

## How Do We Remember the Law of Moses?

<sup>4</sup>“**Remember the law of my servant Moses**, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup>“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Malachi 4:4-6

**Remember the law of Moses.** Having just read the text, *what do you think about the end of the book?* After everything we have seen revealed in the book of Malachi: **how do you feel about the conclusion Malachi comes to?** I wonder, do we understand the message that God is communicating here? Do we understand its place at the end of Malachi & do we understand its **place** and **significance** in redemptive history? While it's always important to try to understand the message of any given book in the Bible, the book of Malachi is unique in the fact that these are the last words from God to His people for the next 400 years. The people didn't know that these would be God's last words for 400 yrs, but God did. And this is the message that He leaves them with: **remember the law of Moses**. If these were the last words of a prophet from God, *can you imagine how they would ring in your ears?* God was communicating a message to the Jews through Malachi, but also to you. I wonder, **do we know what that message is?** My friends, we need to understand the message found here in Malachi. And I'll ask you, what has been the tone of voice from God in this book? Has the book of Malachi been about God commending the people for how well they have followed the law? No! Malachi was sent to **rebuke** the people for their disregard of God and His law. The people of Israel were found to be in a bad place spiritually and were rebuked for it. And among the final words given to them were this: **remember the law of Moses**.

What we have to see here is this: <sup>1</sup> The people were just told of all this **guilt** that they have. How they have disregarded God, betrayed Him, and dishonored Him. And <sup>2</sup> He **concludes** this message by saying, “**Remember the law of Moses**.” A great guilt is revealed → and God ends His message by saying remember the law of Moses. And I wonder, how you are understanding this statement? The concern that I have at this moment is whether or not we really understand what is being said here. Why is God ending the book in this way? What's the point He is trying to make?

So how about this, instead of me just explaining this text, why don't we just **do what God is instructing us to do**? Why don't we literally do what Malachi is calling us to do here in the text? Why don't we right now, "**remember the law of Moses**?" Can we do that together? Now, you may think that at this point we are going to go to the book of Deuteronomy and read about the law given to Moses. And there would be nothing wrong with that, but I don't think we need to go that far back to effectively remember the law of Moses. If you have been here for the sermon series, honestly, you should have already been **remembering the law of Moses** as we have gone through the book Malachi. We actually had an opportunity to do that for the past seven weeks. **Do you realize that?** But that is what I'd like us to do right now. We are going to walk through what we've seen in Malachi and as we take this journey... we are going to **remember the law of Moses** as it is applied to the text. Make sense?

In these past seven sermons, much of the law of God was clearly communicated to you in the text and through the preaching. As a simple reminder: law of God is summarized in two ways. <sup>1)</sup> To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength & <sup>2)</sup> to love your neighbor as yourself. At the onset of the book we saw that the people accused God of not loving them, but what was revealed was how ungrateful the people were. They were not honoring the God that had blessed them. The God that had rescued them out of exile. As He said to them in Deuteronomy 7:6 *"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has **chosen** you to be a people for His treasured possession, **out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth**. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is **because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath** that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."* They were not honoring the God that chose them as His people though they were insignificant and not many in number. They were not loving their God, but rather, questioning His word and faithfulness. What does a God who adopts you, sets His love upon you, loves you through your sinful rebellion, and rescues you... **what does this God deserve?** **Remember the law of Moses**: does He not deserve to be loved with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength? And yet the people would love Him as He deserves.

We know from the law of Moses that our God is a holy God and He cannot ignore our sin. You should remember that in the law of Moses, God established a sacrificial system for His people to atone for their sins. There were specific requirements regarding the condition value of the sacrifice they were to bring. It was in these things that we found that the people in Malachi were **despising the name of God** with the sacrifices they were bringing. In the 2nd sermon that was preached, do you recall what sort of sacrifices the priests were accepting? They were accepting sick and blind animals as sacrifices! The psalmist says in Psalm 145:3 *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable”* and yet with their sacrifices they were effectively calling God “worthless” as the sacrifices they brought to Him were worthless to them. Their sacrifices were so offensive to Him that He declared, *“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on My altar in vain!”* In chapter 1 verse 13, we even see that the people were complaining and moaning about **how tiresome service to God is**. Guys, they were complaining about the fact that God had made a way for their sins to be atoned for. They were complaining about how tiresome it was to bring animals to sacrifice ***for their sin!*** How out of touch were these people! The Psalmist calls us to **remember the law of Moses** and glorify our God in Ps 96: *“Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts!”* But God was not being honored as He deserves.

