

01-FCC-2024-19-06- Pastor Matt Malachi 1.1

Great is the Lord Among the Nations

Malachi 1:1 (page 953)

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October 6, 2024

Alternative Sermon Title:

“Does God Still Care? A Journey Through Malachi”

Abstract:

This sermon explores the opening verse of Malachi, reflecting on the history of Israel and God’s unwavering commitment to His people.

Pastor Matt highlights Israel’s repeated disobedience and the question many face today: does God still care?

Through an exposition of Malachi 1:1, the sermon emphasizes God’s enduring love, His call to repentance, and the hope that culminates in the new covenant established by Christ.

The message serves as a reminder that, despite mankind’s failures, God remains faithful, holy, and worthy of all worship.

Outline:

1. Introduction to Malachi and the Historical Context

- The relevance of Malachi to contemporary believers.
- God’s covenants with Abraham, Moses, and Israel.
- Israel’s slavery in Egypt and God’s deliverance through Moses.

2. The Encounter at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20)

- The giving of the law and the reverence due to God.
- Moses as an intercessor and the people’s fear of God’s presence.

- Application: the flippancy in today's culture versus the holy fear of God.

3. The Role of Christ as the Greater High Priest

- Christ's defeat of sin and the ability to cast our burdens on Him.
- Jesus as the greater high priest, surpassing Moses.

4. Malachi's Prophetic Message

- Introduction to the study of Malachi.
- Why Malachi is relevant today: addressing sin, unrighteousness, and apathy.
- The central question: Does God still care?
- God's care for His people, His covenant, and the glory due His name.

5. Israel's History of Disobedience and God's Faithfulness

- A review of Israel's history: from Abraham to Moses, to the period of judges, kings, and prophets.
- God's consistent faithfulness despite Israel's rebellion and idolatry.
- The exile in Babylon and God's promise of restoration through the prophets.

6. The Rebuilding of the Second Temple and Disappointment

- Israel's return from exile under King Cyrus of Persia.
- The rebuilding of the second temple and its diminished glory.
- The disillusionment of the people and the promise of something greater.

7. The New Covenant Foretold in Jeremiah 31

- The promise of a new covenant, written on the hearts of God's people.
- The fulfillment of this covenant in Christ and the shift from external to internal worship.

8. Christ as the True Temple (John 1 and 2)

- Jesus as the fulfillment of God's presence with His people.
- The destruction and raising of the true temple: Christ's body.

9. Conclusion: God's Unchanging Nature and Call to Worship

- God's unchanging faithfulness, His call to wholehearted worship, and His care for His people.

- The hope of the new covenant in Christ and the anticipation of God's ultimate plan.

10. Closing Prayer and Benediction

Scripture Citations:

1. Malachi 1:1 (ESV):

"The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi."

2. Exodus 19:16-20 (ESV):

"On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."

3. Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV):

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

4. John 1:14 (ESV):

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

5. John 2:19-21 (ESV):

“Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.”

/// SERMON SUMMARY WITH INFERRED HEADERS ///

Sermon Summary: “Does God Still Care? A Journey Through Malachi”

Introduction

Pastor Matt began by emphasizing the greatness of God and the blessing of casting our burdens on Christ, who defeated every sin. He reflected on the history of God’s dealings with Israel, setting the stage for the study of Malachi, a book relevant to both ancient Israel and our contemporary world.

The Greatness of God and the Encounter at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20)

The sermon referenced Israel’s history, beginning with God’s covenant with Abraham, and how the people of Israel, though enslaved in Egypt, were miraculously delivered by Moses. The encounter at Mount Sinai was highlighted, where God descended in fire and smoke, demonstrating His awesome power. The people trembled in fear, but Moses served as an intercessor, receiving the Ten Commandments. Pastor Matt stressed the reverence due to God in worship, contrasting today’s flippant attitudes toward prayer with the holy fear shown by the Israelites.

Christ: Our Greater High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Matt reminded the congregation that, for those in Christ, we have no need to fear, as Jesus, our intercessor, is the greater high priest, surpassing Moses in every way. He highlighted that through Christ, we can confidently approach God.

Why Study Malachi?

Pastor Matt introduced Malachi as a short but powerful book that speaks directly to us today. The prophet Malachi addresses Israel’s disobedience, apathy, and

challenges the people to return to God. He posed key questions for reflection:
Does God still care amidst a world filled with sin and wickedness? Does He care about our personal struggles?

