

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Malachi)

ch.1:1-1:11

by Zac Poonen

Malachi's message warns against spiritual decline and emphasizes the importance of knowing God's love and sovereign election.

Duration: 1:00:44

Scripture: Malachi 1:1, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Timothy 3:5

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Malachi and the overall theme of revival and declension in the history of God's people. The Old Testament is seen as a revelation of how God's people had power but eventually lost it, leaving only a form of godliness. The speaker emphasizes the danger of having a form of godliness without the inward power and warns against compromise and worldliness. The sermon also references the last days, where it will be difficult to be a Christian due to people having a form of godliness but denying the inward power. The speaker connects this to the importance of following all the commandments of Jesus, as symbolized by the building of the wall in Jerusalem.

Transcript

Let's turn to the book of Malachi and chapter 1. Malachi chapter 1 and we begin with the first verse. Now, in our study of the Old Testament, we haven't followed the sequence of books as it is put in the Old Testament, but rather in the sequence of time. And particularly studying the movement of God's people out of Babylon into Jerusalem.

And if you remember, we started with the study of Daniel, for the movement from Babylon really began with that one man. And we studied through the book of Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and then Nehemiah. We saw that movement of people who were willing to give up the comforts of Babylon and moved into despised Jerusalem, paid the price, came back and built the temple through the spirit of prophecy and through hard work.

And then finally, we saw the building of the wall, the wall of separation that separated Jerusalem, the holy city, from everything around it. And we saw that the wall is a picture of the commandments of Jesus proclaimed that separates an assembly from all others who do not proclaim all the commandments of Jesus. That is what keeps the wall around an assembly, the proclamation of all the commandments of

Jesus.

Now Malachi comes in towards the end of Nehemiah's time, or shortly thereafter, and we see what we saw in the last chapter of Nehemiah, that when Nehemiah was away for a while, that one man of God preserved Jerusalem in purity and obedience to God. But when he moved out, the forces of spiritual death took possession. But we read in Nehemiah 13 that Nehemiah came back and set all those things right and straightened things out.

But in every generation, God requires a man to stand for him. And in every place, God requires a man. And when Nehemiah's time was over, or perhaps he went back, we do not know what finally happened to Nehemiah.

But as we read the book of Malachi, we find that declension, decline, compromise, worldliness has come back into God's people. With this difference, that now they had the temple, they had the walls, and then there was decline and corruption. Before that, they had no temple, no walls, and there was decline and corruption.

But now it was worse, because they had the temple and had the walls, and there was decline and corruption. That is like saying, now we talk about the body of Christ, and talk about the commandments, and talk about the new and living way, and there is corruption, and there is decline, and there is compromise. That is the worst of the lot.

That is worse than the days when we never knew anything about the commandments of Jesus, never knew anything about the body of Christ, and there was compromise and decline. But the word of God says that in the last days, there will be many people who have a form of godliness. He writes to Timothy, in 2nd Timothy 3, 5. And what is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ manifest in the flesh.

And there can be this form of the mystery of godliness, of speaking about Christ manifest in the flesh, and about the new and living way, and yet inwardly there can be a covetousness, and a selfishness, and an arrogance, and a conceit, and a pride, which is the exact opposite of that form of godliness. That is what the word of God warns us about. And when we read 2nd Timothy 3, 5 and says that in the last days it will be difficult to be a Christian because men will have a form of godliness, but deny the inward power.

When we read that verse, do we think, yeah, but that doesn't apply to us. Then we are of all men most miserable. For let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Each time we read that verse, we have to fear and tremble at the word of God, and say, Lord, save me from that happening to me, of having a form of godliness. The entire Old Testament is a revelation of how God's people had the power, and after some time the power went away, but they had the form. And the last book of the Old Testament shows us that God's people now had the temple, had the walls, but it was only a form.

The inner power had gone. And that is how the Old Testament ends. And we find the entire history of Israel is one continuous cycle of revival and declension, and then revival and declension, and revival and declension.

And when we see the history of the Christian church, we find it is exactly the same. There's revival and the same group that brought the revival after a little while in one generation is declined. There's compromise, there's worldliness, and then God has to raise up something else, and then that declines, then God raises

up something else.

And that has been the history of the Christian church right through the centuries, and we see that even in the 20th century. So, the book of Malachi is very instructive, because it comes at the end of all this fantastic revival and movement from Babylon to Jerusalem that we have studied. And in the context of that, this tremendous movement.

Therefore, the book of Malachi has a warning, not to the people who are in Babylon, for he was not a prophet in Babylon, he was a prophet to the people who had come out of Babylon into Jerusalem. And he was a prophet to the people who had built the temple and built the wall. And as far as we know, he was the only prophet that God sent to people who had come out of Babylon into Jerusalem, built the temple, and built the wall.

