**Malachi**

Last book in the Old Testament: What are God’s last thoughts to us?

Theme: Covenant.

Message: Having faith in God vs being faithful to God.

Malachi = “my messenger” Malachi may not be an actual name of a prophet, but most likely he was a real person.

According to Jewish tradition, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were members of The Great Synagogue who assembled the OT canon.

Date: between 458-432 BC Between the two visits by Nehemiah.

The situation: The temple is rebuilt, but the people are relying in themselves. They are cynical and skeptical of God working. They are accusing God of not fulfilling the promises to Jeremiah Ezekiel and Zechariah of a blessed and prosperous restoration. They have faith in God, but their faith is in what God will do for them. They have faith in God but they are not being faithful to God.

Outline:

Introduction: God still loves Israel. God has been faithful to Israel. 1:1-5

I The Priests have been unfaithful 1:6-2:9

II The People have been unfaithful 2:10-3:15

III The Day of the Lord is coming Malachi 3:16-4:6

Style: Socratic. Make a point, Propose a question from a theoretical person, Answer the question.

You have robbed God.

How have we robbed you?

In tithes and offerings.

Introduction: Malachi 1:1-5

God: I still love Israel.

v. 2 God: “I have loved you.”

The people: “How have you loved us?” We do not feel you have loved us. You have not loved us the way we wanted to be loved by you. If you really loved us, We would have more blessings in our life right now. What God has to offer them is not good enough for them.

Jacob have I loved, Esau I have hated. (quoted in Romans 9:13) chose you. Look at how Edom is doing even today. I have every intention to bless Israel (if you will let me)

God: I made a covenant with you. Do you really believe I will not be faithful to my covenant?

This sets the tone for the entire book. In view of my love….

Aside: He uses Esau/Edom as an example. The Edomites were allies of Babylon when Jerusalem was sacked in 597 and even during the Persian period they occupied parts of southern Judea. God assures them (v. 4-5) that he will take care of Edom.

I. Malachi 1:6-14 The Priests have been unfaithful.

 (and don’t forget that we are all priests)

1:6 “It is you, O priests who show contempt

Remember, that we are the “priests” of Christianity

1 Pet 2:5 a holy priesthood

1 Pet 2:9 a royal priesthood

Exodus 19:6 A kingdom of priests.

It is time for us to look at our hearts!!!!

v. 6 What does God want from us? He wants our honor and respect.

Does he want our money? Not really…. He wants our honor and respect.

v. 6 It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.

v. 6 How have we shown contempt? These people were clueless about the fact that they had shown contempt for God.

Lesson: We could be religious think we are honoring God, yet in his eyes we could be showing contempt.

Me: I do not want to show contempt for God!!!

v. 7 You put defiled food on my altar.

The people: We have? How have we defiled you? When? Again, they are clueless.

v. 7-8 By giving me your second best.

Illustration from last night: We asked what was the worst gift you ever got?

Jennifer: A half-filled bottle of shampoo which was diluted with water.

They gave crippled or diseased animals. They gave the stuff they didn’t really want anyway.

Priests: Isn’t it only logical to give a crippled animal? We are going to kill it anyway.

Q: What do we give in a canned food drive? Do you give second-hand clothes to your parents as a gift?

We give our used clothes to the poor or our unwanted canned goods to the poor.

For us: We give our “left over” time our “left over energy” our “left over” money

God (sarcastically) to the people: Try giving that to your governor.

Many of us give more of our discipline, our effort, our heart, our attention to our jobs, our vacations, 0ur education, our hobbies, etc.

Q: How might we be like this?

v. 9 Rhetorical Q: Will God accept that?

Q: Is it because God is a spoiled brat?

v. 10-11 God: If you are going to give me your second best, do me a favor: just stay home.

Q: Is God exaggerating here?

Q: Isn’t a little better than nothing at all? Answer: No!!!!!

Isn’t it better to put $5 into the plate than to put nothing in?

Isn’t it better to be religious than to be a pagan?

Q: Why is God so upset about such half-hearted gifts? Is it because he is an egotist and wants us to stroke his pride?

No!!!!! He gave his absolute best to us. It is because it represents ungratefulness.

I do not want to be in this position!!!

v. 12-14 The key issue.

v. 13a “What a burden.” Like Zechariah 7:2-3 “Should we keep mourning as we have done for so many years?”

Is that you? Special Contribution: “What a burden.”

Leader’s meetings: “What a burden.”

Staying pure: “What a burden”

v. 13b When you say “What a burden” God sees you sniffing at it contemptuously.

Q: How have we been like this?

v. 14 If you give half-hearted service (like a blemished animal), God calls you a “cheat.”

Malachi 2:1-9 Admonition for the priests.

A. Malachi 2:1-4 The priests have not honored me.

Very tough words. v.3 I will spread the bloody innards from the sacrifice on your faces. Malachi is alluding to the curses in Deuteronomy 28 You can keep your “worship”.