Israel's History of Disobedience and God's Faithfulness

The sermon reviewed Israel's long history of disobedience, from the covenant with Abraham to their time under Moses, through the periods of the Judges and Kings. Despite Israel's repeated rebellion, God remained faithful to His covenant promises. Pastor Matt described Israel's cycle of disobedience, judgment, repentance, and deliverance, as recorded in the book of Judges (Judges 21:25). The people desired to be like other nations and asked for a king, leading to Saul's reign and eventually David.

God's Promise to David (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

God promised David that his throne would be established forever, a promise ultimately fulfilled in Christ. While Solomon built a grand temple, even he fell into idolatry. After Solomon's death, Israel fell into decline, leading to exile under Babylon.

The Exile and Return (Jeremiah 25:11; 2 Chronicles 36:23)

Israel's disobedience led to the Babylonian exile, during which the temple was destroyed. Seventy years later, under King Cyrus of Persia, the people returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. However, the second temple was less grand than Solomon's, leading to disappointment and disillusionment among the people. Malachi addresses this period of frustration and calls the people back to faithfulness.

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Despite their disappointment, God had something greater in mind—a new covenant that would be written on their hearts, not on stone tablets. This covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, pointed to Christ, who would fulfill the law and bring true restoration.

Jesus: The True Temple (John 1:14, John 2:19-21)

Pastor Matt pointed to Christ as the fulfillment of the new covenant. Jesus is the Word made flesh who "tabernacled" among us, becoming the true temple. Through His death and resurrection, He established the new covenant in His blood, and believers now form the spiritual house of God.

Conclusion: God's Unchanging Nature

God's faithfulness never changes, and He still cares deeply about His people. Malachi challenges the people of Israel, and us today, to return to wholehearted worship. Pastor Matt concluded with a call to reflect on the glory due to God and to anticipate the hope found in Christ, the fulfillment of God's promises.

Key Scriptures:

- *Malachi 1:1: "The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi."*
- *Exodus 19:16-20; 20:18-21: The giving of the law at Mount Sinai.*
- *2 Samuel 7:12-16: God's promise to establish David's throne forever.*
- *Jeremiah 31:31-34: The promise of the new covenant written on hearts.*
- *John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*
- *John 2:19-21: Jesus speaks of His body as the true temple.*

/// FULL SERMON TRANSCRIPT WITH INFERRED HEADERS ///

Does God Still Care? An Introduction to the Book of Malachi

Introduction

Good morning, church family. It's good to be with you this morning.

It's a blessing to sing of our great God and Savior as we remember Christ defeated every sin; we can cast our burdens now on Him.

He is worthy to be praised with every thought and deed. He is indeed the great God of heaven.

The Greatness of God

As I was reading in preparation for this morning, I was in Exodus 19 and 20.

In Genesis, you know, a man called Abraham—God makes a covenant with him and a promise to make him into a great nation. And He does that.

Generation after generation, they become numerous, as God has promised Abraham. But then this Hebrew people find themselves in slavery in Egypt.

And God raises up for them a man, a deliverer—Moses—who would lead the people out of Egypt, miraculously, through the Red Sea and toward the Promised Land.

God makes another covenant with Moses and the people. He sets them apart from the nations of the world.

The Encounter at Mount Sinai

As this is happening, right before we get to the Ten Commandments within the story of the Exodus, there's a picture that's going to come up on the screen. This is what's believed to be Mount Sinai in Israel.

As we're thinking about this, this is what we see in Exodus chapter 19. We read this:

“On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.” (Exodus 19:16, ESV)

So the gathered Israelites are together around the mountain.

And Moses brought the people out of the camp, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. It says:

“Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. The LORD came down on Mount

Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.” (Exodus 19:18–20, ESV)

We see Moses is this intercessor, serving in this priestly role for the Israelites.

The Fear of the Lord

And then it continues in chapter 20, when Moses has gone up to get the Ten Commandments from the Lord, this new covenant for them. It says:

“Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’ Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.’ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.” (Exodus 20:18–21, ESV)

Our culture—we just live in a culture of flippancy. Even in church culture, “Jesus is my homeboy.” Heard that before?

We need to be reminded of the greatness of God when we bow to pray. And we consider that we communicate with the God who spoke the world into existence with a word.

