

Remember Moses; Look for Elijah Malachi 1:1-4:6

Turn to that Italian prophet... Malachi.

This will complete our series through the minor prophets (or “our readings”).

Last week: “I do not understand what you are saying.” [pray]

The popular statement “Don’t shoot the messenger” comes to mind when I read Malachi.

- Malachi gives a strong word to Israel here, but it is for their good.
 - It’s actually a great book on basic discipleship.
- What’s more, Malachi’s name means “my messenger.”
- And, in 3:1, the Lord promises to send his “messenger” which is a reference to John the Baptist; and the second reference in the verse refers to Jesus.
- One messenger was beheaded, John the Baptist, while the ultimate messenger, Lord Jesus, was crucified for our sins.

Malachi ministers about 80 years after Haggai and Zechariah.

- The book is a big argument; a back and forth dispute with God and Israel.
- God has entered a covenant with his people; *He has been faithful, they have not.*
- Malachi mentions **covenant** more than any other prophet.
- The people were making ethical compromises and questioning God’s character.
- They have grown tired of God (1:13); and thought it was vain to serve God (3:14)

The book includes six disputations/arguments

1. Lack of Appreciation for God’s Love and Care (1:2-5)
 - (“But you say” is the pattern in most of these arguments)
2. Corrupt Worship Practices (1:6-2:9)
3. Pagan Marriage (2:10-16) (a bit different structure, but still an argument)
4. Complaining and Questioning God’s Justice (2:17-3:5)
5. Withholding Tithes (3:6-12)
6. Complaining Rather than Serving God (3:13-4:3)

Verses 4:4-6 is a summary of the main points:

⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

⁵ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.” (Malachi 4:4-6)

Regarding **verse 4**, Horeb is Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 19-20; Deut. 5:2).

- Malachi has been echoing the events at Sinai; **God’s covenant** and his **God’s Word**.
- **It refers to God’s grace in choosing Israel, and it’s also a call to build their lives on God’s Word.**

Re **verse 5-6**, the coming prophet as “Elijah” points to the future hope (I will treat it later).

Remember Moses; Look for Elijah

We could then arrange all of this material in three parts:

1. Be Comforted by God's Love (1:1-5)

[Covenant love/Pentateuch]

2. Honor God's Name (1:6-3:18)

[Following Law of Moses]

- By Giving God Your Best in Worship
- By Being Faithful in Your Relationships
- By Speaking of God Rightly & Treating Others Justly
- By Honoring Him with Your Wealth
- By Serving God Wholeheartedly

3. Live by faith in God's Promises (4:1-6)

[Future Promises, Including Elijah]

1:1- oracle means *burden*. This must have been a tremendous burden for him to speak.

#1: Be Comforted by God's Love (1:1-5)

The people questioned God's love. **They did not appreciate his care of them.** God answers by saying "I have proven my love by my actions toward you."

Exodus 19

⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." (Ex 19:4-6)

v. 2: Yet they ask, "How have you loved us?"

- They've returned to the land, but are still under the rule of powers.
- They haven't reached the glorious days of Solomon and David.
- They knew his promise to Abraham to be a great nation, but their like "We're not great!"
- It looks like the **blessed people are cursed and those who are cursing us are blessed.**
- **Wrong attitude, wrong thinking, but an honest question.**

It's very relevant – "God, how have you loved me?"

- Suffered? Lost a spouse? Been abused? Had a spouse leave?
- Recall Romans 8:31-39 – many of these experiences may cause you to think that you've been separated from God's Word.

2b-3: God's response is interesting. "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated"

- Is this supposed to be comforting to us?
- We kind of squirm when we hear God "hating?"

God's love and hate are not like our love and hate.

- His **love** is *not*: "I can't help, fall in love with you..."
 - Not a spinning ball and music, or like a Hallmark movie where two people accidentally fall in the snow together, and bam, now they're married....
- And **hate** does not mean a temper tantrum
- It's using the words in a **comparative sense**. He's stating opposites.
- **Genesis 29:31**: "When the Lord saw that Leah was hated..."

