Malachi 3:7 – 4:6

Review…

- **Malachi** – the 39th book of the Old Testament - the 12th and final of the Minor Prophets!
  - Malachi – My Messenger – was a postexilic prophet to the remnant of Judah…
  - He wrote to challenge the people who had began to doubt the love of God!
- God first addressed the priests – who had no respect for the Lord – they despised His Name…
  - They would offer blind and lame animals as sacrifices to God!
  - The priests lost sight of their calling – and accepted the defiled sacrifices of the people…
  - They forgot they were the messengers of God – and were trying to please the people!
- God then addressed the people – who broke THE covenant in two ways…
  - They committed an abomination by who they married – those who worshiped pagan gods…
  - They committed treachery by divorcing their wives – devastating their families!
  - And since God did not immediacy judge - they assumed He approved – God must have changed!
- God assured them judgment was coming!
  - But first He would send His messenger – John the Baptism – to warn them to repent…
  - Because God DOES NOT change – and when He did come to His Temple – WHO COULD STAND!

The Coming of the Lord… (*3 things*)

- **1st – Robbing God… vs. 7-12**
  - 1st – Return to the Lord… vs. 7
    - Since the days of your Fathers…
      - God made it clear that He never changes – He did not approved of their sinful ways…
      - But the people of Israel ALSO had not changed – they were just like their fathers!
      - And like their fathers they walked away – and rejected the commands of the Lord!
    - But God gave them hope – if they came back to Him – He would return to them!
      - Often I hear people complain where is God – as if He is the one who left them…
      - God did not go anywhere – when we choose sin – we walk away from God!
      - The good news is He is never far away – but He is a gentleman and will wait for us…
      - The moment we turn around – He is always ready to receive us again...
      - No matter how far we have run – or how many times we make mistakes!
      - **James 4:8** – "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."
  - 2nd – Will a man rob God… vs. 8-9
    - Question - How could they return to the Lord…
      - Answer – by not robbing Him – by not withholding their TITHES and OFFERINGS!
      - The whole nation was under a curse because they ROBBED God!
      - This has to be one of the more infamous verses of the Bible – pastor love it / people fear it!
      - But we miss the key question - why was the key to returning to the Lord – giving to God!
      - Certainly God does not need our money – He is the creator of all heaven and earth!
      - But God does want us to invest in Him / His work – **Luke 12:34**
      - If you have $1 in a bank account you never think about it – but if you have $1 million!
      - We do not choose where are heart is – we do choose where we put our treasures...
      - Wherever we put our money / time / talents - is where our heart will also be!
      - We tend to think we invest in the things that are important to us – 'on our heart'…
      - But our heart follows our investments – our choices dictate what our heart wants!
      - That is why we should never follow our heart – it is deceptive – **Jeremiah 17:9**

- Instead we need to be wise were we choose to invest our time and treasures!

- How much should we invest in the Lord…
  - The word tithe is the Hebrew word for a tenth – we would say 10%
  - But according to the Law there were 3 different TITHES people were required to give…
  - **Numbers 18:21-24** – the Levitical tithe to provide for those who served the Lord…
  - **Deuteronomy 14:22-26** – the feast tithe – 10% of the harvest – eaten before the Lord…
  - **Deuteronomy 14:28-29** - the poor tithe – to take care of those less fortunate
  - The poor tithe was only once every 3 years…
  - So in all the people were required to TITHE about 23% of their income each year!
  - And that did not include offerings – which were free will gifts above the TITHE!
  - I am always amused by those who teach giving 10% to the church (*should be 23%*)...
  - They take this one Law from the OT and teach it like it belongs in the NT...
  - The Law is not a buffet line - you cannot pick and choose what laws you like...
  - Those who teach giving 10% to the church - must also teach the rest of the Law!
- The New Covenant command is to give because we want to – **II Corinthians 9:7**…
  - Often today people give out of a sense of obligation - they give but do not want to!
  - It may even be taught that if we do not give - God will not bless us...
  - As if we are steeling from God if we do not give to the church!
  - But God says to give whatever we want - as little or as much as is on our heart...
  - But whatever we give - we are to do it with a hilarious heart - a cheerful giver...
  - If we give out of obligation - it counts for nothing - God does not want it!
- Churches do not have to tell people to give...
  - **Exodus 36:4-7** - the building of the Tabernacle - Moses had to stop the people...
  - To often in the church – money is the focus – tithes / offerings - the reason…
  - The church is trying to do something that is their idea - new building…
  - If it is our idea we have to pay for it – if God has the idea He will pay for it!
  - When God is the one doing the work - He will stir the hearts of His people...
  - He will provide so much – they will end up having to tell the people to STOP giving!