And then God sent them one prophet and said, that's all, finished. And then for 400 years, there was silence. God never spoke.

And that declension went on and on and on and on and on and on and on, became worse. It ended up in the Pharisees and in the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, till John the Baptist came, the next prophet after Malachi. And therefore, I believe that the book of Malachi has a particular message, perhaps more than any other Old Testament book, to those who have come out of Babylon into Jerusalem, have understood the truths of the body of Christ, of the wall of separation, of preaching the commandments, keeping the commandments.

To them, Malachi has a message. The other books have a message to those who are in Babylon, exhorting them to come out and build the body and build the walls. But here is a message to those who have already built the temple and the walls.

And therefore, it's good for us to take this book very seriously. And what we go through will really be only like an outline. But if we can take this book to heart, I believe it can protect us from the declension and the compromise and the worldliness that came into the people who sat in the holy city.

They were not Babylonians. And it says here, the burden of the oracle, the margin says, the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. God's word was a burden to this prophet.

A burden means something that he had to lift up, something heavy that was weighing him down, something that was on his heart, a concern for the condition of God's people. He had listened to God, and each word of God he had received had gone into his heart and weighed him down, and he had a burden. That's what he speaks of, and that's the mark of every true prophet, that he has a burden.

A man who doesn't have a burden can never be a prophet. A prophet has a burden which he has received from God concerning God's people. And the other thing I want you to notice here is the word Malachi.

The margin says, my messenger. Now Malachi is not actually a name. Malachi is just a Hebrew word which means my messenger.

The word Hebrew, the word in the Hebrew for angel and messenger is Malak, just like it is in some Indian languages. And there is a possibility, a very real possibility, that this was only a title, that the prophet so hid himself that we don't even know what his name was. He just called himself God's messenger.

That's all he wanted to be known as, a man who had a burden. And if that is true, then there is one prophet in the Old Testament in these books whose name we don't even know. A man who wanted to so hide himself because he only wanted to proclaim the message that we don't even know his name.

He is known only in the Hebrew as Malachi, meaning my messenger, God's messenger. And that was the spirit in which John the Baptist came later on, the voice of one crying in the wilderness. That's all John was, a voice crying in the wilderness.

And it's very significant to see that these last two prophets before the coming of Jesus Christ were both people who wanted to hide themselves. They were preparing for this new age when Jesus Christ would be everything. When Moses and Elijah on the mountaintop would be hidden and taken away and we would see only Jesus.

And so Malachi was the last prophet preparing for this new age where the prophet would not be a great man, but would be one who is hidden, just known as my messenger. And I tell you, Malachi puts to shame, to terrific shame, all the so-called Christian preachers who want everybody to know who they are, want everybody to know their names, want everybody to know how big they are and how great prophets of God they are. And all this want people to know about their sermons and their books and their everything.

And Malachi, who hadn't entered into the new covenant yet, had got that spirit. He knew he had to hide as a messenger of God, worthy to be the last prophet before the new covenant burst upon the scene. Then we come to verse two.

I have loved you, says the Lord, but you say, how has thou loved us? And this phrase, how have you or how have we, occurs seven times right through the book of Malachi. A question that these people who have come out of Babylon into Jerusalem are asking God, how have you done this? How have we done this? You see it here in verse two. I'll just go through those seven references first.

How have you loved us? Then again in verse six, the last part, you say, how have we despised your name? And verse seven, in the middle of that, how have we defiled you? And then a fourth time in chapter two, verse seventeen, and you have wearied the Lord with your words, yet you say, how have we wearied him? And then chapter three and verse seven. And you say, the Lord says, return to me, but you say, how shall we return? That means we haven't gone away. How do we have to return? Verse eight, will a man rob God? You say, how have we robbed thee? Verse thirteen, chapter three, your words have been arrogant against me.

And yet you say, what have we spoken against thee? Those are the seven questions that these people asked. And there you can see a controversy. The Lord saying, you are like this.

And they say, what do you mean we are like this? And then the Lord says, you're like this. And they say, how are we like this? We're not like that. And the Lord says, you robbed me and says, where have we robbed you? What is the picture that you get in all these, in this sevenfold controversy? A picture of a people who do not know their true spiritual condition.

God says, you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked. And they say, what do you mean we? You mean we are wretched? No, we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. This is exactly the Laodicean church.

And it's very significant that that is how the Old Testament ends. And if we look at the seven churches in the book of Revelation chapter 2 and 3, there's a picture of the churches in different ages, significant that it ends with the Laodicean church even there. The history of the church age is very similar to the history of the age of Israel, of an ignorance of one's true spiritual condition.

That's why God sent them a prophet. And the purpose of a prophetic ministry is always to let God's people know what they are ignorant of. To let God's people know that this is your spiritual condition, but you are ignorant of it.

