

“Behold I Send My Messenger”

Malachi

Minor Prophets: Message 18

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The prophecy of Malachi is the last of the twelve “Minor Prophets” and the last book in the OT. Four hundred years will pass without a word from God until according to Malachi’s prophecy John the Baptist suddenly appears to proclaim the arrival of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

The OT sacrificial system is coming to an end because the singular Lamb will fulfill all the OT types of substitution; the innocent suffering for the guilty.

Malachi is a series of complaints against God made by the people of Judah and the answers from God through His prophet.

Does God really love you?
How would you answer the question?
How do you measure God’s love for you?

The “burden” of a prophet is his message; a message that bears heavily on him and often is not a pleasant thing to preach.

Who is Malachi? The simple answer is we don’t know. This is the only record of Malachi and he doesn’t tell us anything about himself.

There is a case to be made that the writer is Ezra who takes the pseudonym “Malachi” which means “My Messenger.”

However, the fact that the Holy Spirit did not tell us anything about who he is we must be content with the knowledge that his identity is not as important as his “burden.”

Over ninety years have gone by since Haggai and Zechariah promised blessings and the coming of Messiah. The temple had been rebuilt and by now the offerings of sacrifices were tiresome. Dead religion will kill the spirit.

A LOVING GOD

Malachi 1:1-3

The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

² "I have loved you," says the LORD.

"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"

Says the LORD.

"Yet Jacob I have loved;

³ But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness."

The people that Malachi is speaking to would have been followers of the Joel Osteen "Prosperity Gospel"; that God wants you to be prosperous brand of ear tickling. They measured God's love and blessing by material riches and good health.

Religion is very boring if true worship of God is missing.

If you are not getting anything out of a worship service did it ever occur to you that you might be the problem?

In Malachi's Judah there were corrupt priests and corrupt people, who Malachi said, were robbing God. The time has come for God's last word through a prophet until John the Baptist would come 400 years later!

There would be no prophet and no word from God until John the Baptist shows up at the Jordan River; not in the temple, calling for repentance! There was dead religion in the temple and if you wanted to hear from God you had to go down to the River Jordan.

So Malachi is mostly a series of complaints being made by the people and God answering them. It is very easy to bring these kinds of murmurings up to our own time. It takes little imagination to make comparisons with the kinds of charges that some people make against the goodness and mercy of God.

The first charge against God was that He did not love them.

They defined God's love as an emotional "health and wealth," "everything is coming up roses," silly kind of feel-good subjective evaluation.

God's rebuttal to the charge that He did not love them is based on His sovereign choice in divine election; on twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, sons of Isaac and Rebekah.

² "I have loved you," says the LORD.
"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'
Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"
Says the LORD.
"Yet Jacob I have loved;
But Esau I have hated,

Some people have a problem with God hating Esau. They try to "defend" God by saying that God didn't really **hate** Esau; He just didn't love Esau as much as He loved Jacob. People fall into this error because they don't understand that all men and women are born under the righteous wrath of a holy God. They have not learned that God is not under any obligation to love guilty sinners. God does love sinners; but He is not under any obligation to love an individual sinner.

You should know the story of Esau and Jacob [Genesis 24-27].

Someone said, "I can see why God hated Esau but I don't understand why He loved Jacob." If you can grasp that concept you will understand that God's sovereign choice is an act of mercy and not an obligation for God to "try" to save someone.

When the Apostle Paul makes the case for God's "remnant according to the election of grace" he refers to Esau and Jacob.

Romans 9:1-24

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, ⁷ nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called.*" ⁸ That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this *is* the word of promise: "*At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.*"

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "*The older shall serve the younger.*" ¹³ As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*"

¹⁴ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*" ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

²² *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Then in Romans 11:

Romans 11:1-6

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of the tribe of Benjamin.* ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ "LORD, *they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life*"? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "*I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.*" ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then *it is* no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if *it is* of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

The point that Malachi makes here is that the people had lost their perspective and priorities and they had redefined God's love and they had missed what matters the most.

Do you really know what the most important thing for you to know is?

Psalms 32:1-2

Blessed *is he* whose transgression *is* forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.

² Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit *there is* no deceit.

The people of Malachi's day like far too many religious and lost people of our day counted their personal well-being more important than the knowledge that they were chosen, called, and justified by grace through faith alone.

There is always the remnant, the Israel of God within the Israel after the flesh.

So it is no coincidence that God reminds the people of His electing grace before He presents to them a list of their sins. How unthankful would we be if when we claim to be among the chosen people, God's elect, we then trivialize and skimp and rob God when it comes to worship.

Why this denunciation of Edom?

Malachi 1:3-5

Because the Edomites were descendents of profane Esau.

