

1 ☐ Malachi Study

Men of Grace

June 24, 2008

Malachi 2:17 – 3:12

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6 ☐ Malachi Message

Message of the Book of Malachi:

I (the Lord) am serious about My covenant relationship with you (nation of Israel)

7 ☐ Book of Malachi Outline

OUTLINE OF MALACHI:

Verse 1:1

- Introduction
 - The word of the Lord to Israel

Verses 1:2 - 5

- I have loved you, Israel
 - Grace
 - Election

Verses 1:6 – 2:9

- You priests have violated the Covenant
 - In your worship (1:6-14)
 - In your teaching (2:1-9)

8 ☐ Book of Malachi Outline

Verses 2:10 – 16

- You people have profaned the Covenant
 - By marrying non-believers
 - By divorcing your believing wives

Verses 2:17 – 3:6

- You accuse Me of not enforcing the Covenant
 - "Where is the God of justice?"
- But...
 - I will send My Messenger of the Covenant to judge covenant breakers.

9 ☐ Book of Malachi Outline

Verses 3:7 - 12

- You people have disobeyed the Covenant
 - By not giving your tithes and offerings
- But...
 - Trust me and give; then I will bless you abundantly

Verses 3:13 – 4:3

- You accuse Me of not honoring the Covenant
 - By not blessing those who serve Me
 - By allowing evildoers to prosper
- But...
 - A day is coming when the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked judged

10 ☐ Book of Malachi Outline

Verse 4:4

- Conclusion:
 - Remember (obey) the Mosaic Covenant

Verses 4:5 – 6

- Final Promise:
 - The "day of the Lord" is coming!

11  Malachi 2:17 – 3:6 Outline

Verse 2:17

- **The People's Complaint**
 - *God is unjust!*

Verses 3:1 – 6

- **God's Response**
 - *The Coming "Messenger" of Judgment*
- **Verses 3:1-2**
 - *The Coming Lord*
- **Verses 3:3-14**
 - *He will Purify the Levites*
- **Verses 3:5-6**
 - *He will judge and vindicate*

12  Malachi 2:17 – 3:6 Outline

Key Point:

God's unchanging faithful love to the nation of Israel is why He does not "destroy" them for their continual rebellion:

- *He will honor His Covenants*
- *He will not reject His "chosen" people*
 - *Romans 11*

Key N.T. Verses: 2 Peter 3:3-13 (especially vs. 9)

13  Malachi 3:7 – 12 Outline

Verse 3:7

- **Call for "Heart" Repentance**
 - *"Return to Me and I will return to you"*

Verses 3:8 – 10a

- **Call for Tithes**
 - *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse"*
- **Tithes**
 - *Obedience to the Old Testament Law*
 - *Demonstrated their faith and gratitude to God for the gift of the "promised" land*
 - *Provided for the Levites and the landless poor*

14  Malachi 3:7 – 12 Outline

Verses 3:10b - 12

- **Promise of Blessing for Obedience**
 - *3:10b - Blessing from Heaven*
 - *3:11 - Blessing from the Land*
 - *3:12 - Blessing from the Nations*

Key Point:






Israel's attitude toward- and use of- their possessions was one indication of the health of their relationship to God.

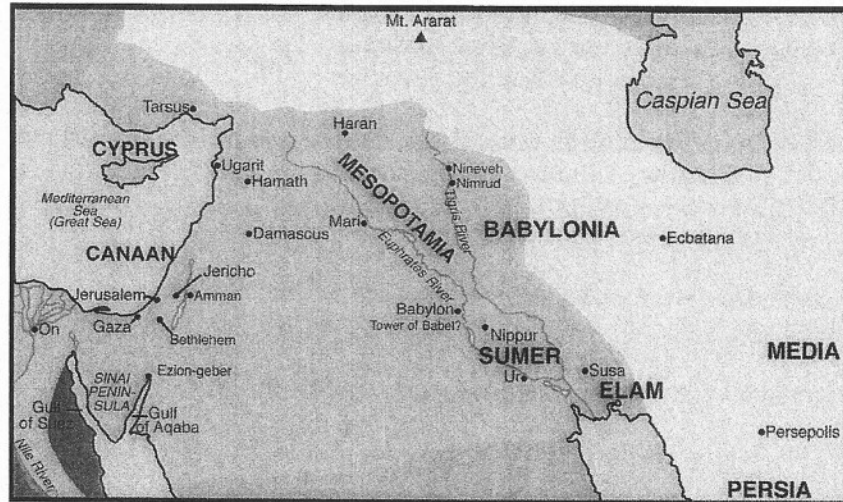
- **Key N.T. Verses:** 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9

