

MALACHI 3:7 – 4:6

REVIEW...

- **Malachi** – the 39th book of the Old Testament - the 12th and final of the Minor Prophets!
 - o Malachi – My Messenger – was a postexilic prophet to the remnant of Judah...
 - o He wrote to challenge the people who had begun to doubt the love of God!
- God first addressed the priests – who had no respect for the Lord – they despised His Name...
 - o They would offer blind and lame animals as sacrifices to God!
 - o The priests lost sight of their calling – and accepted the defiled sacrifices of the people...
 - o 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...
 - o They committed an abomination by who they married – those who worshiped pagan gods...
 - o They committed treachery by divorcing their wives – devastating their families!
 - o And since God did not immediacy judge - they assumed He approved – God must have changed!
- God assured them judgment was coming!
 - o But first He would send His messenger – John the Baptism – to warn them to repent...
 - o 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**
 - o 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.”
 - o 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 stealing 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 started 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**

o **1st – Why serve the Lord... vs. 13-15**

- God accused the people of using HARSH 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!

o **2nd – The Remnant... vs. 16**

- There were still a few who followed the Lord – and they did three things...
- They feared the Lord...
 - **Psalms 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 fellowshiped 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!

o 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

o 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 STUBBLE – 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!

o 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!