

# Malachi 2:17-3:12

## Return to Me

Image Church // Exposing the Heart: wk. 3

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### Introduction

If you have your bibles, grab them and turn to the book of Malachi... We're going to be in **chapter 2:17**...

If you're new with us we're walking through the book of **Malachi**, it is the last book of the **OT**... It's God's last recorded words to the people of Israel... Then there would be about 400 years and then Jesus would come...

Remember what I've been telling you, **God Chose Israel as a means by which to reveal Himself to the world**...

God would set them apart by giving them a specific way of living in light of who He is... A way of living that puts on display the Holiness of God and man's desperate need for God's promised deliverer....

- *And then ultimately, the way that God would reveal Himself is through Jesus that would come through the line of Israel...*

But Israel over and over again turns their backs on God...

And what we see through Israel is that they expose the reality of our own hearts- they are a picture of us in so many ways...

And yet in the midst of that is **God's faithful love toward wicked and rebellious people**...

In fact, this is where God starts... He's speaking to His people through the prophet Malachi, and He starts this whole thing by saying ***I have loved you!***

But ***Israel's missing the love of God***, so God lays out a series of disputes to point out this reality to them...

- God's saying you're not loving me in light of the love that I've shown you...

***God is after their heart***, and everything He's holding up is to show them that he doesn't have their heart!

God shows them how they've been offering Him the ***leftovers*** when it comes to the things of God and the worship of God...

He points to the ***drift*** in their relationship with Him that's shown through how they were living, they were marrying pagan women and adopting the worship of their gods, and divorcing their wives...

And this week He's going to talk about what they are doing with their ***money***...

**And here's what we're going to see: *We respond to the faithful redemption of God by giving our first fruits to God...***

But, listen, and I don't want you to miss this... ***God doesn't lead in with money... He leads with love***, and He's going to point to His redemptive work for Israel and for the world...

- It's God's love that's that's the means and motivation for what he's going to call them to when it comes to their money...
- See, *Money isn't the problem, money just reveals that there's a problem.*<sup>1</sup> ...
- They have a heart problem that's revealed in what they're doing with their money... So we'll get to money at the end...
- *What we do with our money is the **application** to what God's done for us...*

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from Joby Martin, Our God is One: *First Fruits*

So, Let's jump in and take a look at where God starts...

## Malachi 2:17-3:12

**17** You have wearied the Lord with your words.

Yet you ask, "How have we wearied him?"

When you say, "Everyone who does what is evil is good in the Lord's sight, and he is delighted with them, or else where is the God of justice?"

Israel's saying to God, why don't care about all the evil going on? Everyone who does evil is fine according to you- you delight in them because you're not doing anything about it you're just letting it ride...

Where is the God of justice?? *Bold claim right there...*

Meanwhile, here's the *irony* you'll see in a little bit... Israel's doing evil just as much as anybody else! They're the ones rejecting the things of God and the ways of God!!

Again, this shows us *the reality of their hearts*... They have no regard for their own rebellion, all they want to do is call God on everybody else...

- *Sounds familiar...* How many times do we do the same thing?!?
- How many times do we look at God and say how could you allow this evil, meanwhile we miss the evil in our own lives...

And yet, here's the crazy thing... Watch how God responds... *If it were me I'd be like you're done...* Not the case with God...

God's going to respond in a way that reveals his answer for injustice holistically offering grace, freedom, and hope in the midst of rebellion...

**3:1** "See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. *[Keep all of verse 1 on the screen]*

Alright, so check this out... This is why I love the Bible so much... You have to see the continuity and the beauty of how God's woven it all together...

Can you recall a messenger in the NT that prepared the way?? **John the Baptist!**

- In **Mark 1:2** Mark would quote **Malachi 3:1** when He's introducing *John the Baptist*... Saying *he's the messenger!*<sup>2</sup>

**Now watch this, we have another messenger, and I want you to look at how this messenger is described...**

**Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple,**

- **LORD** in your bible, this is **YAHWEH** - This is God's covenant name that He gave to His people to know Him by... Given in **Exodus 3** through Moses...
- So, **YAHWEH, God Himself** will suddenly come to his temple...

**the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the Lord of Armies.**

- **YAHWEH** will come as **the Messenger** of the covenant that He had established...

**Who is this Messenger?? JESUS!**

This is how God will be faithful to His covenant... He will come down and mediate it and execute it...

Absolutely incredible... God's not going to leave humanity to fend for itself... He doesn't step away in the midst of the rebellion, He's going to come down to the rebels!

- **BTW:** This is the difference between Christianity and any other religion... Every other religion says work your way to me, God says I will come down to you...

This also points to the reality that **Jesus is God**- another dividing line between Christianity and every other religion... Not only is this a claim that Jesus makes but it's laid out ahead of time in the **OT!**

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11:10 Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1

Jesus was not a representative of God, **He was God**... He's the only one that could fulfill His covenant to redeem humanity!

And watch how He does it...

**Verse 2: 2** But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and like launderer's bleach. **3** He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. **4** And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord as in days of old and years gone by.

