

Note

Malachi – Part 1 of 1

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God created the world.	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam & Eve	Gen 1~5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4~5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5~10
Before 2100 BC	Job Elihu	Job
About 2000 BC Era of Patriarchs	Abraham Isaac & Ishmael Jacob & Esau Joseph	Gen 11~50
About 1500 BC~ 1000 BC Era of prophets	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num Deu
	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges(Othniel Ehud Shamgar Deborah Gideon Tola Jair Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon Samson) Abimelech	Judges
	Ruth Boaz Naomi	Ruth
	Eli Samuel Saul David	1 Samuel
About 1000 BC Era of princes	Saul Jonathan David Absalom Solomon	1 Samuel 2 Samuel
	Solomon Jeroboam Rehoboam Ahab Elijah Elisha Jehu	1 kings
	Ahab Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Elisha Jehu Elijah	2 kings
	Saul David Solomon	1 Chronicles
	Solomon Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Joash Hezekiah Josiah	2 Chronicles
About 500 BC Era of priests	Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah	Ezra Nehemiah
	Esther Mordecai Haman Ahasuerus	Esther
	Isaiah Ahaz Hezekiah	Isaiah
	Jeremiah Baruch Zedekiah	Jeremiah
	Jeremiah	Lamentation
	Ezekiel	Ezekiel
	Daniel Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar	Daniel
	Hosea	Hosea
	Joel	Joel
	Amos	Amos
	Obadiah	Obadiah
	Jonah	Jonah
	Micah	Micah
	Nahum	Nahum
	Habakkuk	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah	Zephaniah
	Haggai	Haggai
	Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi 	

Summary

Malachi - Part 1 of 13

Malachi contains six lessons.

1) Does God love us?

God demonstrated His love by preserving the Israelites, but not in the way they wanted. We must not focus on the things we lack and forget what God has done for us.

2) Do we despise God?

The Israelites sacrificed the lame and blind animals to God and the priests allowed it. We must give our best to God, not our crumbs. Pastors today are expected to ensure this.

3) Are we treacherous?

Israelite men broke their vows and divorced their wives. God expects us to keep our marriage vows.

4) Why does God allow evil people to prosper?

God will judge in His time.

5) Do we tithe?

Under the New Testament, we don't just owe God 10%. Now, everything we own is God's and we are commanded to give our whole lives to Him. We are to be willing givers.

6) Why serve God?

Those who understand and love God will be recorded in the book of life. Our reward is in heaven, not on earth.

God's judgments are sure; His timing is different from ours. We must remember that He is God, respect him and give Him our best.

Transcript

Malachi – Part 1 of 1

Today, we come to the book of Malachi, the very last book in our English Old Testament. I say English Old Testament because in the Hebrew Scriptures, Chronicles is the last book.

Malachi was a contemporary of Haggai and Zechariah. These are the post exilic prophets - Haggai and Zechariah were used by God to motivate the Israelites to complete the building of the Temple to encourage more of them to go back to Jerusalem. Malachi was the last of these post exilic prophets. His job was not so much about completing the building but about their behavior in the building of the Temple.

All these took place about 100 years after they returned from Babylon. It's a long time... 100 years. Now of course, when you read the Bible, we don't realize this.

What was the situation during this time -Haggai, Zacharias, Malachi's time. Basically, the Israelites were very discouraged, because they were so poor. They were great traders in Babylon, the financial trading capital of the world at that time. They left it to go back, dreaming of rebuilding the kingdom of God, David's glorious kingdom. But after 100 years, what was it like? It was just a little town on the hill. Nehemiah had completed the walls, a tiny temple was there, but it was nothing like Solomon's.

There were so few people in the city, the walls have been rebuilt, but the people were not confident that there were enough people to defend the city if invaders came. So, the vast majority of the Israelites actually didn't live in the city of Jerusalem but in the villages around, knowing that invaders don't bother with villages. And it's easier to run and hide.

So basically, it was just a little town with a few people in it, with the surrounding villages. It was not what they had anticipated. They knew God said He will rebuild David's kingdom, but they didn't figure out the time frame. We have very limited time frames and God works on a different timeframe. So we are very impatient with God.

For example, I live in a city and when I say I want something done fast, I mean I want it tomorrow, but to a person living in a village, fast means maybe, 'next year'.

