

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-25-12 PM NOTES  
MALACHI  
#41 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

"Things had not turned out as expected. Israel was not a great and prosperous land courted by all nations. In a vast empire, she was a tiny province of no account. The Jews were living in one of the stagnant backwaters of the world."

—John Phillips

I. The First Rebuke—They Doubted God's Love (1:2-5)

**Malachi 1:2b (ESV)** "How have you loved us?"

**Luke 14:26 (NKJV)** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

**Deuteronomy 29:29 (NKJV)** "The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law."

II. The Second Rebuke—They Dishonored God's Name (1:6)

III. The Third Rebuke—They Defiled God's Worship (1:7-2:16)

**Malachi 1:10 (HCSB)** "I wish one of you would shut the [temple] doors, so you would no longer kindle a useless [fire on] My altar! I am not pleased with you,' says the Lord of Hosts, 'and I will accept no offering from your hands.'"

**Matthew 6:21 (NKJV)** "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

**1 Samuel 12:24 (NKJV)** "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

**Malachi 2:8-9 (ESV)** "But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts, <sup>9</sup> and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."

IV. The Fourth Rebuke—They Denied God's Holiness (2:17)

V. The Fifth Rebuke—They Declined God's Invitation (3:7)

VI. The Sixth Rebuke—They Depleted God's Treasury (3:8-12)

**Malachi 3:8 (NIV)** "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you ask, 'How do we rob you? In tithes and offerings.'"

A. Their Crime (3:8)

B. The Command (v. 10a)

*Abraham commenced it;*  
*Moses commanded it;*  
*Jesus commended it,*  
*The early church commended it,*  
*Who are we to cancel it?*

C. The Challenge (3:10b, 11, 12)

VII. The Seventh Rebuke—They Disregarded God's Blessing (3:13-4:6)

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-2-12 PM  
MALACHI  
#41 in Series, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament”

**Malachi 1:1 (NKJV)** “The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.” The Hebrew word translated “burden” literally was used of the packs on the back of a donkey. Figuratively it speaks of something that weighed down a person until they spoke it. Most all of the Minor Prophets were motivated to speak hard things to sometimes unresponsive people by a deep burden from God that the prophet could not ignore. Such was the message of Malachi. We know nothing about the man Malachi. He was the third of the post-exilic prophets (those who prophesied to the Israelites who came back after the exile to Babylon). To put the book in context, Malachi prophesied about 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah and during the lifetime of Nehemiah. The book is set in the fifth century BC, probably between 430 and 420 BC. When the first Jews had returned from Babylon in about 536 BC, they rebuilt the Temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. By the time that Malachi was written, the Jews had hoped to be prospering and to be a major power in that part of the world, but neither of those had come about. They were barely making it. Bible scholar John Phillips describes what was going on when Malachi unloaded his burden on the Jewish people: “Things had not turned out as expected. Israel was not a great and prosperous land courted by all nations. In a vast empire, she was a tiny province of no account. The Jews were living in one of the stagnant backwaters of the world.” [John Phillips, *The Minor Prophets*, Page 320]. Their worship had turned into dead ritual, and a sarcastic, cynical attitude prevailed. This cynical, sarcastic attitude had greatly affected their walk with God. I find that generally, a sarcastic and cynical attitude is evidence of a backslidden heart. When you find yourself being sarcastic and cynical I would encourage you to get alone with God and examine your heart.

There is an unusual pattern in the book of Malachi. God (through His prophet) makes an accusation against His people and each time they respond to God’s rebuke with a cynical, sarcastic question. It is an attitude that responds to God with, “Oh yeah? Then why is *this* and *that* happening?” I think you will recognize some of the same kind of sarcasm and cynicism in the church today and maybe even in your own life. I remind you that when God rebukes us (whether it is through His Word or one of His servants making application from His word) the only acceptable response is to agree with God (that’s what “confess” means), and repent of our sin. When we refuse God’s rebuke, we are headed for a backslidden heart.

