

The Great Mediocrity

I. Introduction to the Relationship Between God and Israel

A. God called the people of Israel into relationship: **Grace**

1. Making a covenant relationship with them
 - a. A Covenant of Faith – *Exodus 3:5-10*
 - b. A Covenant of Life – *Exodus 12:29-30*
 - c. A Covenant of Deliverance – *Exodus 14:13-14*
 - d. A Covenant of Law – *Exodus 20:1-17*
 - e. A Covenant of Worship – *Exodus 40:34-38*
2. Sending messengers to help lead and guide them
 - a. Priests to instruct them – *Leviticus*
 - b. Shepherds to guide them – *Judges*
 - c. Kings to maintain justice for them – *Samuel, Kings, Chronicles*
 - d. Prophets to exhort and warn them – *Malachi*

B. Israel failed in their worship and witness: **Sin**

1. They misused the gifts of God
 - a. Forgot the promises of God – *Isaiah*
 - b. Forgot the provision of God – *Jeremiah*
 - c. Forgot the presence of God – *Ezekiel*
 - d. Forgot the power of God – *Daniel*
2. They misrepresented the grace of God
 - a. Failed to be distinct from their neighbors – *Hosea*
 - b. Failed to share God's Word – *Jonah*
 - c. Failed to administer justice to those in need – *Micah*

II. The Great Mediocrity

A. Rebuke – *Malachi 1:1-14*

1. God loves them – chosen, blessed, loved – Israel does not feel loved
2. God desires honor and respect – *Lord Saboath* – priests show contempt
3. God expects holiness and obedience – offerings are not acceptable
4. God wants a faithful commitment – witness to the world is hindered

B. Reflection

1. Do we count our blessings?
 - a. comparison negates our love on all levels
 - b. Competition taints our witness to God's love and grace
▶ Be thankful – *Luke 17:11-19*
2. Do we lead with integrity?
 - a. Do all the good you can and avoid doing harm – John Wesley
 - b. Learn to listen to your critics and as well as your supporters
▶ Be real – *Colossians 3:17*
3. Do we give generously?
 - a. God owns everything and we are to be good stewards
 - b. The love and grace of God are meant to be shared
▶ Be gracious – *II Corinthians 9:7*
4. Are we serious about God?
 - a. Commitment requires a long obedience in the same direction
 - b. Love never fails; never gives up; and never ends
▶ Be holy – *Mark 12:29-31*

THE LAST OF THE MESSENGERS

Faithfulness

I. Introduction to the Prophet Malachi

A. Last of the Old Testament Prophets

1. Begins with the phrase “Oracle of the word of Yahweh” – *Zech 9:1,12:11/Malachi 1:1*
2. Malachi means “my messenger” – *Malachi 1:1; 3:1*
3. Usually attached to *Zechariah* because of the common phrase and time period
4. Separated out to form the 12th Minor Prophets- highly symbolic
5. Written in the early postexilic period – 500-400 BC

B. Outline of the Message

1. *Malachi 1:1-5* – Introduction and Declaration
2. *Malachi 1:6-2:9* – Covenant, Service and Sacrifice
3. *Malachi 2:10-16* – Breaking Faith
4. *Malachi 2:17-3:5* – Judgment
5. *Malachi 3:6-12* – Blessings and Curses
6. *Malachi 3:13-4:3* – Day of the Lord
 - a. Remember Moses – keeping faith with the Law of God
 - b. Receive Elijah – keeping faith with the people of God

II. Faithfulness – *Malachi 2:1-16*

A. Dishonored the Name of the Lord – *Malachi 2:1-9*

1. By not listening to God – leads to disobedience
2. By not honoring God – leads to rebuke
 - a. Reverence – respect/awe/devotion – remembering who God is
 - b. Truth – nothing false on the inside/outside – honesty
 - c. Holiness – walking with integrity and peace – different way of living

