

MALACHI: The Final Warning

Chapter 1

Introduction:

1. This first chapter of Malachi is loaded with glorious verses to provoke your hearts with holy thinking.
2. Consider the Lord's appeal to the special love He has for His people that is even greater to us (1:2).
3. Though twins in the womb of Rebecca, the great God had only chosen one of them for blessing (1:2).
4. In contrast God hated Esau and destroyed his home and inheritance in judgment, not chastening (1:3).
5. There are those against whom God has indignation forever – reprobates. Let grace be exalted (1:4)!
6. We should see and rejoice at the many differences that are visible from the borders of our lives (1:5).
7. Men are disgracefully inconsistent when they treat fathers and employers better than the Lord (1:6).
8. Your actions may say things loudly that you would never want to say audibly before the Lord (1:7).
9. What a valuable lesson to consider and compare how you would seek a governor's acceptance (1:8).
10. Sin corrupts worship so that any prayers for grace and mercy will be ignored by the great God (1:9).
11. Some are so profane toward spiritual things they need hire or reward for even opening doors (1:10).
12. What a glorious prophecy of the Gentile churches offering to Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit (1:11).
13. God's name is profaned by neglect or inferior service or worship by His public ordinances (1:12).
14. Do we ever snuff at spiritual things? Or do we know those who do? Let us be on holy guard (1:13).
15. What a fearful argument to religious living and sober worship with our very best at all times (1:14).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI

- A. We know nothing more about Malachi than that he wrote this Old Testament book.
- B. We know those to whom he wrote were the regathered outcasts of Israel from Babylon.
- C. The book is the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel – God's warning of judgment.
 1. "Burden" is a warning of judgment (Isaiah 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1,11,13; 22:1; 23:1; Jer 23:33-40; Ezek 12:10; Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zec 9:1; 12:1).
 2. But let us not forget "burden" as duty to God (Matt 11:30; Acts 15:28; Rev 2:24); for this prophecy contains many points of correction Israel needed to make.
- D. It was written after the regathering of Israel from Babylon based on internal witness.
 1. An approximate time of its writing may be set at around 400BC by these points.
 2. It was written during a time Israel was under governors instead of under kings (1:8).
 3. It was written after Esau – or the Edomites – had been destroyed by God (1:3).
 4. It was written after the temple was rebuilt and sacrifices were restored (1:7-10; 3:1,10).
 5. It agrees with Nehemiah (Mal 3:8-12 cp Neh 13:10-14; Mal 2:10-16 cp Neh 13:23-29).
 6. Ptolemy's chronology is wrong by about 80 years. See Anstey's or Mauro's Chronology.
- E. The lessons of this last prophecy of the Old Testament have much instruction for us.
 1. The O.T. is for our learning and warning (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:5-6,11-12).
 2. Malachi is quoted often (Matthew 11:10,14; 17:10-13; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:16; Rom 9:13).
 3. Jesus Christ will surely judge our worship (Luke 13:6-9; Rev 2:5,16; 3:3; I John 2:28).

LESSON #1: The distinguishing love of God should motivate to service and joy (1:1-5).

- A. Immediately after announcing God's burden to Israel, a plain statement of love is given (1:2).
 1. Paul exalted God's love in conjunction with His chastening (Heb 12:5-13; Prov 3:11-12).
 - a. Judgment that is chastening proves judgment to condemnation is gone (I Cor 11:32).
 - b. We can and should use a similar approach with children – combine love and warning.

2. Love is as meaningful as it is discriminating and rare. Universal love has little of either.
 - a. The more any commodity increases in total supply the less each unit of it is valued.
 - b. Love is valued as well by the pursuit, provision, and price it makes for its object.
 - c. Professions of love from a whore mean little due to overuse and no investment.
 - d. God's love of Jacob is meaningful to the extent He did not love Esau (Rom 9:10-16).
 - e. God's love of Jacob is meaningful by the effective blessings it surely brought with it.
 - f. Here is a lesson in national blessing, not election. See Romans 9:13 for election.
 - g. Demands for obedience become greater the more exclusive the love (Amos 3:2).