Let’s examine these seven rebukes that God gives to these sarcastic backslidden people that Malachi had a burden for.

I. The First Rebuke – They Doubted God’s Love (1:2-3)

In answer to God’s rebuke that they have taken His love for granted, the people answer with a sarcastic question, **Malachi 1:2b (ESV)** “How have you loved us?” God is so patient! He answers their question with an illustration concerning Esau and Jacob (2b-3). Some people are troubled with the Lord’s illustration. It is important to understand the common biblical use of the word “hate” when God uses it to refer to certain people. The word “hate” is not an emotional hate. It is primarily a word of comparison. The Lord is simply saying that He chose Jacob over Esau. God’s blessings on His “**chosen people**” were more abundant than His blessings on any other people – including Jacob or Israel’s own brother – Esau. In the New Testament we find Jesus using the word “hate” in a similar way. **Luke 14:26 (NKJV)** “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” Jesus is certainly not saying that His disciples should have an emotional, seething hatred for their families. That would contradict the fifth commandment. He was saying that compared to our love for Him, every other love is like hate. Our love for Him is to be supreme over all other loves. Even so, God chose Jacob and his descendents for His special purposes before Jacob was even born. There was nothing Jacob did to deserve or give a reason for this blessing of being the father of God’s chosen people; it was simply God’s sovereign choice. God chose Jacob and his

descendants and set them apart as His special covenant people through whom would come the law, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Messiah. Does that mean that God despised Esau and his descendants? No, not in the emotional sense, but God didn't choose Esau. Why not? It was because He chose not to; He doesn't owe an explanation. **Deuteronomy 29:29 (NKJV)** “The secret *things belong* to the Lord our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.”

How could any Jew say that God did not love them? God chose them in spite of their sin; time and time again God had rescued them. Even when their idolatry reached the point that God sent them into captivity, He allowed them to return to the land and had given them another temple and allowed them to worship Him and to have freedom from their oppressors. Something even more astounding than these 5<sup>th</sup> century Jews asking that question is someone under the new covenant that has experienced the saving grace, the mercy, the love of God on their lives by saving them, forgiving their sins, uniting them to Christ and giving them His Spirit asking that question, “in what way have you loved us?”. Doubting God's love is a dangerous thing. In the Garden of Eden, it was Eve's doubting the love and goodness of God that made her open to the enemy's temptation. Satan basically said that God was holding out on her. If she disobeyed God, she would be as wise as God knowing good and evil. When we are going through trials and disappointments and we begin to doubt God's love, beware. You are headed for dangerous waters. We may not understand God's allowings in our lives, but we have His promise that if we are His and love Him that He is causing everything that comes into our lives and the lives of our loved ones to work together for good – the good of being conformed to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:28-29). If we could see what God sees and know what God knows, we would see that everything He causes or allows in our lives is motivated by His love for us. I remember hearing a story 30 or 35 years ago about a young mother and her infant child in the 1800's traveling on a stagecoach in the dead of winter in the old West. This simple story did so much to help me see how God's love is poured out on us in ways that we don't understand at the time. The stage coaches of that day were of course not heated and far from air-tight. The seasoned driver knew that this was going to be a dangerous trip in such bitter cold. He would often bend over and look into the coach to check on this mother and baby who were his only passengers. He saw the young mother removing some of her layers of clothing and wrapping them around her baby. As time went by the driver saw some alarming signs that the mother was experiencing hypothermia. He would call to her and tell her to move around and keep the blood flowing in her body, but it was too late. She drifted off and the driver knew that this was the sleep of death. He abruptly stopped the stage coach, opened the passenger door and jerked the young mother out. He ripped the baby from her arms and with the baby cradled in one arm got back in the driver's seat and took off leaving the young mother behind. The startled young mother began to scream “my baby, my baby” as she ran after the coach. The seasoned driver kept a close watch on her and when she had run far enough to warm her body, he stopped the coach, handed her the baby, helped them aboard and took off once more for their destination. What seemed like an unloving act was really the most loving thing to do. Often the causings and allowings of God seem unloving and make no sense to us, but God's ways are good, loving and perfect with His children, even when we cannot understand. If we ever doubt His love, all that we have to do is to look at Calvary.

