

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 29TH, 2019 // BOOK OF MALACHI

WHO WAS MALACHI?

- Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament- after his ministry there is a 450 year period of silence until John the Baptist arrived on the scene.

BACKGROUND:

- Written around 450 B.C. during the time when Judah was a province of the Medo-Persian empire and was ruled by a governor appointed by the Medo-Persians.

WHAT IS MALACHI ABOUT?

- Because of the hardships that the Jews were facing, many felt that the Lord didn't love them and some showed their dissatisfaction with God by bringing defective animals for sacrifices, and expressing that worship of God was a drudgery & that serving God was a waste of time.

WHY IS MALACHI IMPORTANT?

- Malachi's message includes a rebuke for the people's sinful actions and attitudes while at the same time assuring them of God's never-ending love.

I HAVE LOVED YOU... (MALACHI 1:1-5)

Malachi starts with a familiar prophetic designation, "an oracle", or "burden" (vs. 1).

- This was a God given message that gave him insight into the hearts of the people, the problems of society, and the Father heart of God.
- This wasn't his personal opinion- this is "the word of the LORD to Israel" and most likely it was preached to the people of Israel during a gathering.

With so much hardship in the lives of His people, where does God start? With His love (vs. 2).

- God clearly states His love for Israel, and yet they somehow didn't believe it.
- The first sin that God addresses is their failure to believe that God loved them.
- All of our faithfulness to God flows out of understanding His love for us (1 John 4:19).

The Hebrew form in vs. 2 is understood as, "I have loved you and still do", yet the harsh conditions led some people to question this and they responded, "how have you loved us?"

- The evidence God presents for His great love towards His people is found in the reality of God's electing grace (2b-3) in choosing "Jacob" over "Esau".

Esau & Jacob were the twin sons of Isaac, and the grandsons of Abraham.

- As the firstborn in the family, Esau should have inherited both the blessing and the birthright, but the Lord gave them to his younger brother Jacob (Gen. 25:21-23).
- The descendants of Esau became known as "Edom" & the descendants of Jacob, "Israel".

Through His own sovereign grace and mercy, God chose Jacob's descendants, Israel, as His covenant people rather than Esau's descendants, Edom (vs. 4).

- God's gracious choice of Israel was through no righteousness or goodness of their own, it was simply because of God's love.
- God's passing over Esau and his descendants for this honor was "hate" like in comparison.

Wait...God "hates" Esau? (The best way to interpret Scripture is through Scripture) The other evidence that God gives for His love is His evident blessing (vs. 4).

- Like other nations in that area, Edom suffered during the Babylonian invasion of Israel, but the Lord didn't promise to restore their land as He promised the Jews.
- Because of Edom's sin, God promised to tear down anything they'd try to rebuild (vs. 4).

But when Israel sinned, God not only spared them as a people, He allowed them to return to their land to rebuild the temple and the city.

- To Edom, the Babylonian invasion was judgment and punishment- but to the Jews, it was discipline and a chastening.
- God shows us that He loves us sometimes by disciplining us (Heb. 12:6) and allowing things to happen in our lives to get our attention.

When God disciplined His people, they had an opportunity to make a new beginning and witness to the Gentiles of the grace and mercy of God (vs. 5).

- Instead, they lapsed into the sins that Malachi addresses in this book and were a weak witness to other nations that didn't know God.
- They failed to see God's discipline as an act of love and saw it as a lack of love.

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- **Our love relationship with God is what's most important in our faith walk (Deut. 6:4-9).**
- **God chose you to be His because of His great love and sovereign Grace- not because of your own personal goodness (Eph. 2:8).**
- **God disciplines those whom He loves- don't miss the opportunities God provides through His discipline (Heb. 12:6).**

PROFANING GOD'S OFFERINGS (MALACHI 1:6-14)

God had done so much for His people throughout their history as a nation- yet how did they respond to God's love?

- The priests and the people alike were "despising" the name of the God who loved and saved them.
- God's people were supposed to be like His children, yet they weren't honoring Him as a Father (vs. 6a).

His people were called His servants, yet they showed no respect for Him as master (vs. 6a).

- The very ones entrusted with teaching the Scriptures and serving in God's holy temple- the priests- were the ones most guilty (vs. 6b).
- All of God's people were guilty to some extent, but the priests were singled out because with great privilege comes great responsibility.

The prophet Hosea said, "like people, like priests" (Hosea 4:9)- rarely will the spirituality & commitment level of the people rise above that of their spiritual leaders.

- One of the biggest problems in our nation today is that many spiritual leaders have been corrupted- Soft, easy, ear-tickling teaching, Doctrinal compromise, & Corruption and sin.

The corruption happening with the priests in Malachi's day was that they were offering defiled sacrifices on the altar (vs. 7-14).

- The sacrificial offerings the priests were taking were ceremonially unacceptable- blemished or forbidden animals.
- These sacrifices had to be pure because they were intended to point ahead to the perfect Lamb of God who would one day die for the sins of the world (John 1:29, Heb. 10:1-14).

The people of God, with the help of the priests, were bringing God less than their very best.

- God even says, "if you offered defective animals to the governor, it would be considered an insult to him!" (vs. 8).
- If these offerings weren't even good enough for the pagan governor, why were they offered to the Lord as a sacrifice?

What does it say about us as professing Christians when we spend thousands of dollars and dozens hours of our time on entertainment, gifts for ourselves & family...

- ...and yet we can't give more than a dollar of our money or an hour of week to God's work?
- Our offerings to God are an indication of what's in our hearts, because "where your treasure is, there will be your heart also" (Matt. 6:21).

The worship and offerings of the people of God were so half-hearted, so lethargic, and so apathetic that God even says, "I wish you'd just stop coming to church" (vs. 10).

- God wasn't pleased with cheap, halfhearted expressions of worship that were devoid of real, genuine devotion.
- **The sacrifices and offerings that God truly wants are ones that flow out of a humble, broken spirit (Ps. 51:17) and a life of obedience (1 Sam. 5:22).**

God's worship will be given to Him in spite of complacency on the part of His people.

- The day will come when all the earth will worship God and magnify His great name (vs. 11).
- Malachi looked ahead when the message of God's salvation would be taken to all nations.
- Israel was called to be a "light to the nations" (Isa. 42:6) and God's call to His Church involves taking the gospel to all nations (Mark 16:15).

The priests were even complaining about the defiled altar and the unacceptable sacrifices, yet they were the ones responsible because they were allowing it to happen (vs. 12).

- They were then complaining that serving God and His people was a burden (vs. 13).
- It's a lot easier to blame the people who are following you than it is to acknowledge a failure in your own leadership.

Apparently another common practice was for people to "cheat" God by vowing to sacrifice animals in their flock who were already going to die anyway, "blemished" (vs. 14).

- If someone were to treat a king or a ruler that way, it'd be considered an insult, but this is how the people of God were treating their Lord.
- God makes it clear that, "His name will be feared among the nations"- if His people wouldn't worship Him, other nations would.

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- **Spiritual leaders are called to live at a higher standard- so be careful who you follow (James 3:1) and make sure your character is more of a priority than your title.**
- **Ritual, half-hearted, apathetic religious formality absolutely disgusts the Lord (Isa. 1:13).**
- **What we offer to God in terms of time, money, and energy reveals our heart (Matt. 6:21).**

When you're in love... (Rev. 2:4, 1 John 4:19) *How have you loved me?*