- B. God desolated the Edomites on several occasions resulting in their eventual total ruin (**1:3**).
 1. The Bible foretold about it (Jer 49:7-22; Ezek 25:12-14; 35; Amos 1:11-12; Obadiah).
 2. God's hatred of Esau and Edom was not merely mental or theoretical, but had results.
 3. With this exaltation of the younger twin, the Israelites should have loved God forever.
 4. If election and predestination are true (they are!), then the elect should love Him forever.

- C. Though Edom thought they would rebuild their nation like Israel; God denied them (**1:4**).
 1. Edom and the Edomites are the direct descendants of Esau (Genesis 25:30; 36:1,43).
 2. Their nation was also called Idumea (Isaiah 34:5-6; Ezekiel 35:15; 36:5; Mark 3:8).
 3. Edom had been blessed with a nation for about 1200 years before its destruction.
 4. Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant to do this work (Jeremiah 25:15-29; 27:1-11).
 5. Though they purposed to rebuild their nation, God determined otherwise against them.
 6. The Jews under Judas Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus effectively destroyed them. See Josephus's Antiquities and the Maccabees in the Apocrypha.
 7. The Herods – wicked, vicious, and incestful to an extreme – were Edomites, or Idumeans.
 8. God destroyed Judah, but He recovered them in love; He never recovered the Edomites.

- D. When saints see the differences God makes, it should provoke them to fervent worship (**1:5**).
 1. Israel questioned God's love due to evil circumstances of their captivity, sort of like Job.
 2. God destroyed Edom without recovery; Israel He chastened in love with full recovery.
 3. For Israel there was a Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem; there was no such savior for Edom.
 4. The contrast between chastening love and judgment is a great difference (I Cor 11:32).
 5. Seeing these differences demands a great response (Psalm 35:26-28; 58:10-11; 83:13-18).
 6. Read Isaiah 5 and the vineyard of the Lord with sweet and wild grapes. Which are you?
 7. There are dramatic borders for those who look, and God deserves the praise (I Cor 4:7).

- E. The application of the first lesson is to consider and give thanks for God's glorious grace.
 1. You must taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). Admire borders in your life!
 2. He demands you serve Him with joyfulness and gladness for abundance (Deut 28:47-48).
 3. Paul said the love of Christ in his life logically constrained him to zeal (II Cor 5:14-15).
 4. Paul appealed to your knowledge of Christ's love as a clear motivating force (Phil 2:1-2).
 5. All the differences in your life are differences God Himself made without you (I Cor 4:7).
 - a. We should consider the five phases of salvation and discriminating differences made in each one (*eternal* in Eph 1:3-4; Jer 31:3; *legal* in Romans 5:6-8; I John 4:10; *vital* in Eph 2:1-7; Tit 3:3-7; *practical* in I Tim 3:16; *final* in Rom 8:28-39; I Cor 15:22).
 - b. Paul prayed for Ephesus to know the full dimensions of His great love (Eph 3:14-19).
 - c. You should consider the daily material blessings that God gives to us in abundance.

- d. Take note of borders (Ex 8:2; 11:4-7; 34:24; Deut 12:20; Pr 15:25; Ac 14:24-28) and seeing them (Deut 4:3; 11:7; Jos 24:7; I Sam 12:16; II Chron 29:8; Luke 10:23-24).

LESSON #2: God will only accept worship that matches His glorious Person (1:6-14).

