

Malachi 1

The Promise of True Worship

Text: Malachi 1

Introduction:

1. God had promised that the seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent and the enemy of man would be defeated (Genesis 3:15).
2. He showed that this victory would include blessedness for all through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).
3. This Victor would be a mediator (Job 19:23-27), a ruler (Genesis 49:10), a star (Numbers 24:17), a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), a priest (1 Samuel 2:35), and a king (1 Samuel 2:10) - ruling from the throne of David (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).
4. During the time of David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1) recorded many prophecies of Jesus in the Psalms.
5. In the writings of the prophets, much more detail about the coming Messiah was given.
6. Malachi showed that the Messiah would institute true worship throughout the world...

I. THE BACKGROUND

(MALACHI 1:1-5)

- A. The name Malachi means, "My Messenger."
- B. He lived during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.
- C. His prophecy fits in with the situation in Judah at the end of the book of Nehemiah - around 445 - 425 BC.
- D. The Religious Background:
 1. Upon their return from captivity, Haggai and Zechariah had been sent to reprove the people of Judah for not building the Temple.
 2. Malachi was sent to reprove them for neglecting the Temple.
 3. The people had become ritualistic in their worship and hypocritical in their lives.
- E. The Social Background:
 1. There were two major concerns in Malachi's time, and both related to the home.
 2. The intermarriage of the Jews with those of other nations was a corrupting influence.
 3. The prevalence of divorce was a danger to society.
- F. The Stylistic Background: *Didactic-Dialectic*
- G. The Contextual Background:
 1. Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah had all done their part in leading the nation in obedience to the Lord.
 2. Despite these good examples and good works, the people became unfaithful to their promise and to the covenant of God.
 3. Malachi is sent with the final message from God - "Israel has failed!"
- H. Note that Malachi's message is the burden of the Word of the Lord.
- I. The first part of Malachi's burden is to remind them of how much God had loved them.
- J. God declared to His people, "I have loved you." Their bitter and rebellious response was, "Wherein have you loved us?"
- K. It must be understood that the root cause of their sin was a misunderstanding of the nature and character of God.

Prophecy of Jesus

- L. As further evidence of His love, God reminded them that He had chosen Jacob and not Esau.
- M. The lesson being taught by God is that He had restored Israel to her homeland while Edom was still left desolate.
- N. In fact, even if the Edomites tried to return and rebuild their homeland, God would cast it down!
- O. Edom remained under the judgment and condemnation of God; but Israel had been forgiven and allowed to return and to rebuild!
- P. They should have understood God's love and sought to glorify Him from the land of Israel.
- Q. Instead, they accused God of not loving them and turned against Him with cold, ritualistic worship and service.

II. THE POLLUTED WORSHIP OF ISRAEL (MALACHI 1:6-10, 12-14)

- A. The words of this passage emphasize the authority of God - "Father," "Master," "Honor," and "Fear."
- B. Because they doubted the love of God, they rejected the authority of God.
- C. God declared that they despised His name.
 - 1. The word for 'despised' means, "To regard with contempt; to consider vile or worthless; to disesteem."
 - 2. Sadly, this attitude was found among the priests - those who were to oversee the worship and service of God and to teach His word.
- D. However, the priests asked, "Wherein have we despised thy name?"
- E. They showed their contempt for God's name and authority by offering polluted bread upon the altar.
- F. While they were offering sacrifices to God, they were thinking in their hearts, "The table of Jehovah is contemptible." (Cf. Matt. 5:23-24)
- G. Their disrespect was shown further by their offering to God the worst instead of the best of their possessions (cf. Lev. 22:7ff; Deut. 15:21).
- H. Their contempt for the things of God was so great that they would not perform the most menial tasks without seeking a reward for their service.
- I. Sadly, the Jews - instead of being a light to the world about the greatness of God - actually snuffed at His worship and lamented that it was a weariness to them!
- J. The final insult was made by those who vowed to God and then tried to get out of their promise by offering that which was corrupt and blemished.
- K. If they continued to disrespect the Almighty God, they would find themselves before Him in judgment - facing His terrible wrath.

III. THE PROMISE OF TRUE WORSHIP (MALACHI 1:11)

- A. Amid this heartbreaking description of Israel's corrupt worship, God made a powerful promise.
- B. There would come a time when the Gentiles would worship God in spirit and in truth.
- C. The Gospel would be preached throughout the world, producing Christians in all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).
- D. Consequently, true worship would be offered to God from every place (cf. John 4:19-24; Acts 10:30-35; Romans 15:16; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 13:15-16; Revelation 8:3-4).
- E. This required a changing of the covenant between God and man (Hebrews 7:12-14).
- F. The Christian must not allow his worship to become polluted in attitude (spirit) or corrupted in action (truth)!

Conclusion: It is both an honor and a duty to worship God in spirit and in truth.