

## 39 – Malachi: Restore your Covenant Relationship with God

- Malachi is the last of the minor prophets, and the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi means "my messenger." The Septuagint gives its meaning as "angel," since *"angelos"* is the Greek word for *"messenger."* An angel is a messenger and can be either human or supernatural. We don't know anything else about Malachi. The message, not the messenger, is important.
- Malachi ministered probably about 100 years after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile (probably around 430 BC). The Temple has been rebuilt, and the priests are serving in it when he writes. In this short time again we see backsliding, and how far away from God the people have come again. They were once again ignoring the covenant promises made with God. The moral and spiritual conditions are like those encountered by Ezra and Nehemiah, but are probably a later generation.
- Malachi uses the term "messenger" three times, and makes three references to other messengers.
- Levi as the messenger of the Lord (2:7):** *"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."* Levi was the tribe of priests. Their role was to teach the people and be an intermediary. Everyone who brings the word of the Lord (prophets, teachers, priests, etc.) are angels (messengers) of the Lord.
- The coming of "my messenger" (John the Baptist):** *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ..."* (3:1). John the Baptist began where Malachi left off. Malachi prophesied of the coming Messiah and John the Baptist prepared the way.
- Christ as "the messenger of the covenant."** *"... and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."* (3:1) The angel (messenger) of the Lord in the Old Testament is always the pre-incarnate Christ. And Jesus would indeed "suddenly" come to his temple... in fact He violently cleaned house there!
- Malachi used a **question-and-answer method**. First, he would state what God said to the people (a reproof of some kind). Then he would give Israel's answer which in every case was ridiculous and arrogant, even insulting. Then he would provide the proof of God's statement. This was a confrontational approach to get the attention of the apathetic Jews at this time.
- Malachi's message is similar to that of the other prophets: **covenant blessing requires covenant faithfulness**. He applied the Mosaic Covenant to Israel's problems of neglect and disobedience. They didn't have the right perspective on God's covenant faithfulness, and stopped believing that His kingdom would be established, leading to widespread unfaithfulness. Malachi showed God's dealings with Israel in order to renew their perspective, reestablish their hope, and motivate them to restored faithfulness.



*"... The Sun of Righteousness shall arise  
With healing in His wings..."* (3:2b)

### Highlights

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Charge God loves you</b>	God loves Israel; Israel questions; Proof, Israel (Jacob) over Edom (Esau); Edom judged, covenant relationships with Jacob (Israel)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Charge Honor God</b>	God deserves respect/honor, Israelites have not given it; Israel questions; Proof, their contemptible sacrifices; Warning to priests
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Charge Be Faithful</b>	God requires faithfulness, to Him and to marriage covenant partners; Interfaith marriages ( <i>people don't respond to this charge</i> ); Charge regarding divorce; Be faithful!
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Charge Justice Coming</b>	Reproof for "wearisome" speech (prayers not genuine); Israel questions; Proof (they have no hope of justice); Day coming when He will fulfill everything; Messenger coming; I don't change!
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Charge Obey God</b>	You have strayed, now return to Me; Israel: "How?"; Charge of robbery against God; Israel: "How have we robbed you?"; Proof (lack of tithes); Promise of reward if they test God in this
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Charge Don't speak against God</b>	You have not spoken true of me, but harshly; Israel questions; Proof, leading people astray with lies about God (no good to follow Him anymore), evil endorsed; Believers respond; Book of remembrance; Difference between believers, wicked
<b>Be Prepared</b>	Day of the Lord, judgment/justice; Restoration, deliverance; Remember covenant, or suffer curse

- God “hated” Esau because of his response to God. The Hebrew word for “hate” here **implies a choice to reject**, rather than an emotional response. Esau’s descendents were the Edomites, whom God destroyed for their lack of faithfulness to Himself, and to their brothers the Jews. They became an example of those who despise and turn from God, and His people. God chose Jacob over Esau from the womb (*not because of something Jacob did or didn’t do at this point*). He was the one God chose to have a covenant relationship with, but it took many years before Jacob finally responded to God positively. God knew that Esau would not. **God chooses those who respond to Him, and rejects those who do not.**
- Israelites **didn’t honor God** with same respect they gave fathers and masters. They sacrificed blemished lambs, forbidden in the law. God was to get the best of everything, but He was getting the leftovers.
- The people “look” sincere but God would not accept their sacrifices because they were not sincere, and because they were living in sin. Their **rituals were offensive to God**, and could not be accepted by Him.
- **“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,”** (1:11) This is another reference to the presence of Gentiles in God’s kingdom. This is prophetic of the Millennial Kingdom.
- The **priests were not instructing the people correctly**. They were showing partiality, endorsing evil and speaking against God. People were discouraged by seeing evil prosper, so decided there was no gain in following God (*wrong motive!*)
- Malachi wants those guilty of intermarriage to be “cut off,” in other words, be killed (*normal meaning of these words*). This was a serious offense and death was the only solution, or consequence. Divorce is not the solution. It is condemned. It is not so much the action (divorce), but the heart that offends God.
- **“For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce...”** (2:16 NKJV) God hates “*the putting away*” (literal meaning in Hebrew). It means to forsake and put aside a wife, especially as they did for very trivial reasons. God clearly states he hates this. It is not his original intent. **Marriage is a God-given institution that He uses throughout the scriptures to represent His relationship with His people. They are in a covenant relationship, just as a man and wife are.** God will not abandon His “wife” nor should they, or we (*scriptures do make some allowances, as in the case of adultery, but even then, as Israel “prostituted” herself with other gods, God “put them away” for a time, but restored Her later.*). **“...for it covereth violence with his garment...”** (KJV) This literally means that this putting away covers over (hides) a wrong doing to the wife, as the husband seeks to “cover” sinful deeds by getting rid of his wife for another one. Some have thought this meant that the original first wife was the man’s “covering” a garment of sorts, and by putting her away he seeks to hide his own sinfulness. Whatever the proper translation, what is clear is that God really does not like divorce. It is not his original intent for marriage, and it badly distorts the marriage covenant relationship that is used to represent his love for His people.
- Verses 2:15 and 16 are variously translated with different meanings. Going back to the Hebrew, however, we can see that it is probably intended as a reminder that God created and breathed His spirit into one man (Adam) and one woman (Eve) at a time. This is intended to remind the Israelites that **multiple wives** (what they were doing here) **was not His plan.**
- The people were withholding their tithes and offerings. It says they **were robbing God**. If they would be generous in their giving, He would open the floodgates of heaven and blessing would overflow. Malachi references a “devourer” (3:11) which is the same concept raised by Haggai’s “holes in the purse.” The idea is that God sends a devourer and also puts holes in our purses when our hearts aren’t right before Him. When we give to Him, and lead lives for Him, he rebukes the devourer and mends the holes, in other words, He provides abundantly for us.
- God keeps a **book of remembrance** - He does not forget those who fear and serve Him. “On that day” justice will come on the wicked, but the righteous will be spared and become His “jewels.”
- God promises He will send **Elijah the prophet to announce the Day of the Lord**. His ministry will be to restore the hearts of the fathers (*a reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*) to the children (*Israelites living when Elijah comes*). If they don’t respond, God would smite the land with a curse. This prophecy was partially fulfilled by John the Baptist who came to announce the Day of the Lord was at hand and to call the people to repentance. But the nation rejected Jesus and Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.
- The **last word of the Old Testament is — “curse.”** What a way to end. This is what happens when we ignore God. Soon a messenger is coming who will lift this curse, for all who are faithful. Then, and now!