- A. God appeals to the honor and fear given fathers and masters to justify His own worship (**1:6**).
 1. God rightly assumes children honor fathers and servants masters (Heb 12:9; Ps 123:2).
 - a. Therefore, He should be honored, for Israel called Him both Father and Master.
 - b. In fact, we make great efforts to honor one or the other, but why not the great God?
 - c. He rebuked them by questions for not giving the honor due to fathers and masters.
 - d. If you treat parents or bosses as you treat God, will they be happy and accept you?
 2. The LORD Jehovah confronted the priests of Israel for despising His glorious name.
 - a. In comparison to His greatness over fathers and masters, they had not honored Him.
 - b. He condemned the priests for despising His name, or His worship, by synecdoche.
 - c. Typical of their arrogance and self-justification, they asked how they had done so.
- B. Malachi rebuked the contempt of God shown by less than the best ministerial service (**1:7**).
 1. The sin here is offering inferior sacrifices to the infinite God: we know this by virtue of the context in 1:7-8,10,12-14. The sin here is not profane speech, but rather their actions.
 - a. Their actions of offering inferior sacrifices spoke volumes of their disregard for God.
 - b. Neither is bread of great significance, for it is synecdoche for all the sacrifices, as the context shows blind, lame, sick, and torn animals are under consideration (1:8,13-14).
 - c. Is it God's altar or table at stake? Consider it. The tabernacle's altar was where animal sacrifices were made to God, which made that in effect His table for feasting!
 2. The Spirit's method in this rebuke was to turn actions into offensive words against God.
 - a. "In that ye say," may mean, "because ye say," or it may mean, "your actions say," but it cannot mean both, for it is either giving the cause or it is giving the effect or result.
 - b. We choose the latter by context and the prophet's different use of language when strictly condemning their words and thoughts apart from their actions (2:17; 3:13-15).
 - c. "In that ye say" deduces from their polluted bread an implied view of Jehovah's altar.
 - d. He did not correct them for actual words, "The table of the Lord is contemptible."
 - e. Their sin was offering blemished sacrifices (1:8,13-14), not disrespectful words, and not both; the words "in that ye say" requires one or the other, and context answers.
 - f. Of course, we never say such irreverent things out loud, but our actions still say them.
 - g. Their actions showed contempt which implied that God's worship was contemptible.
 - h. We know actions speak louder than words, for Solomon has taught us (Prov 20:11).
 - i. Jesus condemned the son who answered right but did not do his duty (Matt 21:28-32).
- C. God reasoned with them as to the propriety of giving inferior service to their governor (**1:8**).
 1. The crime is plainly stated as giving inferior animal sacrifices on God's altar (1:7,13-14).
 - a. The law required animals without blemish (Ex 12:5; Ex 29:1; Lev 1:3; etc., etc., etc.).
 - b. Blemished animals had far less market value, so their worship was cheap and sinful.
 - c. If the law condemned such inferior gifts, then it was evil to contribute such sacrifices.
 - d. Would a governor appointed by kings of Persia accept disrespectful, inferior gifts?
 - e. Would such gifts secure the pleasure of the governor to accept their persons? No way!
 2. Notice God used His lofty name "LORD of hosts" for emphasis (1:6,8,9,10,11,13,14).

3. We should use this governor comparison to help our own participation in God's worship.
 - a. The idea that worship in the New Testament is more casual is wrong (Heb 12:28-29).
 - b. Prayer, preparation, punctuality, attire, attentiveness, sobriety, zeal, etc. all fit in it.
 - c. We know how we would prepare for a governor, so it helps make decisions for God.
- D. God rejects worshippers and worship, even prayer, when they compromise His glory (**1:9**).
1. Malachi with sarcastic irony confronts the priest about their neutered power with God.
 - a. His appeal for them to pray for God's blessing is irony – it is a sarcastic rebuke.
 - b. Malachi used sarcastic irony to say that God would not hear their prayers (1:9a).
 - c. It is irony by (a) the governor's rejection of them in 1:8, (b) the accusation against the priests in 1:9b, (c) the rhetorical–negative question of 1:9c, and (d) the rejection of them by the Lord in 1:10cd. God scorneth the scorers (Prov 3:34)!
 - d. This is not a serious appeal to prayer at all, for God would not hear them at all.
 2. The compromise and decline of worship in Israel was by their means – they were at fault.
 - a. He accused the priests as the main party in this crime against God's worship, and it is the same error that has led to the present perilous times (II Tim 3:1-9; I Tim 6:3-5).
 - b. The church and nation will not be better than the pulpit, and these priests had sinned.
 3. Since their worship was insufficient and sinful, would God respect their persons? Hardly!
 - a. God does not respect persons, so their identity was nothing (Deut 10:17; II Chr 19:7)!
 - b. Sacrifices and prayers of sinners are an abomination to God (Prov 28:9; 21:27; 15:8).
- E. Malachi confronted the covetous greed and laziness of the priests in their ministering (**1:10**).
1. Micah warned of such greedy and rapacious priests in Israel in his prophecy (Mic 3:5,11).
 2. God mocked them for refusing to open the temple doors without being paid for doing it.
 3. He had no pleasure in them, and He would not accept their offering. Let us fully beware!
 4. Some ministers that have chosen the non-profit profession for wages with little required.
 5. There are church members that attend and serve for a variety of false and foolish motives.
- F. God will have worshippers in spirit and in truth for His glory from among Gentiles (**1:11**).
1. Here is as plain of a prophecy of the gospel era of the New Testament as can be found.
 2. God took the gospel and kingdom from the Jews and gave it to the Gentiles (Matt 21:33-46; 22:1-14; Acts 1:8; 13:45-48; 15:12-19; Rom 11:17-22; Eph 2:11-22; 3:1-13).
 3. The Gentiles have adored and loved His name and kept His worship alive for 2000 years.
 4. Though not Israelites, they offer acceptable sacrifices through Jesus Christ (Jn 4:20-24).
 5. God has a new nation of and priesthood of Jews and Gentiles (I Peter 2:9; Rev 5:9-10).
 6. Prayers and thanksgiving of saints go up to God as sweet incense (Acts 10:4; Rev 8:3-4).
 7. We saved Gentiles love the great name of Jehovah and the name of His Son Jesus Christ.
 8. Are you happy to be heathen? Saved heathen? Give God glory for His glorious name!
- G. After prophecy of the Gentiles, by name, Malachi again condemned Jewish worship (**1:12**).
1. The "it" of the first clause of this verse is traced back to God's name in 1:11 and 1:6.
 2. God's name is great, and it is to be greatly praised, and its greatness is unsearchable.
 3. While the Gentiles considered it great (two times in 1:11), the Jews sinfully profaned it.
 4. They profaned it not in words, but rather in their actions of inferior sacrifices to the Lord.
 5. "In that ye say" is the same as 1:7, for he returns to that subject (1:13-14). It is the logical implication from their profane worship. They did not actually say the profane words.

