

Book of Malachi, the Final Old Testament conversation with God & His people

Teacher: Yvon Prehn

Malachi, a final conversation between God and his people

- This book is a conversation between God and people, but before we go into that, let's look back at the history of how God talked to his people in the past.
- At the dawn of Creation, in a perfect world we see the wonderful picture of God and Adam and Eve walking together in the cool of the day.
- How wonderful it would have been to be part of those conversations.
- But we know sin intervened.
- They had no idea of the consequences of their action in disobeying God. No idea that the daily conversations would cease and they'd be cast out of the Garden.
- No idea that SIN would now be their constant companion.

But God didn't give up on his Creation

- Through thousands of years he continued to talk to people who could listen.
- We know a lot about some of their stories—Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob and Joseph and how God called and formed a chosen people.
- We don't as much about Job.....who was not of the chosen race and yet according to God the most righteous man on earth
- But our Bible tells us the story of the chosen people, their beginning with the call of Abraham and later—the temporary trip to Egypt that lasted 400 years
- God brought them out with the Exodus and God spoke again on Mt. Sinai to give them the 10 Commandments, but much more including the Covenant between God and his people that if they would serve Him, he would bless them in the land he was giving them and if they did not, they would be punished and eventually removed from the land.
- After a 40 year delay because of sin, the land was conquered as God promised and the Kingdom set up with David beginning the dynasty from which the Messiah would someday come.

From the time of David, Salvation history could have been glorious

- Solomon the wisest and richest of men and admired

by the world could have continued a reign honoring God, being His witness to the world

- But instead.....like Adam so many years before, he turned from his Creator to what looked good to him and as the Bible tells us....his wives led him astray.
- He probably had no idea of the consequences when he first thought one little sacrifice to a pagan god to please a beautiful wife was maybe a small thing, but one pagan wife led to another and another and another and eventually to the division of the kingdom.

The rest of the Old Testament.

- Which we've covered over these many months has been the story of constantly evil kings in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and a variety of good and bad kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- Through it all, God again, did not abandon his people.
- He constantly sent them prophets who reminded them of the covenant they made with God—to worship Him ONLY and to live as he called them to live.
- But they didn't listen.
- As just as God was true to his promises to bless, He was also true to his promises of judgment.
- Israel fell to Assyria and was taken into captivity, never to return

Judah experienced extraordinary miracles, some good, some bad kings, a long line of prophets.....and yet they continued to sin

- Finally Judah fell to Babylon. Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the people taken to Babylon (forgive the great simplification of the years this unraveling took, the series of deportations—but in the end, total destruction)
- But once again, God did not abandon his people
- After 70 years a remnant returned and after a struggling start and a 16 year pause, they finally completed a modest Temple
- We learned these stories from Haggai and Zechariah

Meanwhile back in Babylon

- Many Jews were settled and comfortable, Esther becomes queen now of the Medes and the Persians— in the book named after her we have the threatened slaughter of the Jews, but eventual salvation
- A little after this God calls Ezra to take another

group back to Israel.

- They go, he preaches, but problems remain in Jerusalem.....back at the court.....
- A high official, the cup-bearer to the king Nehemiah asks one of the people who came back from Jerusalem, how it was going and when he heard the people were not doing well because the city had no wall, no protection, God touched his heart.
- God also touched the heart of the king Nehemiah served and he not only gave Nehemiah permission to go and rebuild the wall, but he completely funded it.
- Nehemiah gets to Jerusalem and not only does he rebuild the wall, but he helps to rebuild the people spiritually as well.
- Ezra is preaching while Nehemiah is building and they institute a number of reforms in two major areas:
- Intermarriage with pagan women—it has to cease—that is what caused the fall of Solomon and their nation
- Proper temple services and caring for the priesthood not maintained—these must be cleaned up and done properly

Things appear to get somewhat better

- Nehemiah returns back to the palace, but then comes back to Jerusalem and finds once again the Temple and priesthood not what they should be....
- We see his response in the last chapter of Nehemiah when he comes back and is furious with what he finds:
- The Levites were not receiving the tithes they needed to live on so they went back to their farms and a pagan named Tobiah had literally moved into the Temple.
- They were not observing the Sabbath, were buying and selling
- Worst of all, they had again were marrying pagan women

His response was rather dramatic

- *Neh. 13: 25: I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all*

Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. . . . So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. ³¹ I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the first fruits.

- *Ends the book with this prayer... "Remember me with favor, my God."*
- Somewhere during this time Malachi starts to preach

This is the context of the preaching of Malachi—we'll go through the book with applications

- The Prophet Malachi begins the book by confronting the priests who are bringing blemished sacrifices
- *Chapter 1: 6* "A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord Almighty.
- *"It is you priests who show contempt for my name.*
- *"But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'. . .*
- *"By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. ⁸ When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty.. . . .*
- *¹³ And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the Lord Almighty.*
- *"When you bring injured, lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the Lord. ¹⁴ "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.*

What the priests should have done:

- *And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue," says the Lord Almighty. ⁵ "My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.*
- *⁷ "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of*

the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth. ⁸ But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the Lord Almighty. ⁹ "So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."

Applications not profound here

- God is not pleased with faulty worship
- We should bring him our best—and that includes I think our best attitudes when we come to worship
- Spiritual leaders should be ones of "righteousness and peace"—those who turn people from sin
- And they should teach
- The book of Malachi then goes into the passage in 2:1-16 on how God hates divorce****specifically talking about in this context divorcing first Jewish wives to marry younger pagan women and children were suffering spiritually because of it. Divorce is not God's plan—and most who have gone through it hate it also—but it is not the unforgiveable sin.

Book goes on...God is tired of them.... And judgement is coming

- *Malachi 2:17 You have wearied the Lord with your words.*
- *"How have we wearied him?" you ask.*
- *By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?"*
- It isn't pleasing to God to say evil is good. As always—you must know the Word to know what is truly evil and what is truly good...as God goes on to remind them of what is truly evil:
- *Mal. 3:5 "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty."*
- So similar to previous warnings given again and again in the covenant and by previous prophets

Remember the situation Nehemiah faced with Levites returning to their fields?

- Malachi goes on to show how they are robbing God...in the well-known passage:
- ⁸ *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.*
- *"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'*

- *"In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. ¹² "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.*

Content and application

- Context was the support of the Levitical priesthood and the PROMISES are specifically to them—the nation was to support them with the tithes so they could serve
- So what about giving today?
- We are told to be generous, the NT constant encourages generosity, most often in relationship to those who serve God, Paul often talked about that or for needy Christians. We are encouraged to manage our resources well, not be in debt to care for those less fortunate.
- But we also know from the lives of NT saints that we are not guaranteed physical and financial prosperity IN THIS LIFE. Not a one of them was well off and Jesus himself was homeless.

So what do we do?

- Recognize all we have and are belongs to God
 - Consider tithing a minimum, a discipline..... "training wheels" for giving
 - "the Storehouse" is NOT the local church—responsible in that day for all teaching, worship, sacrifices AND much social welfare—ok to give to various Christian ministries
 - *"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them."*
- **C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity**

Book ends with reminders that this isn't all there is

- Judgment is coming
- *Mal. 4:1 Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. (If you want it all now—now all is what you will get)*
- *² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.*
- And also this wonderful passage:

A great way to end this book and study

- *Mal. 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.*
- *¹⁷ "On the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him."¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*
- You who have listened and learned, discussed and prayed**The Lord Almighty was listening. And it has been recorded.
- And one day when all that is evil and sad is melting away in judgment, we will be spared—his treasured possession to once again walk with our God in loving conversation, forever.
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