

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Malachi / *Jesus is Coming*

North Center | May 29, 2022

Pastor Jeremiah Knoop

I DARE YOU!

How many of you have ever **dared somebody** to do something?

- That was a popular activity in my childhood, and it was usually something really stupid.
 - I dare you eat that. Dare you to drink that. Dare you to climb that. Dare you to jump off that.¹

Here in Malachi (the final book in our OT canon) God gives His people a dare.

PRAY

CONTEXT:

- Malachi is the last OT prophet. Commentators think he probably lived approximately 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah² (which means he would have lived about 400 years before the coming of Jesus).
- Haggai & Zechariah were the prophets who were calling God's people to invest their lives into the worship of God. The **temple** (the center of their worship) had been destroyed by the Babylonian army, and now that God had set them free from Babylon and brought them back home to Jerusalem, He was calling them to invest their lives into the worship of God – instead of investing all of their resources into their own temporary comforts. And, through the preaching of Haggai & Zechariah, **it happened!** The Spirit of God stirred in the hearts of His people, and they were obedient to the word of God; and the temple was built.³

Now, approximately 100 years have come and gone since that time, and the fire in the hearts of God's people has vanished.

- Their **desire** to engage in the **worship** of God is gone.
- They are tired of **serving** God. They are tired of **obeying** God.
- And the thought of **worshipping** God sounds boring to them.
- And this rejection of God has bled over into every other part of their life.⁴

So...here in the final pages of the OT... God sends one final prophet to speak to the heart of His people. And the prophet's name is Malachi, "*My Messenger.*"

¹ **III.** I remember one time (I was 15 or 16) when my uncle dared me to strike up a conversation with this girl who was sitting on a bench by herself. If I remember right, I had to keep the conversation going to 5 minutes, and he would give me \$5. So, I ended that day with an extra \$5 in my pocket. 😊

² We don't have any dates in Malachi, but we have a number of clues that help us to place his book at the end of OT history (see the intro to Malachi in The New Open Bible Study Edition [NKJV], p. 1078–1079).

³ We know this because, here in Malachi, sacrifices were being offered in the Temple (Malachi 1:7–10; 3:8).

⁴ And it seems as if they were actually in the processes of **deconstructing** their **views** of God altogether.

OUTLINE:⁵

1. **THE DEPRAVITY** ... of PEOPLE:
2. **THE DARE** ... of GOD:
3. **THE DAY** ... of CHRIST:

1. **THE DEPRAVITY OF PEOPLE:** God shows us how desperately we need our hearts to be changed from the inside out.

Six chapters into the story of the Bible, and we hear God say that “**every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only wicked continually**” (*Gen 6:5*).

By the time we get to Malachi, thousands of years have come and gone since that time, and (*while God has continued to show Himself faithful to His people...⁶*), His people have only continued to show themselves as **faithless** to their God. Here at the end of OT history (*after all that God has done to show His love and power and goodness and pleasure toward His people*), their hearts are just as corrupt as they’ve ever been.

- Faithless in their marriages...⁷ Rebellious in their relationships...⁸ Calling evil good...⁹
- Playing with religion (when their hearts didn’t treasure God at all)...¹⁰

And we see all of this here in the book of Malachi.

*** Yesterday, I was listening to a clip from one of the most famous pastors in America (certainly one of the richest pastors in America¹¹). His name is **Joel Osteen**, and he was saying that “*Deep down, 99.9% of people are good people.*” ***

- I thought, where do you find that in the Bible, Joel???
- I mention him by name because there is a really good chance that some of you have one or two of his books on your bookshelf, and one of my God-given responsibilities as a pastor shepherd is to **guard the sheep** from false teachers.¹²
- Church, I don’t know where Joel grabbed that statistic (*about 99.9% of people being good*), but it wasn’t from the Bible. In fact, it’s absolutely contrary to the teaching of the Bible.¹³

From the time of Adam to the time of Malachi (*approximately 4,000 years*), the history of God’s people continued to show that “*the heart is desperately wicked,*”¹⁴ and nothing could change that.

⁵ A four-part outline would close with **THE DESTINATION** of GLORY (Mal 1:11).