- The idea is one was favored (pursued), but the other wasn't.
- Here: Jacob was favored and Esau was not.

4: Further, notice that Jacob represents a people: Israel; and Esau represents Edom.

- **God set his love on Israel out of all the nations of the earth.**
- He did it for his own purposes; and he did it that all the nations of the earth might be blessed. Through Jacob would be promise of Messiah – not Esau.

There was nothing in Jacob to make him more attractive.

- **God did not “fall in love with him”**
- **Rather for his own sovereign purpose and in his own pleasure, God chose to set his affection on the trickster, and his descendants.**

God loved Israel with divine love. He cared for them uniquely.

- **“How have you loved me?” “I loved you when you had nothing good to bring to me.”**
- **I chose you when you were the worst player on the field!**
- **Israel had all these privileges as a result – the law, the covenant, the prophets...**
- He doesn't say **“I have conveyed my love by taking away all your hardships”** – that's often how we see God's love – if circumstances are good, he must love us.
- It's not a **“He loves me, he loves me not”** kind of love.
- God's love is a covenantal love; a sovereign love; a saving love; an everlasting love.
- He proved his love by his actions.

4: Edom looked like they were prospering while Israel/Jacob was not.

- Edom didn't go into Exile, and they benefited from Israel's loss.
- Malachi makes clear that **Edom would not escape God's judgment.** (Cf Obadiah).

5: You will see the Lord's universal sovereignty.

- **God will be great beyond the border of Israel.**
- That is, he will have a people for himself from beyond this nation.
- This fits the choice of Abraham from the beginning – that all the nations would be blessed.

Application

- Find comfort in God's saving love. Appreciate his care.
- He has proved his love by his actions.
- It's a sovereign love; it's a global love; it's a love that has drawn us into the love of our Triune God; a love that has led us to the Messiah, “who loved us and gave himself for us.”
- Allow God's purposes to save a people from every tribe and tongue, to propel you to share the gospel with everyone.

#2: Honor God's Name (1:6-3:12)

Honoring God involves our relationship with him, and how we treat others.

- This is a reoccurring phrase (1:6, 11, 14; 2:1, 5; 3:16)

A. By Giving God Your Best in Worship (1:6-2:9)

After they say, "How have you loved me?" God essentially asks, "How have you loved me?" That's the real question. **How have you responded to my love for you?**

6: "How have we dishonored your name?"

- **Answer: They treated him as a trivial deity who will tolerate second best.**
- **You see the problem is, they'd forgotten who God was: Father, Master, Creator, King, Judge**
- **Forgetting who God is, leads to a forgetting who we are.**
 - **If He is Master, we are his servants, dedicated to serving him**
 - **If he is our Father, then we are his sons/daughters, who love and trust our Father**
 - **If he is the Creator, we are his image bearers, filled w dignity and reliant upon him**
 - **If he is our King, we are his kingdom citizens, living for his glory**
 - **If he is our judge, then we must walk carefully.**

The Lord responds with **five different answers**, as to how they have dishonored him:

1. Your sacrifices are blemished (v. 7-11)

7-11 explain what they're doing

- It was lack luster obedience/worship
- Their sacrifices were second rate.
- **They think, "For God, second rate will do."**

8: **Malachi says "You're not even thinking from a decent human point of view:**

Would you do this for the governor?"

- **Would you go before your boss the way you come before God? Or your headmaster?**
- **Or president of an institution? I hope not.**
- **But second best will do for God?**

10 – **just shut the door!**

- That's radical! It has happened in many churches (Rev 2-3)
- It's possible on a personal level to harden your heart that it becomes shut to God's Word.

