



Malachi: God of Resources

Memory Verse: Malachi 3:10 “ ‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’ ”

Background

Malachi is the 39th book of the Bible and the final minor prophet and book in the Old Testament. Malachi's name means “My Messenger” and is an appropriate name for the prophet who delivers God's final message to the Jewish people before a period of 400 years of silence. Nothing else is known about the prophet Malachi although Jewish tradition says that he, like Zechariah, was a member of the Great Synagogue responsible for collecting and preserving Scripture.

In Malachi, the prophet used the Persian word for “governor” (1:8) indicating Persian rule over the Promised Land (c. 538-333 BC), the temple had been rebuilt, and the prophet had similar concerns as those found in the book of Nehemiah. Based on this evidence, it is believed that Malachi prophesied in Jerusalem around 432-425 BC, about 100 years after the Jews had returned home from their Babylonian captivity. During this time, Nehemiah had returned to Persia (Nehemiah 13:6), and so it would seem that Malachi prophesied to the people in his absence.

The Short Story

Backsliding Jews had become apathetic and skeptical in their worship of God.

What's the Big Idea?

One hundred years after the Jews came home from Babylon, they had become spiritually lethargic. Their time in captivity had cured them from the practice of idolatry. However, expecting great blessings from God once they returned home, they had grown discouraged, disappointed, and skeptical while they waited for the promises to be fulfilled and the Messiah to come. The people struggled with belief in God's love for them (1:2) and reasoned that “It is futile to serve God” (3:14). They focused on their unfortunate circumstances and how it seemed that the wicked nations were more prosperous, getting away with evil (3:14-15). God, through Malachi, stated that the priests and people had failed to keep their covenant with Him. The people had backslid into their old ways of intermarriage with pagan wives (2:11). They offered diseased and blemished sacrifices to God that they would never think to offer to their governor (1:8). The priests were corrupt, causing many to stumble (2:7-9). Finally, the people failed to pay tithes for the temple (3:8). Malachi reminded the people that the Messiah would come, but that the Messiah's coming would also bring judgment to those who did not fear the Lord (2:17-3:6). To those who fear the Lord and obey His commands, God promises blessings (3:7-12), and on the Day of the Lord, all will know that it is not “futile to serve God.” “ ‘On the day when I act,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.’ ” (3:17-18).

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

As Malachi prophesied judgment to the people of Judah, it is evident just how much the people needed a Savior. Malachi as God's “messenger” speaks of another messenger to come that will prepare the way of the Lord and speaks of the Messiah's first coming. “ ‘I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (3:1). This messenger is John the Baptist, the next prophet who breaks the 400 years of silence, proclaiming “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Malachi also speaks of Christ's return and the Lord's promise for believers on that day, “But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.” (4:2).

Teaching Text

Malachi 3:8-10 ⁸“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Why did God take offense to Israel's lack of obedience in the giving of tithes and offerings? Why was it upsetting?
- What is the point of giving tithes and offerings? How is it a heart, faith and trust issue according to Heb.13:5-7?
- What does it mean to “test God” by giving your life and resources to Him in worship?
- Have you seen God intervene in your own life because of your faithful giving of your tithes and offerings?
- According to Deuteronomy 15:11; What are we to do towards those who are less fortunate?

Practical Application

- Why is it sometimes hard to give tithes and offerings to the Lord? What does it say about our trust in God?
- Have you ever felt you were under chastisement because of a lack of obedience in giving?
- Where is God challenging you to test Him in your finances? Where do you need peace of mind?
- How do you stay faithful in giving your resources: time, talent, treasure? Which is the hardest to do?
- Where is God challenging you in this season of your life? Where do you need to be generous?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:1-5 “I have loved you,” says the LORD. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’
- 2:10-16 ““The man who hates and divorces his wife....does violence to the one he should protect,”
- 3:1-5 “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?”
- 4:2 “But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.”
- 4:6 “He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents ...”

Bonus Features: Finding Jesus in Malachi

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way for 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." (Malachi 3:1). While the Lord will come to His temple "suddenly," it will not be without announcement. First, He will be heralded by His messenger, or forerunner. The New Testament tells us that the messenger's name was John, who preached and baptized in the wilderness announcing the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom and calling upon all to repent and make ready. Isaiah had also predicted this (Isaiah 40:3-5) two hundred and fifty years before Malachi. The gospel announces that both of these ancient prophecies were fulfilled by John the baptizer (Matthew 3:3; c.f. Matthew 11:10,11; Mark 1:2,3; Luke 1:76; John 1:23). The Messiah is also described by Malachi as "the messenger of the covenant" (3:1). This is certainly a fit description of the One who brought to us the "covenant of promise" (Hebrews 8:6-13). In these last days, God has indeed spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1,2). *Excerpted from Expository Files 6.2; By Jon W. Quinn February 1999*

Personal Takeaways and Notes