

Title: MALACHI — *My Messenger*

Text: Malachi 1:1-5

Subject: *The Message of Malachi*

Date: Tuesday Evening— 2004

Tape # Y-1b

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Introduction:

Malachi was another of those prophets sent of God to speak in his name, as his voice, to the children of Israel after they returned from the long years of Babylonian captivity. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem was complete, the sacrifices had resumed, and the ordinances of divine worship had, to all outward appearance, been restored.

INDIFFERENCE

But things were not as they seemed on the surface. Malachi spoke for God in that period following the days of Haggai and Zechariah. It was an era that corresponded in many ways with the day in which we live. Among those who wore the name of the Lord and professed to be his people, men and women who were actively involved in religion, there was a terrible coldness and indifference toward the Lord God. Unbelief was evident. The Word of God was read in his house with regularity. The form of religion was maintained. But no one, neither the priests nor the people, seemed to believe God. They maintained a form of godliness, but denied the power of God (2 Tim. 3:5).

Religion, with these people was nothing but a ritual, an outward exercise. And the way they performed their religious duties demonstrated that they were a people who drew nigh to the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from him. In Malachi's day, as in the religious world today, for the most part the people who professed to be worshippers of God were "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it*" (2 Tim. 3:4-5).

GOD'S MESSENGER

Malachi was just the man for the hour. He steps in at just the right time as God's messenger. In fact, that is what his name means; and that is what he was — God's messenger. We know nothing else about him. He was a man sent of God with God's message for his people in his day.

UNIQUE BOOK

The book of Malachi is unique in three specific ways. *First, Malachi brings the Old Testament to a conclusion*. His was God's last word to his people for four hundred years. For more than four hundred years, the heavens would be silent until John the Baptist appeared as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "*prepare ye the way of the Lord.*" God's last word in the Old Testament was a call to repentance; and his first word in the New Testament was the same. — "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

Second, unlike other prophets, **Malachi's message was delivered as a dialogue**. Malachi was not like the dialogue preachers of our day. His dialogue was not a dialogue between himself and those who heard him. God's prophets are never sent to carry on a dialogue. They are sent to deliver a message. Malachi simply presents his message in the powerful, authoritative form of a dialogue. He asked a series of questions, and he answered them. Twelve times in the first three chapters of his prophecy, he says, "*ye say*," and shows how that what the people said was in direct contrast with what God says in his Word.

The *third* unique quality of this prophecy is the fact that almost the entire prophecy is written as the direct word of God. Gareth Crossley points out, "Of the fifty-five verses in this book, forty-seven are spoken by God — the highest portion of all the prophets."

DISTINGUISHING LOVE

Malachi's prophecy begins with a declaration of God's distinguishing love and grace to his elect, as it is set forth in the scriptures (Mal. 1:1-5)..

(Mal 1:1-5) "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. (2) I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, (3) And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his

heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. (4) Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. (5) And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel."

Yes, God's love is special, distinct, distinguishing love. He loves his elect, his Jacob. Everything he does is for his elect, for their eternal salvation and everlasting good. Esau exists only because of God's love for Jacob. The reprobate exist only to serve God's purpose of grace toward his elect. That is exactly the meaning the Holy Spirit gives to this passage in Romans 9:11-26. Let every redeemed sinner ever remember that we owe everything we have and shall have in Christ to God's distinguishing mercy, love and grace bestowed upon us in Christ from eternity (Jer. 31:3; Rom. 9:15-18; 1 Cor. 4:7).

(Jer 31:3) "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

(Rom 9:15-18) "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture

saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth."

(1 Cor 4:7) "For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*"

The prophecy of Malachi was given shortly after the time of Nehemiah. Read the book of Nehemiah and you will find the setting of this prophecy and this threefold description of the corruption in Israel:

1. The priesthood was defiled (Neh. 13:7-9, 29; Mal. 3:8).
2. The children of Israel had formed an idolatrous alliance with the heathen nations around them (Neh. 13:23-27; Mal. 2:10-16), which resulted both in mixed marriages, a mixed language, and a disregard for God's law.
3. The support of the house of God was neglected (Neh. 13:10-12; Mal. 3:10).

The Levites who served in the house of God were not given their inheritance in Israel as God required. These men and their families were to be supported by the offerings and tithes of the people, so that they could give

themselves to the service of the house of God. But they were working in the fields to provide for themselves, and the house of God was neglected.