2. Your attitude is apathetic (v. 12-13)

- **How many sacrifices do we need!? It's a weariness**
- **How many times do we have to go to corporate worship?**
- When worship becomes **wearisome, boring**, you are in trouble.
- They were fed up with God.
- No fire. No zeal. It's time to make changes!
- **Sometimes its our habits; you can get in a rut, in a funk...**
- **You need to make changes to get out of apathy.**
- **"Change in one area can affect every other area."**

3. You've fallen short of your glorious purpose (11-14)

- Israel was to be a light to the nations

- God says he will be glorified among the nations
- **Its happening now... and it will continue...**
- Malachi's audience stayed outside this purpose
- **When the character of our worship is impoverished, our impact on the world will diminish.**
- "Blemished" — Not only does God deserve our best, but these sacrifices were intended to set a pattern, for the unblemished lamb of God to come. God gave his best!

4. You approach God with irreverence (2:1-5)

- The "heart" — the center of a person's life in Hebrew.

2:2 - covenant curses - **God will turn blessings into cursings... every aspect of life, plagued with trouble...** it had already begun at some level.

2:3: God is fed up with half-hearted worship - he warns of cursing the priests descendants

- Further God will "spread dung on their faces" — This term refers to the entrails and bodily waste that came from the sacrificed animal

- **Add this to the list of verses that won't be put on a coffee cup; or nice wall art!**
- **It was ordinarily taken outside the camp and burned because it was unclean.**
- **Spreading this on the priest would mean they were taken away — they were removed in utter disgrace.**
- **The Lord would render them useless, like the sacrifices they offered; he would cut them off as well as their descendants.**
- **We have in Jesus Christ, one who was taken outside the city, and crucified, though he was the perfectly innocent High Priest, and he made atonement for guilty sinners.**

2:4: His priestly covenant ("Levi") is mentioned.

- God's purpose in disciplining Israel's priests was so that his covenant with Levi, the tribe of priests, might continue (v. 4).
- He intended to correct the priests and bring them back to what they ought to be.

2:5: It was a covenant was one of reverence: "Stood in awe of my name"

- God grants life and peace to those who fear his name.
- Life and peace are gifts from God.
- A great lie of the devil is that you will be happier and more fulfilled apart from God.
- He has come to kill and steal, but Jesus has come to give life and peace.

5. Your priests are unfaithful in their teaching (2:6-9)

- Priests taught as well as offered sacrifices... Problems with their teaching:
 1. They were to "guard knowledge" (v. 7)— they were to be a **well of truth, supplying God's people with life giving teaching, but the people weren't receiving truth.**
 2. They **had caused people to "stumble"** because of their inaccurate teaching. (V. 8)
 3. They had **"corrupted the covenant"** (8b) - they failed to live up to their part of the agreement

4. They had also **shown partiality**, mostly likely downplaying certain demands of the law out of fear of high powered people.
- I'm grateful to have the privilege of expositing Scripture here at IDC — it is my greatest joy in ministry. I want you to know that.

Application: Five questions based on these five worship problems.

- Are you giving God second best?
- Are you weary of God?
- Do you have a passion for the nations?
- Have you lost awe?
- Are you hungry to hear God's Word, and those of us who teach, are we devoted to studying and teaching it?

1:9: What do you do? "Entreat the Favor of God." Seek him now.

- Malachi is calling the people back to covenant faithfulness.

B. By Being Faithful in Marriage (2:10-16)

In this section, God ties the worship to marital fidelity.

- I'm not sure if you've watched the recent Mission Impossible Movie, Fallout. It begins with Ethan (Tom Cruise) and Julia exchanging wedding vows...
 - Do you Ethan, take Julia to be your lawful, wedded wife? "I do..."
 - To have to hold, to love to cherish, to protect... ? "I do..."
 - To lie, to deceive, to live a double life, to fail to prevent abduction, to erase her identity and force her into hiding? "What? Stop."
 - Then his head disintegrates and he wakes up from a nightmare...
- Malachi wants God's people to be committed to their holy vows.
- While not all of you are married here, it's important for all everyone.