o 3rd – Test the Lord… vs. 10-12

- Bring the tithes into the storehouse – so there may be food…
  - Because the people had not given their tithes – the Levites had no food to eat…
  - Many of them had to leave the 'ministry' and go back to work – **Nehemiah 13:10**
  - It is a blessing to the church to provide for the pastor to free him up to minister...
  - If a pastor has to work to support himself practically - little time for the church...
  - But a pastor should NEVER demand/even ask - for money - **I Corinthians 9:15**
  - Too many pastors today abuse they authority they are given in the church...
  - They use the pulpit as a means for personal gain - take advantage of the people...
  - The result is people are wary of the church - the Gospel message become tainted...
  - **Ezekiel 34:2** - "Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep?"
- Test me in this – see if I will not open the windows of heaven!
  - God promised to bless Israel so much they would not be able to contain it…
  - He would guard their crops from insects (*devourer*) and disease…
  - And all the nations of the world would call them blessed – a delightful Land!
  - If we do not have to give - we might think - then why would I want to give!
  - It would seem to be better for me to keep my money - not to give anything away...
  - But in reality if we give to others - we will end up with more than I stared with!

- **Luke 6:38** – "With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you."

- The Law of sowing and reaping...
  - Some of us might be familiar with the rules for farming - investing in a crop...
  - It can be expensive to plow a field with a tractor / buy good seed / fertilizer...
  - But in the end - the more a farmer invests into a crop - the more they get back!
  - Turn out this principal of sowing and reaping is just as true with giving...
  - Our gifts to God - whether given to the church / or those in need - are like seeds...
  - The more we plant - the more of a harvest of blessing we will reap from God...
  - If we are 'cheap' and choose to only plant a couple of seeds - a little harvest...
  - But if we sow bountifully - we will also reap bountifully!
  - We will never out give the Lord - the more we give / the more we will be given!
- Side note: God knows the motives of our heart - you cannot give to try and get...
  - If you have a friend who only 'gives' to you expecting 'more' back in return...
  - It will not take long before you try and avoid that 'friend'!
  - If we only give to the Lord expecting back - we will be disappointed!

- **2ND – HARSH WORDS… VS. 13-17**
  - 1st – Why serve the Lord… vs. 13-15
    - God accused the people of using HASH WORDS – but they asked – what had they said!
      - It is useless to serve God – what have we gained by obeying His commands / sorry for sin…
      - Better to call the proud blessed because those who do evil get rich!
      - And those who dare God to punish them – face no consequence – and go free!
    - The people recognized it was easier to live for this world / than for the Lord!
      - When we look at the evil world around us – it can be very disheartening…
      - We see people living immoral lives – rejecting the truth of God…
      - And the worst part is they seem to be getting away with it…
      - They are not suffering – they may even prosper – and it seems unfair!
      - It can make a person wonder if it is really worth it to live for Jesus!
  - 2nd – The Remnant… vs. 16
    - There were still a few who followed the Lord – and they did three things…
    - They feared the Lord…
      - **Psalm 111:10** – "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom…"
      - Much of the world today scoffs at the Bible – because they do not fear the Lord…
      - They do not fear the judgment seat – they do not fear the Lake of Fire…
      - But there are only two kinds of people when it comes to God...
      - Wise sinners who feared the Lord and see their need for Jesus - and those who did not!
      - **Hebrews 10:31** - "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God..."
    - They fellowshipped with one another…
      - Going to church does not save us - but it does keep us from getting off track...
      - It is easy to do the wrong things and convince ourselves we right...
      - That is why God call us to fellowship together in church - **Hebrews 10:25**...
      - We help keep each other in check – we are stronger together!
    - They mediated on His name…
      - Our thoughts guide our actions - our actions define our character...
      - We do not just wake up one day and decide to go and sin - **James 1:14-15**
      - If we allow our mind to dwell on a desire - when that desire turns to action - sin...
      - If we are full of this world – think about sin – then we are going to sin!

- But if we are full of Jesus – think about Jesus – we are going to act like Jesus!

- 3rd – Book of Remembrance… vs. 16-17
  - The Lord did two things for the faithful remnant…
  - The Lord listened to them…
    - **Psalm 66:18** – "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear..."
    - Unrepentant sin keeps the Lord from hearing us – leaves prayers unanswered…
    - Our prayers hit the ceiling of our sin - and we end up talking to ourselves!
    - But the moment we repent – turn back to Jesus – we will find He is eager to listen / act!
    - **I Peter 3:12** – "The Lords… ears are open to the prayers of those who do right."
  - The Lord wrote them down in the Book of Remembrance…
    - These days we have cell phones – to record every cute things our kids EVERY do…
    - Hallel has only been around for 2.5 years – we have 14,000 pictures and over 1,000 videos!
    - That is an average of 14 pictures EVERY day of her life – cell phone of remembrance!
    - That is the heart that God has for HIS kids who love Him…
    - He does not want to miss a single moment – and He makes sure to record them all!
    - Because we are HIS Jewels – HIS treasure – that HE values more than anything else!
    - And because we are HIS kids - God plans to spare us from the Judgment to come!
    - **I Peter 2:9** – "You are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession."