And that is why the prophets are always unpopular. Bible teachers can be popular, but prophets are unpopular. Because they are all the time showing God's people what God thinks about them.

And usually that's not very pleasant, particularly for a backsliding people. And so we see here in verse 2, beginning with this first controversy, the Lord says, I have loved you, but you say, how have you loved us? I want you to see this question in the context of 1500 years of the history of Israel, beginning from Moses delivering them out of Egypt. It was about 1100 years up to that time.

And in those 1100 years, there were so many hundreds and hundreds of manifestations of God's love. And at the end of the 1100 years, what is the question they ask? How do you show, prove that you love us? Can you imagine a more ungrateful nation, after all that God had done, beginning with taking their father Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees? They'd have all been idolaters if God hadn't brought them out of there. Delivered them from the slavery of Egypt, delivered them again and again from the Midianites and the Edomites and so many other people in the time of the judges.

Blessed them with prosperity and health and so many things. Sent them prophets, sent them his word, gave them the scriptures, did miracles in their midst. And when they went into Babylon, brought them out of Babylon, helped them to build a temple again and build the walls and all that.

And at the end of it, what is their question? How do you say you've loved us? That same doubt which Satan put into the mind of Eve, right at the beginning in Genesis chapter 3, God doesn't really love you because if he loved you, he would not have stopped you from partaking of that tree of knowledge of good and evil. Such a good tree. Right in the last book of the Old Testament, we find the same doubt.

Satan has succeeded in sowing in the minds of an entire nation, the nation that called itself God's people and not just God's people, but the people who are wholehearted, who have come out of Babylon into Jerusalem. And he who has ears to hear, let him hear. That doubt about God's love is the beginning of spiritual decline.

That is how Eve fell. And that's how it was in Malachi's day. And that's written for our instruction, for our warning.

That's why if the book of Malachi has a special message for us in the church here, the very first part of that message is, do not have any doubt about the love of God. And if we look back on our own personal lives, each one of us, we have more than enough instances where God has proved his love for us. And yet, in spite of that, in spite of all the many occasions where God has manifested his love, yet the devil comes and tempts us to think that God doesn't care much for us.

He's got a frown upon us all the time. He's always a little bit angry with us for something or the other. And we always live with that uneasiness in our heart that, yeah, I won't say he doesn't love me, but he's just a

little bit angry with me.

And I feel that's the only way I can be spiritual, by feeling that God's a little bit angry with me. And that's a deception, a great deception of the devil, to make believers think, particularly those who are pressing on to perfection, to think that the only way to be spiritual is to always have the feeling that God's a little bit angry with you. Then I'm spiritual.

If I'm so happy that God's smiling at me, I must be carnal. There must be something wrong with me. And like that, slowly he works on me, works on me, works on me, till gradually he has made me doubt God's love, brings me to discouragement, gloom, bad moods, depression, irritability, all types of things.

He's accomplished his purpose because he started out making me feel that I can only be spiritual if I feel that God's a little bit angry with me, some way or the other, for something or the other. Think, brothers and sisters, to live one day of my life without ever feeling that God is angry with me at all. He loves me.

What a day that'll be. And then to think to live every day of the year like that. Otherwise, there is this question in our mind.

How has thou loved us? You haven't done this. If you had been here, like Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. And A.B. Simpson used to say that in almost all believers' lives, there is an if.

Lord, if you had answered my prayer, it would not have happened like that. There is a question. Why didn't God, Jesus, come in time when my brother died? That was Martha's question.

Yeah, the answer to that is to be secure in the love of God. How has thou loved us? And that is the beginning of spiritual decline in Genesis 3, in Malachi, and in 1985 in our lives. So watch that.

That's why we emphasize so much we have to find our security, not only just in the fact God loves us, but that he loves us as he loved Jesus. John 17, 23. And then God takes the pains to tell them how he loved them.

He doesn't give a list of all the things that he did for them. He could have given a list, but he wouldn't have been able to complete the Bible in that case. The Old Testament would have contained another thousand pages or something, if he had given a list of all the things he had done.

He just says one thing. He says, why in the world do you think that you Israelites are the chosen people of God? Isn't that a proof of my love? Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? And Esau's children are also there in millions there. Why aren't they God's people? Why are you God's people? Esau was Jacob's brother, but I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.

And though Edom says we have been beaten down, we will return and build up the ruins. Edom means Esau, same thing. The Lord says, the Lord of hosts says, they may build, but I will tear it down.

Men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is angry and indignant forever. And your eyes will see this, and you will say the Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel. God loved Jacob, and they were brothers.

They grew up in the same home, and yet what a different destiny the two had. I wonder whether we, you and I, have ever sat down sometimes and thought, why in the world did God choose me? Out of all the people, think of all my relatives, think of all your relatives who are still out in darkness. Why did God choose you? Why did God choose me? Your own family members haven't got the light.