Would that sort of holy fear and reverence and posture describe you towards this great God?

Christ: Our Greater High Priest

Now, if we’re in Christ, if you’re in Christ, we need not fear, because we have an intercessor who is Jesus Christ the righteous. He is a greater high priest than Moses, and He is far, far above that.

He is that on our behalf. And now, God’s chosen people, Israel—they have this rich history in the way that God has dealt with them and how they have related to God.

And so we are going to look at that this morning.

Introduction to the Book of Malachi

If you are new here at Faith—if I've seen unfamiliar faces—my name is Matt. I'm one of the pastors here at Faith.

This morning, we are going to be beginning a new sermon series through the book of Malachi. We've been walking, kind of topically, through a series that's been about gospel community—about how the gospel shapes the way that we relate to one another.

But our bread and butter is going to be to walk verse by verse through books of the Bible. And so we are going to be looking at Malachi this morning, because we believe that all Scripture is breathed out by God, and it's useful.

It's profitable for teaching and for reproof and correction, for our training in righteousness, that we might be complete and equipped for all the good works that God has for us in Christ.

So I'm excited to walk through this book with you over the next couple of months, and that's going to lead into Advent. I can't believe it's almost Advent. I can't believe that those words are coming out of my mouth.

Why Study Malachi?

But Malachi—it's a short book. It's positioned right at the end of your Old Testament.

And today, we are going to really be orienting ourselves around the context in which Malachi is written. There's a lot of rich history in this book, and rather than just dive right into it, I want to make sure that we understand where we're at.

So, why Malachi? Why are we looking at Malachi?

Well, I would say that this book specifically—it's unique—but we will see throughout the course of this book that we need the book of Malachi, and it speaks directly to us in our contemporary setting.

Does God Even Care?

So, I want to pose a few questions at the beginning of this book as we begin our study through it. They are really this:

When we sit in the midst of just a world of unrighteousness, when we just see the devastating effects of sin that are all around us—we feel them.

But we see things like abortion and identity issues and things like political landscapes that are just uncertain. We see things like global catastrophes, like the flood that we're looking at in North Carolina.

We see those things. We see that in a world where God's name is profaned—out there, but also even in the midst of those who would call themselves believers—that there's a profaning of God's name in various places.

Paul wrote to Timothy, and he said there's a time when people would not endure sound teaching, that they would accumulate for themselves teachers who would tickle their ears and who would say the things that would suit their own passions, right?

There would be no challenging of sin. There would be, you know, "It's okay if you're greedy, right? We'll make a church for that."

God's Care and Faithfulness

With all those things—all that unrighteousness and wickedness and things that we see—***the question is, does God even care? ...Does He care about what's going on?*** And that affects us personally. Does He even care about me personally? Does He care about His people?

In a world of endless depravity and sin and wickedness and corruption, if God doesn't care—or maybe He does care, but He's just not powerful enough to do anything about it. Can He stop it?

You know, I think Malachi is going to answer that for us. **Great is the Lord.**

But that question—does God still care? Does He care?—it's pivotal for us because in a culture where that question looms and really undergirds a lot of things, it begins to erode the faith of God's people.

Do you ever feel as if God is just absent—that He's just taking His hands off the wheel? You sit and you just, you know, like, is my faith in vain? Is it worthless?

Those underpinnings—they can lead us to a place of apathy, a place of spiritual indifference. Our small view of God—it shapes the way that we come before Him, though, in worship and in prayer.

And it shapes the way we treat each other and the world at large.

“Does God even care? God doesn’t care. Then why should I?”

Prayer

How would one get to such a belief like that? We’re going to see this play out with the people of Israel.

How would Israel get to a place like that as we journey through this book together?

I want you to know upfront that God does care. God does care about the glory that’s due His name. He cares about our worship. He cares about His covenant. He cares about His people’s hearts and the way that they live.

Through the course of this book, God is going to call His people back to wholehearted devotion to Himself.

And so as He does that, I would just ask that we pray and ask His blessing on this time of study.

*****Good and great Father, who is worthy of all praise and all honor of all nations from all eternity past. You are worthy of all praise.***

God, our hearts are often just wondering ...the things that go on in this world, the trials that we face, the things that we see day to day.

God, do You even care? And You do.

You draw near to us as we study this book, as we study the way that You dealt with Your people Israel.

God, remind us of Your great glory that is due Your Name. But also remind us that Your people—you love them, and You will not forsake them.