⁶ “All my life you have been faithful” (*Goodness of God*).

⁷ Malachi 2:10–16. Marriage was very near the heart of God at the beginning and at the end of OT history. Truly, one way to humbly assess a person’s relationship with Jesus is to look at how they treat their spouse.

⁸ Malachi 2:8, 11. Family relationships is near the heart of God at the beginning & at the end (e.g., **Mal 4:6**).

⁹ Malachi 2:17. The difference between good & evil is at the beginning and end of OT history (**Gen 2:8–9**).

¹⁰ Malachi 1:10, 13–14.

¹¹ Joel Osteen has a net worth of \$40 Million.

¹² Matthew 5:17; 16:6; Acts 20:28–29; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Tim 1:19–20.

¹³ Romans 3:9–20; 7:18; Psalm 14:1–3.

¹⁴ Jeremiah 17:9.

- No miraculous sign...no rescue...no vision...no command...no promise of blessing...or threat of cursing was enough to change the heart of God's people.¹⁵
- If we have learned anything from our journey through the OT, it's that we are in desperate need of God & of His Spirit & of His grace... and we are in desperate need of a Savior. And this **TOTAL DEPRAVITY** is the last thing we see here in the OT...

The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by **Malachi**.

"I have loved you," says the Lord.

Yet you say, "In what way have You loved us?"...

~ *Malachi 1:1-2*

These two verses really sum up the entire book.

- God **declares** His love.
- And the people **question** His love.
 - *Oh how I have loved you.*
 - *How have you loved us?*

I remember my hearing **my first-grade teacher** say that "there is no such thing as a stupid question."

- Well, *that* (1:2) was a stupid question.

"In what way have You loved us?"

How do you even begin to answer a question like that?

HOW HAVE I LOVED YOU???

- I gave you life. I made you in My image.
- I chose you as My special people... Out of all the peoples of the earth, I chose you.
- I rescued you from Egypt. I cared for you in the wilderness.
- I gave you My Word.
- I made glorious promises to you, and I've kept every single one of them.
- I fought your battles.
- I disciplined you as a loving father disciplines his children when their hearts are turned toward their own destruction.
- I set you free from Babylon. I restored your life back in the land.
- I have performed 10 billion miracles on your behalf...

And you have the audacity to look at Me and say, "*How have you loved us?*"

- God answers them by talking about his special relationship with Jacob as opposed to His relationship with Esau.
- The apostle Paul points to this verse when he writes his letter to the **Romans**, and then he uses it to show the sovereignty of God in choosing His people. It's one of the most glorious doctrines in the entire Bible, but since it's a major theme in the book of Romans, we will look at it in a more depth when we get to that book.
- Essentially, God answers their question by saying, "I loved you before you were born. When there was no reason on earth to love you, I loved you anyway" (1:2-3).

¹⁵ The external circumstances (*land restored; temple rebuilt*) were not enough to change their heart condition.

1. So, the **first** thing we see about their hearts is that they are blind to the love of God.¹⁶
2. The **second** thing we see is that they have despised the worship of God.

A son honors his father, and a servant his master.
If then I am the Father, where is My honor?
And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?
Says the Lord of hosts to you priests who despise My name.
Yet you say, "In what way have we despised Your name?"
~ *Malachi 1:6*

"How have we despised Your name?"

- That's the second stupid question they've asked in this chapter!

They know exactly how they have despised His name?¹⁷

They've been giving God the leftovers of their lives for years – while keeping all the best things for themselves.¹⁸

In the OT, one of the main part of their worship was sacrificing an animal (see: **Leviticus**). These sacrificial animals were a temporary sacrifice for sin and a picture of the coming Messiah, and so they were supposed to be **perfect** – "*a male without blemish.*"¹⁹ They were supposed to offer God the best they had.²⁰

¹⁶ Snubbed, disdained, disregarded, forgotten...

¹⁷ If you are a parent, you understand what's happening here.

¹⁸ When it came to their relationship with God (*their energy, their time, their resources, their attitude...*) they spent everything on themselves first, and then they gave God whatever scraps they had left over. This heart condition was probably **most visible** in the sacrifices that they brought to the Lord... and in their offerings. Before Jesus came and paid the price of our sin (once and for all time), God had instructed His people to offer regular **animal sacrifices** as a temporary covering for their sins (see: Lev 4:25; 5:10).

