

Text: Malachi 1–4

Title: Lessons from Malachi

Date/Location: July 7, 2019 at FBC

Introduction

I read over once again the book of Malachi and reminding myself of the themes we touched over the last few months. Following are some summary thoughts.

I. Chapter 1

God is sovereign over *all* things. He is in charge of every event. Evil only happens at His permission. Nations rise and fall according to His plan and design. Salvation is under his sovereign control.

God chose (elected) the nation of Israel to be redeemed and to be His own special people. Despite their disobedience, He will bring the nation into the fulfillment of His promises. He chooses nations and individuals as He pleases.

God's love doesn't mean that there will automatically be peace and blessing all the time. God's love also chastises and disciplines His people for their purity. God's love is also limited in its full expression to those who belong to Him. Indeed, God loves the world generally (common grace is the expression of this). But He does not love those who hate him in the same way that He loves those who believe in Him. The latter kind of love arises out of special grace. Let us be thankful for God's love for us.

God will be exalted among the nations of the world. God is worthy of the utmost honor from all peoples, especially Israel, because He is the greatest being that exists. In our own lives, we can despise God without saying so explicitly. Our *actions* show what we believe about God.

God will punish wickedness, both in His people *and* in those who reject Him. Notice that He does not show favoritism or partiality.

God doesn't appreciate fake worship or blemished sacrifices. Today, that translates into God doesn't appreciate half-hearted worship or service. Hypocritical worship is profane and evil and God would rather shut down the temple (church) than receive hypocritical worship. See the book of Revelation chapters 2-3 for some examples, one of which has God saying He would take away the lampstand, that is, the church (Rev. 2:5).

God is worthy of our best worship and offerings.

II. Chapter 2

God demands repentance of His people. Note that Elijah will preach just that message (chapter 4). John the Baptist who was patterned after Elijah (but not the same as Elijah) did the same. Jesus did the same. That is what we preach today: repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. If you attempt to proclaim the gospel without including repentance, you are not talking about the real gospel.

God's ministers must be reverent, must know the Word of God, and must teach it to others. The teaching aspect is crucial, for without it, the people simply don't know God's word. God's people—believer-priests—are in a similar situation and responsibility as the OT priest. The “classism” of clergy/laity is not nearly so strong as some people think, as if there are an entirely different set of responsibilities for the pastor as there are for the “regular” church member. Therefore, don't console yourself with the idea “Well, I'm not a pastor, so I don't have to be so holy.” Nonsense!

Disobedience to God brought a curse upon the people. The curse was real, but was also designed as a warning system so that the promises of God to the nation may continue into the future.

There is a precious truth in 2:10 that we share one Father and one creator God. For the Christian, that truth is a great comfort and encouragement. God is not oriented toward us merely as a great king, but also as a loving Father. One Father means we share a unity that should not be broken over trivialities.

God hates idolatry. The people were engaging in this through marriage—“converting” to another religion to marry a person.

God hates divorce. They were doing *that* in order to marry into pagan families. The wider application for us is that God intends for marriage to be between believers and to last for life. Whatever we do concerning marriage—hoping for a spouse, looking for a spouse, dating/courting someone, already married, etc.—all must be geared toward the truth that marriage is meant to be a permanent, God-honoring estate between two believers. Marriage is not something to try out or to treat lightly. If you enter into a marriage against godly counsel, expect trouble. If you are in a marriage that is in difficulties, work as hard as you can to fix them—both of you.

III. Chapter 3

God will send Elijah and also the Messianic messenger to Israel. His coming will purify the people of Levi and the nation of Israel and then receive from them righteous offerings. He IS coming. Be ready.

God calls the people repent and obey the Law of Moses. Even at the late date of Malachi 1000 years after Moses—and beyond, to the time of Christ—God expected the people to obey the Law of Moses. There was nothing new or inventive about Malachi's ministry. If anything, the only thing new was the particular form of the people's disobedience! As you know, there are a thousand ways to go wrong, and only one right way.

God told the people to stop robbing Him of the offerings that were due by law. So we must not rob God of honor by holding back ourselves and our finances and our time, etc.

God doesn't appreciate when people speak harshly against Him. If you say it is useless to serve God or you think that the wicked are prospering and "what's the use!" then you have fallen into this type of sin.

God will spare those who fear Him—actually more than *spare*, He will bless them. He loves those who meditate on the name of God.

IV. Chapter 4

God will send Tribulation on the earth and all the proud will be punished.

The righteous will walk triumphantly after this period of judgment.

Meanwhile, they must remember the Word of God and keep it. If they fail from time to time, and they will, they must repent. Elijah will come and call them to do so.

This is all just as true for us as it was for Israel. The nation was called to repentance, from the top (priests and Levites) to the bottom (the non-priestly class). God calls us to repent from top to bottom as well. We need that call.

Conclusion

Maybe all this seems like a lot. But if we fear God, we will be on the right track. If we love God more than ourselves; if we respect Him more than wanting to honor ourselves, then things will be well. But if we put ourselves at the center of the universe and do everything to please ourselves, we are in trouble. We must walk with God, not against Him.