You care about Your people. You provide for Your people. And our only response to You is worship. And that worship comes about through a new covenant that You've made by Your blood.

I pray this morning that You would just give us clarity and help us just come to a deeper understanding of who You are through Your word and through Your dealings with Your people Israel.

I pray for our hearts this morning. God, may Your word be clear.

We thank You for Your Son Jesus. It's in His precious name that we pray.

*Amen.***

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Introducing Malachi

Alright, well, I want to introduce to you this morning, Malachi. And really, I'm gonna give you three things this morning. It's in your outline.

There is an authority. We will see an audience and an agent. And this is all in the superscription. This is the heading within Malachi.

Malachi 1:1. We're looking at one verse this morning, but it says this:

"The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi." (Malachi 1:1, ESV)

The Oracle of the Word of the LORD

Malachi simply means "my messenger." "My messenger" is what Malachi means. This is an oracle. It's a pronouncement. It's a message.

It's used in many places that we see in the Old Testament, specifically with the prophets, but is specifically used, most numerous, as a word of judgment against foreign nations.

We see its author. It is of the word of the LORD.

We see this similar phraseology throughout the prophets. What's important here is that we remember that the words of Malachi are the words—they find their source in the LORD.

Those capital letters L-O-R-D within your Bible—they represent something. They represent the personal name of God. It is Yahweh.

Y-H-W-H as we would translate it in English—this fancy word, the Tetragrammaton. We can't overlook the significance of this.

Now, Elohim is a word that you might have heard from the Hebrew, and what that means is, more generically speaking, more generally speaking, God. It can refer to Yahweh. It can also refer to the lowercase gods of the other nations.

But Yahweh first appears—it's the name that's given specifically for the God of Israel. It's first given to Moses in Exodus, chapter 3.

Moses asks God—he says, "I'm going to go to the people. Who am I supposed to say that You are, that who sent me?"

And we read this:

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"" (Exodus 3:14, ESV)

This is Yahweh.

No other nation has this kind of personal relationship with God.

Verse 15:

"God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.'"" (Exodus 3:15, ESV)

This is not any old name. It is the covenant God of the people Israel.

And in history, when even they were—we get the word Jehovah from this. People were so afraid to speak even the name of Yahweh that we got another name for it.

This God is great. There's no flippancy with the way that we approach Him.

Israel's History with Yahweh

We see the author. We see the audience. Who is this to? It is to Israel.

This leads us—we're gonna camp out here for a while today, because we're gonna talk about Israel for a minute.

They have quite a history in the way that they have dealt and been dealt with by this Yahweh. They have a very extensive history as a nation.

I'm gonna do my best to walk through it a little bit this morning.

We mentioned Abraham earlier—this man graciously chosen by God. We see that back in Genesis 12.

I'm gonna give you a lot of scripture references, so you can just feel free to jot those down as we work through this this morning.

But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Abraham had Isaac, who had Jacob, who became Israel. His name was changed to Israel.

And we see that Israel had a brother, Esau. We're gonna talk about Esau next week.

But Israel had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Of those twelve, we saw Joseph, who had evil done to him by his brothers. And God raises him to power in Egypt, which helps save the nation from famine.

We have another son of Israel, Levi, who was of the priestly clan of the nation. We're gonna talk about Levi in the coming weeks.

So these are all important little chain links in here.

From Joseph to Moses

But we get to the end of Genesis, and Joseph—he dies. He had a great relationship with the Egyptian king, and the nation overall was thriving and numerous.

But in Exodus, chapter 1—there's a new king in Egypt, and it says that he does not know Joseph.

And so we get this long period of about 400 years where they are treated very harshly, the Israelites.

And as I read earlier from Exodus, we get Moses. Moses comes up on the scene, and he is of the tribe of Levi, and God raises him up to deliver the people.

Read about that in Exodus, chapter 12, and this is all happening around 1446 BC. Sorry, this is a history class this morning.

God's Presence and the Covenant

But as God leads this people out of Egypt to a promised land, He is going to give them some interesting things. This period of time is very important.

First, there is an emphasis on God's presence. God's presence with His people. He is leading them.

And so we get this picture of God doing this through a couple of ways, but then we see this in the Tabernacle.

So I have a picture coming up here on the screen of the Tabernacle. This is something of what it might have looked like based on the dimensions and things that we get, but the people would have been camped around out there.