One of the great reasons why those who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel, being supported in their livelihood by the generosity of God's people is that the Word of God and the preaching of the gospel be not neglected. When those who are responsible for the ministry of the gospel neglect prayer and study, those to whom they preach suffer.

It was at this time, in these deplorable conditions, that God raised up Malachi. He was not a tea-sipping socializer. Malachi was a prophet, God's messenger. Everyone thought the prophet was old-fashioned, out-of-step with the times, and a troublemaker. And they were right. Prophets are always old-fashioned, out-of-step with the times, and troublemakers for those who despise God and his Word. But the faithful servant of God, like Malachi, cannot be silenced. He will, like Malachi, stick his finger directly in the middle of the sore spot in the hearts of men and press hard, forcing those who hear him to know their sin.

SEVEN QUESTIONS

Perhaps the saddest part of the story of Malachi is that the people were not aware of their awful condition. They were insulted by Malachi's message. This is demonstrated by **seven points of dialogue**

between the Lord God and those who claimed to be his people.

1. “Wherein hast thou loved us?” (1:2)

Israel’s insolence in asking this question is shocking, until we are forced to acknowledge that we who are the objects of God’s great love often think of our God’s love with the same insolence (Ps. 73:2-3, 13-14).

Sometimes we are so blind that fail to see the tokens God’s amazing grace and special love for us.

(Mal 1:2-5) "I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, (3) And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. (4) Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. (5) And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel."

Oh, what a great lover our God is to us! The Lord God has, throughout history, protected, cared for, and provided for us, destroying our enemies on ever side, because he is determined to magnify himself from upon

the the border of Israel, and determined to make us see and know his glory in saving us.

2. “Wherein have we despised thy name?” (1:6)

Next, the Lord reminded Israel that a son honors his father and a servant honors his master, but they had no fear of him in their hearts. Is that not the case with many today? Is it true of you? — of me? Let’s be honest. We profess that we belong to Christ, that we believe God, but where is his honor?

(Mal 1:6) "A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"

As I read Malachi 1:7-14, I blush with shame. How often I offer to God my Savior that which is polluted, and lame, and sick, and worthless! David said, *“I will not sacrifice to the Lord that which doth cost me nothing.”* But we have polluted our God by our demonstrative irreverence and indifference toward him. Have we not? Does that sting? Perhaps you ask, *“Wherein have we polluted thee?”* *That is exactly what these people did. Look at verse 7.*

(Mal 1:7) "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible."

3. *“Wherein have we polluted thee?”*

They offered animals that were lame and sick and blind for sacrifice. They offered the most contemptible things to God and called it sacrificing, worshipping, and honoring God! No earthly ruler would tolerate such action. Men would not even treat their employer like Israel was treated God, like we treat him.

I say with Malachi (1:9), *“I pray you, beseech God that he may be gracious unto us.”*

As I read Malachi 1:7-14, I blush with shame. How often I offer to God my Savior that which is polluted, and lame, and sick, and worthless! David said, *“I will not sacrifice to the Lord that which doth cost me nothing.”* How much better he deserves than I give! I’m tired of giving God my leftovers! Aren’t you? I know this — He’s tired of it; and he refuses to accept such *“sacrifices!”* My God, give me grace to give you the best of...

- Time
- Labor
- Gifts.

Now, read at chapter 2, verse 17.

(Mal 2:17) "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the

sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?"

4. "Wherein have we wearied him?"

Note the context of this question. The priests, who were supposed to keep knowledge, seek the word of God at his mouth, and serve as messengers of the Lord of hosts, departed out of the way, caused the people to stumble at God's law, corrupted his covenant, and led the people to deal treacherously with the Lord (vv. 7-11).

Remember, Malachi was a prophet, God's messenger. He did not speak in vague terms that might be interpreted in any way men might choose. There was no misunderstanding this man. He specifically identifies the evil into which Israel's religious leaders led them.

- **First, the priests led the people to profane God's holiness that he loves, by wedding themselves to the daughters of strange gods** (v. 11).

They profaned God's altar, the place where his holiness was displayed in the sacrifices he required. By wedding themselves to the daughters of strange gods, they said, "The satisfaction of justice is not really necessary. Christ's substitutionary atonement is not the only way sinners can come to God. Grace is good; but grace is not essential. As long as you are sincere, come to God any way you want to, and he will receive you." The priests

led the people in the way of Cain, ran greedily after the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Korah.

