

## Malachi

### Introduction

- I. A Review of Israel's History
  - A. 1000 BC: Monarchy under King David
  - B. Divided Kingdom
  - C. 722 BC: Assyrians conquer northern kingdom of Israel
  - D. 586 BC: Babylonians conquer southern kingdom of Judah (exile)
  - E. 536 BC: The Persian (King Cyrus) allow the Jews to return to Israel
  - F. 515 BC: The Temple is rebuilt under leadership of Zerubbabel
  - G. 456 BC: The city wall is rebuilt under leadership of Nehemiah
- II. The context of Malachi
  - A. Political instability
  - B. Economic uncertainty
  - C. Religious "let down"
- III. The message of Malachi

"Return to me, and I will return to you" (3:7)
- IV. The structure of Malachi

A series of disputes between God and Israel

### The Passage

- I. Issue #1: questioning God's love (1:1-1:5)
  - A. The People's complaint: "how have you loved us?" (1:2)
  - B. God's response
    1. "I loved (= chose) you, not the Edomites" (1:2-4)

You are my chosen people and, therefore, you will be protected while the Edomites will not
    2. He points them to the greatness of his sovereign love for them
    3. We need to be reminded of the greatness of God's love and choice of us  
See Ephesians 1:3-6
- II. Issue #2: Half-hearted worship (1:6-2:9 and 5:6-12)
  - A. The basis of true worship: honoring God as a Father and Master (1:6)
  - B. The priests' half hearted worship
    1. The issue: sacrificing blemished animals (1:8, 13)

= They are not giving their first and best to God
    2. The motivation: they care more about money than God  
-You can sell unblemished animals for more  
-in ch. 4 they aren't giving the full tithe because they want to hang on to \$
    3. Their attitude: indifference (1:13: "what a weariness this is")
  - C. God's response
    1. Try treating your human leaders like that! (1:8)
    2. It would be better to stop sacrificing altogether than be hypocritical (1:10)

3. Judgment (2:3)

4. Reminds them of his greatness

a. "Lord of hosts" (10 times in section to priests)

b. He will be worshipped in all the world in the future (1:11, 14)

D. Us today

So easy to not give God our first and best in worship

So easy to lose a sense of God's greatness and feel that worship is a weary chore

III. Issue # 3: being "faithless" to one another (2:10-16)

A. Jewish men marrying non-Jewish wives (2:11)

The problem with that is that their wives will pull them a way from a pure devotion to the one true God and entice them to worship other gods

B. Jewish men are divorcing the Jewish wives of their youth (2:13-14)

C. The heart of the issue: they've lost sight of the greatness of God's plan for marriage

1. Their view of marriage: 2 consenting adults agreeing to a mutually satisfying

Meant to meet my needs, fill my loneliness, make me happier than single

2. God's view of marriage (2:14-15)

a. God was a witness to the covenant

b. God makes the two spiritually one through His Spirit

c. God's purpose for them is to produce godly offspring

D. Us today

1. If you're married to a believer, remember God's greater purpose for marriage when you're discouraged and "guard" your marriage (2:16)

2. If you're not married and hope to be married some day, let the most important quality in your spouse be a deep faith in God

3. If you're married to an unbeliever, God's call is the same: guard your marriage, and be a witness to your spouse (see 1 Corinthians 7:12-16)

IV. Issue #4: Questioning God's justice

A. The people complain that God isn't just (2:17; 3:14)

B. God's response: look to the future

1. The coming of a messenger who will prepare the way (3:1)

He is Elijah (4:5)

The NT identifies him as John the Baptist

2. The coming of the "Lord" (3:1)

He is virtually synonymous with God himself

The NT identifies him as Jesus, the Son of God

3. The greatness of God's coming justice

a. Who can withstand it? Do you really know what you're asking for?

b. The purpose: a refining fire

1. The fire will destroy the arrogant and wicked (3:5; 4:1)

2. The fire will purify those who fear the Lord (3:3-4, 6; 4:2-3)

Conclusion

A. The root issue is that the people have lost sight of the greatness and majesty of God and are caught up in their immediate circumstances and desires

B. Let's be a people who foster a sense of awe and reverence for the greatness of God  
John Piper: our attitude towards God should be one of "affectionate awe"

C. Let's be people who constantly thank God for the cross

### Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Malachi begins with the Israelites complaining that God doesn't love them. How did you react to God's response in Malachi 1:2-5?
3. In Malachi 1:6-2:9 God is angry with the priests for their half-hearted worship (not giving God their first and best in worship). Do you agree that half-hearted worship is a serious problem in today's churches? Practically speaking, what would an ideal Sunday morning service look like in your mind (assuming people worshiped whole-heartedly)? How would the time be spent and what would it look like in your mind?
4. In Malachi 2:10-16, Malachi deals with the issue of people divorcing and remarrying non-believers. He concludes with the command to "guard yourselves in your spirit" and remain faithful to each other. What has been the single most helpful practice or idea you have used in guarding your marriage?
5. In Malachi 2:17-3:6 and 4:1-3, God speaks about the coming judgment. He mentions two key figures: a messenger who will prepare the way, and the Lord whom you are seeking, and he describes what their coming will be like. How does the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus match with this description and how is does it differ? How do you piece this all together?
6. How have you tried to foster a sense of God's greatness and majesty in your life? What concrete practices or ideas have helped you in this issue?