So, one of the things we must understand about God is, He is in no hurry because He lives in eternity and so will we. And we must always try to think of God's time frame because we will live with God in eternity. So, they were really discouraged. They didn't understand God, and most Christians today don't understand God.

One big difference between the pre-exile and post-exile days was they did not have idols anymore. They were cured of idolatry. Pre-exile, before they went to Babylon, they were in love with idols. Post-exile, their heart was still the same sinful heart, but they feared idols.

Basically what was their religion like? No idols. It was a temple and they went to worship in the temple. They would have what you and I would call today, traditional worship, just like many Christians today. I would say 90% of all Christians are traditional "Christians", either born in Christian countries, Christian families, Christian communities. And so they worship God, but it is more a ritual than a reality. It's just something you do.

This was the situation at this time. Their idea was very much like "Christians" today, nominal Christians, not born again. Their idea was, what's the minimum we can do so that we don't get punished by God? That's the attitude of most "Christians". Let's just do the minimum. Example, how short can my miniskirt be? God does not determine the length but do you think it pleases Him?

And so that was their attitude. They were poor. They thought God didn't bless them.

You see, their mind worked on human economics. As I had said earlier, God's economics is different. The reason they were poor was that they treated God badly. So God responded by treating them in like manner. If you don't bother with God, don't expect God to bless you! Salvation is eternal but our fellowship with God is based on our present obedience to God. As they didn't bother with God, God didn't bother with them, and so they got poor. And so they thought there was no point to serve God. They didn't understand that if they sought first the Kingdom of God, they wouldn't be in this condition. In human economics, God is not in the equation at all. They thought that if they work hard, they will get more, but it was not so.

Now, Malachi was the very last prophet. The name Malachi simply means messenger. Some people say there was no such person as Malachi. They believe it was Ezra writing under the name of 'messenger.' Now we don't know, but the style of Malachi is very interesting. It's not the typical prophetic style of 'Thus saith the Lord.' In the book of Malachi, an accusation is made, or a statement is made, usually by the prophet and then the people respond, and then God answers. These were the last words of God to His people. And then He kept quiet for 400 years. .

So what's the message? Why does your father keep quiet and not talk to you for a long time? Because he's angry with you! But I know he's still there. And the Jews knew God was still there. This was never a question in their minds.

But the question was, Why was He quiet for 400 years? He's fed up! He's fed up with them. And many times, Christians wonder why God never speaks to them. He could be fed up with you. Every time He wants to get your attention, you ignore Him, you question Him, like the Jews we're going see here.

Let's look at the book. There are basically six accusations or statements, and then the response, and then the answer from God.

1st accusation or statement:

Malachi 1:2-5

"I have loved you, says the Lord, but you say "how have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. Yet I've loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."

The first statement God says, I love you, and the Jews' immediate response was, Huh, you love us? We're so poor, are you sure you love us? It's like a father says to his son, I love you. And the son says, What, you love me, you keep beating me, you keep scolding me!

What's God's answer then? God's answer is very simple. He said, Aren't Esau and Jacob brothers? They were twin brothers. Jacob's line became the Israelites, Esau's line became the Edomites. But where are the

Edomites today? He's asking them, where are they? They don't exist! There's no such people. So God said, Haven't I blessed you and preserved you even in exile? I preserved you.

It's like a father telling his son, you know, I still take care of you. You know, the other fellow is gone. A lot of times we forget how much God has done for us. We look at the things we don't have and forget the things we have, we look at our problems and ask where is God.

Just look around creation - God's there. We just need to look around. And so He tells them, think about Edom. The Edomites, we learned from Obadiah were the people who lived in the impregnable place today called Petra where they built houses in the mountains, in massive caverns. Impregnable. They were situated along a major trade route. They were rich and powerful. But today, God asked them, Where are your cousins the Edomites? They don't exist. God allowed another group of people, basically the Arabs, to come in and take over. And same with the Ammonites, Moabites, you never hear of them anymore. That was God saying, I love you. That's why you're still my people, as long as the world exists, and as long as eternity exists, there will always be an Israel.

2nd accusation - an accusation against the priests

Chapter 1:6-7

A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the Lord's table may be despised.

So in the second accusation God says, you despise me- you, especially the priest, because they are responsible. If a company goes wrong, the managing director gets it. If a war is lost, the general gets an accusation. If people spiritually go wrong, the priests, the pastor has to take responsibility.