And then you have the Tabernacle in the middle—this is where Moses would meet with God.

There were very specific attentions to this, and there were very specific utensils and all these things.

But this is all meant that when you look at this, God is holy, and God does not meet with His people on their terms. It's on His terms.

There's no room for flippancy.

And secondly, we see this picture, this idea of covenant. God has given them a law, and the law is important because it really distinguishes them. It sets them apart from the other nations that are around them.

Other nations' gods—they do not compare with Yahweh. And Yahweh makes it explicit to His people how they are to worship Him, how His people are to live.

Blessings and Curses

And so we see this play out in a couple of ways, but God tells the people that you are going to have continued blessing for your obedience.

But if you fail to live in obedience to what I give you, there are going to be curses.

So in Deuteronomy chapter 28, in Leviticus chapter 26, you can see those laid out specifically.

Now, because of his own failures, Moses is actually not able to enter into this promised land.

And so we see Joshua. And Joshua leads the Israelites through really a conquering time within the nation of Israel.

So they get this promised land, and there's a lot of war, and they are driving out other nations—the ones that do not worship Yahweh, the one true God.

Israel's Cycle of Disobedience

And we get into this long period of history where God is continuing to work in His people, and He's being faithful to the covenant that He has set before them.

And every step of the way, though, we see God's faithfulness, but we also see Israel's disobedience.

God is constantly, consistently showing His perfect character. He has to remind them that He is gracious, He is merciful, He is slow to anger. He's abounding in steadfast love.

But Israel—they're just constantly grumbling and complaining, and they are disobedient.

We read time and time again of them following after the nations, their gods. This is idolatry. Israel is just consistently unfaithful to God, to Yahweh.

The Period of the Judges

And so we have this long period of time of leaders that are raised up, that lead the people. And this is recounted in the book of Judges.

So I'm just kind of walking chronologically a little bit.

But in Judges, there's this pattern of the nation who sins against Yahweh, and various nations come as a curse against them—to really to punish them, to point them back—and this would lead to a time of repentance for the nation.

And then God would raise up a deliverer for them. So if you read stories about Gideon or Samson.

But the thing is about these leaders is, through the book of Judges, they just consistently get worse and worse and worse, and they will deliver the nation. God will deliver the nation through them.

And there will be a time of peace. But then this cycle goes right back, and they fall right back into the same disobedience and sin.

And so, as you see on the screen, the book of Judges ends with this:

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25, ESV)

The Monarchy: Saul, David, and Solomon - The Rise of the Monarchy and God's Promise to David

It's really a rough period of history, but at the culmination of this, Israel—they want a king. They want to be like the other nations.

And God gives them a king. We see Saul enter the scene, and eventually, we see that story play out, and we get to David. This is around 1000 BC.

Sorry for the history lesson this morning, but God promises David something significant. He says:

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12–13, ESV)

This is a great promise, but it gets even more specific. God tells David that:

“Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:16, ESV)

In the immediate sense, we see this promise fulfilled when Solomon, David’s son, builds the temple. But in the long term, this promise looks forward to Jesus, our Savior, who comes from David’s lineage.

The Splendor of Solomon’s Temple and Its Fall

So, under the reign of Solomon, we have a united Israel, and Solomon is tasked with building the permanent temple for God’s presence to dwell with His people. This is not just any structure—it is a magnificent place for God’s glory.

Once again, we have a visual. This is what the Tabernacle may have looked like, but the temple Solomon built was much grander, far exceeding the Tabernacle in size and splendor. It took seven years to build. To give you some context, the labor force for this construction effort was massive:

“King Solomon drafted a labor force out of all Israel, and the draft numbered thirty thousand men. He had seventy thousand burden-bearers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country.” (1 Kings 5:13, 15, ESV)

This was no small task. There was an enormous amount of resources, manpower, and wealth dedicated to building this temple. However, despite all the external grandeur and extravagance, Solomon fails.

Even Solomon, who was given great wisdom by God, falls into the same traps that Israel did. He takes foreign wives and builds altars and high places for their gods. And Yahweh is a jealous God—these things would not be tolerated.

Israel's Decline and the Role of the Prophets

As Solomon dies and other kings succeed him, we see a gradual decline in Israel. There are a few good kings through the years, but overall, over the next 300 years, Israel's history is filled with disobedience and disregard for Yahweh.

Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah rise up, calling the people back to repentance. During this time, the kingdom splits into two: the northern kingdom retains the name Israel, and the southern kingdom becomes Judah.

In Jeremiah 25, the prophet tells the people that because they have not obeyed God's words, punishment is coming. God would use Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to bring destruction upon them:

"The whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (Jeremiah 25:11, ESV)

This period is known as the Babylonian exile, a time of captivity for Israel due to their breach of faith.

The Exile and the Devastation of the Temple

The exile takes place around 586 BC, and this is an important date because it shapes the context of Malachi. The temple—Solomon's grand building—is demolished. The nation is in ruins, both physically and spiritually. The devastation is not just in the physical destruction, but also in the fact that God's presence—His glory—has left the temple. Ezekiel 10 talks about this departure of God's glory.

The people of Israel could never have imagined a time when God's presence would leave them like this. This is the setting that leads up to Malachi.

Return from Exile and the Rebuilding of the Temple

After 70 years in Babylon, as prophesied by Jeremiah, God begins to restore His people. They are introduced to a king named Cyrus, who issues a decree allowing the Israelites to return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. We read about this in 2 Chronicles 36:

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.’” (2 Chronicles 36:23, ESV)

Cyrus’s rule is quite different from Babylon’s. He practices a kind of religious tolerance, allowing the Israelites to return to their homeland. But when they return, they find Jerusalem and the temple in ruins. They begin to rebuild the temple, but it does not compare to Solomon’s glorious structure. The second temple is less grand, and the people are disappointed.

A Disillusioned Israel and the Role of Malachi

This is the context in which Malachi is written. The people are disillusioned. They expected a grand restoration, but what they find is a less glorious temple and a nation that is no longer a powerhouse.

This leads to the central question Malachi addresses: Does God still care? Does He care about His people and their circumstances? If He does, then why doesn’t their restoration match their expectations?

We have the luxury of knowing that God had something far better in mind. He was pointing them to a new covenant, not one based on an external temple, but one based on the internal transformation of hearts.

The Promise of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31–34 prophesies about this new covenant:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33, ESV)

This new covenant is not about a physical structure but about a relationship with God that is written on our hearts. This covenant points forward to Jesus, the fulfillment of all God’s promises to Israel.

Jesus: The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

We see in John 1:14 that Jesus is the Word made flesh, and He “dwelt among us”—the Greek word used here is literally “tabernacled” among us. Jesus Himself became the true temple, the place where God’s presence dwelt fully.

In John 2, when Jesus drives out the money changers from the temple, He says:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19, ESV)

Jesus was speaking about the temple of His body, pointing to His resurrection. Through His death and resurrection, the new covenant is established, and we, as believers in Christ, become the spiritual house—God’s new temple.

Conclusion: God’s Unchanging Nature

As we journey through Malachi, we will see that despite Israel’s failures, God’s faithfulness remains. He is unchanging, and His promises are sure. He deeply cares about His people, His covenant, and the glory due His name.

God does care, and as we dig deeper into Malachi, we will be challenged to examine our own worship, our own hearts, and our own devotion to this great and unchanging God.

Let’s pray.

***** Closing Prayer:***

Heavenly Father,

We come before You, recognizing Your greatness, Your faithfulness, and Your unchanging nature. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and You are the God who has walked with us through every generation. We thank You for the reminders of Your covenant, for Your presence, and for Your care for Your people.

Lord, as we reflect on Your word today and as we study through the book of Malachi, help us to see Your glory more clearly. Help us to understand that You are worthy of our worship, worthy of our reverence, and worthy of our hearts being fully devoted to You.

God, we thank You for the new covenant that we have in Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and for the relationship that we have with You through Him. May our lives reflect that covenant and may our hearts be set on You.

We ask that You would draw us closer to You in this time of study, that You would soften our hearts, and that we would worship You in spirit and in truth.

*In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.***

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Using the following text, create a word-for-word gloss that stays as close as possible to the original. Only make minor grammatical or typographical corrections for clarity and readability. Ensure that the essence and style of the original text are maintained without adding or removing any significant details.

Group gloss text into logical paragraphs. Add thematic headers every second or third paragraph. Omit timestamps. Append Sermon intro with a telling title, abstract, and academic outline following inferred headers. Cite scripture in ESV full text with chapter & verse citation.

****Text:****

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