The Edomites were not immediately affected by the Chaldean invasions of Judah. By a timely submission, they appear to have won the favour of Nebuchadnezzar; and they are named among his willing supporters in the invasion of Judah. The Edomites delighted in the overthrow of Judah, their kinsmen.

Do you remember the TV reports of the people in the streets in some Arab countries celebrating the attack on America on September 11, 2001? That's the image of the Edomites celebrating the overthrow of Judah.

Our study of Obadiah dealt with the eventual ruin of Edom.

The Israelites and the Edomites were closely related, and though the Israelites were commanded:

Deut 23:7

“You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he *is* your brother....”

“Yet the bitterest enmity existed between the two nations at every period of their history. When Israel asked leave to pass through Edom on the way to Canaan, it was rudely and insultingly refused. During the decline of Jewish power, the Edomites encroached on southern Palestine; and when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, the Edomites joined him, and took part in the plunder and slaughter which followed. Their cruelty is especially mentioned in Psalm 137, and was the chief cause of those terrible prophetic curses pronounced upon them by the later prophets, and since executed with such wonderful minuteness.

“Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished.”

[John Kitto, 1845]

For what it is worth, King Herod was an Edomite.

SINFUL PRIESTS

Malachi 1:6

6 "A son honors *his* father,
And a servant *his* master.
If then I am the Father,
Where *is* My honor?
And if I *am* a Master,
Where *is* My reverence?
Says the LORD of hosts
To you priests who despise My name.
Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

Are you not struck by the arrogance of these people as they reject God's accusation that they do not reverence Him?

Some of what passes for reverence today looks to me like the character in the Muppets that wildly played the drums.

Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

In the natural course of relationships a father and a boss may expect obedience. The priests of Judah, who called upon God the Father, failed to respect Him. "How have we shown contempt for your name?"

"In what way have we despised Your name?"

Malachi 1:7-9

What would you call defiled food, blind and diseased sacrifices? Try taking these offerings to the governor; he wouldn't appreciate their leftovers.

Malachi 1:10

The sorry condition of the offerings is bad enough but it is the attitude of the priests and of the people that is the real problem.

Jeremiah saw the same situation before the captivity.

Jer 5:30-31

³⁰ "An astonishing and horrible thing
Has been committed in the land:
³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule by their *own* power;
And My people love *to have it so*.
But what will you do in the end?

But God will have a people that will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Malachi 1:11

“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down....”

Malachi is prophesying of a time when God will turn to the Gentiles and include them with the remnant of the Jews together in the Church.

Eph 3:1-7

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles — ² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, ³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, ⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, ⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

The “mystery” was not that there would be the church but the make up of the church; believing Gentiles and believing Jews in the same body.

Malachi 1:12-14

“Oh, what weariness!”

For some people what they call worship is an insult to God and they would be better off staying home. Bringing the stolen, the lame, and the sick is the same as coming to church and getting absolutely nothing out of the service.

“Oh, what weariness!”

Now as a preacher I will take responsibility for the times that I have failed to feed you the Word of God in a manner that was not encouraging to your spirit. But you are responsible to come expecting to get something out of the message regardless of who the speaker is or how able he is to preach.

Malachi 2:1-7

Malachi continues to rebuke the priests. Their role was to feed the people by explaining the Word of God [2:7].

What the priests gave the people did not glorify God. We have preachers today that tell a sad story about grandma’s mule that died and then give the “invitation.” There is no Gospel content in what they preach; nothing about sin; nothing about repentance; and worse than all that they do not preach faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. In fact, there are times that an entire service is spent and Jesus Christ is never mentioned. Last Wednesday I read an email from a friend who reported exactly that; an entire church service where God was not mentioned even one time.

Malachi warns the priests that the Lord will spread refuse [offal] on their faces. The offal was the entrails of the sacrifice that was burned.

Malachi then speaks about three covenants:

The Covenant of Levi [2:8-9];
The Covenant of the fathers [2:10-11];
And the Covenant of Marriage [2:14-16].

The Covenant of Levi [2:8-9]:

The priests were violating the Levitical covenant in several ways. They were not instructing the people correctly from the law; they were permitting divorce for any reason; and they were showing partiality.

The Covenant of the fathers [2:10-11]:

Since God is the Creator He has the right of a father to choose a wife for Israel. In Genesis we have the record of Abraham arranging a wife for Isaac and Isaac likewise for Jacob.

The people are profaning the Covenant of the fathers; Judah “has married the daughter of a foreign god” and is an abomination to the God of Israel.

A Second Thing [2:12-13]:

A “second thing” is pretended repentance; “You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying....”

One writer says they borrowed these actions from pagan rituals that were intended to bring the false god from the realm of the dead and thus renew a season of fertility.

The Covenant of Marriage [2:14-16]:

Arranged marriages are a little strange in our “modern” culture but they have a better success record than our current 50 percent failure rate.