## II. The Second Rebuke – They Dishonored God's Name (1:6)

When God accuses the priests of dishonoring or despising His name, they answer with a cynical, sarcastic question, “In what way have we despised Your name?” The word translated “despised” means to show contempt for. God makes it very clear what they have done; they have refused to honor the Lord. The Hebrew word translated “honor” is translated “glory” in other places in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word (“Kavodh”) means to consider weighty, to esteem, to treat as mighty and great. In other words, they were refusing to give God the glory that He is due. They were trivializing God; they refused to glorify Him.

The word “reverence” in verse 6 is translated “fear” in the ESV and “respect” in the NASB. They had no fear of God. Notice that He is primarily addressing the Priests here. The most common manifestation of a lack of fear of God is half hearted worship, especially by the very people who are supposed to be leading the congregation in worship. I am convinced that most of God’s people do not comprehend the evil of half hearted worship! Half-hearted worship reveals a deficiency of fear of God! Half hearted worship says, “Lord, I believe You are real, but You don’t excite me, You don’t thrill me; in fact, You bore me. Worship is just a little ritual that I go through, and then go back to my life as I want to live it.” Do you see how this dishonors God’s name?

### III. The Third Rebuke – They Defiled God’s Worship (1:7-2:16)

**Malachi 1:7-8 (NKJV)** “*You* offer defiled food on My altar. But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’<sup>8</sup> And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, *is it* not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?’ says the Lord of hosts.” Here we go again: we see God’s rebuke and their sarcastic question. God accuses them of offering defiled worship. They answer, “In what way have we defiled you?” They were offering their cast-offs and leftovers to the Lord. God answers them in **Malachi 1:10 (HCSB)** “‘I wish one of you would shut the [temple] doors, so you would no longer kindle a useless [fire on] My altar! I am not pleased with you,’ says the Lord of Hosts, ‘and I will accept no offering from your hands.’” To paraphrase what God is saying – “Who has the courage to just shut the doors of the temple and put an end to this hypocrisy?” They had turned sacred worship into a white elephant party! A white elephant party is where everyone brings a gift that they don’t want to give to someone else who doesn’t want it. They were bringing sick and deformed animals that were good for nothing else and presenting them to the Lord. The Lord challenges them to try that with the government. What would happen on April 15<sup>th</sup> if you called the IRS and said, “things are a little tight this year; I’m not going to send you any money this year, but I do have some extremely worn furniture that I was going to take to the dump, but if you’ll send a truck by, I will donate it to the government”. I don’t think so!

Oh how often do we give the Lord the leftovers from our finances, our time and our energy. Are we guilty of giving Him the leftovers of our life? **Matthew 6:21 (NKJV)** “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Because we have so little treasure invested in Him, we have little heart for God.

Are you defiling God’s worship with your half hearted sacrifice and service? May we be compelled by **1 Samuel 12:24 (NKJV)** “Only **fear the Lord**, and serve Him in truth **with all your heart**; for consider what great things He has done for you.”

It is interesting that in the last part of chapter two they were involved in something else that was defiling their worship. **Malachi 2:14-16 (NKJV)** “Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ [the reason that God does not regard their offering] Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.<sup>15</sup> But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.<sup>16</sup> ‘For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence’, says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’” Notice in verse 14 that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman before God. That is why God says in **Malachi 2:16a (NKJV)** “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce...” Divorce is dealing “treacherously” with your spouse (V15). In the context, God is saying that divorce which we initiate or cause defiles our worship.