What we began to see revealed was the fact that these Israelites **did not stand in awe of their God**. They actually began to look at Him as no different than the pagan gods of the nations around them. When God had rescued them from their slavery in Egypt, He gave them His law and with it many promises. Promises of love, blessings, and care for His people. He reminded them to not fear nations such as Egypt for God would protect them. In Deuteronomy 7:21 He said, *“You shall not be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.”* The power that God displayed in rescuing Israel should have left the people in awe for generations. What they knew about their God should have caused them to be struck with reverence and wonder...but as we saw in the 3rd sermon, because the priests turned aside from **instructing people in the law of this awesome God**, they fell into the belief that He is not a God to be feared or one who should be looked upon with reverence.

Guys, if I gave you all a bunch of rules and laws that you had to live by in order to honor me...it wouldn't mean very much. None of you stand in awe of me. I don't deserve that honor. I did not give you life. I am not your creator. **I am not God.** But Yahweh. The One True God. The Creator who has made the world and everything in it, He should be feared and looked upon with awe. The Psalmist calls us to **remember the law of Moses** and stand in reverence of our God saying, *"Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples! **For great is the LORD**, and greatly to be praised; **He is to be feared above all gods.** For all the gods of the peoples are **worthless idols**, but the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."* Yet He was dishonored by the priests by their failure to teach the law of God and remind the people of their awesome and holy God.

The teaching of the law was so vital and important to the people of God because, *in the law*, the people were able to learn and know what their God is like. That He is a God who is honest and faithful to His promises. Faithful to keep His covenant. Thus, why God calls them to faithfulness and honesty in the law of Moses. But what we saw in the 4th sermon was how their **low view of the law** → produced a **low view of God** and therefore → a low view of **how they should treat each other**. The people of Israel were marrying the daughters of foreign gods. Jewish women were being divorced by their former husbands in pursuit of wives outside the people of God. In this, they had betrayed their God and they had betrayed their wives. With their actions against God and their wives, it was as if they said this: **"I want the blessings that another god can give."** And with that thought, they saw the covenant of God's law and the marriage covenant as inconveniences to them. They saw no merit in keeping covenant with God because to them, He *could not* and *would not* give them the blessings they wanted. This is what they thought: *"Breaking covenant with God is not a big deal."* **Remember the law of Moses** and how it is summarized. This is the God that they were supposed to love with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. And this was how they were treating their wives that they were supposed to love and serve above themselves.

This lack of reverence and fear of God was the result of **forgetting the law of Moses**. It caused them to forget the God of true justice. That their God is a God who *“loves righteousness and justice.”* A God who punishes the wicked and *“who will by no means clear the guilty.”* This is what we saw in the 5th sermon, that in their grumbling they cried out against God and said, *“Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them.”* Or by asking, *“Where is the God of justice?”* Because these people had **forgotten the law of Moses** and the sin it would reveal in them, they had forgotten that they too, like Job, are but sinners *“of small account.”* For as Romans 3 tells us, *“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, **so that every mouth may be stopped**, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.”* Because they had **forgotten the law of Moses**, they spoke to God as if they had no guilt themselves. They spoke to God as ones ignorant of the mercy shown to them. This is why they were not humbled by the law and their guilt to speak as Job and say, *“What shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.”* **Remember the law of Moses** and how we are to love God, and yet these people bear false witness about God and accuse Him of being unjust and evil.

So much of the concern of these people was wrapped up in the thought of what they felt they deserved while completely neglecting **what God deserves!** If you recall from the 6th sermon preached, the people were not tithing. Remember what is said of them? They were robbing God. And the fact that they were not tithing was a sign that they were abandoning the whole temple worship and sacrificial system. Not only had they **forgotten the law of Moses**, but they had turned aside from it. In chapter 3 verse 7 He says, *“From the days of your fathers you have **turned aside from My statutes** and **have not kept them.**”* **Remember the law of Moses** for as Leviticus 27 says, *“Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.”* And yet the people turned aside from giving to the Lord who had richly blessed them.