Two specific examples of lack of faithfulness:

1. You've married outside the covenant community (2:10-12)

- "flirt and convert" is not the plan laid out; I know that happens...
- This is not ethnic but spiritual (2:11 – a foreign God)
 - It shows a blatant disregard for the clear command of Scripture...
 - It's also carried the the danger of syncretism...

2. Lack of faithfulness to one's spouse (read - 2:13-16)

The dominant idea: **don't be faithless (v. 14-15).**

Notice three **basic truths related to** faithfulness in marriage:

1. You can't separate Worship life from relational life. (13-14)

- God didn't accept the worship of those husbands who were unfaithful to their wives.

3. Marriage is about covenant and companionship. (14)

4. God's design includes a one-flesh union producing "godly offspring"

- The two become one, reflecting the unity of the One God, and by God's grace **conceive children.**
- **Many in our church are quite good at this commandment!**
- You don't have to have biological children to be faithful in marriage; the fall has brought great affects on humanity including the inability to conceive, and **this has caused many of us much heartache.**
- But it's clear that in marriage, God says it is a holy union between a man and a woman and included in this union, is God's design for children.
- **Godly children – just don't get married have a bunch of kids – have kids and disciple them!**

Applications

- So, be faithful in your marriage
 - Cultivate companionship, be faithful and seek to raise godly offspring should you have that privilege.
- If you aren't married to a believer, be a faithful and godly example.
- If you aren't married, commit to marrying a believer/a worshiper of Christ.
- For all of us, understand that you can't treat people wrongly, unfaithfully, and then **come and look all spiritual in corporate worship! God sees that hypocrisy and finds that worship unacceptable.**

C. By Speaking of God Rightly & Treating Others Justly (2:17-3:5)

2:17: Malachi rebukes those who are wearing God with **cynical complaints.**

- "Evil is good... God delights in them" – they had returned but didn't see the glory and blessing
- "Where is the God of justice?" – **They question God's character.**
- **We all have a grumbling streak... We should make Phil 2:14 our life verse.**

3:1: God corrects their vision.

- **They're wondering where is God? Where's the glory?**
- **He says, "I'm coming."**
- **But this is a case of "careful, you might get what you ask for"**
- **God says that his coming will involve judgment on all who are unfaithful, including the cynics who question his character!**

This **messenger** is not Malachi (though that's what his name means); as the text news, and as 4:5 indicates.

- But his ministry foreshadows the coming messenger.
- The NT confirms this as John the Baptist, who prepares the way for the Lord Jesus
- The next term "messenger" prepares us to understand the nature of Jesus as the "Lord"). (**Matt 11**)

3:2-5: When the Lord comes, he will perform two complementary works: **he will purify some sinners (vv. 2–4) and judge others (v. 5).**

He will come to refine some; he won't come to destroy all like a forest fire.

3: Here, Malachi says... **He will purify the “Levites,”** that is, the priests

- **Now we are a kingdom of priests, purified by Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:4-10)**
- **Only those who will stand on the last day, are those that have been washed and our purified...**
- **Rev 22 — we are those whose robes have been washed; we aren't better, just washed!**
- **But we also need a daily cleansing, not a bath, but the foot washing, the daily cleansing.**

v. 5: And why will they be judged? **They have not acted justly.**

- **Sorcery, adultery, and sins of oppression and a lack of neighbor love.**

Application:

- **We honor God through the honoring of him alone; not murmuring against him, and through the proper treatment of others.**

D. By Honoring God with Your Wealth (3:6-12)

6: A great statement about God's immutability; he does not change. He is faithful; his word is true.

“You deserve all the covenant curses, but because of my gracious promise, you will not be consumed.”

7-12 [Read] The prophet returns to the begrudging offerings of God's people (ch. 1-2).

- They were robbing God by withholding their tithes (a tenth).

7: “Return to me” – as a sign of repentance, God says that if the people become faithful in their contributions, then he will bless them (10-11)

8-9 Not tithing as “robbing God” — taking that which is his.

