

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 12TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MALACHI

WEARYING GOD (MALACHI 2:17-3:6)

The prophet charged that the people had actually "wearing the Lord with your words" (2:17a).

- God never grows weary in a physical sense, but He does grow weary of some of the things people say and do.
- These people had wearied God and exhausted His patience by accusing Him of injustice.

Specifically, they alleged that "all who do evil are good in the sight of the Lord..." (2:17b).

- They also accused God of being indifferent to the world's injustices.
- They were basically saying, "if God is so good, why is He blessing those who are evil and why doesn't He step in and right the wrongs, punish the wicked, and bless us?"

Here's what's downright comical about their complaint- the very people claiming to be so righteous and deserving of God's blessing were living in open wickedness!

- They were offering blemished animals, complaining about having to worship, marrying pagans, and divorcing their wives.
- And then they had the audacity to suggest God was being unjust for not blessing them.

Malachi answered "Where is the God of justice?" by speaking about 2 messengers.

- "My messenger...who will prepare the way before me", was quoted by Jesus when He specifically identified John the Baptist as 1 messenger
- John prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus by preaching the Word, urging them to repent of their sins, baptizing them, and then introducing them to Jesus.

The other messenger is the "the Messenger of the covenant" (3:1).

- When He comes, He will prove that God is just by purifying His people and judging.
- Jesus is this "Messenger of the covenant" in that He fulfilled all the demands of the old covenant in His life, suffered the penalties in His death, and rose from the dead to usher in a new covenant of grace.

When the Messiah appears, all wickedness will be removed just like a refiner's fire purges dross from silver (vs. 3) and a laundress's soap cleanses impurities from clothing.

- "Who can endure the day of His coming and who can stand when He appears?"- only those who have repented and believed in the Messiah.
- Unfaithful priests will be removed (vs. 4) and judgment will fall on all wickedness (vs. 5)

Judgment was coming for Israel and the world, but did this mean the end for Israel? No.

- God's covenant to them was unchangeable, so in vs. 6 He assured Israel that "He doesn't change and they would not be consumed."
- Those of us who have been "grafted in" through our faith in Jesus have this same promise- God is faithful to His promises and just toward His son who died for our sins.
- People had lost respect for these spiritual leaders and for the office of priest in general.
- From the scandals in the Catholic church to the affairs of well-known TV evangelists, God's judgment on spiritual leaders has led many to lose respect for the church and pastor/priests.

ROBBING GOD (MALACHI 3:7-12)

When the people heard Malachi call them to return to the Lord and keep His commands, instead of agreeing they began to argue (vs. 7).

- They gave a cynical response asking, "how is that supposed to happen?" (vs. 7b)
- People who argue with God rarely receive blessings from God- it's when our mouth is stopped and we submit to His will that we can experience His grace.

Malachi didn't hesitate to tell the people how to start returning to God: "Bring God the tithes and contributions (offerings) that are rightfully His!"

- It was robbery, even though they didn't want to admit that's what it was (vs. 8).
- The word tithe literally means "tenth part", which meant a 10% contribution.
- Contributions is a more general term, but basically it's any gift for a sacred purpose.

The needs of the priests and Levites were met from the sacrifices and also from the tithes and offerings from to the temple by the people.

- In bringing tithes and offerings, the people were not only supporting the ministry of the temple, but they were also giving thanks to God for His provision.
- But if no-one gave, the important ministry of the temple and priests suffered.

The people were not fulfilling the covenant; therefore, God was not blessing them (vs. 9)

- Whenever we rob God, we always rob ourselves. We rob ourselves of the spiritual blessing that always accompanies obedience and faithful giving (2 Cor. 9:6-15), but there's also a promise of financial provision given to those who trust God in their finances (vs. 10-12).

If His people would simply trust Him in the area of their finances with tithing, God promised to lift

the curse and send so much blessing that they wouldn't even have room for it (vs. 10).