And finally, last week, in the 7th sermon in Malachi, we see the people continue to express their lack of fear and reverence for God as they declared in arrogance that **it is vain to serve God**. Despite everything that should have been known and obvious to these Israelites, they grumbled against God and essentially called Him weak and powerless. Unable to give them the blessings they thought they deserved. They looked at all of the law of God and their covenant with Him and thought, *“This is a waste of time.”* They did not see God as faithful or trustworthy. They called themselves the people of God, but they did so in vain. They had **forgotten the law of Moses** and in turn, broken the law again & taken the Lord's name in vain.

Now...if I lost any of you along the way, here's your chance to catch up. Let me just reiterate why we just walked through the whole book. It was for two reasons: <sup>1)</sup> because the people would not have heard this message from God in an eight-sermon series. They would have heard it all at once. It all would have fallen on them at the same time and then <sup>2)</sup> I walked through all of this so that we would understand why God is ending His message to the people this way. A great guilt is revealed → and God ends His message by saying remember the law of Moses. ***We need to understand why the people were being called to "remember the law of Moses."*** And so I'll ask, what was God hoping to accomplish by calling the Israelites to remember the law of Moses? I think there are three things God wanted the people to see in this call to remember the law of Moses: <sup>1)</sup> ***what His commands for the people were*** <sup>2)</sup> ***what it says about who they are*** <sup>3)</sup> ***and what the consequences are for breaking the law.*** Because let me tell you, if you didn't notice: these people were quite ignorant to what the righteous demands of the law were. They were ignorant of what the law revealed about them. And they were ignorant to the judgment they deserve for their lawbreaking.

These people failed to remember the law of Moses. The very sins that were revealed in the people was proof of the fact that **the people did not understand** the full weight of God's commands. If they did, they would not be bringing sick and lame sacrifices to the altar. If they understood ***the weight of God's commands***, they would have shown honor and reverence to God. But they dishonored Him. And because they did not remember the law of Moses, they didn't realize what it says about them. They didn't see the reality of all of their **failures**. They didn't see that they were ***unfaithful, treacherous, and guilty of betrayal***. They didn't see that they were **thieves** and ones who were ***profaning their covenant with God***. And because they did not remember the law of Moses, they didn't realize what they deserve as a consequence of their lawbreaking. They were demanding that God be **just** with those they deemed wicked, but didn't see their own wickedness and the wrath and judgment that should fall on them.

But I wonder, ***have we been much different?*** Now that you have remembered the law of Moses, who has done these things? You've now heard seven sermons, ***but what has changed?*** You've heard seven consecutive sermons that unpacked various aspects of the law of God, ***how has it impacted you? Think about it!*** Seven weeks ago it was revealed to you that *you question God's love for you*, have you taken these accusations seriously? If so, ***have you overcome that weakness?*** Our God deserves all glory, honor, and praise but it was revealed to us that we do not value God in the way that He is worthy of. Has anyone in here been able to **change that in themselves?** Has anyone been able to give all of themselves in complete devotion to God? With all that has been revealed to you about your God (His power, His authority, His mighty works) do you now **stand in awe of His name as He deserves?** Do you "*Sing to the LORD, bless His name & tell of His salvation from day to day?*" We saw the truth of the fact that we have **betrayed** God.

We have **broken** our covenant with Him. We have been **unfaithful** to Him. But now, who among us has offered to God the faithfulness He deserves? *Do I need to go any further?* None of us in here can honestly say that we have changed our ways to the point that it satisfies God. **Not even close!** A **great guilt** has been revealed in us and we are now called to remember the law.

**What do you do when a great guilt is revealed in you?** What is your response? Think about it! How you respond to that really shows how you remember the law of Moses. And if we are honest, we all have this tendency to respond to our guilt by thinking, “I need to clean myself up. I need to fix this sin in me. I need to be doing better.” We run to all the things that we think we should be doing to rectify the guilt that is revealed. **But that is not why God is calling us to remember the law of Moses.** Remembering the law of Moses should not drive us to self-righteousness or legalism, interacting with the law of God **properly** should drive you to despair. You see, your response, as you interact with the law, should reveal to you where your righteousness is.

