

The Old Paths

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“The Burden Of Malachi”

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It is unfortunate that the book of Malachi is not better known than it is among most Christians. This book contains prophecies concerning John and Jesus. This book is also the last book written before the so-called “400 years of silence” which took place between Malachi and Christ’s birth. (I say so-called because though there was no “new” revelation, God continued to “speak” through the Old Testament Scriptures.)

The book of Malachi not only contains prophecies, but it also contains words of warning and demands that God’s people repent. As Malachi begins this book, we read, “The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi” (Mal. 1:1). The word “burden” means, “a burden or load, figuratively a judgment which lies heavy on a people” (Wilson’s, p. 59). Why was this word a burden? What was this judgment and why would it lie heavy on the people? It is because Malachi was God’s “mouth” who rebuked the people for their sin, and warned them of the consequences if they refused to repent. Let us take an overview of the book of Malachi and see what sins they had committed and God’s answer to the problem.

God’s People Did Not Honor Him.

In Malachi 1:6-7, we read, “A

son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.”

God charges them with disrespect and dishonoring Him. The Jews ask in verse 7 how this happened, and the Lord answers them by looking at the way they were worshipping. They offered polluted, or unclean bread on the altar, and their attitude was one of pride. They also despised the altar. In other words, they gave God the “leftovers” in their worship! They gave God the least of their time and devotion. They focused on this world and its pleasures, rather than focusing on God and pleasing Him.

God’s People Were Bored With Worshipping Him.

In verse thirteen of chapter one, God says, “Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD” These people literally were bored with worshipping God. They had no intention of pleasing God through sacrifices, and did not want to serve God. In-

stead of it being a pleasure and joy to serve the only true and living God, it was considered a burden to them.

This is a sad commentary on the people of God. They were bored with God and did not want to serve Him as they should. In contrast, King David said, “...I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Ps. 122:1). This needs to be our attitude as well. Let us come to worship God with zeal and enthusiasm! Let us be ready to worship God and also serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mk. 12:30)!

God’s People Had A Perverted View Of His Character.

In Malachi 2:17, God tells them that they have wearied Him! “Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?” They had pushed God to the point that He was literally disgusted with them (Wilson’s, p. 477). These people had completely perverted the character of God. They taught others that God delights in those that do evil. We can hear the utter disrespect in their words as they sneered, “Where is the God of judgment?”

This is not the only time God’s people had such an attitude, unfortunately. Isaiah 5:20-21 states, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” Woe to those today who would try to pervert God’s character, and in effect, scoff at His power and might like the Israelites did!

God's People Robbed Him.

In Malachi 3:8, God accuses, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Just as they defiled the altar, they robbed God through their tithes and offerings. They refused to do as God commanded. They did not give like they should have, and God was ready and willing to punish them for it. As we read further in this chapter, we notice that these Jews had become very arrogant and proud. "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered" (Mal. 3:13-15). There is no room in God's kingdom for those who think they can work wickedness and God will not care, or that He will not punish them for acting that way!

God's People Were Given An Opportunity To Repent.

Even at this time, God had not given up on them completely. God told these Jews in Malachi 3:7, "...Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts." After all God's people had done, God was still willing and ready to forgive them. He told them to return, and when they did, He would return to them. This passage is not unlike the one found

in James 4:8: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you..." After all the terrible things these people did to God, God was still willing to forgive them. If we want to please God, we must realize that we have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and make our life right with God through obedience to His word. In spite of their arrogance, pride, and thievery, God was willing to take them back because He loved them as a man loves his son (Mal. 3:17).

God's People Had A Reward Waiting For Them.

Even at this time, God made a promise to these wicked people. He said, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12).

After their selfishness and unwillingness to serve God, He still was there with out-stretched arms waiting for them. He told them "...prove me now...". How foolish

people were if they did not take God up on His offer!

How foolish people are today, as well. Jesus Christ extends His arms, saying to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Do not let the cares of this world lead you away from the Truth. Stay grounded and settled in God's word as long as you live (I Cor. 15:58). Do not become like these people of Old. Let us make sure we learn the lessons from the people in Malachi's day (Rom. 15:4), and be a people whom God can call His own; who are ready, willing, and able to follow Him at all times (Rev. 2:10)!

Consider It Well...

◆ "You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you do not try."

◆ "If you are too big to willingly do little things, you are probably too little to be trusted with big things."

◆ "Bitterness is to a soul what a termite is to a house."

(From: Larry Ray Hafley, Baytown, TX)

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