

The Prophets

Lesson #56

Malachi

Outline

I. ***The Privilege Of The Nation (1:1-5)***

- A. God's love for His people (1:1-3).
- B. God's rejection of Esau (1:4-5).

II. ***The Pollution Of The Nation (1:6-3:15)***

- A. The sin of the priests of Israel (1:6-2:9).
 1. The priests despise the name of the Lord (1:6-14).
 2. The Lord curses the priests (2:1-9).
- B. The sin of the people of Israel (2:10-3:15).
 1. The people commit idolatry (2:10-12).
 2. The people divorce (2:13-16).
 3. The Lord will judge at His coming (2:17-3:7).
 4. The people rob God (3:8-12).
 5. The people doubt the character of God (3:13-15).

III. ***The Promises To The Nation (3:16-4:6)***

- A. The rewards of the book of remembrance (3:16-18).
- B. The rewards of the coming of Christ (4:1-3).
- C. The prophecy of the coming of Elijah (4:4-6).

Notes

Malachi 1:1-5

- God's love for His people (1:1-3).
 - God declared His love for the people, and by this love He sought to bring home to the hearts of His hearers their own ingratitude and lack of devotion toward Him. The conditions around them and their own state of mind had led them to the conclusion that the Lord did not love them; otherwise, everything would have been different.
 - God's choice of Jacob was to show He was not controlled by human concepts of action, but His hatred for the nation grew out of His own immutable and absolutely holy character and Edom's unholy character and disposition toward Him.
- God's rejection of Esau (1:4-5).
 - Edom's boast that though beaten down, they would return and build again the waste places was having an effect on Judah. However, Edom's destiny was not in their own hands, but in the hands of God.
 - Edom had received a blow already from which they would never recover. After the Chaldeans came, the Nabateans drove them out.

Then they were conquered by the Maccabees and finally the Romans drove them into the eastern desert.

- Jacob would continue as a people and see the fulfillment of this word in Edom's complete destruction. In God's favor toward Jacob and His casting down of Edom, He would be magnified in the eyes of the world.

Malachi 1:6-3:15

- The sin of the priests of Israel (1:6-2:9).
 - The priests despise the name of the Lord (1:6-14).
 - God began His rebuke of the priests and people by an appeal to a long established principle among the Semitic race and His own people in particular. He spoke of the honor of a son for his father and a servant for his master.
 - If honor and respect on the part of sons and servants for their father and master was accepted among them as a fundamental of society, where then was their honor and fear of God?
 - God charged the priests, who were responsible for the sacrifices, with having offered polluted bread on His altar. They were saying that the whole of God's worship was contemptible by their word and by their action in what they offered to Him.
 - God wanted there to be one among them with sufficient jealousy for Him and His altar to close the doors against such profane worship. It is better to lock the doors and stay at home than be guilty of their practices.
 - The Lord curses the priests (2:1-9).
 - The priests had insulted the name of God and had brought it into disgrace; now they must give glory to it or suffer the consequence of God's curse, demonstrated in the outpouring of His wrath.
 - "Dung" was the waste of the sacrificial animal that normally was carried outside the camp, but here it is first used as a gross insult to the officiating priests; they and it would be carried away.
 - Instead of finding the faithful ideal among the priests, God made three solemn charges of corruption and faithlessness in vs. 8. The verdict came and the sentence on the priests involved shame and humiliation.
- The sin of the people of Israel (2:10-3:15).
 - The people commit idolatry (2:10-12).
 - The broad introductory statement is, of course, addressed to the people of Israel, not to the Moabites, Tyrians, Philistines, Syrians or others with whom the intermarriage had taken place.