In Chapter 1:7-8 He says, you despise me. You have allowed lame and blind animals to be sacrificed to me. God had told them that when they bring a sacrifice, bring a perfect lamb without blemish, no blind, no lame. But when they offered blind, lame, sick animals, the priest just accepted it, and offered it.

Now isn't this like Christianity today? Throw your spares at God. Whatever you don't need, just give it and it'll make you feel good that you gave something to God, instead of giving your best to God. God says, Would you offer this to your king or to your governor? Would you dare?

Chapter 2:7-8

For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You've caused many to stumble by your instruction.

Isn't that so true today? You're supposed to instruct. But you allow all these things and you preach falsely. So that was the second accusation.

The 3rd accusation: Chapter 2:10-16

Chapter 2:10-12 An accusation of treachery to God.

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!

Now, what is this treachery about? This treachery is about men divorcing their wives. You can go on to read chapter 2 verse 10 to 16. They divorced their Jewish wives for pagan wives whose sexual style and life was so much more attractive to them. God said, You've made a vow and then you denied her just like you made a vow to worship God and you deny it. Many of them did this and sought foreign wives and just divorced freely. There were abandoned wives and kids who were not taken care of.

Divorce among Christians today who made a vow in church, and then walk off-that's treachery! Unsaved people get divorced because for them marriage is just nothing.

The difference is they didn't make a vow. You made a vow. So it's treachery when you lift up your hand, made a vow and then you walk out of your marriage.

I'm not accusing people whose spouses walk out of them. I'm accusing people who walk out on their spouses. There is a world of difference.

The 4th accusation:

Chapter 2:17

You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them. "Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

So basically here, they are saying terrible things about God. They're saying, if you're God, how come evil people are prospering? How come good people are suffering. Same question Christians ask today. They don't read Malachi, they don't read the Bible.

What is God's answer to this question?

Chapter 3:1

"Behold I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

Wicked people prosper, good people suffer, Why? God says, Behold, the day will come, but not in your timeframe. When you talk to God, work in God's timeframe! You live in God's world, you have to live in God's timeframe. You don't make God live in your timeframe.

Even the courts of our land have a different timeframe from your idea of justice. It's not judgement today and tomorrow the guy hangs. God has His timeframe and you have to understand it. You go to certain countries, you know it takes many years for the high court to make a judgement. And yet people don't understand this. Why? They don't read the Bible. God will deal in due time. God will deal better than your high court judge.

5th accusation:

In Chapter 3:6-12 God is telling them to return. And then they say to him, how to return? What do you want us to do? And God said, by paying your tithes.

This is the chapter pastors love to preach whenever they need their offerings to go up. And they preach on tithing. I'm afraid this is totally taken out of context.

In the Old Testament, the Jews were commanded to tithe, to pay 10% . It was a command, just like today, we have a command from the government to give income tax, it's a command. You don't pay, you go to jail. In the Old Testament you don't, you get cursed. And preachers love to use this whenever they need offerings. Can I just say this to all people who are confused? In the New Testament we are not commanded to tithe, we are commanded to give our whole lives. You are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are God's. In the New Testament it's not 10%. Don't cheapen it! In the New Testament everything I own is God's. And what I use, I use as a steward. What is left after I take care of my needs, not greeds, is God's.

People say you don't preach tithing, then how? I've never preached tithing in my life. I preach to people that God sent His Son to die for you. And if you understand that God can give His Son to you and His Son can give His whole life to you and suffer for you, and you are bought with a price, then everything you own is not yours, it's God's. I've been bought, I am a slave redeemed by God, slave to the greatest master of all. I know He will take care of all my needs. And everything He gives me is from Him. And everything I earned is through Him....the brains, strength, health, opportunities, connections He gave me. So I use what I need as a steward and manage it. The rest is God's. Don't cheapen it, not 10% of me belongs to God. Christ didn't get 10% of me.

For some people who are poor, even if they give nothing to God, God understands because they can barely meet their own needs. But for some, even if they give 99% of all they own, it's not too much. Let me tell you this, this is Christianity. It is not giving 10%. In the Old Testament, it was 10%. In the New Testament, you are bought with a price. Be a willing giver because Christ willingly gave his life for you.

I hope you understand this. I've never preached tithing, I've never been short in my life, neither has my church. Never. God will always take care of us. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. Remember that you have been bought with a price. We are not tithers, we are willing givers.

