

TIMELESS TRUTHS FOR A CRUCIAL TIME

The Messages of Twelve Old Testament Prophets

Discussion Guide
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Sermon Title

The God of Covenant Love

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Malachi 1-4

Introduction: G. Campbell Morgan writes of Malachi: *In this book we have the last record of an inspired utterance to Israel for four hundred years. It is a prophecy of a stultified people, and a sensitive God. It is a picture of a people who imagine that they are all right where they are all wrong. They question every prophetic utterance.* With Malachi we come to the end of the Minor Prophets and the last word from God to His people until the angels herald the birth of John the Baptist and the long awaited Messiah.

Sermon Outline

I. An Overview of the Prophecy of Malachi

- A. Malachi is a “My messenger.” One commentator notes, *His book is the discerning analysis of a teacher rather than the impassioned appeal of an evangelist.*
 - C. Hassell Bullock sees in Malachi an exposition of the Ten Commandments in the context of a covenant keeping God.
- B. Malachi deals with several themes that will characterize Israel even until the time of Jesus:
 - 1. A passionless, half-hearted form of religion without any true sense of God’s love and care for them. (1:1-5)
 - 2. A corruption of the priesthood and religious leaders who practice for profit and go along with the trends of the times. (1:6-2:9)
 - 3. A moral decline resulting in a casual attitude within society toward marriage, family, and divorce. (2:10-16)
 - 4. Loss of interest in spiritual goals and true worship resulting in withholding the tithe. (3:7-15)
 - 5. A promise of hope for the few who will obey from the heart and put God first in their lives. (3:16-4:6)
- C. Key Phrases in Malachi:
 - 1. “I have loved you.” The word of the Lord (1:2)
 - 2. “Wherein...?” The skeptical answer of the people 7 times.

II. Lessons from Malachi

- A. God is a covenant keeping God. In the study of the Minor Prophets we have reviewed over 500 years of Israel’s history and God’s love and promises remain steadfast. God is on the throne and all of history moves toward His pre-determined end. Yet, whole generations may pass without obvious Divine interventions of a global nature—the faithful still trust, love, and obey God knowing the certain and eventual outcome.
- B. God will bless the faithful on a personal level, even if the mainstream is living in a faithless and backslidden condition:
 - 1. God knows who is listening and believing (3:16-17)
 - 2. God’s promise of the Tithe (3:10-11 & 18)
- C. God’s nature is a God Who loves, Who loves to bless, and Who delights in His people, His faithful followers.

Conclusion: God is a loving, faithful, covenant keeping God Who only delays His promises in order to include as many as possible in the blessing.

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' 7 "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' 8 "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. 9 "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. 10 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.

Malachi 1: 6-10 (NASB)

Discussion Questions

- 1.) Discuss the parallels between Malachi's time and our present day in the United States.
- 2.) Discuss the meaning of the Tithe. How much is it? Is it still valid? What is the storehouse today? How does this apply to us?
- 3.) Is it a true statement to say that if you put God first and give Him a tithe, He will give you more money in return? Explain your answer.
- 4.) What was the problem with the priesthood of Malachi's day? How does that relate to what we read about the clergy in our times?
- 5.) What is the purpose of marriage and family? Read 4:6 and explain how this applies to our times.
- 6.) How does God bless those who put Him first in their lives and demonstrate it by their practice?

¹¹ "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god".

¹³ "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴ Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your

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"And now this commandment is for you, O priests. ² "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. ³ "Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. ⁴ "Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says the LORD of hosts. ⁵ "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. ⁶ "True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷ "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 2: 1-7 (NASB)

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

Malachi 3: 8-10 (NASB)