“Tithing”

- **This goes back... Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20) and Jacob vowed to give a tenth to Yahweh (Gen 28:22) showing the practice of giving a tenth to a superior.**
- **The law stated that a tenth of Israel's produce belonged to God (Lev 27:30).**
- **The tithes were given in support of the priests and Levites whose ministry was vital to Israel being faithful. The priest and Levites were landless, so they were to be supported; and the priest and Levites were then to tithe.**
- **Regarding land, they were to keep the Sabbath and participate in festivals of joy with gifts to God.**
- **There were other freewill offerings on top of this obligatory tithe:**
- **The tithe was the floor.**
- **And there was the support of the poor**
- **To get technical, there was so many tithes, offerings, you could get to like 23%**

Often you hear, “we're under the new covenant, our time is different.”

- Well, yes and no.
- It's not as though giving is now optional!
- We are stewards of everything God has given us.
- There are obvious difference with temple worship and now; with Israel's land offerings and the new covenant.

However, I would be careful in distancing our time with this time **too much.**

- Some times you hear, "the NT teaches cheerful giving." Yes, so does the OT!
- "The NT teaches sacrificial giving." Yes, so does the OT!
- "The NT teaches Giving Yourself to God." Yes, so does the OT!
- And in Matt 23:23 — Jesus says you should not have neglected social justice while continuing to tithe. Jesus didn't say "stop tithing your spices."

Furthermore, there's a principle we should remember when we read OT Laws...

- **While we can't draw a straight line from Israel's theocracy to us, every law we read about in the OT, expresses something true and timeless about *the Lawgiver!***
- This is how we draw out the timeless principles.
 - His law about cities of refuge shows that he cares about the vulnerable (Deut 19)
 - His law about ceremonial holiness shows he his holy; and he calls us to holiness
 - His law about how to care for the poor shows that he expects us to care.
 - So it is with tithing. The character of the Lawgiver has not changed! (3:6)
 - God still expects his people to be generous and to support the work fo ministry, and to honor Him with their wealth.

10-12: Promised blessing — "Test me... see if I won't meet your needs!"

- It's usually a bad thing to "test God" — this may be the only place where God says, "Test me... See if I won't bless you... See if you can out give me."
- This is not prosperity — "give some seed money and I'll send you a prayer cloth that has touched my bald head, and a autographed picture of me and Kimberly, dressed in purple — Bishop Bone and the Prophetess Special K."
- But it is to say, "God honors faithfulness." And blessing is not just material.
- **Your giving to God does not mean that God will meet "your greeds" but he will meet our needs (Phil 4:19).**
- It is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20)
- Prov 3:9-10
- One of the surest signs of a heart transformed by grace, is generous, joyful, sacrificial giving of one's wealth.

Application

"Return to me" — not just with head down and hands raised — it should show itself in something visible, honor me with your wealth. (Example: Zaccheus)

E. By Serving God Wholeheartedly (3:13-18)

Two groups of people are mentioned here: Fault-finding critics of God, who complain and don't serve, and a remnant who fear God and serve him.

13-15: Fault finding critics think “it is vain to serve God.”

13: An audacious complaint – “It is vain to serve God.”

- No everything else is vain (Eccl)!

14-15: They are questioning God's character again.

16-18: The remnant fears God, esteems his name

16 – God overhears the faithful — out of all this sin and rebellion; there's a remnant.

- We finally find a group that fear the Lord.

“and a book of remembrance was written...”

- They say “we're with Yahweh.”

- That's membership in the church — “I want to obey the Lord, will you hold me accountable and encourage me to be faithful.”

- God's record book appears throughout Scripture (see e.g., Ex. 32:32–33; Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Dan. 7:10; 12:1; Rev. 20:12),
- It shows that God will never forget his people, & will rightly judge the wicked (17-18).

17: “They are mine”

- “My treasured possession” -

- Have any treasured possessions? (Wedding Ring; Child; something passed down.