15  Malachi 2:17 – 3:12 Discussion Questions

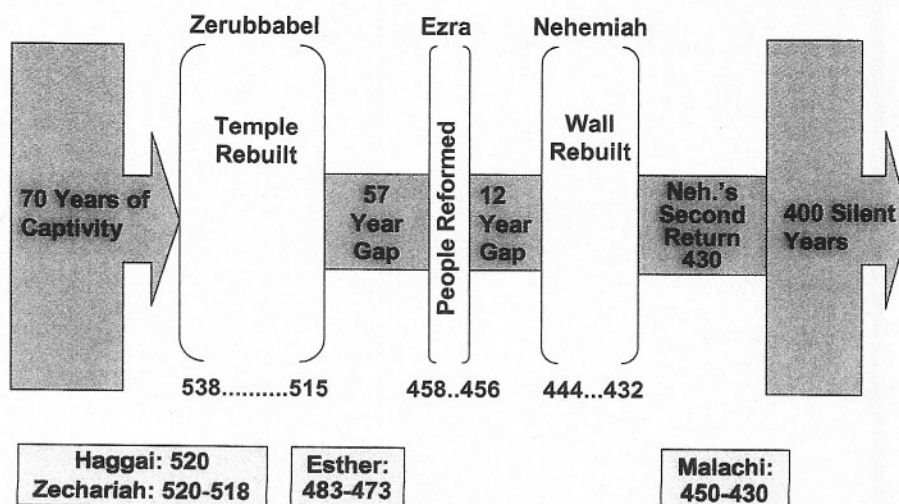
- 1) ***Why does God not "come back" and judge this rebellious world right now?***
- 2) ***Discuss the concept of tithing in the Old Testament:***
 - *How did it work?*
 - *What was its' purpose?*
- 3) ***Are we supposed to tithe today in the church age?***

Middle East
Babylonian Kingdom
 600 BC

	Babylonian Kingdom		Arabian Desert
	Median Kingdom		Scythians
	Lydian Kingdom		



Three Returns from Exile



Malachi 2:17 – 3:12
Worksheet

2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?"

Malachi 3

1 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

5 "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings.

9 You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me.

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty.

12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

Malachi 2:17 – 3:12 Commentary

Excursus: Tithing in the Church?

How do these verses apply to the Christian today? That the Old Testament law continues to instruct the church is indicated by the apostles' continued delight in it and use of it to reveal sin (Rom 7:7, 22; 1 Tim 1:5-11; 2 Tim 3:16-17). A continuity between new covenant and old covenant instructions is shown both explicitly (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14) and implicitly in citing old covenant law to confirm instructions under the new covenant (1 Cor 9:8-10; Eph 6:1-3; 1 Tim 5:18; 1 Pet 1:15-16). The New Testament writers taught, however, that the believer's relationship to the old covenant law is different since the coming of Christ. This is shown, for example, by the instruction Peter received from God to "kill and eat" and not to "call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:13-15) and by the apostolic church's rejection of the proposal that "the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Furthermore, Paul asserted that the Christian is "not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14; also Gal 5:18; 1 Cor 9:20), that he has "died to the law" and been "released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (Rom 7:4, 6; also Gal 2:19). He declared that the law was added to the promises "because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come" (Gal 3:19; also 1 Tim 1:9) and that

before this faith [in Jesus Christ] came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:23-26, HCSB)

He also declared that Christ has made peace and created "one new man" of Jew and Gentile by "destroy[ing] the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations" (Eph 2:14-16).

Furthermore, the church believed they were under a new covenant (1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6-11) and worshiped on the first rather than the last day of the week (1 Cor 16:2). And finally, the author of Hebrews declared that Christ's death on the cross instituted a new priestly order and that "when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law" (Heb 7:12). He also described the new covenant as "superior to the old one" and pointed out from Jer 31:31-34 that "by calling this covenant 'new,' [God] has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb 8:6, 13). More specifically, the "gifts and offerings" under the old covenant "are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order" (Heb 9:9-10). In this

context we may understand Jesus' teaching (see Matthew 5) as "a new law that at once fulfills and surpasses the law of Moses," a law that Paul would call "the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2).

How to reconcile the New Testament teaching on the continuity and discontinuity between new covenant and old covenant instructions has been debated for centuries, and the literature is voluminous. The evidence is clear enough, however, that one cannot simply apply directly to new covenant believers the laws, directives, warnings, and incentives given to Israel under the old covenant. D. Dorsey has argued, for example, that "the collection of 613 regulations comprising God's covenant with ancient Israel is not intended to legally govern the Church."

The Sinaitic law code was very specifically designed by God to regulate the lives of the West Semitic inhabitants of the southern Levant. Nearly all the regulations of the corpus—over 95%—are so culturally specific, geographically limited, and so forth that they would be completely inapplicable, and in fact unfulfillable, to Christians living throughout the world today.