Even some who claim they are believers, they don't have light, clearly. But God has given us light on some of the most glorious mysteries in the New Testament. Why? And God says, isn't that an indication of my love? Does he have to talk about money, and job, and material things to prove his love? That is nothing.

That is garbage. That will pass away. He talks about the thing which is eternal, that God has sovereignly elected you and me to be his children.

Think of that. Think of that. And shame the devil to his face by telling him he's a liar.

We read in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, before he made the world. We read in the book of Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, but actually Ephesians 1.4 comes before Genesis 1.1. The first verse of the Bible is really John 1.1, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Okay, that's the beginning.

You know what the next thing is? The next thing is Ephesians 1.4, that before he made the heaven and the earth, before you come to Genesis 1.1 at all, God has chosen certain people by name. Just think of that, that God knew my name before Genesis 1.1, and your name too. It's a fantastic truth, and I believe we don't spend sufficient time meditating on it.

And when the people in Malachi's day say, how do you say you loved us? God gave them only one answer. He didn't tell them about the healing, and the miracles, and the material prosperity, and the jobs, and nothing. One thing.

He said, I chose Jacob. Why? Tell me why. That's a proof of my love.

I chose you. Why did I choose you? You think it was so spiritual that I chose you? No. We were chosen because we were sinners.

He didn't come to call the righteous. If we were righteous, we'd have been left out. He came to call us because we were sinners.

What did we have in us to qualify us? Nothing. He chose us. Never forget it, brothers and sisters.

Turn to Romans chapter 9. We see this truth of election. He talks about Israel in Romans chapter 9, and he says concerning Isaac, verse 10, verse 7, neither all the children because they're Abraham's descendants, but through Isaac your descendants will be named. Abraham had Ishmael, then Isaac, and then many other children through another wife after Sarah's death, but none of those children were selected, only Isaac.

And then Isaac, it says in verse 10, had twins through Rebecca. And verse 11, though the twins were not yet born, it's amazing, and had not done anything good or bad. Obviously, they couldn't have done anything good or bad because they were both still in the womb.

In order that God's purpose may be according to his choice, it might stand not because of works, but because of him who calls. It was said to Rebecca, Genesis 25, 23, the older will serve the younger. God said that to Rebecca before the children were born.

The older is going to serve the younger. And as it is written in Malachi chapter 1, verse 2, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then? This is the question that the clever man, the man with wisdom of the world asks.

Isn't there injustice with God then? May it never be. But as Moses has, as he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. I'll tell you something, brothers and sisters, that is very difficult for our small human minds to understand. But it is true.

It's like saying our little cup cannot contain the whole ocean, but the ocean is still there. Even if my cup cannot contain it, the ocean is still there. And God's truth concerning the fact, it did not depend on your willing and it did not depend on your running.

You may think many times that it was because you willed and because you ran that you are finally here out of Babylon in Jerusalem. Well, you're sadly mistaken. It's God who had mercy on you and that's the thing that keeps us humble.

When we realize that, that keeps us down on our face in the dust, it saves us from becoming Pharisees. We say, Lord, it was your love that brought me here. Not that I'm someone special or that I'm somebody specially righteous minded or spiritually minded.

Your mercy. What have I that I did not receive? Nothing. That keeps me down on my face.

The fact that it was God's mercy that brought me here and then I don't doubt his love. So that's the point of Malachi chapter one. The reason I turned to Romans nine is because it is quoted there.

Jacob I have loved and Esau have I hated. Now, I want to mention this, lest people misunderstand it. God did not say before the twins were born, all right, Jacob's going to heaven and Esau's going to hell.

That's not what he said. Some people misread it like that. No, but for a particular ministry on the earth, Jacob was called and Esau was rejected.

And try to make it mean something God didn't mean at all. It does not mean that God says to certain people, well, you're going to hell. Just do bad.

If that were the case, it's pointless preaching the gospel. But the word of God is very clear in the New Testament. God doesn't want anyone to perish and God wants all men to repent and all men to be saved.

That's clear. But yet the fact remains that he has chosen. And you say, well, my mind can't understand it.

That's exactly what I said. Your cup cannot contain the ocean. We might as well humble ourselves and say all our human wisdom is foolishness before God.

I cannot understand it, but it is true. It's like trying to understand the Trinity. I cannot understand it, but it is true.

In the same way here, I cannot understand it, but it is true. God has sovereignly chosen me. It's true.

He has chosen me. Before the worlds were created, before Genesis 1.1, my name was written in God's mind. I have no doubt about it in my mind.

And that's the proof of God's love for me. And we must never forget that. He has chosen us and that's why we are here today.