6. Is it God's altar or table at stake? Consider it. The tabernacle's altar was where animal sacrifices were made to God, which made that in effect His table for feasting!
- H. God further condemned the Jews with even more examples of words by their actions (**1:13**).
1. Their actions said God's altar and worship were weariness to them i.e. boring and tiring.
 2. Their actions said God's altar and worship was an irritating nuisance i.e. to be snuffed at.
 3. To snuff is to inhale strongly through the nostrils, or to snort disrespectfully. God forbid!
 4. Should God accept offerings that are cheap, disrespectful, sinful, and done casually? No!
- I. God cursed those who brought less than their best to His worship; He is a great king (**1:14**).
1. These men were lying deceivers and hypocrites by not keeping their vows in substance.
 2. When they went to the flock to fulfill their vow, they overlooked the better for the worse.
 3. Though these men brought sacrifices to the Lord God of Israel, He cursed them for it!
 4. Every Christian should reflect on his baptism as a vow and his commitment to Christ.
 5. When you open your mouth in God's house, even by singing, you better fulfill it rightly.
 6. Never bring or give less than your best, for He is a great King that deserves the very best.
 7. He is far above a governor, because He is the great King of kings. Praise ye the LORD!
 8. Another jab at the Jews was to remind them again (1:11) the Gentiles would honor Him.
- J. The application of the second lesson is to worship God according to His great glorious name.
1. Whatever authority figure you respect most cannot compare to the great God's worship.
 2. An offering to God can be evil, if not done exactly right, with cost, and in the right spirit.
 - a. Remember the importance of always serving Him with gladness and joy (Deu 28:47).
 - b. Do you always come before Him with thanksgiving and praise (Ps 100)? You should.
 3. Is your worship of God comparable to weariness and snuffing you would not do actually?
 4. God's curse is upon those who vow one thing and pay something else and less instead.
 5. You do not have to vow to be guilty here, for a vow is merely a synecdoche for worship.
 6. Consider compromise and deception of Ananias and God's curse for his gift (Ac 5:1-11).
 7. Paul warned that proper N.T. worship has reverence and godly fear (Heb 12:28-29).
 8. God is a great king with a dreadful reputation. Does your worship totally fit His name?
 9. Today there is a form of godliness without reverence for His glorious name (II Tim 3:5).
 10. Today Christians love pleasures more than they love God and His worship (II Tim 3:4).
 11. Are you thankful to be the heathen here (1:11,14)? Fulfill your destiny. Glorify Him!

Conclusion:

1. We have two lessons – consider our distinguishing blessings and worship God with reverent fear.
2. Though Malachi was written 2400 years ago, there are lessons here that condemn modern Christians.
3. Are you a fulfillment of the prophecy of Gentiles who consider the name of Jehovah a great thing?