One of the most powerful stories of animal sacrifices in the OT is the night of **the Passover** in Egypt (see: Exodus 12). As the final plague against the Egyptians, God was going to kill the firstborn son of every family in Egypt. The only way the firstborn would be spared is if the family took a lamb (a *spotless* lamb), killed it, and spread its blood over the doorpost of the home. This way, when the Angel of Death came through the land, he would see the blood on the doorpost and know that death had already come upon that home; and so He would pass over it, and the firstborn son would be spared. The lamb was sacrificed so that the son could live.

Generally-speaking, that was the picture of animal sacrifice throughout the entire OT. All of God's children were sinners (Rom 3:23), and the wages of their sin was death (6:23). But God made a way for His sinful people to be saved from death – through sacrificing a spotless animal in their place (See: Hebrews 9:22). There are probably a number of reasons why God wanted their sacrifices to be as spotless as possible, but **ultimately**, these animal sacrifices were looking forward to the day when "*the Lamb of God*" would come to "*take away the sin of the world*" (**John 1:29**). They were a picture of what Jesus was going to do by giving up His life on the cross as the ultimate and everlasting payment for our sins.

¹⁹ Read about this in detail in the book of **Leviticus** (e.g., chapter 1; 22:22).

²⁰ **Illustration:** I spent every dime I had in purchasing Liz's engagement ring. Now, it was hardly the most expensive ring on the market. There are many jewelry stores that probably don't even have a ring as cheap as the one I purchased, but that's not the point. The point is that I spent everything I had to purchase her ring because it was a symbol of my love for her, and I wanted my ring to communicate that I loved her with everything I had.

God was going to offer the greatest sacrifice in the world to cover our sins and restore our relationship with Him (i.e., John 3:16). And (*since the animal sacrifices in the OT were pointing forward to that reality*) God commanded them to offer **THE BEST** of their animals.

But here at the end of OT history, instead of offering their best to God, they were spitting in God's face by offering THE WORST of the animals in their flocks & herds.

Let's keep reading...

You offer defiled food on My altar.

But you say,

"In what way have we defiled You?"

By saying, *"The table of the Lord is contemptible."*

"And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil?

And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?"

Offer it then to your governor!

Would he accept you favorably?"

Says the Lord of hosts.

~ Malachi 1:7-8

They were giving God their leftovers.

- Instead of offering God the best of their flocks, they were offering Him the worst of their flocks. *The blind animals. The lame animals.*
- Their attitude was something like... *"I'm keeping the best animals for myself because they bring in more money, but since I'm supposed to offering something to God, I'll give Him the old sick one."*

Not only were they doing this with their sacrifices, but they were also doing this with their **tithes & offerings**.

Will a man rob God?

Yet you have robbed Me!

But you say,

"In what way have we robbed You?"

In tithes and offerings.

You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me,

Even this whole nation.

~ Malachi 3:8-9

After God rescued His people from Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai where He taught them how they were to worship Him. And **the last thing** that taught them about worship (*in Leviticus*) was how they were to worship Him **with their resources** (money, crops, livestock...).

And all the tithes of the land,

[whatever it is]...

It is **holy** [set apart] to the LORD.

~ Leviticus 27:30

And as we read through the OT law, we see that there were actually several different tithes that God's people were required to give to the work of the ministry.²¹

- Everything they had was from God, and so (as an act of worship & obedience) God's people were commanded to give **AT LEAST TEN PERCENT** of their income back to God – to be used in the work of the ministry.²²

And...they...weren't.

- And they were keeping their tithes & offerings (which belonged to God) for themselves.
- They were spending the best of their lives on themselves and giving God whatever scraps they had left over.

It might be easy for us to shake our heads at them...if we didn't do the same thing all the time.