And we see here that because he chose Jacob, he blessed him and through him came that promised nation, the tribes of Israel, for a ministry on the earth. Then I want you to notice here what it says about Edom. And we can look at Edom throughout the Old Testament.

It's a picture of the flesh. And what God says about the flesh, I have hated Esau. Apply it to the flesh and we understand what it means.

God hates the flesh and the mountains in the flesh are to be made a desolation. And the inheritance of the flesh is to be for the jackals of the wilderness. And even though the flesh tries to rise up and build itself up again, the Lord says they may build but I'll tear it down.

And he did it in Jesus Christ and he seeks to do it again in us. The men call them the wicked territory. Nothing good dwells in it.

And the people towards whom the Lord is angry forever. That is a description of God's attitude to all the lusts in our flesh. God is perpetually angry with every single lust in our flesh, even though he loves us.

So we are Jacob and our flesh is Esau. And then we understand it. He loves us, but he hates this Esau, these lusts in our flesh.

And he wants to destroy it. That's the application for us today. Jacob, I have loved Esau, I have hated.

And notice this phrase here in the middle of verse four, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of hosts. We have seen that in our study of Zachariah and Haggai. Number of times it comes in those books, I think about 14 times in Haggai and about 53 times in Zachariah.

And it comes 24 times in Malachi. Small book, 24 times, the Lord of hosts. It's very significant that the last three books of the Bible, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi, have a repetition of this title, the Lord of hosts, more than 90 times.

That's very significant. The sovereign ruling God. A God who loves us, verse two, and a sovereign ruling God, the Lord of hosts, verse four.

We often emphasize in the church that the two greatest truths that we need to know about God, the two greatest truths we need to know about God is one, the fact that he loves us perfectly. And the second, that his sovereignty is absolute and total. That's what Jesus said when you pray, what must you say? Our father, which means a God who loves us, who art in heaven, which means one who rules from heaven over the whole earth.

The two things Jesus taught us to pray in what's called the Lord's prayer, our father who art in heaven, are to remind us right at the beginning of our prayer that God loves us and he's sovereign. Those are the two truths that Malachi brings forth at the end of the Old Testament. And that is the truth the Lord wants to bring to our hearts at the end of the New Testament age in which we live.

Because those are the truths we tend to forget. And the Lord is angry with the flesh forever. The tremendous message.

This Esau God hates, the Jacob he loves. We need to see which part of us in which part is Esau. And your eyes will see this.

And you will say, the Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel. Israel means the one who rules with God. A prince who rules with God.

And that is our calling. To be, though we start out as a Jacob, he loves us even when we are a Jacob. But though we are Jacobs loved by God in verse two, his intention is that we end up as Israels who rule with God.

Princes who rule with God. That's our calling. To be kings and priests with him.

And the Lord will be magnified through all the territory of these people who are rulers with God. So we see those verses have an application for us once we understand what the spiritual meaning is. And then we come to the second controversy that God has with his people.

He sorts out the first one about his love. And then he says through his prophet to these people, a son honors his father. That's understood.

And a servant honors his master. Then if I am a father, God says, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my respect? Says the Lord of hosts, particularly to you leaders, the priests were the leaders. And I'll tell you something about the prophets.

If you read the Old Testament prophets, you always find they dealt with the leaders. They didn't speak to the people first. They spoke to the princes and the prophets.

You get an Elijah. He doesn't speak to the people first. He speaks to it.

And the prophets throughout the Old Testament, Jeremiah, all the others, they spoke to the leaders first, the priest. The problem is with the leaders. And that's why the prophets were unpopular.

Because the leaders sat there on the platform and the prophets, instead of speaking to the congregation would turn around and speak to the people on the platform, say, we'd like to speak to you. God has a message for you. That's what infuriated them.

And that's what made them kill the prophets. And that's how it was with Jesus. When he came, he spoke to the leaders.

He rebuked the leaders. He didn't call the people a generation of vipers. He called the leaders a generation of vipers.

And that's why prophets are always hated, criticized, scandalized. And that's how Malachi was. He says, listen to this, you priests who despise my name, you leaders who despise my name.

But you say, oh, how have we despised your name? We are the leaders. How have we despised your name? I don't know what Malachi's end was. Probably they killed him in some way or the other.

But I can imagine that was his fate, the way he spoke to these leaders and priests. How have we despised your name? And the Lord explains to them there, in verse six, he says, a son honors his father and a servant his master, I'm your servant and your master. Where is my respect? You don't honor me, you don't fear me.

And what he was saying to them is, he says, now think of this and we can apply this to ourselves. You who are fathers, when your children don't obey you or speak disrespectfully to you or dishonor you, aren't you very strict with them? How dare a child disrespect me as a father? And God says, just think about your relationship with me also a little bit. When you think of how your son should behave towards you and how strict you are with your son when he doesn't respect you, you just think of how strict I should be with you as a father, just the way you are with your children.