- God would protect them and their crops (vs. 11) and He would bless them so that they could be a blessing to unbelieving nations (vs. 12).
- This is the one time in all of scripture when God calls His people to "test Him".

There are often heated debates over whether N.T. Christians have to bring to God the tithes.

- 1 Cor. 16:1-2 suggests proportionate giving and 2 Cor. 8-9 teaches "grace giving"- and we just followed these teachings, we'd give WELL beyond 10%.
- If believers under the Old Covenant were to bring their tithes, how could Christians under the New Covenant begin with anything less?

If no-one gives, the ministry of the church suffers.

- **We don't give to be blessed, we give because we have already been blessed.**
- **We give because we love God and want to obey Him, and because He's been exceptionally generous to us. And when we give, He uses our gifts to do things for His Kingdom that are incredible and He blesses us in the process.**

INSULTING GOD (MALACHI 3:13-15)

God begins with an accusation of the people of Judah insulting Him (vs. 13).

- They were insulting Him by saying it was unprofitable to serve and walk with God (vs. 14).
- "We're not getting anything out of it!" was their grievance, but you only "get out of it" what you put into it! We serve God because it's the right thing, not for what we can get out of it.

And if we serve God faithfully and walk with Him obediently, we do get blessed and rewarded.

- Their 2nd complaint was that the pagan people around them who didn't know the Lord were in better shape than the people of Judah (vs. 15).
- Not only were they "prospering", they put "God to the test and were escaping" (vs. 15).
- The people of Judah were only thinking about God's blessing/judgment in the short term.

If they truly feared God, they'd know that God's judgment is sure.

- They'd also know that affluence or prosperity in this life is no indication of the "good life"- what good is it to gain the whole world and lose your soul (Matt. 16:26)?
- We serve and worship God because He's God- not so we can use Him to gain blessings.

FEARING GOD (MALACHI 3:16-4:6)

In spite of those who questioned and argued with Malachi's message, some of the prophet's audience ("those who feared the Lord") took it to heart and repented (vs. 16).

- They discussed with one another and God heard and made note of it (vs. 16).
- The idea of God keeping written records appears occasionally in the scriptures and seems to symbolize God honoring and remembering those who honor and serve Him.

God makes two amazing promises to those who fear His name.

- First, "they shall be mine"- there's a promise of a special relationship to God as a treasured possession and as a child- **We're loved by God and significant to Him.**
- Secondly, God promises to spare us from the wrath to come (vs. 17)- **God's judgment on wickedness is coming, but we can be spared.**

God talks about a "distinction" that will be made between the righteous and wicked, those who serve God and those who don't (vs. 18).

- In the end, there will only be two groups of people- those who want to serve, love, and surrender to God, and those who want to serve, love, and follow themselves.
- Those who say to God, "THY will be done", and those to say to God, "MY will be done"

Malachi speaks of the day of the Lord, when God will punish all evildoers (4:1-3).

- The wicked will be burned up the way fire eats up stubble and leaves no root nor branch.
- But those who "fear my name" will see the dawning of a new day as the "Sun of righteousness" rises (vs. 2).

Then Jesus will reign as King and His people will "leap like calves from the stall" (vs. 2).

- Malachi has been faithful as God's messenger, and he closes the book by reminding the people to listen to the message of two other faithful prophets, Moses & Elijah (4:4-6).
- The law of Moses was God's rule of life for the Jews, and if they obeyed it, God would bless them. But then there's the interesting promise of God to "send Elijah" to prepare the way for the day of the Lord (4:5).

In Matt. 17:10-13, Jesus explained that John the Baptist was the Elijah who prepared the way for His first coming, but He also made it clear that another Elijah was coming in the future.

- Interestingly, the "2 witnesses" described in Rev. 11:3-12 seem to fit Moses & Elijah.
- Elijah will preach justice and reconciliation, and those who won't listen to God's messengers will be subject to God's wrath as He strikes the land (vs. 6).

THE DISTINCTION (3:18)

What are you trusting in to be made righteous? Who are you serving?