

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DEC 28TH-29TH, 2019 // BOOK OF MALACHI

THE MAIN OFFENSES WERE SPIRITUAL

Offerings were tainted or withheld, people were marrying non-believers, the temples were being desecrated, and people were discouraged and spiritually lethargic. The temple had been rebuilt beautifully, but the rest of the city lay in ruins (sound familiar?).

THOUGH THE REBELLION AND HATRED FOR GOD AND HIS COMMANDS DOMINATE THIS BOOK, THE THEME IS POSITIVE.

God loves His people, even if their response is a heartbreaking “No!” to His leadership and provision. This book is simply a warning, to a people, to turn from sin and repent.

I LOVE YOU (MALACHI 1:1-3)

A VERBAL PRONOUNCEMENT TO THE PEOPLE

The “pronouncement” from Malachi to the Jewish people was a heavy message also called a burden. This was a stern rebuke aimed at a country that had become sinful.

- **This was not Malachi's opinion, but a word from God Himself.** Malachi's preaching probably took place during a festival.

THIS WAS A DIFFICULT TIME FOR THE JEWS

Israel was struggling financially because of foreign domination and the people were discouraged because they felt insignificant. Malachi was sent to tell them many of their woes came from their lack of trust in God.

- We must be careful with this. **Not every hardship is due to our relationship with God, but many absolutely are.**

A VERY STRATEGIC BOOK

Malachi is broken up into 6 major sections, each identified by a key question. The 1st section deals with God's love for Israel. The 1st key question is, “How have You loved us?”

- “I have loved you” from God is both past and present tense. Not only has God done much for His people, He still loves them despite their rebellion.

BUT, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY?

Like many of us, the Jewish people couldn't see past their present circumstances. They knew God had done much, but their fear coupled with entitlement caused them to ask foolish and selfish questions. God could have brought up a million things that He had done for His people, but He selected one big thing.

I CHOSE YOU

God had done enormous miracles in the history of Israel, but it was the fact they were chosen in the first place that was the greatest of gifts from God. Choosing the descendants of Jacob over Esau doesn't mean that God didn't love other peoples. God chose Israel to share His love with the world.

GOD HATED SOMEONE?

“...but I hated Esau” is a tough passage that takes some work to understand. Paul quoted Malachi in Romans 9:13 to show the sovereignty of God. More than likely, this is a reference to God not choosing Esau and his descendants the Edomites, not a literal hatred as we know the word today.

THE ALMIGHTY (MALACHI 1:4-5)

EDOM WAS REBELLIOUS

The arrogant, greedy, and violent Edomites (Esau's descendants) escalated in pride to the point to where they believed they could rebuild their ruins and save themselves.

- In response to their defiance against God, He promised to “demolish” anything they build because they are a “wicked country.”

“THEY” AND “I”

The pronouns used in v4 are emphatic. They show the power of all humanity is nothing compared to the power of the one true God. **We must remember Who He is and what we are! We are creations of the Creator, and this fact alone makes God worth respecting and worshiping.**

THE PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED

Malachi's prophecy that the Edomites will be “cursed forever” has come true. The Media-Persian empire has been in ruins for almost 3000 years now.

- The lesson for the Jewish people was that God loves them and shows them mercy by defeating their enemies and giving them the chance to repent.

IT ALL HINGES ON HUMILITY

We live in an extremely irreverent and arrogant culture that often fails to see anything greater than themselves. **If we fail to choose humility over pride, we will not only miss the love and blessings of God, we will find that our endeavors will always crumble against God's will.**

RESPONSES - PART 1 (MALACHI 1:6-10)

IT IS NEVER OUR FAULT

This section deals with the troublesome response of people to God's love and provision. God had done so much for His people, but they did not appreciate it. Even the religious leaders had become arrogant, entitled, and rebellious to God and in turn “despised” His name.

“HOW HAVE WE DESPISED YOUR NAME?”

As a general rule, children honor their parents and servants honor their masters. So, it should be assumed that God's people should respect and honor their Savior.

- Ironically, it was the religious leaders that were the most irreverent, even doing blasphemous things in His name.

LEADERS ARE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD

Misuse of power, especially in God's name, makes Him exceptionally angry. Christian leaders are held to a high level of accountability (Lk. 12:48, Js. 3:1) and failure to teach and live truth has severe consequences.

- **Poor leadership affects a lot of people!** This is why God's standard is so high.

HALF-DONKEYED OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES

God commanded people to give Him their best, but the temple priests were offering blind, crippled, and diseased animals for their sacrifices and keeping the best for themselves.

- This is what we often do, **we give God fractions and left-overs while we keep our best for ourselves. This is disrespectful and selfish.**

HAVE WE FALLEN TO THIS IN THE UNITED STATES?

Absolutely! Because of the watered-down, materialistic, feel good, fake gospel that many “pastors” preach, the state of American faith is falling apart. **We're guilty.** We've passively sat idle and let Christianity deteriorate.

- **We have failed to teach scripture and pray, turned a blind eye to sexual sin, and become selfish and irreverent.**

AND GOD WOULD RATHER SHUT THE DOORS

God says, “I wish one of you would shut the temple doors.” This means God would rather the church fail than to mislead others and disrespect Him.

- **God would rather us stop the fake and selfish façade than to keep falsely believing we're righteous by our own apathetic works.**

RESPONSES - PART 2 (MALACHI 1:11-14)

ONE DAY EVERYONE WILL RECOGNIZE HIM

Though His chosen people were not honoring Him, God knew that the whole world would be introduced to the truth and that eventually every knee would bow to Him.

- **God's objectives will be accomplished whether we get on board or not.** We should want to be a part of God's plan.

OUR PROBLEM IS APATHY

We tend to take our faith for granted and say “**Look, what a nuisance.**” The treating of our faith as something mundane or even an inconvenience is profane to God.

- Let's put on our honesty cap for a second. **How is our attitude when it comes to being a true Christian? Who is this really about?**

WITH CHRISTIANS LIKE THIS...

With leaders and congregants that give defiled sacrifices and look at their faith as an irritation, it is no wonder that Israel was in the broken state it was.

- And our current culture is no different. With such poor leadership and apathetic “Christians,” no wonder we have ended up where we are.

“THE DECIEVER IS CURSED” (V14)

When we promise to give God our best but then grow complacent and entitled over time, we come under a curse (doomed to fail) because we think we can somehow con God.

- The conclusion of chapter 1 is positive. It reminds us that **God is a “great King” that will be on our side if we choose Him.**

NO DEPOSIT, NO RETURN

God is patiently waiting on us to want to grow and change. When it comes to the Christian life, **we will only get a return when we make a whole-hearted deposit.** We often blame God, but do we honestly ask ourselves if we have given Him our best? What kind of offerings and sacrifices do we bring to God? Are we sincere, or have we become apathetic? Do we believe we can pull one over on God? Do we believe that we can somehow fix ourselves and make better decisions without Him? **Will we choose to be humble and submit ourselves to God's will and direction?**

Has the Christian walk become a nuisance or obligation? Have we become entitled and irreverent?