A son honors his father, but do you honor me? You want your sons to honor you, but do you honor me, the Lord says? Or take another example, he says in verse six, he says, many of you are masters or mistresses. You have servants working under you. Oh, how seriously you take it if that servant does not give you the respect and obedience that you deserve as a master.

And God says, don't you think I should treat you like that? I am who I'm your master. Don't you think I should be just as strict with you as you are with your servant? That's the question. These prophets came straight to the point, theirs was not some theoretical message up in the air, it was straight with an illustration down to the point where they understood.

They knew the type of honor and obedience they expected from their children and from their servants. And the prophet says, what about you? Are you giving that same respect and obedience to God? That was searching, that was searching. They were dishonoring God's name, the leaders, and they said, how have we dishonored your name? Where is my fear? That is two questions he asks.

Verse six, if I am a father, where is my honor? If I am a master, where is my fear? Two things God says, I want from you. I want you to fear me. I want you to honor me.

A servant must fear his master. A child must honor his parents. For exactly the same reasons he says, you must fear me and you must honor me.

That is God's word to the people who have come out of Babylon and settled down in Jerusalem, got all their doctrines right, built the walls of separation. He says, now learn to fear me in your daily life. Now learn to honor me in your daily life.

Quite a word. He says, I'm not happy with all this form. I'm not happy that you built a temple.

That's good. I'm not happy that you just built a big wall around Jerusalem. What about your heart attitude now? The form, the doctrine is not enough.

What about the heart attitude? Do you fear me? Now brothers and sisters, let's apply that to ourselves. The next time we discipline our children to think, now, yeah, he's doing something wrong and I have to punish him. But how is my relationship with God? Does he have to punish me also for something? The next time I expect something from my servant, and that is right, that a servant should obey and respect, to think, how is it between me and God, my master? Is it also as I expect? Because the same measure I demand from another, God will demand from me.

The same measure of subjection that I as a spiritually minded husband expect my wife to submit to me, Jesus is going to one day in the day of judgment with the same measure expect from me, the same subjection that I expected from my wife. And I expected from my children and I expected from my servants. And that won't be unrighteous of God to do that.

Because of the same measure that I judge and I demand, God will also demand from me in the relationship he has with me as my Lord and my master and my husband and my father. That's absolutely righteous. So it's a very searching question.

But the thing is, human nature is such that where we have authority, we demand the maximum from my wife, from my children, from my servants. But when it comes to me giving to my husband or to my parents or to my God, and the prophets exposed that, opened it up and said, look at all this hypocrisy. It's all hypocrisy your spirituality is claiming to be so spiritual.

No, there's a humbug there. You are not willing to offer to God the same subjection that you expect from your wife, your children and your servants. There's a hypocrisy there.

Straighten out your relationship with God first. Humble yourself, mourn, weep. There's something wrong there.

Fear him, honor him. And then they say, how have we despised your name? Think they were so ignorant. These people who had come back from Babylon to Jerusalem, they don't understand yet how they are dishonoring God's name.

See, this is one of the great themes of the book of Malachi. God's name. You see that again and again.

In the book of Malachi, thy name, we'll come to that a little later. But you see here, God explains to them, all right, you don't know how you are dishonoring my name. He says, I'll explain it to you.

You are presenting defiled bread upon my altar. In other words, they had to present to God certain meal offerings. You read about that in the first five, six chapters of Leviticus, that they had to present among their many offerings.

One offering was called a meal offering, which was an offering of grain and meal, and a form of bread, a bread offering, we can say. But they were giving to God the old bread, which they couldn't eat in any case. Well, after all, it's got to be put on the altar.

It's going to be burnt or something. Let's offer the old one to God. And you say, how have we defiled you? In that you say, the table of the Lord is to be despised.

That means they were despising the Lord's table of those days. The Lord's table of those days was where they presented this bread offering. And they were putting old bread there, perhaps on the table of

showbread in the temple.

Maybe it was there. Old bread, because they thought they'd save some money on that. And thus they despised the Lord's table.

The Lord's table is despised today as well among Christians. I tell you, it's one of the greatest sins of Christians, the way the Lord's table is dishonored. All types of people partake of it, who have no interest in dying with Jesus, who are not living in a clear relationship with their brothers and sisters.

They talk about New Testament pattern, breaking bread every Sunday. But it's all despised. And if a Malachi came along into their midst, he'd say exactly the same thing.

But they would say, where have we despised you? Such ignorance prevails among those who have the Lord's table every week in their midst. Till a Malachi exposes to them, you are despising the Lord's table because you are not entering into it with meaning. It has become a ritual, a form.

You have to have it every week. And when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? They had to present lambs, but they would go through their flock and pick out the lame one. Yeah, there's a bit of a nuisance here.