### IV. The Fourth Rebuke – They Denied God’s Holiness (2:17)

Here once again we see the accusation and the people’s sarcastic answer. It is interesting that God created the entire creation in six days and then rested, not because he was tired, but because He was through. However in verse 17 we see something that wearies God! They wearied God by questioning His justice and goodness. They said, “Those who do evil seem to be blessed and those who do right lack God’s blessing.” They were really saying that it doesn’t pay to live in obedience to the Lord. We see that

same accusation against the Lord in Psalm 73, but the Psalmist finally realized that that questioning God's goodness and character shows a warped perspective. They see this world as the total story. The story of God starts before the world was created and continues through eternity. God doesn't even the books here. There is always perfect justice, but it never happens in this world. Don't ever deny God's holiness! We can't see the whole picture.

#### V. The Fifth Rebuke – They Declined God's Invitation (3:7)

Here we go again as God makes an accusation and they respond with a cynical and sarcastic answer. God, over and over has invited His children to repent and return to Him, but they refused. They denied that there was even a reason to repent. It is the sense of "What do we need to repent of?" God is so patient or longsuffering with His people. So often we are so hardened to Him that we refuse to even look inward and see the need for repentance. Oh the arrogance of puny man to refuse the entreaty of God to return to Him!

#### VI. The Sixth Rebuke – They Depleted God's Treasury (3:8-12)

Just as they were treating God flippantly in every other area, so they were in the area of finances. God makes an accusation in **Malachi 3:8a (NKJV)** "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!" They answer Him with a sarcastic question, "In what way have we robbed you?"

##### A. Their Crime (3:8)

The word "robbed" in verse 8 means forcible strong-arm robbery. There is an emphasis on "Me". In other words, "You have committed forcible robbery against ME!" It is certainly wrong to rob a residence, or a church, but to rob God? How is God robbed? God is robbed by the withholding of tithes and offerings. What a deficiency in the fear of God to refuse to obey the minimum of giving – the tithe (tenth part).

##### B. The Command (V10a)

In the Old Testament the Jews had several tithes. We are not under the Old Testament law, but the concept of the first tenth part of our income belonging to God was around a long time before God gave the law to Moses. Tithing was practiced by Abraham 400 years before the law. In the New Covenant (Testament) the tithe was implied. In the early church, the tithe was given as an act of gratitude and a reminder to us that God owns it all. Someone summarized the tithe in history:

*Abraham commended it;*

*Moses commanded it;*

*Jesus commended it,*

*The early church continued it,*

*Who are we to cancel it?*

What is the "storehouse" in verse 10? The storehouse was a special room in the temple where the Levites and priests stored the tithes and offerings. It was from the storehouse that needs were met. I believe that it is not dogmatic, but the local church is the equivalent of the storehouse today. It is the church that fulfills the function of meeting the material needs of the members of the body of Christ.

##### C. The Challenge (3:10b, 11, 12)

God invites us to test His trustworthiness. As we are faithful stewards, He gives us both provision and protection. The provision is the opening of Heavens windows and the protection is primarily the protection of what we have as He causes it to last longer and not wear out.

#### VII. The Seventh Rebuke – They Disregarded God's Blessing (3:13-4:6)

This is similar to the fourth rebuke. **Malachi 3:13-15 (NKJV)** "'Your words have been harsh against Me,' Says the Lord, 'Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' <sup>14</sup> You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit *is it* that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have walked as mourners Before the Lord of hosts?' <sup>15</sup> So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.'" There is the same pattern! God rebukes and the Jews answered with a

sarcastic question. The word “harsh” in verse 13 refers to a hard heart. The people were accusing God and had no fear of God.

In 3:16-18 we finally see some openness and how God responds in love. These folks are everything that the sarcastic cynical Jews were not. God is so delighted in them that He summons an angel to write their names down in a book of remembrance and says that their reward is sure and then He calls them His Jewels.

How is your heart toward God? Don't make it hard by being cynical and sarcastic in the sight of God.