If you are hearing “remember the law of Moses” and you are thinking: “OK, do better. Work. Perform. Clean up my act.” You hear, “remember the law of Moses” and you immediately think about the works you need to do to “make God happy.” **You are missing the point.** **What's the real way you should interact with the law? You should see that it cannot produce righteousness in you and it cannot give you peace.** This is the problem we run into when a great guilt has been revealed to us. We see that we have dishonored Him **and so we try to honor Him as recompense.** We see that we have not given God what He deserves **and so we try to bring an offering in return.** We see that we have failed to keep the law **and so we quickly run to try and serve Him in response.** We see how unfaithful we've been **and so we make promises of faithfulness to Him.** But whatever type of honor, service, or obedience you try to bring to Him in return for your sin...it is offensive to God. **Remembering the law of Moses** should show you that God is not honored by our half obedience.

While the text is indeed calling us to “remember the law of Moses,” the danger we face is this: *are we are going to remember the law in the same way that the Jews remembered the law?* Because if you're now just thinking, “Oh we just need to remember the law of Moses by knowing it better. By studying it. So we can honor Him properly.” Then I will do this for you: meet me after church in the back room. We've got some duct tape and some cardboard boxes and I'm gonna put a Bible in that box and tape it to your head...sounds foolish, right? **That's how the Pharisees responded to “remember the law of Moses.”** They wanted to prove their devotion to the law of Moses by tying the phylacteries to their heads. **This is what they got wrong.** A great guilt was revealed and they responded by saying, “Wow, you're right we messed up. OK, God. We're not gonna let you down. We'll right the ship. We're gonna fix this.”

And 400 yrs later, it was that thought process that produced the Pharisees in Jesus' day. At this point in redemptive history, the Jews thought that *they had arrived*. The Pharisees thought they had *corrected* what was lost in Israel. **But they had missed it**. As Romans 10 tells us, that being ignorant of the righteousness of God, they sought to establish *a righteousness of their own*. Remembering the law is not "the work" you are supposed to go and do to make up for your lawlessness. Remembering the law should **remind you that *you are not righteous***. This call to remember the law of Moses is a call to look at yourself in the mirror. **Look in the mirror guys!** That's how God, through Malachi, is ending this message. Among God's last words, before 400 years of silence, was Him calling these people and all of us – to look in the mirror.

Whether you *haven't* been paying much attention to God's law or you have been *trying so hard* to live by every jot and tittle, you are both lawless. Because you are either **ignoring what God commands** or you are thinking that **you can fulfill what God demands**. Neither one of those things are the result that God intends for you to have when you look upon the law. You should see that it's good, but that it cannot save. Remembering the law of Moses rightly should leave us empty handed before God & prepare us to seek out His grace and mercy. They dealt with this same problem in the first church in Acts. There were people coming in and teaching others that "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And also saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." Peter then got up and said, "*...why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.*" Did you see what Peter said here? He said, why are you putting us back under the law? None of us were able to keep it. Neither our fathers or us could.

The law declares condemnation with no mercy of any kind. **Remember the law of Moses** my friends, remember that the law declares the holiness of God, and also, it declares condemnation *with no mercy* to all lawbreakers. There was no mercy found under the law. The soul that sins must die. Friends, what happened to idolaters, blasphemers, and adulterers under the old covenant? They were taken out of the city and stoned. No mercy. The law held no peace for anyone. There was no hope in the law either. There is no hope in a law that condemns sinners. You can only find hope in the law if you have no sin.



But as we remember the law of Moses, there are three things that are revealed to us: <sup>1)</sup> **what God commands you to do** <sup>2)</sup> **what it says about you – a lawbreaker** <sup>3)</sup> **and what the consequences are for breaking the law.**

Malachi's call to Israel to **remember the law** of Moses was his way of preparing the people for the word and message of John the Baptist. It was a call to set their eyes upon God's holy mirror. It should have been preparing them & causing them to eagerly yet patiently await the coming Messiah. This is what Malachi goes on to say in v.5 & 6. <sup>5</sup>*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”* And so if you have wondered, why is God ending the book this way? It is for this reason: you need to remember the law of Moses **if you are going to understand the Savior that comes and your great need for Him**. If you don't understand the law of Moses, the Messiah that comes will seem irrelevant to you. Everything in the law of Moses – from the commands to the sacrificial system – all of it was supposed to be pointing the people to their need for mercy and grace. It is through the preaching of the law that the people of God will come under the conviction of their sin and seek the mercy of God. This is what will bring about the turning of hearts that is promised in verse 6.

