

The Book of Malachi

I. Introduction.

- A. One of the minor prophets. Not much study is given to the book. Not much is known about the writer. Malachi's name is translated from the Hebrew, My Messenger. Thought it might be interesting to examine this book & see how we can apply it to our lives.
- B. The name Malachi occurs nowhere else in the Bible except in chapt. 1:1. We know little of the prophet himself.
 - 1. Some scholars even think that Malachi was the title or name of Ezra the Scribe. There is no evidence to support this theory, except that it is tradition in which has been handed down over time.
 - 2. Go over time line.
- C. In this lesson, I want to discuss several main points. They are:
 - 1. The Historical setting.
 - 2. The Prophet himself.
 - 3. Lessons learned from the text.
 - 4. Conclusion by application to our lives today.

II. The Historical Setting.

- A. Malachi & his contemporaries were living in an uneventful waiting period.
 - 1. Judah was under the foreign domination of the Persians.
 - 2. The majority of the people were living in great poverty.
 - a. This would characterize the nation throughout the rest of its history.
 - B. The temple has been completed for almost a century, but nothing had occurred to indicate God's presence was there (As it was before they were carried off.)
 - C. Religious duties were being carried on, but without enthusiasm.
 - 1. After studying the book, one gets the picture that they felt it didn't really matter whether one served Him (the Lord) or not.
 - a. Many were losing their faith and worshipping foreign gods.
 - D. This was a generation that had lost touch with God.
 - 1. They were not aware that they were in a terrible spiritual condition.
 - 2. Malachi shows the way back to a genuine, enduring faith in God who does not change. (3:6)
 - a. Invites them to return to Him (3:7)
 - b. tells them that He never forgets those who respond to Him. (3:16)

III. The Prophet Himself.

- A. As mentioned earlier, his name means My Messenger
 - 1. Very little is known about Him. No listing of his genealogy, or what tribe he was from. His name is mentioned only once - 1:1
 - a. This was true of some of the other minor prophets:
 - 1. Jonah & Habakkuk are mentioned nowhere else in the OT, and Obadiah's genealogy is unknown.
 - B. Scholars believe the book to have been written as early as 445 BC or as late as 415 BC.
 - 1. It was the last message from the Lord before the period of silence.
- C. After reading the book:
 - 1. Malachi stood bravely & confidently for God's law.
 - 2. He was righteous in a day when God was de-emphasized. (Comparable to our own time...)
 - 3. He tried to get the people to wake up out of their spiritual coma.

4. In this way he could be compared to Hosea, Amos & Micah in the way they stood for the Lord

IV. Lessons from the Book.

A. God's Love is shown for His children. (1:2-1:5) God had cared for the children of Israel in a special way.

1. God loves his people even when they neglect or disobey him. (He loves them, not their actions.) He is always desirous of someone to come to Him.

2. Even with all of their hypocrisy and careless living, he wanted them back. (3:7)

a. The kind of living they were in, denied the relationship he wanted with them. Friendship with the world is enmity with God.

3. Their kind of living, denied him the glory and honor He deserved.

a. Refer to question raised in 1:6

B. The Sin of the Priests. (2:1-9)

1. In chapter 2:1-9 - Malachi singles out the priest for condemnation.

a. They knew what God required. BUT their sacrifices were:

1. unworthy

2. service was insincere

3. They were lazy, arrogant, and insensitive.

b. They had a casual attitude toward the worship of God and the observance of His standards.

2. This presented another problem. The people saw the half-hearted worship of the priest and followed in their example. (2:7-8)

a. God would show them that he was displeased with them (2:9)

C. The Sin of the People. (2:10-17)

1. These people were no different than their ancestors. They had quickly forgotten the lesson that God had taught in sending their grandparents into exile. They had not listened to the prophets.

a. Men were divorcing their faithful wives to marry younger women who did not follow the Lord. - detrimental to the future of their children. (didn't know God...)

b. The Lord hates divorce (2:16) Still true today. The world has made a mockery out of marriage.

2. One can see from these verses that pride had hardened their hearts.

a. 2:13-14

b. They had only themselves to blame. They were trying to shift the guilt to make themselves feel better.

D. The Lord's Coming. (3:1-7)

1. Despite the attitude of the people, God continues to show His love for the people.

a. Verse 7 - God's love almost seems endless...Still wanted them to turn to Him... Even after all of the time had passed...