- *Second, the worship of God had become noting more than superstitious froth, sentimentalism, and emotionalism* (v. 13).

(Mal 2:13) "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand."

- Malachi's *third* charge proved that these people were mere hypocrites, pretending worship God while living according to their own brute lusts. They utterly disregarded the word of God and their moral responsibilities before him, as was manifest in their disregard for marriage (vv. 14-16).

I know to whom I am speaking. I know that some of you are divorced and remarried. For some, that is not something you chose, but what another forced upon you. For some, the whole thing took place before God saved you. For others, it was a matter of utter disregard for the glory of God on your part.

I deliberately preface my next comments with this word. — That which is past is past. Leave it there. If Christ has forgiven your sin, it is forgiven. The people of God ought not hold it over your head.

Illustration: “*I could never allow...*”

Now, having said that, hear me and hear me well. — There is no such thing as a biblical divorce. Marriage is for life. And there is no such thing as a divorce that is “best” for all involved, or “best” for the children. Hear what God says.

(Mal 2:14-16) "Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. **(The vow I took 35 years ago, the covenant I entered into was not just with my wife, but with my God.)** (15) And did not he make one? (**He made Adam and one**). Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. (**God made Adam and Eve one and instituted the union of one man and one woman for the moral preservation of humanity** [1 Cor. 7:14].) Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. (16) For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

- **In verse 17, the faithful prophet declares that the religion of such people is nothing but lip service, and that it is a weariness to God.**

(Mal 2:17) "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where *is* the God of judgment?"

When men and women abandon the authority of God, despise his law, and disregard his Word, there is no standard by which to live (v. 17). When every one does that which is right in his own eyes, they call evil good and good evil, and justice is gone.

CHRIST

But blessed be our God, he will never abandon his own. Look at chapter 3. Here we see our Savior, in whom alone we have hope, by whose grace we are saved and kept.

- **Christ is our all-glorious Substitute, in whom God has established his covenant, and in whom he delights** (Mal. 3:1).

(Mal 3:1) "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

- **He sits as a refiner and purifier, and he will purify all his own** (Mal. 3:2-3)

(Mal 3:2-3) "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: (3) And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

- **Our sacrifices are made acceptable and pleasant to our God in and by our Substitute** (Mal. 3:4).

(Mal 3:4) "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

- **He is the Lord our God who changes not; and "he hateth putting away"** (Mal. 3:6).

(Mal 3:6) "For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

5. **"Wherein shall we return?"** (3:7)

(Mal 3:7) "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

Their attitude suggests that they did not even know they had strayed from the Lord. They actually thought they were doing God a service.

6. “Wherein have we robbed thee?” (3:8).

(Mal 3:8) "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

“*Will a man rob God?*” It is almost as if they respond, “Preposterous! A man will not even rob a fellow man.” But God said, “*Ye have robbed me*” in tithes and offerings.

7. “What have we spoken so much against thee?” (3:13)

(Mal 3:13-14) "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee? (14) Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"

The context in verse 14 indicates that they had spoken against the Lord in both word and action. Oh, they had kept up their religious ceremonies, but [they] were not worshipping God in their hearts. All the while, they were bringing torn, lame animals for sacrifice. And they were

trying to outdo each other in making money, procuring divorces, and indulging their lusts.

THE FAITHFUL REMNANT

In the midst of all these people with an empty profession of faith, was a little remnant that feared the Lord. They *“spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name”* (Mal. 3:16).

Then Malachi leaped the centuries and saw the time when men shall be rewarded. A remnant of Israel, the *“hidden treasure”* of Matthew 13, will experience the fulfillment of Jehovah's words: *“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him”* (Mal 3:17).

THE DAY

Chapter 4 of Malachi speaks of that day of Christ's coming when the proud and the wicked shall be like stubble. But to those who fear his name, the appearing of Christ will be the *“Sun of righteousness”* (v.2), arising with healing in his wings.

Thus the Old Testament canon is brought to a close. In every book, the person and work of the Lord Jesus is reflected, pointing forward to his incarnation, his perfect

life, his sacrificial death for our sins, his victorious resurrection, and his glorious return to defeat Satan, to purge the world of evil, and to establish his kingdom of righteousness and peace. We have seen the One of whom it is written, “*It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell*” (Col. 1:19).