The difficulty with trying to apply part of the Old Testament law to Christians is the lack of any biblical substantiation for such a division on the one hand and the biblical teaching regarding the unity of the law on the other hand. Paul in Gal 5:3, for example, declares "to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law" (also Jas 2:10-11). God's moral absolutes are eternal because they arise from his own character. But how those absolutes are manifest and administered in the different economies of old and new covenants will likely differ. An obvious example is that under the old covenant adultery was not only wrong but was punishable by execution (Lev 20:10). Under the new covenant the absolute prohibition remains, but the penalty apparently does not (Heb 13:4). What can be learned from the Old Testament prohibition is the seriousness and destructiveness of the sin.

One the positive side, the Old Testament included instruction to care for the landless poor, especially those whose responsibility was to minister in teaching the law and in maintaining the temple and its worship. This is matched by New Testament instructions regarding God's ownership of all we have (Matt 6:25-32; Acts 17:24-25; Col 1:16; Jas 1:17) and the Christian's responsibility for acts of mercy, kindness, care for the needy and for respect, love, and care for church leaders (1 Tim 5:17-18; 1 Thess 5:12). In response to the Spirit's warning of a coming famine, for example, "The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea" (Acts 11:27-30; cf. 24:17). Paul speaks in Rom 15:26-27 of the obligation of Gentile Christians to meet the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem based on the principle that "they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings." The basic principle of caring for the poor is repeatedly taught in the New Testament (Acts 4:34-35; Rom 12:13; Gal 2:10; Eph 4:28; Jas 2:16; 1 John 3:17). And similar to the Old Testament law of the tithe, one's gifts are to be in accordance with his financial

resources. Paul's instruction to the Corinthians as well as others was that "each of you is to set something aside and save to the extent that he prospers" (1 Cor 16:1-2; also "according to your means" in 2 Cor 8:11-12).

Nevertheless, even though in Romans 15 Paul described these collections as spiritual obligations, he spoke of them in 1 Cor 16:3 as "gifts" (*charis*, rendered "act of grace" in 2 Cor 8:6 and "grace of giving" in 8:7), and in the major New Testament passage on giving, in 2 Cor 8:2, he described it in terms of "generosity" (*haplotēs*; also *eulogia*, "generous gift" in 2 Cor 9:5). He praised the Macedonians for giving "even beyond their ability" (8:3; see Mark 12:44). Paul offers a clue in 2 Cor 8:8 that giving under the new covenant follows different principles than under the old covenant when he says, "I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." Whereas the law of the tithe was an external obligation commanded of every member of the covenant community of Israel, giving under the new covenant is to be an expression of joy (2 Cor 8:2) and love (cf. 8:24; 9:7) produced by God's Spirit and giving evidence of the presence of the One "who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil 2:13; see Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26-27; Rom 12:8). In 2 Cor 8:1 Paul had said that the Macedonians' giving was the result of the grace that God had given them (also 2 Cor 9:14-15). So the acceptability of one's offering was determined by it being proportional to one's means and the product of a willing and even "cheerful" heart (2 Cor 8:12; 9:7).

The question remains whether under the new covenant obedience to biblical principles of kindness and generosity carried motivations of material blessing (or deprivation) as under the old covenant. One must recognize that the assurances of material blessing found in Mal 3:7-12 are based on the blessings and curses attached to the Mosaic covenant in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. If the new covenant has replaced the Mosaic covenant in some sense, these blessings and curses are no longer in effect, at least not in a direct and literal sense. Yet one must ask is a similar motivation might be attached to New Testament guidelines for giving. At first glance 2 Cor 9:6-11 seems to echo Mal 3:7-12.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Closer examination, however, shows that the principles at work here are very different. Paul is not advocating giving that will result in blessing but rather blessing that will result in giving. The purpose of "having all that you need," he says (v. 8), is that you may "abound in every good work," not vice versa. The abundance of God's supply of seed and bread (quoting Isa 55:10) that makes "rich in every way" (v.11) is for the purpose of being "generous on every occasion." What then is the harvest one reaps from the generosity that is sown, "the harvest of your righteousness"? It is not material blessings one may enjoy as the reward for righteousness and obedience. The harvest of generosity is rather "thanksgiving to God" (vs. 11). Paul elaborates in the next two verses:

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (2 Cor 9:12-13)

The motivation of material blessing in the New Testament, therefore, has a different emphasis from that found in Malachi and the Old Testament. God blesses the Christian for giving not *because* of giving. Also different is the apparent lack of guidance about the amount to be given. Nowhere in the New Testament, even in these two chapters of 2 Corinthians dedicated to the issue, is the Christian instructed to give a "tithe" or "tenth." Since the giving requirement is no longer an external obligation required as "dues" from every member of the covenant community but rather is to be the expression of love from a regenerated and redeemed heart, the amount is also not specified. How much, then, should the Christian give? Since the New Testament lacks specific instruction on the amount one should give, though on the other hand continuing the principle of giving as one has prospered and according to one's means, and since the giving of a tenth is the pattern used in the Old Testament, even before the founding of the Mosaic covenant (Gen 14:20), the use of the tenth should be considered an initial guideline for New Testament giving.

Excerpt from "The New American Commentary" by E. Ray Clendenen