

**ST. ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Sarasota, Florida**  
**A CONVERSATION ON MALACHI**  
**Session Plan #3**

**OPENING PRAYER:**

**A SHARING OF GOD'S PEACE**

**QUICK REVIEW:**

Malachi is often referred to as the "***Hebrew Socrates.***"

- a) He used a distinct writing style much different from that of other prophets
- b) His literary form was that of the scribes; delivering confrontational messages:  
after each charge, he backed it up with evidence
- c) He used a rhetorical speech form that contains 4 components
  - Assertion
  - Questioning
  - Response
  - Implication
- d) Called the "**DIDACTIC-DIALECTIC**" Form:
  - There are 7 distinct examples of this method in Book of Malachi

**RHETORICAL QUESTION #1** – "***How hast Thou loved us?***" (Malachi 1:2-5) (*FINISHED during our last session*)

- a) God declared His great love for His chosen people.
- b) God spoke of Jacob and Esau as the representatives of their descendant nations; God did not hate Esau personally; but He did hate what Edom, as a nation, had become.
- c) But, Israel would one day see the Lord magnified beyond its border

**RHETORICAL QUESTION #2** – "***How have we despised your name?***" (Malachi 1:6 – 2:9) {PARTIAL COMPLETION during last session}

- a) Jews were dishonoring God's Name by offering blemished sacrifices (Malachi 1:6-11)

## TODAY'S FOCUS:

b) Despite their dishonor, this prophetic foretelling. One day God's name would be great among Gentiles!

***11 Nevertheless, from sunrise to sunset, my name will be great among the nations. Incense and a pure grain offering will be offered everywhere in my name, because my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of heavenly forces.***

- ***"Sunrise to sunset"*** – figure of speech called 'merism' – 2 opposites are stated for the meaning of a totality. A prophecy of Gentile worship!
- ***"My name"*** – The name "Yahweh" means His entire nature; his character; who He is
- ***"Lord of heavenly forces"*** is a judgment title of God, meaning that He has all the heavenly and earthly armies at his disposal to judge the people
- What does God's Name mean for you??????????????

c) What is the Attitude concerning the Altar and its Offerings? (cf. Malachi 1:12-13)

***12 But you make my name impure when you say, "The table of the LORD is polluted. Its fruit, its food, is despised." 13 But you say, "How tedious!" And you groan [SNORT] about it, says the LORD of heavenly forces. You permit what is stolen, lame, or sick to be brought for a sacrifice, and you bring the grain offering. Should I accept such from your hands? says the LORD.***

- ***"How tedious!"*** – sheer drudgery; 'a pain in the neck;' something to be endured
- ***"Groan"*** or snort – a gesture or expression of disgust
- Obviously, there is no delight in worship; no delight in serving God
- Is that attitude at all true of our present-day worship?

d) Then, the Lord pronounces a curse on the priests and rebukes them in the assembly:  
(cf. Malachi 2:1-9)

- First come these Divine Words of Condemnation:

***But now, this command is for you, priests: <sup>2</sup>If you don't listen, or don't intend to glorify my name, says the LORD of heavenly forces, then I will send a curse among you. I will curse your blessings, and I mean really curse them, because none of you intend to do it. <sup>3</sup> I am about to denounce your offspring; I will scatter feces on your faces, the feces of your festivals.***

- ***“Blessing”*** (and verb ***“to bless”*** [BARAK]) means an enrichment – physically, spiritually, materially – a gift from God that also comes with some empowerment
  - To ***“curse”*** is the opposite of ***“bless”*** = a reversal or the ban of a blessing
  - Because they had failed to live up to what was expected of priests, God would make them base and contemptible
  - Remember Moses' disobedience at the rock in **Meribah**?
  - What profound ***“life-reversal”*** was Moses forced to experience?
- Next, comes a reminder of the Covenant Standard

***Then I will lift you up to me, <sup>4</sup> and you will know that I have sent this command to you so that my covenant with Levi can continue to exist, says the LORD of heavenly forces. <sup>5</sup> My covenant with him involved life and peace, which I gave him, and also fear so that he honored me. He was in awe of my name. <sup>6</sup> True Instruction was in his mouth; injustice wasn't found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and did the right thing; he made many turn from iniquity. <sup>7</sup> The lips of the priest should guard knowledge; everyone should seek Instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger from the LORD of heavenly forces.***

- The nature of covenant with Levi was one of “**life**” and “**peace**”
- If the priests were faithfully serving; speaking the truth; praying for people; offering atonement sacrifices, then worshippers would find “**life**” and “**peace**” through them.
- If the people confessed and brought sacrifices, they would experience peace with God
- Priests expected to be guardians of knowledge; both in their living and teaching
- 3 duties of priesthood (Deuteronomy 33:10) 1-teach the Law of God (*primary responsibility*); 2-burn incense (*intercessory prayer*) 3 – make sacrifices (*help people get closer to God through provision of atonement*)
- Does this “standard” apply – in any way – to us?
- Finally, the “Charge!”

***<sup>8</sup> But you have turned from the path. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of heavenly forces. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, I have made you despised and humiliated in the view of all the people, since none of you keep my ways or show respect for Instruction.***

#### **BREAK POINT FOR DISCUSSION -**

1. Why does God require holiness and loyalty of His people?
2. What does it tell you when people become careless in their religious practices?
3. Bringing a defiled gift to God’s altar was a real insult. But, Why? Does this still happen today?
4. What does it say to others when people wear the “name” of God, but refuse to follow His “ways?”