- “I will spare them”

This is what God calls his people. It's glorious.

18: He sees our service!

#3: Live by faith in God's Promises (4:1-4:6)

4:1 - Fire. John the Baptist employed this image of fire speaking of the coming of Christ. Matt 3:11–12:

I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

There will be purification of the repentant and eventual judgment on the unrepentant.

4:2a: The Sun of Righteousness.

- Christian interpreters through the years have understood this as a poetic and prophetic way of speaking of Jesus. Not
- because of “sun” “Son” (which is only English), but because of light and what light does.

A. His coming will do away darkness and bring joy.

- As the light of the world, Jesus will drive away darkness and the clouds,
- He will bring light and joy, dispelling gloom, oppression, and injustice.

Zechariah (JB Father) praised God, acknowledging that his son would “go on before the Lord to prepare the way ... and “because of the tender mercy of God”... “the sunrise shall visit us” (Luke 1:78).

- The light came into the world in Jesus Christ, and has shone in the hearts of all who Mnkandhla was a worship team of glory not heaven and loving god more mmmbelieve, and one day the darkness will be dispelled forever.

B. The Sun Brings healing

- **“wings”** (Psalm 139) was a common way to depict the sun’s rays — **like as the wings of a bird.**
- The rays of the sun bring healing to all who come under its influence.
- For the sun also has a healing effect, as does he Savior.
- His healing will be comprehensive, for in the new heaven and new earth, the curse will be reversed; no more toil, thistles, pain, tears — total healing, total shalom is coming.
- He have assurance of this because at the cross Jesus healed our iniquity! (Isa 53)

4:2b: Leaping like calves.

- This is another image of joy and final deliverance.
- **Deer everywhere jumping — on a run... woah!**
- That’s going to be you...

4:6: Elijah.

- The great OT Prophet.
- **If we had Bible trading cards (let’s not do that), an Elijah rookie card would be valuable!**
- **So would “a Moses”**
- The stood with Jesus at the MT of Transfiguration, one representing the law and the other the prophets.

The promise to send Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome “day of the Lord” refers to a future prophet to come, which we have identified in 3:1 already as John the Baptist.

- JB’s ministry would be similar to Elijah.
- His appearance was even like Elijah’s.
- (See also; 17:10–13; etc.).

A few times JB denied that he was Elijah. (John 1:21, 25).

This was probably his way of saying “I am not the exact person, Elijah.”

His ministry was like that of Elijah.

John the Baptist did come and he did prepare the way for David's' greater Son, Jesus Christ, our prophet, priest, and King.

So at the the incarnation, people would be blessed or cursed depending on what they did with him.

6: Father's/Children: The point is that fathers and sons will no longer live self-centered lives, but will live for the good of one another.

It's a picture of peace and harmony, the fruit of turning to the Lord.

That's what the Lord desires from fathers/sons; families.

- Fathers/Mothers: don't neglect, be unkind, or be embittered with disappointment.
- Children: Love and honor your parents.

“Lest I come to strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

- It's interesting how the book (and the OT in English!) ends.
- **“You must change or else.”**
- It's one of those prophecies that extends to the ends of the age.
- When the day of the Lord comes it will mean salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked.

- The word for the remnant is keep trusting, obeying and waiting on his coming.
- So we await the second coming of Jesus... having placed our faith in him, we are shielded from coming destruction, and promised a whole new world.

Summary

Be comforted by God's love - he has loved you with an everlasting love.

- if you are not a Christian, the invitation goes out to you — trust in the Messiah, this promised one, and be swept up into this love and these promises.

Honor God's Name

- by giving him your best
- By being faithful in your relationships and in marriage
- By speaking rightly and treating others justly
- By honoring God with your wealth
- By serving God wholeheartedly

Live by Faith in God's promises — what promises we have in these Minor Prophets!

All the promises of God, find their Amen, in Christ.