejoicing in our deliverance by blood applied. Our sacrifices are offered. Our lives are those of God's chosen people. We have sinned, been exiled, and know of God's judgment through Assyria in the north and Babylon in Judah. We know sin is not a safe zone! We are religious.

Knowing the danger of sin, **we have rebuilt the temple** in our land to our joyous sorrow. Glimpsing the Promised Land's desirability there was that delay with the reconstruction that resulted in prophetic rebuke. *We are home. We are sacrificing. We are satisfied with ourselves.*

But pause. **Suddenly, God sends forth His messenger named MY MESSENGER.** MY MESSENGER is provocative. MY Messenger reveals God has a controversy with His people, His worshipers, yes, even with His own priests! As we prepare our hearts and look to the advent of the Messiah, the Christ foretold, God's last word to His people for 450 comes to Malachi **HIS** prophet.

Let us these last two weeks before Christmas let Malachi examine our hearts and lives to see if we, like Judah of old, have allowed the clutter of our lives to crowd our God out of our lives.

- 1. God loves the people of His covenant but His people doubt His love (1:1-4).** Have you ever doubted that God loved you? Judah did. They looked at life and wondered: how can my life with these circumstances show that God loves me?

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God answered simply: I love you. My love for you is permanent and unchanging (Jeremiah 31:3). Contrast my treatment with you with my judgment of Edom, the descendant of Esau. Edom was doomed; Judah had hope in her God. Edom could seek to salvage herself through her works and rebuilding, but God would frustrate her efforts.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord (Psalm 33:12). That nation will be blessed indeed. The nation that spurns God finds herself spurned by Him in turn. The chapter Book of **Obadiah** prophesied the safety of Edom like a high eagles nest (3-4) would be dashed; the pride of Edom abased (3,8). Her hatred and harm of Judah would result in the destruction of her valiant warriors (10-15). Edom experiences in full the Abrahamic curse (18-19a).

2. **God is Father and Lord to His children, but His priests disrespect His worship (1:5-14).**

Malachi's second message is that worship of Yahweh has been debased. Instead of giving God the best, worthless broken second-best animals were given as "sacrifice." Animals that tax-collectors would reject were given to God. Wise men from afar would bring gold, frankincense and myrrh to the house where Jesus was (Matthew 2), but His people would bring him the blind, lame, and sick (Malachi 1:8).

The Lord God snubs such worthless tokens! The King of kings and Lord of lords deserves better than some vassal emperor or local yodel ruler! This is defiled/ despised /polluted in both the sight of God and man (1:7)! What grace can such a gift obtain (1:9)? The Lord sighs and wishes the priests would just shut the temple door and just stop worship (1:10). David refused to make an offering that cost him nothing; the priests and people of Malachi's day were not nearly so

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picky! God, however, was the same God as He was in David's day and expected the same quality of worship. The quantity was not the matter, the quality was. So it is today. God does not want your trillions of won if you have only billions; He seeks not your billions if you have but millions; He asks not your millions if you have only thousands.

A sacrifice to God must be, should be, sacrificial. After all, it is for God, not just Caesar.

3. God gave a covenant of peace and life to His priests, **but His priests corrupted His covenant (2:1-9)**

The Lord's third message by Malachi is a command to repent.

God's glorious holy name had been defiled (1:6). His name had been taken in vain, not by cursing, but by worship!

Stop. Stop wicked worship. Stop worthless worship. God is not impressed with performance. Do it right or be punished (2:1-4). He wants your heart. His desire is for worship that is genuine, from the heart, done in the right way. God's covenant stands (2:4).

God recalls the glorious worship as Israel came to Sinai- not with the calf, but as the tabernacle was built. He was at the temple dedication of Solomon. He was glorified by the rebuilt smaller temple. He did not despise the day of small things when it was the day of small things. Small or big, the widows' two mites or the greatness of Hezekiah's Passover- God is glorified in true worship!

God grants the people of His covenant, His Levitical priests life, peace, and respect (2:5-6). Priests were pastoral; they proclaimed God's Word rightly. They feared the Lord and helped His people do the same. They restored the wayward through exhortation, teaching, and sin offerings (2:7).

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Cataclysmically, instead of being messengers of peace, priests had become fake news. They had misled the people, directing them away from God instead of to Him (2:8). The Just Judge of all the earth and His people would not and will not tolerate false teachers (2:9)!

4. God granted His people a godly heritage, **but Judah's families were falling apart (2:10-16)**

Malachi's fourth message: God is our Father, but your families are falling apart. Malachi once again returns to his message. God has revealed Himself as Ruler- the Covenant Giver of the priests but He is also their Father (1:6).

God is our Maker and Creator. All the earth belongs to Him, but those who believe in God have a unique Father-child relationship with Him. Jesus taught us to pray to our Father in Heaven, but this was not a new revelation (Matthew 6).

During biblical times, the father was responsible for his child's marriage. Abraham ensured that Isaac married right. Esau went astray by getting a wife in defiance of Isaac and Rebecca's wishes. Isaac sent out Jacob, in part, to get the right kind of wife.

God, as Father of His people, is concerned about His people's spouses. In the Old Testament, Jews were forbidden from marriage to unbelieving neighboring countries. Judah defied that Fatherly protection of their souls (2:11-12).

Other people walked away from their Father in Heaven by walking away from their wives (2:13-14). The God of their fathers did not countenance this disloyalty to family. God made marriage. He made Adam and Eve to be a lasting marriage unit, not a temporary disposable alliance. Marriage is a covenant with three parties: the husband and wife with each other before God (2:14). Divorce is hated

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by God (2:17). God made marriage for enjoyment, mutual benefit, offspring, and to reflect the relationship of His Son to His church.

5. **God is just in all His ways, but His people question His justice** (2:17). They thought God blessed the wicked. Perhaps, like the psalmist of Psalm 73, they saw the prosperity of the wicked. Like Job, they experienced trouble while those worse than them prospered.
6. **Malachi gives a message of the Messenger of the Lord (3:1-4:3) The Second Coming of Christ will bring an end to straying.**

Malachi, the Messenger of the Lord, proclaims the FINAL Messenger of the Lord, the Son of God who comes as King and Judge in His Second Advent.

6.1 The people and priests professed to delight in the Lord. This Messenger of the Covenant would bring the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31). He would come as the Melchizedian High Priest that offered Himself as the Lamb of God to offer the final sin offering of all time (Psalm 110:4; John 1:29). Those who reject the New Covenant will deal with the sudden appearance of the One who comes as the refiner and purifier (Malachi 3:3-4). During the Millennial Reign the renewed service of Levi will be presented by Levi (3:4-5).

6.2 Our Savior's Second Advent will be a day of judgment (3:3-6). The Tribulation will show the futility of Satan's reign under AntiChrist; only the mercy of God will preserve humanity at the end (Matthew 24-25).

6.3 Today is the day of mercy, when we call "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" with John the Baptist and the Messenger of the Covenant. We call upon all men everywhere to turn from sin to their Deliverer, Deity, the Son of God! Then you can worship God in

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Spirit and in truth through the work of Jesus Christ applied to you (Malachi 3:7-15).

7. God offers His people a chance to repent and obey (4:4-6)

Christ's First Coming offers a new Covenant as John the Baptist prepares to restore families and Jesus Christ restores His people to Himself(4:5-6). His law is now written on our hearts because the Babe was born in Bethlehem, came and fulfilled all Moses' law, fulfilling all righteousness, and paid the full penalty of the broken law on the cross for our sins (4:4).