- How much time do you spend looking at your **phone** on an average day? *Now compare that to how much time you spend looking at your **Bible** on an average day.*
- How much time do you spend investing into your **hobbies** or your **leisure activities** each week? *Now, compare that to how much time you spend **servicing** your church family?*
- How much time do you spend interacting on **social media**? *Now, compare that to how much time you spend interacting with your Father in **prayer**.*
- How much time do you spend building up your **financial security**? *Now, compare that to how much time you spend building up the **Kingdom of God**.*

This isn't to say that your **phone** is bad or that your **hobbies** are bad or that **social media** is bad or that **financial security** is bad (*necessarily*); it's to say that so many of us give the best of ourselves to all of these things, and then we turn and give God whatever we have left.

You also say, *Oh, what a weariness!* And you sneer at it,

Says the Lord of hosts.

And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;

Thus you bring an offering!

Should I accept this from your hand?

Says the Lord.

But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male,

And makes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished –

For I am a great King.

Says the Lord of hosts,

And My name is to be feared among the nations.

~ *Malachi 1:13–14*

PAUSE FOR A MOMENT & ASK GOD TO **EXPOSE YOUR HEART** IN HIS PRESENCE:

- If people were to examine your life (*your financial priorities; your calendar; your dreams; your cell phone usage; your internet history...*) ...

²¹ Leviticus 27:30–32; Deuteronomy 12:17–19; 14:28–29.

²² And there is reason to think that this practice of tithing was also an expected practice for God's people in the NT church (e.g., Matt 23:23).

- Would they conclude that God is your great King? Would they conclude that your heart is in love with your God, or would they conclude that your heart is in love with this world, and that you are the king of your life?
- In what areas of your life are you giving God second best? Or perhaps an even better question is: In what areas of your life are you giving God last place?

God spends the rest of this book **EXPOSING** the depravity of their hearts and (one last time) calling them to turn their hearts back to Him.

2. **THE DARE of GOD:** God **DARES** them to give Him the best of their lives. And He follows that dare with a **PROMISE:** that, no matter how much they give to God, they will never be able to outgive Him.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house,
 And PROVE (test, try) ME now in this,
 Says the Lord of hosts,
 If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
 And pour out for you such blessing
 that there will not be room enough to receive it.²³
 ~ Malachi 3:10

God is daring His people to give the first & best of their lives to Him & then see what God does!

- Prove Me. Try Me. Give Me the first and the best of your lives, and then see what happens!

Jesus said almost the exact same thing in the NT...²⁴

Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,
 And all these things shall be added to you.
 ~ Matthew 6:33

It really is something like a dare because it goes against all our natural instincts.

- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I give God the first part of my paycheck, I might not have enough left over to meet all my needs.
- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I get up early in the morning to spend time with God, that I'll be too tired for everything else that I have going on the rest of the day.
- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I live for God while I'm young, I will miss out on all the fun the people have in their early years.
- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I give my Sunday for the Lord's church and for rest...then I might not have enough time to get all of my house projects done.
- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I commit to serving the church in a particular ministry, that I might not have enough time for all my hobbies.
- *My natural instincts tell me* that if I spend my retirement as a missionary, that I will miss out on watching my grandkids growing up...or that it might be too stressful on my health, and I could die sooner.

²³ This sounds similar to the story of the prophet Elisha and the widow (2 Kings 4:1-7).

²⁴ The Apostle Paul also says something similar in his letter to the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 9:6).

I don't know precisely what God is calling you to do for His kingdom and for His glory and for the spread of His gospel across the globe...

And **I don't know precisely** what your natural instincts are...

But **I know** that God is daring you...

- To trust Him
- To obey Him
- To give Him the best of your life (of your time – energy – finances – gifts – years)

And **I know** that God has promised to provide all that you need and “to pour out such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it!”

It's the dare & the promise of a lifetime.²⁵

NOTE:

Now, we need to be careful here, because there are many who would see a dare and a promise like this and think that they have uncovered the secret formula for health, wealth, and success.

- They think, “*If I just live for God, then He'll make me & my family rich & healthy.*”²⁶
- But (*think about that for a moment*) is that really what God is saying: “If you give Me your best, then I will make you rich and healthy and successful”??????
- **Q.** What would that make God? **A.** It would make God a means to an end.
 - *I'm living for God *so that* He will give me money. He will make me healthy...*
 - In that way of thinking, riches are what you really want & God is how you get it.