**RHETORICAL QUESTION #3 – “For what reason has Yahweh rejected us?” (Malachi 2:10-16)**

a) For profaning the Marriage Covenant by Marrying Heathen Women

***<sup>10</sup> Don't we all come from one Father? Aren't we all created by the same God? So why can't we get along? Why do we desecrate the covenant of our ancestors that binds us together? <sup>11-12</sup> Judah has cheated on GOD—a sickening violation of trust in Israel and Jerusalem; Judah has desecrated the holiness of GOD by falling in love and running off with foreign women, women who worship alien gods. GOD's curse on those who do this! Drive them out of house and home! They're no longer fit to be part of the community no matter how many offerings they bring to GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.*** (The MESSAGE translation)

- **Israel and Jerusalem; Judah** – figures of speech “Israel” is name of God’s covenant people; “Judah and Jerusalem” emphasized the center of the theocratic kingdom
- **desecrated the holiness of God** in other translations spoken of as “treachery”
- the word means a willful betrayal of confidence, trust or truth
- therefore, the people were seen as ‘traitors’ of the ancient Covenant that God made with His chosen people
- this has far greater implications than a couple not getting along and divorcing!

b) By divorcing their Jewish Wives

***<sup>13-15</sup> and here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from GOD. Do you know why? Simple. Because GOD was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. GOD, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does he want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse. <sup>16</sup> “I hate divorce,” says the GOD of Israel. GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies says, “I hate the violent dismembering of the ‘one flesh’ of marriage.” So watch yourselves. Don't let your guard down. Don't cheat.*** {MSG}

- Marrying idol worshippers profanes God's holiness
- Because God desires a "godly" seed, people must take heed in their marriages
- Covenant of Marriage includes the words spoken before God: **"till death us do part."**
- It's not just the covenant between human marriage partners that is broken in divorce
- Introducing idolatry into the family of God warrants the threat of God's curse

**RHETORICAL QUESTION #4 – "How have we wearied Him?" (Malachi 2:17 – 3:5)**

a) They were trying God's patience by questioning His Justice:

***17 You make GOD tired with all your talk. "How do we tire him out?" you ask. By saying, "GOD loves sinners and sin alike. GOD loves all." And also by saying, "Judgment? GOD's too nice to judge."***

- God was clearly sick and tired of hearing the Jews, because behind their flowery speeches and false "repentance" were their sins and offenses against Him. They were hypocrites!
- This figure of speech is **"anthropomorphism;"** (using human language that we understand to explain God's reaction to their endless challenges.)
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- The prophet Isaiah says something similar in 43:24 ***"You didn't buy spices for me with your money, or satisfy me with the fat of your sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your evil actions."***
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- The matter of God's Justice is even questioned – they said that those who do evil are considered good in God's sight; the statement is made that God even delights in them!
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- It is a serious lie to tell people that evildoers are good in God's eyes. **1 John 2:3-6** says, ***"<sup>3</sup> This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments. <sup>4</sup> The one who claims, "I know him," while not keeping his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. <sup>5</sup> But the love of God is truly perfected in whoever keeps his word. This is how we know we are in him. <sup>6</sup> The one who claims to remain in him ought to live in the same way as he lived."***

- How much of this deception goes on today?

b) The Lord's Response will be to send His messenger (Malachi 3:1 AMP)

***Behold, I send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me. And the Lord [THE MESSIAH], Whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger or Angel of the Covenant, Whom you desire, behold, He shall come, says the Lord of hosts.***

- The grammatical formula "BEHOLD" plus use of the term "I SEND" is a biblical way to express the imminent future; it is what God is about to do – even though 400 years off into that future
- First, the "messenger" who will prepare His Way for Him
- A clear reference to **John the Baptist**
- Compare Isaiah 40:3 – ***"A voice is crying out: 'Clear the LORD's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!'"***
- ...and Matthew 3:1-3 ***"In those days John the Baptist appeared in the desert of Judea announcing, <sup>2</sup> "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" <sup>3</sup> He was the one of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke when he said: 'The voice of one shouting in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight."***
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- ...Then, will appear the Messenger or Angel of the Covenant
- Here the reference is to Christ, the Messiah, for which they had longed
- "suddenly" He will come, does not mean quickly, but surprisingly
- Who certainly came to His Temple – Matthew 21:12 – ***"Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves."***
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- ... and was a Messenger of a New Covenant – Matthew 26:26-28 - ***While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body."<sup>27</sup> He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from this, all of you.<sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many so that their sins may be forgiven.***

c) His coming will be one to purge His people (Malachi 3:2-5 AMP)

***<sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify the priests, the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord offerings in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Then will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in ancient years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against the false swearers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and who turn aside the temporary resident from his right and fear not Me, says the Lord of hosts.***

- Like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap {the "fire" removes dross from metals; the "soap" comparable to lye soap today}
- The sons of Levi (i.e. priests) especially, that their offerings may be acceptable
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- He will come near to judge those who do not fear the Lord (cf. Matthew 3:11-12) - ***I baptize with water those of you who have changed your hearts and lives. The one who is coming after me is stronger than I am. I'm not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup> The shovel he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out.***
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- This prophecy can also apply to Jesus' Second Coming as described the Book of Revelation (chapter 11)
- The final list of those to be judged includes all those who have committed crimes against both God and men; from gross violations of the moral code to the breakdown of social justice. No one will escape!

**FUTURE READING SUGGESTION** – In preparation for our final meeting session on Malachi, it is suggested that you re-read Malachi 3:6 – 4:6