In every marriage ceremony that I perform I emphasize that marriage is a covenant made before God. Yet 50 percent of the couples getting married will divorce. I don’t mean that will be true for the weddings that I have performed but that is the statistical average.

That says that the marriage covenant has little or no meaning for one or both of the people getting married; but God takes marriage to be a serious matter.

When people in leadership set an example of corruption, immorality, and greed, the “common people” will usually become as they are.

Included in the three covenants; Malachi names three specific sins of the Jews.

a) Sins against Brotherhood: Malachi 2:10

How many true Gods can there be? Why can't believers get along?

1 Cor 8:4-6

⁴Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), ⁶yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.

Job 31:15

Did not He who made me in the womb make them?

Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?

This is Job's answer to racism. Cf. Paul in Acts 17:26 "one blood"

b) Sins against the Family

Malachi 2:11-16

What does the Scripture say about marrying an unbeliever?

2 Cor 6:14-16

¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you* are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people."

God says He hates divorce because it undermines the family unit.

God is Not Executing Judgment
Malachi 2:17

The people could not see an immediate judgment of God upon wickedness so they concluded that God approved of the sin.

Solomon understood the way people tend to think. The big mistake is to think that God is bound to your calendar!

Eccl 8:10-13

¹⁰ Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also *is* vanity. ¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. ¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred *times*, and his *days* are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong *his days*, *which are* as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

Is there an application today of saying that God delights in evil when we read about women who are boasting of their being lesbians and are ordained to the office of pastor? How about a major denomination holding a conference to discuss ordaining homosexuals as pastors?

Please allow me to make my frequent disclaimer. I am not homophobic and the homosexual lifestyle is no worse a sin than adultery and gossip; it is however, an abomination, especially when it is clothed in religion.

The third specific sin;

c) Sins against Stewardship
Malachi 3:8-15

R. G. Lee said there were two kinds of church members, tithers and thieves.

Please avail yourself of Brother Gables' series on NT principles of giving. It is traditional to call your gifts of money to the church your tithe. But NT believers do not "tithe." There is no temple or priesthood and that was the purpose of the OT tithe. There is no NT tithe.

However the NT principle of giving is much more generous and literally “hilarious.” For the Lord loves a cheerful [hilarious] giver. Cf. 2 Cor 9:7

That said, don’t worry about “legalism” until you pass the ten percent level, and then learn about proportional giving.

About twenty years ago I did a study using the demographics of the membership of this church [family size and household income] and concluded that if every family gave at least ten percent that our biggest problem would be what to do with all of the money.

One family left our church when I said that while I would never tell anyone how much to give to the church I would say that the amount is not ZERO!

Having too much money is still is not our biggest concern.

LOYAL SUBJECTS

Malachi 3:16-18

Even if it sometimes seems that the world has forsaken God, there will be a remnant who loves the Lord.

We read Rom 11:5: Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Now we deal with THE COMING LORD

Malachi 3:1-7; 4:1-6

These parts of my message gets a little tricky so don’t let me confuse you.

There is Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Christ!

“Behold, I send My Messenger” [3:1] [Behold, I send **Malachi!**]

Behold I will send you **Elijah the prophet** [4:5].

John the Baptist is Malachi, My Messenger and John the Baptist is Elijah.

Two prophecies are tied together in John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was the last OT prophet and his role is to prepare for the coming of the “Messenger of the Covenant” who is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist and he had a visit from the angel Gabriel who told him that the son he had prayed for would be the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5. There is a lesson in answered prayers. Zacharias and Elizabeth had long ago stopped praying for a son. God had heard their prayer but had waited until just the right time to answer their prayer.

Luke 1:5-17

⁵ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

⁸ So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, *'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,'* and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The Lord Jesus Himself interpreted Malachi's two prophecies.

Matt 11:1-15

Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

² And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples ³ and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵ *The* blind see and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised up and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

⁷ As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. ⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ For this is *he* of whom it is written:

*"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You."*

¹¹ "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear let him hear!

It is John the Baptist that fulfills the two prophecies as he is the messenger sent by God to announce the arrival of the Messenger of the Covenant and he is Elijah who was to come.

Jesus Christ is the "Messenger of the Covenant."

Jesus Christ is the Word, the *logos*. Jesus is the way that God the Father communicates with His covenant people whom He gave to Christ before the world was created.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Heb 12:22-24

²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.

Matt 26:26-29

²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Malachi closes the Old Testament with a curse; John closes the Revelation with grace. But the word of God through Malachi is "don't play church."

Mal 4:5-6

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD .
⁶ And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Rev 22:20-21

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Have I preached anything that brings conviction?

Have you any need to repent?

As for me, I surely do! Repent and believe the Gospel!