Here's what God's saying: **Jesus, the divine messenger is going to bring about reformation**... He's going to **refine** all that the Levites had allowed to get jacked up...

Like a refiner's fire, and a launder's bleach that are used as agents of separation... Fire separates impurities from metal, bleach separates dirt from fabric...

- **Jesus is going to be the agent of separation that establishes what remains and what needs to go...**

He's going to **bring a new reform of the priesthood** and redefine what **true worship** looks like...

And in this process, it's also going to **reveal a separation** of those who **truly trust God and believe in His promises and those that don't**...

Jesus is going to frame out what **true worship** looks like, the kind that's acceptable to God, *similar* to how *early on Judah* worshiped God in a way that was acceptable to Him...

Ultimately, through Jesus, what God's going to do is **purge and purify His people**...

**Illustration:** Ashley and Adalyn's room... Funny

- *Purge and clean...*

- *Takes toys that she's not using for the right things...*
- *Cleans up the mess...*

*This is what God's going to do with Israel...*

*And watch how badly they need it! Look at **verse 5** God continues:*

*"I will come to you in judgment, and I will be ready to witness against sorcerers and adulterers; against those who swear falsely; against those who oppress the hired worker, the widow, and the fatherless; and against those who deny justice to the resident alien. They do not fear me," says the Lord of Armies.*

What God does here, is lay out the reality of where Israel is... These are all things that they're guilty of... This is where they are...

- *Meanwhile they're the ones asking where the God of justice is!! Crazy right...*

**But here is what I want you to see**, in the midst of their utter rebellion, in the midst of their blatant sin- God's going to make a way...

Look at what God says in **verse 6**...

**6** "Because I, the Lord, have not changed, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed.

God says *it's gotten bad Israel*... You've drifted so far from who I am and who I've called you to be... And yet in the midst of your rebellion, in the midst of your rejection of me, I've not destroyed you like you deserve...

**God says In the midst of your faithlessness, I'm still faithful**... I have not changed... **You have changed, but I haven't**...

*I will stay true to my promises even when you don't stay true in your trust and your love toward me...*

- I will be faithful to my character and true to My Word...

The justice you cry out for, the justice that needs to be served to you, the **purification** that you ultimately need... it will come, but not in the way that you expect it...

**God would bring about purification through the execution of justice, but instead of bringing it on His people, He takes it on Himself...**

And the way God will do it is through **Jesus**, who would **become the justifier**: *The one who pardons and absolves from guilt and punishment...*

Jesus would be the **once-and-for-all Sacrificial Lamb** laying down His perfect life in place of the guilty... God's justice would be executed on Him...

- **2 Cor. 5:21** *He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

And the beauty is that what Jesus does isn't just about a people, it's about all people... **John 1:12 says** But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God

This is the beginning of the **reformation** that Jesus would bring in the midst of the brokenness...

And with it He would establish a new way of worship and a new way of living in light of who He is and what He's accomplished...

- **No longer would offerings be made for sin, lives would be surrendered because of salvation...**
- There would no longer be a lineage of priests, there would be the priesthood of all believers...
- There would no longer be a need for the temple because God would dwell with His people through the Holy Spirit!
- No longer would the people of God be bound by the OT law, they would be under the law of Christ...

This is the good news of the **gospel** that **Malachi** is pointing to... The faithfulness and the love of God that's put on display through Jesus...

## GOSPEL APPEAL...

- Family listen, you and I are just like Israel... Our hearts are desperately wicked above all else...
- We have rejected God... We deserved to be destroyed, but God made a way...
- **Example**: in the valley below the Dam...
- Do you see the faithful love of God?!?

Listen, God wants Israel to see His love through what He will do, would you see His love in what God has done through Jesus...

*Would you hear what God says in **verse 7**...*

**7** "Since the days of your ancestors, you have turned from my statutes; you have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of Armies.

Some of you need to sit in that today... **Return to me...**

- **Pastoral appeal...**

*Israel hears the sweet words of God's invitation, and listen to how they respond...*

Yet you ask, "How can we return?"

**8** "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me!"

"How do we rob you?" you ask.

"By not making the payments of the tenth and the contributions."

**Didn't see that one coming!!** *I mean of all the things God could have said here on how they could return to God and this is what God brings to the table when they ask Him how can they return!!*

**Why?** Well, I think Jesus helps us out on this one... In His Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 6:21** Jesus would say: **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What's God been after with Israel from the jump?!? **Their heart!**

- God's been after their heart...
- And he's showing them that He doesn't have their heart...

**Verse 9: 9** You are suffering under a curse, yet you—the whole nation—are still robbing me. **10** Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the Lord of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. **11** I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit,” says the Lord of Armies. **12** “Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of Armies.

God says **return to me**, give me your heart... Stop putting me off when it comes to your financial generosity...

What I want you to see here is that God doesn't say this because He needs their money...

- *If only they gave their money then I could do all this stuff...*
- *God has what He needs... It's obvious here that that's true!*

**God doesn't just want money out of their pockets, He wants to get idols out of their hearts...**

See, here's the thing about money... **Money is a root idol that feeds so many other idols in our lives...**

- It's the place we look for dependence, satisfaction, fulfillment, comfort, hope, security...