- **3RD – THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT… 3:18 – 4:6**
  - 1st – Discerning between the righteous and wicked… vs. 18-3
    - On the day when God spares HIS kids – but judges those who reject Him – it will be obvious…
      - It is FOOLISH to call the proud blessed – dare God to punish - they WILL BE judged!
      - They will be like STUBLE – the Lord will burn them up – leaving neither root nor branch!
    - It is NOT useless to serve God – there is MUCH gained by obeying His commands!
      - Because the SUN of righteousness will rise with healing in HIS wings…
      - I love the illustration of the rising SUN – because like the rising of the sun…
      - We can be absolutely certain the day is coming when the SON will rise!
      - And in that day He will make the difference extremely clear…
      - Those who fear the Lord will be like fat cows (*compliment*) - well fed and cared for!
      - We will TRAMPLE the wicked that HAD prospered – as if they were dust under our feet!
    - They key is it may not happen TODAY – but it will most definitely happen ONE day!
      - Therefore for those who desire to live for TODAY – serving God seems foolish…
      - But for those who live with their eyes on eternity – it is FOOLISH NOT to serve God!
      - **Luke 16:19-20** – we are given the story of two men – the RICH man and Lazarus…
      - And anyone with a lick of common sense would want to be the rick man...
      - Who would not want wealth / comfort / prosperity / lots of friends - the easy life...
      - No one wants to be sick / poor / hungry / void of any friends!
      - IF - this life was all there was - IF we did not have to think about eternity!
      - But both men died - the same fate that all men share – ONLY Lazarus was saved!
      - Life is not about how much stuff we can buy - or how many people like us...
      - Life is a gift - with only one purpose - it gives us the opportunity to make a choice...
      - Where will we go when our time here on earth is up - where will we spend eternity!
  - 2nd – Elijah the prophet… vs. 4-6
    - Therefore – in light of the difference between the fate of the righteous an wicked…
      - Remember the Law of Moses – that GOD gave to Israel on Mt. Horeb / Sinai…

- It was critical to remember the Law – because God was about to be silent…
- For the next 400 years there would be no prophet in Israel to speak for God!
- It may not be accurate to call these the years of silence – because God did speak…
- He had given His word to Israel – all they need to do was open it and listen!
- God still speaks to His people through His Word – but the question is who is listening…
- From the moment we get up – to the moment we go to bed we are busy…
- We tend to be so busy in life we rarely have a moment to open our Bibles…
- And then we wonder why God is silent - He is not silent / we are not listening!

▪ Until God would send Elijah the prophet…
- He would come before the GREAT (*saints*) and DREADFUL (*sinners*) Day of the Lord…
- For those who believe - John the Baptist came in the Spirit of Elijah - **Matthew 11:14**
- For those who do not believe in Jesus Elijah has yet to come…
- **Revelation 11:3** – One of the two witnesses who stand to judge the world!
- Moses wrote the 1st 5 books of the Bible – represents the Law of God
- Elijah represents the Prophets – he never died – **II Kings 2:11**
- They represent the testimony of the Law and Prophets – pointing people to Jesus!
- For 2,400 years the Jews have been looking for the coming of Elijah…
- Every year at Passover (*Holy Friday*) they set a place at the table for him!

▪ Elijah will turn the hearts of the fathers – lest God strike the earth with a curse…
- This verse is bit controversial and difficult to interpret…
- It is possible that it is talking about restoring harmony to broken families…
- But based on **Luke 1:17** – it would appear it may have a different meaning…
- **Luke 1:17** – "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will change disobedient minds to accept godly wisdom."
- God will restore the hearts of the father (*Abraham / Isaac / Jacob*) to the sons of Israel…
- Changing their disobedient minds so that they will accept Godly wisdom…
- In other words He will save Israel – so He does not have to strike them with a CURSE!
- Interesting that the last verse of the OT is 'curse' – because the Law could not save…
- The only hope for Israel was a change of heart – their disobedient mind…
- Which is where the next verse comes in – **Matthew 1:1** – the arrival of Jesus Christ!
- **Jeremiah 31:31** - "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant… I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."
- The New Covenant is not about what we have to do - but what God does for us!
- Only Jesus can bring lasting change - a transformed heart and new life...
- As we look to Jesus – the CURSE is lifted - we are changed from the inside out!