God doesn't want to squeeze money out of us. He's given us the Holy Spirit to teach us what an amazing salvation we have, what an amazing privilege we have to serve God, what an amazing privilege to turn every dollar on this earth to eternal reward. If you teach that, you will never be short.

God said to the Israelites, if you tithe, I'll open the windows of heaven. People just love to take this verse completely out of context. Let's look at the windows of heaven.

Chapter 3:10

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts.

What do you think this window of heaven is? I think it is rain!

God withheld the rain, and that was true in that time. Somehow their fruit trees would never produce much. We read in the previous books Haggai and Zachariah. They grew and their grapes were tiny. Why? No rain. God says, you tithe and I'll let rain drop. Now we talk about, God opening the windows of heaven and the prosperity gospels go like, I'd be a billionaire....

I don't think that was the context of it. God doesn't want us to be filthy rich. For most people being filthy rich is a filthy curse on them, they get into mischief. God allows some Christians to be rich, but not all. Because riches is a temptation. So I hope you understand, but to prosperity gospel people, this is the verse that can pad their pockets.

The 6th and last accusation in chapter 3:13-18 Hard words against God.

Chapter 3:13-14

"Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' You have said 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts?'

Now His answer comes in a little story. What's the point of serving God? That's the question. I don't get rich in serving God, other people get rich.

Look at verse 16 and verse 18

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed His name. "They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more, you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him."

Those who understand and love me and fear me, I put their name in the book. And those who don't, I won't. The point is, there will be a reward. If you trust God, you will have your reward. If you question it: what's the point? Who is this God anyway? You will have no reward!

What's the point of this lesson for you and me? Please don't see judgment and rewards on this earth. Don't be a child, realize that you don't live in your timeframe, it's God's. God's work, God's timeframe, God's methods. You adjust to God, not God adjust to you.

We see a conclusion in chapter four, the last few words of the Bible.

Chapter 4:1-3

For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.

You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.

Leaping like calves... you know this is something we don't quite understand. We're not agricultural. I'm told by people in agricultural lands, when it's winter, the poor calves are inside the barn for sometimes, 6 months. They are miserable, eating dry hay.

Then when spring comes, and the first the sun comes out, and bit of grass pops out on the ground, the gate of the barn is open, and the calves run out and jump and jump! They get so excited being released from the dark barn to the bright sunlight and the fresh air out there.

That's how you and I will be one day in the kingdom God has prepared for you and me. It's not on this earth, my friends. Reward is not on this earth. We are bogged down with our daily cares, but one day.....So this is the preparation again that God's trying to help us who believe in him.

This last part seems to be added because it's not the conclusion of Malachi. It's the conclusion of the entire Old Testament.

4:4

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

It's going to be silence for 400 years, but it's not silence. He's telling the Jews -You still have the word, the Law of Moses is still there.

A Christian should never say, God never talks to me. Have you tried to open your Bible? He's waiting to talk to you everyday.

4:5

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

The last verse is 'I come and strike.' In the King James Version it ends with the word 'curse' - Lest I smite the earth with a curse. The last word of the Old Testament is a curse.

So they are supposed to remember the law and wait for Elijah, the prophet. Elijah was the first prophet warning Israel, but after 400 years, God said there will be one more Elijah coming. And true enough in the New Testament, John the Baptist appears wearing camel hair and eating wild honey and locust just like Elijah, the prophet. After 400 years, with no prophet, they gathered to John. And Jesus Himself said, you know who John the Baptist is? He's the Elijah that God promised. In Matthew 11:7-14, and Matthew 17:9-13. And so after 400 years of silence, God fulfilled His promise. Some of you may remember reading about the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus went up to the mount and three of his disciples saw him transfigured. Who was with him? These two men, Moses and Elijah, the two greatest men of the Old Testament. One brought the Law and one warned the people.

I hope you see this last book of the Old Testament says, you will be cursed if you don't heed this warning. And you know, sad to say when Elijah came, i.e. John the Baptist, the Jews ignored him.

So the curse continues for 2000 years. But I think with the coming back of the nation of Israel, the story may be coming to its ending. The romance story of God and Israel, and God and His Church will be consummated very soon.

And I hope, as we end in Malachi, we learned that God's judgments are sure, His timeframe is different. He is God. Respect Him, give Him your best, because He deserves your best.

And so we end the Old Testament. May God bless this study. We enter now into a new phase, but though we may do the lesson tomorrow, it's 400 years later in God's timeframe.

God bless you.