But God is not a means to an end.²⁷ God **is** the end.²⁸

²⁵ Very few people have ever taken God up on this dare. Oh, they might dip their toe in the water once or twice, but they've never jumped off the cliff of their own security and trusted God with everything they have: like **Abraham** or like **David**. And so few people have ever experienced the depths of God's promise to Malachi.

Abraham gave up everything he had as an offering of worship to His God, and the blessings he received were more numerous than the sand of the shore and the stars in the sky (i.e., Gen 22:17; 26:4). **David** gave God the first & the best of his life, and at the end of his life (when he was an old man) he could say: “I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (**Psalm 37:25**). I think of **George Müller** caring for over 10,000 orphans and seeing God provide millions and millions of dollars for the work of the various ministries to which God had called him.

²⁶ This is known as “**the health & wealth gospel**” or “**the prosperity gospel**”, and there are far too many professing Christians who believe it – (in part) because talented preachers (e.g., Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn) do such a good job selling it. The idea is that if we just give a little more money to God (by way of the preacher), then God will make their lives blissfully prosperous. The “gospel” (they say) is that God wants to you to experience maximum pleasure in the things of this world. God wants to make you successful. God wants to make you healthy. God wants to make you rich. In one of his books, **Joel Osteen** writes, “*God wants to increase you financially*” (Your Best Life Now, p. 5).

²⁷ Isaiah 45:5.

²⁸ Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:8.

God is the End.

- He is our life. He is our hope. He is our peace. He is our righteousness. He is our great reward. He is the One who sees us. He is the One who fashioned you in your mother's womb. He is the One who gives power to the weak. He is the One who holds all of your tears and who dances all around you with songs of delight. He is the source of wisdom. In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- And so the greatest blessing that God could ever give to you is more of Himself.

The overflowing blessing that God means to pour into your life is more of Himself – which is ultimately more of Christ.²⁹

LESSON: the more you will trust God with your life...the more you taste & see the overflowing goodness of God in Christ Jesus.

And that brings us to the third part of the message...

- God only gives “good gifts” to His children,³⁰ and **THE GREATEST GIFT** that God could ever give was His only begotten Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.³¹

And Malachi sees Him coming!

He looks 400 years into the future, and he sees **the day of Christ – the coming of Christ**.

3. **THE DAY OF JESUS:**

**Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.
And the LORD, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight! Behold, **He is coming**,
Says the Lord of hosts.
~ *Malachi 3:1***

When we turn to the NT (*beginning next week*) we will see that this prophesy was fulfilled in John the Baptist & in Jesus the Christ.

- **John the Baptist** was the messenger of God who prepared the way for Jesus.³²
- And **Jesus Christ** is the Lord, the Messenger of the covenant.

Malachi says...

The Lord is going to come to His temple,
and He will teach us & show us what it looks like for God to be **a covenant-keeping God**.

- To a people who were faithless in their marriage covenants,
 - Jesus is coming to show us what it looks like for God to keep His covenant with His bride.³³

²⁹ John 5:39; 10:30–39; 14:9; 17:1.

³⁰ Matthew 7:11; James 1:17.

³¹ John 3:16.

³² Mark 1:2–4 (cf. Isaiah 40:3–5; Luke 1:17; 7:27); Matt 11:13–14.

³³ Throughout both the OT and the NT, God's people are often referred to as His wife, and Jesus came to give His life for His bride.

- To a people who were questioning God's love for them,
 - Jesus was coming to show them just how radically they are loved by God.
- To a people who were asking, "where is the God of justice" (2:17),
 - Jesus coming as the answer to their question.
 - **Q.** Where is the God of justice?
 - **A.** He is hanging on a tree for your sin.
- To a people who were giving God the worst of their sacrifices as a temporary covering for their sin,
 - Jesus is coming as the perfect, spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.
- To a people who were bored with worship and just going through the motions in their relationship with God,
 - Jesus is coming to show us what it looks like for God to be the treasure of your heart.
- To a people who were spending all of their God-given resources on themselves,
 - Jesus is coming to show us what it looks like to spend your life on God.