B. Betrayed One Another – *Malachi 2:10-16*

1. Broke faith (5x) – faithless, unfaithful, to betray, treachery
 - a. One Father – many gods – idolatry – false worship
 - b. One Flesh – divided loyalties, destroyed relationships
2. Guarding the Spirit within us through faith, hope and love

C. Salvation – the loving God in Jesus Christ – *Mark 12:29-31*

1. Love is the highest honor – more love, more honor
 - a. Honor God’s name, purpose, people, creation
 - b. God first loved us – love met our sin at the cross
 - c. Fall in love with God – heart, mind, soul and strength
 - +Draw near to God by faith
 - +Surrender self by faith
 - +Adjust continually by faith
2. Love is the greatest commitment
 - a. Love one another – *John 18:35* – forgive, encourage, help
 - b. Commit to one another – justice, mercy, faithfulness
 - c. Serve one another – different from the world – holy community

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The Refiner's Fire

I. Introduction to Life

- A. No one like to be wrong – sometimes we are
 - 1. We do not see everything
 - 2. We do not know everything
 - 3. We are limited in power, scope, understanding and wisdom
 - 4. We will make mistakes, fail, error, stumble and sin
- B. No one likes to suffer – sometimes we do
 - 1. Suffering has a purpose and a cause
 - a. Sometimes we are the cause of our suffering – self
 - b. Sometimes others are the cause of our suffering – Satan
 - 2. Suffering can draw us closer to the grace of God
 - a. God can redeem suffering for our benefit
 - b. God can use suffering to bless others

II. The Refiner's Fire

- A. Question – Where is the God of justice? *Malachi 2:17*
 - 1. Where is God?
 - 2. Why do people get away with evil?
 - 3. Why do people suffer?
 - 4. Why did God let this happen?
 - 5. When will this suffering end?
 - 6. When will God come?
 - 7. How long, O Lord? How long? *Psalms 13*
- B. Answer – Messiah/Savior/Redeemer – *Malachi 3:1-5*
 - 1. The Messiah's Mission – v.2 – separate and cleanse
 - a. By fire – tested and tried – what are we made of?
 - b. By soap – cleanses and washes – removes the stains
+Jesus Christ transforms and renews us
 - 2. The Messiah's Servants – v.3 – more valuable than gold or silver
 - a. Servants will be set apart to teach, lead and model
 - b. Servants will be holy examples of godly leaders
+Jesus Christ calls and anoints us
 - 3. The Messiah's People – v.4 – holy and just people
 - a. The people will bring righteous offerings
 - b. The people will live with holy hands and holy hearts
+Jesus Christ sets us apart
 - 4. The Messiah's Judgment – v.5 – unrighteous
 - a. There will be judgment for the sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers
 - b. There will be judgment for cheaters, oppressors, and doers of injustice
+Jesus Christ brings justice...
 - 1. Workers – used
 - 2. Widows – forgotten
 - 3. Orphans – neglected
 - 4. Aliens – abused

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Storehouse Living

I. Introduction to Christian Stewardship

A. Definitions

1. Stewardship – the responsible use of our possessions
2. Offerings – the presentation of a sacrifice or gift
3. Alms – the act of giving to the poor and needy
4. Tithes – the tenth part of a whole given for the glory of God
 - a. Tithe used 31x in the Old Testament for crops, livestock, wine, money
 - b. Tenth used 22x in the OT for the amount set aside for God and His house
 - c. Tithe not used in the New Testament but **assumed**
 - d. Tenth used 10x in the New Testament directly related to an offering for God

B. Abuse

1. Money is abused in society – class distinction: rich and poor
2. Money is abused in church – greed is an old sin
3. Money is abused by individuals, families and governments – lack of control

II. Storehouse Living – *Malachi 3:6-18*

A. First Charge – The people have been robbing God

1. Neglecting their tithe – *v.10* – commanded in *Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*
2. Neglecting their faith – *v.11* – God says he would protect them – *Psalm 121*
3. Neglecting their witness – *v.12* – God says he will bless them – *Deuteronomy 30:11-20*