2. Talks in v.1 of the coming of a messenger to prepare the way before Me...-commonly referred to as being John the Baptist.

a. Then talks about the coming of Christ.

b. Christ coming would bring comfort & healing for a faithful few but (v.5) a day of judgement for those who would not obey Him.

E. Blessings for obedience; Punishment for those who did not obey. (3:8-4:6)

1. 3:8-17 point out how the people had been robbing God.

1. Malachi points out God's judgement will be final.

2. Beginning in 3:18, he shows a fundamental difference between the man who obeys God and the one who doesn't. Judgement turns on a man's relationship to God. Relationship would be determined by their response to return in 3:7...

a. Mentions a fire again in 4:1 But it is destructive in nature. The arrogant and all evildoers who refuse to repent will find no escape - Baldwin...

b. Those who remained faithful would be able to rejoice (4:2-3)

F. 4:4-6 - The Final words of the Old Testament. One's fitting for the next 400 yrs. of silence...

1. Remember the Law...

V. Conclusion by Application to our lives.

A. The constant danger of Apostacy.

1. Throughout history, mankind has revealed his tendency to become careless and depart from loyalty to God.

a. We have already talked about how Jerusalem was restored, and the temple was rebuilt, etc...

b. Seems that they would have learned their lesson.

2. Not even a century after this - again engulfed in sin.

3. The same thing can happen to us.

a. 1 Cor. 10:12

1. take heed lest we fall.

b. God's work must be constant in our minds & hearts. We must not let up.

1. The Hebrew writer urged his audience not to drift away. (Heb. 2:1-3)

2. This is one of the most critical problems facing the Lord's church = apathy.

c. Will continue to be a problem until He returns

1. We do like Jesus told the people at Smyrna in Rev. 2:10 - be faithful unto death.

B. The Sin of substitution

1. In Deut. 15:21, God had specified that in choosing animals for sacrifice, they were to select those without blemish.

2. Jews had come to disrespect God's laws. (1:8-9)

a. Substituted the no good animals for God so they could keep the better ones.

3. This is not a rare sin in our society today. Most people are only concerned with what pleases them in worship instead of pleasing God. They substitute:

a. instrumental music

b. sprinkling

c. Absence of necessity of baptism

d. leniency & tolerance toward the works of the flesh.

1. Gal. 5:19-21

a. adultery & fornication - no big deal - sin played down in society, while the acts are glorified.

b. Drunkenness & envy - glamorized in TV by ads & seen in attitudes of get it all while you can.

e. Substitute fun & games for worship of the Lord.

1. coon hunts for Jesus.

2. weight lifters for Jesus...

f. When we do these things we aren't serving the Lord, we are serving ourselves!

C. Worship becomes wearisome.

1. The priests of Malachi's time had allowed worship unto God to be a wearisome burden. (1:13)

a. Sometimes we find ourselves going to worship & B.S. merely out of habit.

b. Need the attitude exhibited in the 100th Psalm & in 122:1

2. Worship out of habit is not pleasing to God.

a. Does one no good.

3. It depends upon your heart.

a. Is your heart in it? In the things you do for Christ?

b. It needs to be.

VI. Final Thoughts.

A. From this lesson:

1. We see a nation caught up in apathy. We are living in a nation full of apathy today. Are you caught up in this? Don't be apathetic or careless about your salvation!

2. We saw that God will judge those who are not faithful to them. It is not a matter of "if" but "when."

B. Are you living as you should if you are already a christian?

1. Remember 1 Cor. 10:12 says take heed lest you fall.

2. What is the condition of your heart? Do you do things out of habit, or because you want to?

3. We need to take heed how we are living and make corrections where necessary.

C. If you are subject.....

Timeline of the days & events leading up to the days of Malachi

- 586 B.C. - Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians
- 537 B.C. - The first exiles begin to return to Jerusalem
- 536 B.C. - Reconstruction of the Temple Begins
- 520 B.C. - Haggai, Zechariah become prophets
- 516 B.C. - Temple Completed
- 479 B.C. - Esther becomes Queen of Persia
- 465 B.C. - Artaxerxes becomes King of Persia
- 458 B.C. - Ezra comes to Jerusalem
- 445 B.C. - Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem
- 430 B.C. - Malachi becomes a prophet
- 400 B.C. - 400 Years of silence / between the Testaments