We tend to think of the prophets as ones who would come to vent the anger of God with hellfire and brimstone. Words of rebuke and judgment. While this is true in part, consider this, a prophet is a testimony to a loving and merciful God. My friends, ***it would be far worse*** to have no message from God. This would be a sign to mankind that all hope is lost. **It is an incredibly loving & merciful appeal for God to show us our sickness in the law.** I've often thought that one of the most shocking words God ever spoke in the face of our rebellion and sin was this: **“Return!”** What does it benefit God for an unfaithful people to return! This is pure mercy and grace. What faithfulness God shows to His people! Like the prophet Hosea, who was called to love a harlot as his wife, our God has time and time again called the people out of their harlotry and idolatry and back to Him. **“Come to Me my love! Come to Me! Come to Me and I will heal you of your harlotry.”** These rebukes & thunderings of the law & judgment were done with the intention of drawing them back to Himself for mercy. So God's Word through Malachi, to ***remember the law of Moses***, was intended for it to convict the people and draw them to God for mercy. **But this isn't the last word of God.**

You see, Malachi was telling the people that God would send another prophet. This prophet God would send was known as the forerunner. John the baptist. And this was John's task as he cried out, *"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.'" Simply put: **the Redeemer is coming!** Yes there will come 400 years of silence, but God is not done speaking. vMy friends, in the face of our sin your God calls out to you saying, "Yes, you have broken every command. Yes, you have committed great sins against Me. Yes, you have betrayed Me. Been unfaithful to Me. But I will still send My forerunner. The one who is the voice crying out in the wilderness to make straight the way of the Lord. Yes, the one who will declare: ***"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."****

My friends, with all that has been revealed of the people's guilt, and your guilt, what better words of comfort could come to us? ***"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*** Yes there will come 400 years of silence, but God is not done speaking. *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* (Hebrews 1:1-2a) *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son...**"* And our God did not just break His 400 year silence to speak, ***the Word became flesh*** and dwelt among us. Yes, the Word of God became flesh brothers and sisters. Yet He did not just take on flesh to speak with us. He did not just take on flesh to dwell with us. He took on flesh so He may take on the burden that has come with our flesh – a need for righteousness and a need for our debt of sin to be paid.

My friends, though we have failed to "remember the law of Moses" as we should, ***our Savior remembered the law of Moses***. He remembered the righteous demands of the law but unlike us, *"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth."* He honored His Father perfectly. In all the ways you have failed to honor Him & serve Him, your Savior has fulfilled that for you. Our Savior remembered the law of Moses. He remembered that ***without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins***. And He did not shrink away from what the law required. He knew that if our redemption would be secured that He must take on the full debt of our sin. He could leave no debt to be paid. He knew that He must bear our griefs & carry our sorrows. He knew that He must be pierced for our transgressions & crushed for our iniquities. He knew that the law of God demanded punishment and that *"...the Lord [must lay] on Him the iniquity of us all."* *"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*

Brothers and sisters, this is why God has called you to remember the law of Moses. Remember <sup>1)</sup> what it commands of you <sup>2)</sup> what it says about you <sup>3)</sup> & what the consequences are. ***Are you remembering all of that? Are you remembering the law of Moses? Because if you are...you WILL see that Christ is a glorious and wonderful Savior of sinners.*** If you remember it that way, it prepares you for the Savior who is to come. It prepares you to joyfully *“Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* Once you remember the law of Moses as God would have you, **the Savior is beautiful**. Because in Christ you see that your debt is paid for & that He gifts you with His righteousness. He wants you to remember it so that you will be:

- 1) Drawn to see the great grace & mercy you need
- 2) and the great grace & mercy He provides in Christ