B. Second Charge – The people have been speaking badly about God

1. Speaking against the Law and repentance – *v.14* – *Ecclesiastes 5:1*
2. Speaking against righteousness – *v.15* – *Proverbs 3:5-6*

C. Right Living and Right Witness

1. Fear of the Lord – *v.16a* – those who honor the Name of God
2. Prayer – *v.16b* – those who seek the Lord
3. Blessing – *v.17* – those who God loves and keeps
4. Righteousness – *v.18* – those who serve God in holiness and peace

D. Good Stewardship

1. Plan to give – priority – tithes, offerings, alms – *Matthew 6:3*
2. Give from your heart – generously – *II Corinthians 9:6-11*
3. Use your resources willingly and wisely – *Matthew 6:24*
4. Let the grace of God abound in you – *Luke 6:37-38*
 - a. Set apart your tithe first and trust God
 - b. Set aside offerings and alms and bless as many people as you can
 - c. Remember your checkbook/credit card statement is a theological statement
 - d. Remember that to those who have been given much, much is required
 - e. Remember what you reap you will sow – don't be a miser be a giver
 - f. Remember you will be measured by your own measurements
 - g. Remember you can never out give God

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Last Words

I. Introduction to the Day of the Lord

A. Jewish World View

1. Faith First – God’s way of relating to Abraham and his descendents – *Genesis 12:1-3*
2. Jews First – God’s chosen people delivered out of sin and bondage – *Exodus 14:13-14*
3. Covenant First – God’s calling to be a witness and a blessing – *Exodus 19-20:17*
4. Law First – God’s directions for holy living – *Leviticus*
5. Land First – God’s plan for connecting and empowering His people – *Numbers 13:26-33*
6. Love First – God’s greatest virtue in the hearts and hands of humanity – *Deut. 6:1-9*
7. Obedience First – God’s commands are to be followed – *Joshua 1:6-9*
 - a. Torah – Word and Law
 - b. Tabernacle/Temple/Land – dwelling place
 - c. Covenant/Circumcision/Marriage – witness
 - d. Faithfulness/Justice/Mercy – character

B. The Day of the Lord

1. Now and Then – only two concepts of time (suffering and blessing)
2. That Day – judgment of the Gentiles and justification of the Jews
3. That Day – always a point of hope, reward and victory for the Jews
4. That Day – God will reveal Himself to the whole world and the end will come
5. That Day – interpreted by Christians as the coming of the Holy Spirit – *Acts 2:1-41*

II. Last Words – *Malachi 4:1-6*

A. A Day of Fire - **Then**

1. Burning like a furnace consuming the arrogant and the evildoers – *v.1*
2. Nothing will be left – root or branch – *v.1b*
3. Healing and victory for those who revere the Name of God – *v.2*
4. The righteous will leap for joy and trample underfoot the wicked – *vs.2b-3*

B. A Time for Remembering – **Now**

1. Remember Moses and the Law
 - a. Ten Words – the Commandments – *Deuteronomy 5:1-21*
 - b. One God – the Shema – *Deuteronomy 6:1-9*
2. Remember Elijah and his Message
 - a. Sent by God before that day – *Matthew 11:7-19; 17:1-13*
 - b. Will call the people to repentance and right relationships – *Psalms 145:8-13*
 1. God’s grace – greatest gift
 2. God’s compassion – greatest action
 3. God’s patience – greatest strength
 4. God’s love – greatest virtue
 5. God’s goodness – greatest blessing

*The life and ministry of Elijah

1. Elijah fed by ravens – *I Kings 17:1-6*
2. Elijah raising the widows son back to life – *I Kings 17:7-24*
3. Elijah and Obediah – *I Kings 18:1-5*
4. Elijah and the false prophets of Baal – *I Kings 18:16-46*
5. Elijah and spiritual burnouts – *I Kings 19:1-9*
6. Elijah and a revelation from God – *I Kings 19:10-18*