Why? Because you have not honored God (v. 2).

v. 4 I have kept my covenant with Moses…. This calls for reverence.

B. The Priests have not taught the truth. 2:5-9 Faulty instruction.

You have not taught the truth. You have compromised/watered down the message. You have made it too easy to be righteous.

True instruction should be in your mouth (v6)

Your lips should be preserving knowledge.(v7)

But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble (v8) violated the covenant. You have shown partiality.

Quoting Tyndale commentary: “Right behavior on the part of the people of Israel in covenant relationship with Jehovah was dependent on sound priestly instruction in the Torah and the virtuous example of the priests as covenant-keepers themselves.

II Malachi 2:10-3:18 The People have been unfaithful

A. They have been getting divorces. 2:10-16 (a metaphor for spiritual divorces)

2:10 Breaking faith with one another is breaking faith with God.

It is likely they were marrying foreign women to gain access to economic success—they were not trusting God to give them physical blessings.

v. 11-12 Marrying a non-Jew is desecrating the sanctuary.

v. 14 You have “broken faith” with a marriage covenant. In doing so they have broken faith with God.

v. 16 God sees divorce as a kind of social violence against the wife.

B. The people have stopped trusting in God 2:17 Where is God’s justice?

They are accusing God of not living up to his side of the bargain. They do not trust God’s justice.

Q: How have we been like this?

Malachi 3:1-5 The Day of the Lord Part I. (a previes of Malachi 3:16-4:6)

Malachi 3:1 “my messenger [my Malachi] who will prepare the way before me = John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:3, 10, 14)

v. 1 The Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The Messiah is coming.

v. 1 “the messenger of the covenant whom you desire” = the Messiah.

v. 2-5 Do not let God’s mercy and patience cause you to believe he will not judge those who are not faithful to him. They will get what they asked for (for God to come), but not what they wanted (a free ride without judgment).

Are you ready for the Day of the Lord? Amos 5:18 “Woe to those who crave the day of the Lord.”

Malachi 3:6-15 The people have been unfaithful.

God is speaking here to the people, rather than the priests, so he keeps it simple. He encapsulates their spiritual issues in the question of giving the tithe.

3:6-7 God: Only return to me

The people: What do you mean we left you? When did we leave? What are you talking about? Who???? Me??????

[note: they had already returned. How can we return? They had returned to the land, but had not received the blessings of covenant relationship had not yet materialized because they were not faithful to God]

v. 8 You have robbed me.

The people? Who, me?

I imagine them trying to think what they had stolen from God….

Q: What about us?

How have we robbed you?

v. 8b In tithes and offerings. You have been stingy. You are under a curse!!!!!

Why? Stinginess = unbelief.

Bring in the whole tithe (Deut 12:6).

Q: Why is a partial tithe robbing God?

v. 10 Test me in this. [the word could be translated as tempt]

You have not trusted me to take care of your things.

This is not about money. It is about trusting that God will take care of us. You have held back. In your heart of heart, you did not really believe that God has your back. That’s why you gave better stuff to your boss than to me.

It is about being faithful. “Test me in this”

How? Trust fully in me.

v. 10b-12 Q: Do you REALLY believe God will bless you if you bring in the full tithe of your effort, your heart, your love, your money?

“the floodgates of heaven” = rain, abundant crops (Deut 28:12 blessings)

v. 13 You have said harsh things against me.

People? I have??? Did I say I hate God? Did I say that I refuse to worship God?

What have we said against you?

v. 14-15 Here is the key: You said It is futile to serve God.

What are we getting out of this? (Having faith vs being faithful again)

Do you trust God to give you a spouse if it is best for you? Do you trust God to take care of you financially if you give generously to the work of the church? Do you believe that if you give generously to Special Missions, your gift will produce an abundant harvest in your life?

Finish: 1 Timothy 6:6-10

III The Day of the Lord Malachi 3:16-4:6

3:16 A scroll of remembrance. The Lamb’s book of life.

3:17 They will be mine… I will spare them…

This section summarizes everything we have learned in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

v. 1 The day is coming. For sure. Will the Day of the Lord be a bad day or a good day for you? It depends. It is a day of disaster and deliverance.

a. Every evildoer will be stubble. Not a root or a branch will be left to them.

b. Those who revere my name… The sun of righteousness (the Messiah) will rise with healing in its wings. You will leap like a calf in its stall. Like Bella when we open up her can of dog food. All the covenant promises and all the promises of Zechariah will be fulfilled.

God’s final words of the OT:

Summary:

1. Remember my law—remember Moses (v 4)

2. Be ready. I will send Elijah before that day. (Luke 1:17 John comes in the spirit and power of Elijah, Matt 11:14 He [John] is the Elijah who is to come)

Matthew 17:11 To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.

Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild. All this is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.