In any case, when we take the flock out for walking, we'll offer this to God, this lame one. And this blind bullet, yeah, it's about to die in any case. Before it dies, we'll give it as an offering to God.

They say, after all, it's got to be killed. What does it matter whether it's lame or blind, makes no difference. But there was a very clear law in the Old Testament.

You are not to give to God a blind or a lame or a sick animal. You must give to God the best. But reason says, why the best? It's got to be killed there.

No, don't lean on your own understanding. God was trying to teach them to honor him. And he says, why don't you offer this to your governor and see whether he will be pleased with you? You know, when your governor says, I want your taxes, some of your sheep, some of your bullet, and you go and give the blind one to the governor and see what happens.

He'll lock you up. But you wouldn't dream of doing that. You wouldn't dream of cheating the income tax if there's a danger of you getting caught.

But cheating God? Yeah, that's not so serious, because he doesn't keep accounts so carefully, and there are no inspectors coming along to check up whether everything is being done in a straightforward way. Offer it to your governor, he says. When the governor comes to visit your home, give him day before yesterday's bread and see whether you'll do that.

See how happily he receives that. I tell you, these prophets, they had a sarcasm about them in their ministry to cut and to lay open the condition of God's people to them. Give it to your governor, he says.

No, they did not understand to give God the best. Now we can ask this question, why did God want them to give their best to him? Why did he say, the first of your lambs and your bullocks, the best? The more I've thought about it, when you think about it according to reason, after all it's going to be killed. It's going to be killed on an altar.

According to reason, you'd say, all right, pick out the old ones, the ones that are about to die, and put them on the altar. That appears to be more sensible to reason, because basically we are all businesslike in our thinking. And it is to deliver us from this businesslike way of thinking that God says, no.

It is to deliver us from this covetousness and this love of money, which is rooted in our flesh, that God says, don't bring the lame ones, don't bring the blind one, give the best. Give the best. The best must be for God.

If you have a blind one, keep that for yourself. That is the way God wanted to deliver those money-minded Jews from their covetousness, by giving the best to God. But you find the same spirit even today.

There are people who have lived all their life for making money, and when they retire, they want to serve God. You know, one foot is in the grave. They want to earn some money in their retirement days, and they want to join some Christian organization.

What is it? It's the same old spirit. Same old spirit. They spent all their life living for the world, and now they want to make money in the name of God.

The lame and the weak and the sick, and this is not a joke when I tell you that there are families in parts of India that send certain of their children to full-time Christian work. You know which ones? The ones that fail regularly in the school, somehow could not get to college. What to do? We'll send them for Christian work, to Bible school.

We'll give God, what will we give to God? The lame, the sick, the failed ones. Supposing you've got a brilliant son, absolutely top of the class in everything. Oh, he must be for the world after all.

We have to train him up for the world, but this fellow who is good for nothing, we'll send him to Bible school. Well, I'm not saying that going to Bible school is a great thing, but the whole attitude, this whole attitude of giving to God the lame, and the sick, and the weak. Think of that.

Think of that, brothers and sisters. If you have a brilliant child, what do you want him for? I hope you want him for God. I hope you say, Lord have him, he's brilliant, he's for you.

All of them are for you. And if you've got something really good in your life, to say, Lord that's for you, that's for you. And in our young days when we've got health, and energy, and time to go about, and time to serve him, say, Lord that's for you.

All that time is for you, Lord. Not just to be fooled around, played around in the world, that's for you. My spare time, my spare money, that's for you.

My best is for you. Then we don't deserve the rebuke of Malakai. But I tell you, there are very, very few believers who are so wholehearted.

Their mind is occupied with the world. Their mind is occupied with promotion, and increment, and making money. And God is, yeah, you have to have a little bit of religion.

So it's sort of somehow squeezed in, going for a few meetings, and talking about the new and living way, and coming out of Babylon, and into Jerusalem, and all that high-sounding spiritual stuff. But God's not impressed. Because He says, deep down in the heart, I see that I'm not first in your life.

Your job is first. Your money is first. Your family is first.

I'm not first in your life. You're giving the lame, and the sick, and the weak to me. Even though you've built the temple and the walls, your heart attitude is wrong.

There is a covetousness, there's a worldliness in your attitude. And that can come to us, brothers and sisters. We can react against full-time work, and full-time workers so much, because there's so much hypocrisy there, in full-time workers, that, remember this, to every error, there is an opposite error.

I don't think in our assembly we are in danger of falling over the cliff of the error of full-time workers, but I think there's a terrific danger of many of us falling over the cliff on the opposite side. The opposite side, where our job is our God, and other things, God is a thing, the things of God, the house of God, the work of God, it's when we have time, if it's convenient. That is the opposite cliff, and beware of it.