- God would punish this sin by cutting off every man who committed it. All betrayals, from the slightest unkindness to the grossest injustice, merit God's disapproval.
- The people divorce (2:13-16).
 - Not only had they married foreign wives, but they had put away their faithful companions, rejecting the covenant of their youth. The expression used is a metaphor in which the rejected wives were covering the altar with their tears, weeping and sighing to such a degree that the fire was extinguished and the sacrifices were never received but rejected by God. The tears of these mistreated wives stood as an unyielding barrier between the worshippers and God.
 - No one with a remnant of the spirit of respect for the law of God and of feeling for his mate would do as the people had done. Anyone desiring to have a godly or holy posterity, which God desired, would not have put away his Hebrew wife and married a heathen women.
 - God has always intended that there should be one woman for one man. The man who puts away his wife, willfully ignoring her tears and her deeply wounded feelings, covers his garment, himself and his character with the violence of iniquity.
- The Lord will judge at His coming (2:17-3:7).
 - The remainder of the book is introduced by vs. 17. The faithless multitude of the people had worn God's patience thin by their skeptical attitude toward Him. The address is not to any one class in particular but to the large majority who had lost their faith in God.
 - The promise of a messenger rests on the prophecy of Isaiah (40:3-5); this messenger is the Elijah of 4:5. There is no prophecy more clearly established than that the "voice" of Isaiah (40:3) and the Elijah of Malachi (4:5) is John the Baptist (cf. Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:17; 3:4; John 1:23). This messenger would go before and prepare the way for the Lord's coming. Furthermore, we have the testimony of Jesus Himself that the prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10) and that John the Baptist was the Elijah that was to come (Matthew 11:14).
 - However, the coming of God will not be as they had expected; for He will not come simply as a judge of the heathen, but as a judge of His own as well. The Lord will not come simply as a fire, but as a smelter, purging the dross from the silver.
 - Not only will He come in judgment against the priests, but He will come also against all the wicked among the people. God would

judge the moral and ethical sins of the people. Their problem was that they did not fear God.

- The people rob God (3:8-12).
 - To rob one's fellow man was a great sin, but to rob God should have been unthinkable. Tithes and offerings given freely are acknowledgments of the ownership of God and the stewardship of man.
 - God challenges the people to measure their faith with their deeds. In short, if they did their part, God would certainly do His.
 - From a general statement of blessing, Malachi next specifies that the form of their blessings would be agricultural. Then, as is always the case, there was a purpose for the blessing. Not merely would God's people be comfortable, healthy and happy, but His name would also be honored.
- The people doubt the character of God (3:13-15).
 - The Lord had laid before them the reason for withholding His blessings. He then made another charge against them: they had harsh words against God, questioning His moral government among men.
 - They had put their confidence in the outward fasting which was of no worth before God. This question had been clearly settled by Zechariah (7:1-8:23).
 - The murmurers charged that the proud who worked wickedness were built up by God and that, though they tempted God, they escaped from judgment (cf. Isaiah 5:20).

Malachi 3:16-4:6

- The rewards of the book of remembrance (3:16-18).
 - Malachi portrays God as listening to those who feared Him. What they were saying, we do not know; perhaps it was an expression of love and worship. The idea of God's keeping written records appears frequently in scripture (cf. Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; 49:16; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).
 - God's people will be His very own, and He will spare them. On that day, when all wrongs are rectified and all wickedness punished, it will be apparent that God does judge justly and that He does make a distinction between those who serve Him and those who do not.
- The rewards of the coming of Christ (4:1-3).
 - The reference to the coming of the day of judgment as a devouring fire was often used by former prophets (e.g., Amos 1:4, 7; Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8). It would burn as a furnace in which the wicked and proud would be as the dry stubble of the wheat field.

- Although the prophet writes of many such days that have come upon the wicked of the earth, especially the destruction of the Jews and of Jerusalem, a final day of complete destruction of the wicked from the face of the earth will be at Christ's coming (2 Thessalonians 1:9).
- To "tread down the wicked" indicates the complete victory of the righteous and righteousness over the wicked and wickedness.
- The prophecy of the coming of Elijah (4:4-6).
 - The prophet closes with an admonition, a final promise and a threat. To meet the judgment of God in confidence the true Israelite must respect and keep the law. Malachi began with an illustration from Genesis (Jacob and Esau) and spent most of the first half of the book reminding priests and people of the need to keep the Mosaic law. Now, close to the end of his book, he gives another terse reminder of their continuing obligation to those laws.
 - Before the great and terrible day of judgment, refining and purifying, God promised to send Elijah the prophet. John denied that he was Elijah in person (John 1:21), yet Jesus said he was the Elijah of promise (Matthew 17:11-13).
 - The mission of "Elijah," the forerunner of the Messiah, was to turn the affections of the people back to God and His divine law. If the people would change their hearts, they would be ready to receive the Messiah. Because most people did not listen, God destroyed their city and their land (Matthew 23:38; 24:28).
 - Malachi serves as a fitting close to God's Old Testament revelation. A final appeal is made to the people to purge out the wickedness found among them and to render an acceptable service to God, a final warning is given of inevitable judgment upon the wicked and a final promise is made of God's righteous to be provided in Him who would be the personal bond of unity between God and His people. There was no more that God could say or do.