

Malachi – last of the Old Testament prophets

The Old Testament books starting with *Isaiah* and ending with *Malachi*, along with *Revelation* at the end of the New Testament, contain prophecy. The root words that form the word “prophecy” mean “to speak beforehand.” This gives us the sense that God’s prophets tell people what will happen. While this is true, their roles also included reminding God’s people what he had done for them and how they could live lives pleasing to God.

Let’s take an in-depth look at the short book by the prophet Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets. He wrote at a time when the Israelites had just been allowed to return to their land from decades of exile. They lived in poverty, surrounded by enemies, ruled by a far-off foreign king; they were struggling to find their way. This week, Malachi will show us – as he did them – that God is the only way (John 14:6).

Monday – The Love of God

“God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

1. Please read Malachi 1:1-14. Why would the Israelites have needed assurance of God’s love?

Text Insight: Esau and Jacob were brothers. Jacob’s offspring became the nation of Israel, while Esau’s became neighboring Edom. Their original sibling rivalry continued in national rivalry, even warfare.

2. What is the significance of the questions asked by God’s people in verses 6 and 7? Why is God justified in his demands regarding their sacrifices?
3. According to verse 14, what is the real issue with bringing a less fit animal for sacrifice? How does 2 Corinthians 9:7 (above) help us to understand God’s heart about giving?

Making it Personal: Do you give God your best? Pray for guidance in cheerfully giving him all you have.

Tuesday – The People of God

“In the Kingdom of God, service is not a stepping-stone to nobility: it is nobility, the only kind of nobility that is recognized.” T.W. Manson, 20th c. British theologian

1. Please read Malachi 2:1-9. What are the two problems identified in verses 2 and 9?

Text Insight: The priests of Israel always came from the tribe of Levi, one of Jacob’s 12 sons. Levite men who were not priests also worked in God’s temple as musicians, singers, teachers, administrators, guards, etc.

2. What covenant had God made with the tribe of Levi? How had the priests failed to carry out their responsibilities under this agreement? What discipline did God use to stop them?
3. Who in the church today carries out the tasks originally given to the tribe of Levi? In what ways?

Prayer Focus: Pray for all those who minister in the church – teachers, singers, those who set up equipment and those who take it down, greeters, musicians, pastors, and everyone else you can think of – to do God’s work in a way that pleases him.

Wednesday – Godly Relationships

“The Bible opens and closes with a wedding.” Selwyn Hughes, 20th c. Welsh pastor and writer

1. Please read Malachi 2:10-16. What is the point of Malachi’s commentary in verse 10?

Text Insight: The phrase “daughter of a foreign god” means a foreign woman who worships idols. Men were apparently divorcing their Israelite wives in order to marry unbelieving women from neighboring nations.

2. What is God’s view of marriage in verses 13-16? Why does it make sense for God to mention divorce and violence in the same sentence?
3. Why are the words of caution stated in verse 15 repeated in verse 16? How does this tie in with the warning in verse 12?

Making it Personal: Pray that God will guide you in honoring your relationships in ways that please him.

Thursday – God’s Messenger

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

1. Please read Malachi 2:17-3:5. What do you think might have led to the cynical questions in 2:17?

Text Insight: Malachi 3:1-4 is prophecy about the coming Messiah, Jesus.

2. What will God’s messenger do? What will the purification achieve for God’s people?
3. Who will not be able to stand in judgment? Why do you think dishonest employers are listed along with adulterers and liars? What does this list tell you about God’s priorities?

Making it Personal: The list of sins in Malachi 3:5 is not meant to be complete. Pray for God to refine you so that you can honor him in all you do.

Friday – God’s Abundance

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:31, 33

1. Please read Malachi 3:6-18. What is God’s promise in verses 6 and 7? How had the people turned away?

Text Insight: Our word “tithe” was the original English word for “tenth.” The Israelites were to give God a tenth of all they produced by way of offerings in the temple.

2. How did God summarize the charges against his people in verses 13-15? Why do you think the people were so focused on the prosperity of the wicked (those who utterly reject God)?
3. What did the people identified in verses 16-18 do? Why was God desirous of blessing them?

Making it Personal: Do you trust God with all you have; giving to him without holding back in fear that he will not be able to meet your needs? Pray that God will open up your heart to his blessings through giving.

For the Weekend: Compare Malachi 4:1-5 with Deuteronomy 4:1-14. What assurance does God give his people at the conclusion of *Malachi*? What is your responsibility in all this according to verse 4?