We are much nearer that cliff than the other cliff, and we don't need to keep being, beware of the full-time worker cliff. We are miles away from that, we are very close to this other cliff, where God is not first, but money is first, increment, job, position, honour, and say, well, I'm supporting myself, and at the end of my life, I say, well, I didn't beg, like the other full-time workers. I tell you, there are thousands and millions of Hindus and Muslims in the world who can say that, at the end of their life, I didn't beg for money from America.

Is that all our testimony? Thousands and millions of Muslims and Hindus in India can say that. What do we have more than them? No, that is not our calling, but that we have put God first in every area, that we have examined and seen that God is first in our life, in every area, with our children. Like David said in 2 Samuel 24-24, I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing.

If I offer anything to God, it must be something which costs me sacrifice, it costs me my health, it costs me my time, it costs me my money. I've heard of John Hyde, a great man of God who came to India, who died in his 40s, but the reason he died early was because he lived so utterly for God, so utterly for God, praying, fasting, seeking God. He spent his life in a much better way than so many other people who live up to be a hundred years old.

It cost him his health, it cost him his life to serve God. And when people like John Hyde and others come forward to receive their reward, brothers and sisters, are we going to hang our head in shame, with all our understanding of doctrine, and we haven't sacrificed, we haven't put God first, we offer to God that which costs us almost nothing, but we had the right doctrine, we had the form, we had the walls, we knew what every brick of the walls of Jerusalem represented, we knew all the little details about how the body of Christ, the temple should be built, the pattern is absolutely right, but these people who didn't have such an understanding, had such a right attitude of sacrifice, of self-denial, of putting God first in their life, therefore they accomplished more. So let's beware, I really believe that we are in grave danger of the very things that Malachi speaks about, and that's why we need to really take heed to the word that this man, we don't even know his name, this messenger of God, who hid himself, speaks straight to our hearts, and then he goes on there, he says, now will you not entreat God's favor, that he may be gracious to us, with such an offering on your part, will you receive any of you kindly, says the Lord of hosts, oh that there were one man among you, who would close the gates, and say no more meetings, till you repent, no more breaking of bread, till we sort out our relationships.

Boy, what do you think would happen to some assemblies, where they think the most important thing in the universe is to break bread every Sunday morning, if one man came up and closed the doors, and said no more of this, and God says, I wish there were one man, who would shut the gates, and say don't bring all these rotten offerings, God doesn't want them, and who would not kindle the fire on the altar, when the fellow brings a lame offering, sorry we can't receive that, God says, I wish there were one priest, who would send these fellows back, and say go and bring the best one, don't bring that rotten lamb, and that sick bullock, and that blind goat, so I'm not going to light the fire for you, he says, oh that there were one, that's a cry that comes many times in the old testament, where

God says, I look for one man, you read that in Jeremiah chapter 5, God says to Jeremiah, go through Jerusalem, and see there's one man, who desires righteousness, same thing in Malachi, he says, oh that there were one man, who would shut the door, and stop kindling fire for these types of things, I am not pleased with you, even though you built the temple, even though you built the walls of Jerusalem, I am not pleased with you, nor will I accept an offering from you, something like what Isaiah said, in Isaiah chapter 1, I just want you to turn to that verse, Isaiah chapter 1, Isaiah was another man like this, who said, Isaiah 1 11, what are your multiplied sacrifices to me, says the Lord, I've had enough of your burnt offerings, and I'm fed up of all the fats, of fed cattle, I take no

pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs, verse 13, don't bring your worthless offerings to me anymore, your incense is an abomination to me, the new moon, and the sabbath, and all the calling of the assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity, and the solemn assembly, I hate your new moon festivals, your appointed feasts, your breaking of bread meetings, they have become a burden to me, I'm weary of bearing them, you know what they did to Isaiah, they sawed him in two pieces, got rid of him, but he spoke the truth, God was fed up with all this ritual, where he was not first in their heart, I tell you that's exactly what God says today, you don't want all this breaking of bread meetings, if you don't mean it, you're not going to put me first, everything must be meaning, you get baptized, it has

got to have a meaning, you break bread, you mean it, you're willing to die to yourself, follow Jesus, you're willing to die in your relationship with the other people with whom you break bread, otherwise the whole thing is an empty ritual, he said, I don't want you to do it, and he says, I wish there were one man who would stand up and stop this rot that's going on in my name in the midst of Jerusalem, that's what Malachi said, these covetous people, they love their money, they love the world, they love their own positions and greatness, and they come pretending that they are spiritual, you know that's a serious word, we can continue next week, I just want to show you one verse in where it says, the Lord says, don't think you are the only people, Jews, one of these days I'm going to

reject you, and from the east to the west, the north and the south, my name will be great among the Gentiles, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to another people, who will bring forth the fruit, and there they will bring a pure offering to my name, that's always been God's desire, a pure offering.

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