This is why I think that **Jesus** talks about money so much in the NT... He talks about it more than He talks about Heaven and Hell...

How we spend our money is a big deal because it shows where our hearts really are... This is what God's showing Israel...

And notice how strongly God addresses it... He says **you're robbing me...**

- **IOW:** You're stealing from me because you're not giving me what I own...

Here's the premise... **God owns everything...**

- **Ex. 19:5** *all the earth is mine...*
- **Lev. 20:26** *all Israel is mine...*
- **Lev. 25:23** *all the land is mine...*
- **Psalms 24:1** says the earth is the Lord and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants belong to the Lord.

Their call to give financially is a reminder that God owns everything, and that everything they have is a gift from Him... It's a surrender to His Lordship...

- **To not give was a rejection of who God is...**

The way that **Jesus** would drive this home in the **NT** is by showing us that we're just managers of God's stuff... We're **stewards** (Matt. 25)- **BTW that's one of our core values...**

- And He would show us that *we're not to store up treasures for ourselves on earth where they won't last, but to store up treasures in heaven* (Matt. 6)

And James would echo the realities laid out in the **OT** in **James 1:27** where he says that *every good and perfect gift comes from above...*

So **Jesus doesn't do away with giving; he further exposes how important giving is!** This is a Lordship thing!

Something else that we see here in **Malachi** is that God talks about giving a tithe...

- **Tithe means tenth- 10%**

The **tithe** was something that was consistent throughout, it was pre-law (Abraham); law (Moses); post-exile (here in Malachi)...<sup>3</sup>

Now, I know that Some of y'all are wondering if tithing is still applicable since we are in the new covenant. In other words... *If the law called for 10%, what does the gospel call for?*

<sup>3</sup> JD Greear, Article, *Some Questions I get about Tithing*. June 7, 2012.

**One pastor says it like this:** *If the people who saw God's generosity in the Exodus responded by giving 10%, how much more should people who have seen the cross [respond]?*<sup>4</sup>

What we see is that **tithing** in the **OT** was *connected* to the law, but it was also a principle for how God sustains ministry that stands *outside the law*...<sup>5</sup>

Jesus also affirms the principle of the *tithe* in **Matthew 23:23**...

But Jesus also affirms the **widow who gave 2 coins** (Luke 21:1-4) which was everything she had...

He also affirmed **Zacchaeus** (Luke 19:1-10) who gave away **50%** of all he had- saying that his generosity showed his heart was changed... Jesus told the **rich young ruler** (Luke 18:18-23) to sell **everything** and follow Jesus...

And what we see from the **NT** church in **Acts 2** and **Acts 4** is that they give substantially above **10%**...

**What we see is not grace for giving less, but grace for more!** If anything, the gospel raises our level of response when it comes to giving...

*Jesus showed this not just as it relates to money, but even as it related to the other **OT laws**...*

- *Jesus said that the **law** said do not murder, I say don't be angry with your brother or sister without cause...*
- *Jesus says the **law** said do not commit adultery, but I say don't even look at a woman with lust...*

So, no, we're not under the law, we are under grace, but a great place to **start grace-centered giving** is 10% - *It's a good starting line, but it's not the finish line*...

At the end of the day giving to God through the vehicle of the local church is about our heart... It's something God's called us to in order to keep our hearts centered on Him... Every time you give it's a reminder...

***We respond to the faithful redemption of God by giving our first fruits to God***

***Some of you need to start somewhere and watch what God does!***

This leads us to the last thing I want you to see from the text and that's the benefits and blessings that come through giving...

God says, *Test me in this!!* The only area God says to test Him... **See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.**

***This is not a get-rich scheme...***

***Motive matters... God's after your heart... Your motive is God, not getting, if getting is your motive you're missing what God's saying...***

*But when you give it to Him your heart, and it's reflected by your open hands of generosity, He will show up for you!*

**11** I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit," says the Lord of Armies. **12** "Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of Armies.

<sup>4</sup> JD Greear, Article, *Some Questions I get about Tithing*. June 7, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> John Piper, sermon. *Toward the tithe and beyond*. Sept. 10, 1995.

**Key:** Putting your dependence on God... Calling Him at His Word, trusting in His promises...

In giving you see the beauty of God and His faithfulness... this is what it's all about... Don't just hear money... hear who God is... God's after your heart...

***Generosity is a gift given to direct our eyes to God, putting our dependence on God, so that we can experience the blessing of God!***

## **Conclusion [Vamp]**

***We respond to the faithful redemption of God by giving our first fruits to God***

Some of you have never responded to the faithfulness of God in your salvation...

- ***Appeal to the non-Christian...***

***Appeal to the Christian...***

- Some of you need to return to the Lord...
- You need to see Him for who He is and be reoriented around what He's done...
- You've missed the goodness of God...
- You need to respond in your generosity...

You're missing out on the blessings of God in your life...

***3:10 Offering appeal***

***Pray...***