

Malachi Lesson 6: Malachi 3:6-12

Lecture

- In her commentary on Malachi, Joyce Baldwin notes that Malachi 3:6 forms a close connection between the previous 4th disputation and the 5th disputation, in which God charges the people for robbing him by not giving their tithes and offerings.
- In the 4th disputation, the people challenged God by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”
 - God answered them by showing how he would send the Lord the people were expecting to judge the Israelites for their many sins.
 - God has always been a God of justice and will continue to be a God of justice, in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, to whom God has granted all judgment. (John 5:22)
- In the 5th disputation, God tells the people of Judah that he does not change and neither do they.
 - The New English Bible gives this translation of Malachi 3:6:
 - I am the Lord, unchanging; and you, too, have not ceased to be the sons of Jacob.
 - The New International translation is:
 - I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.
 - To a certain extent, this is a tongue in cheek statement.
 - The descendants of Jacob continue to sin, yet God, who is merciful to forgive them, has not fully destroyed them, because he is a covenant keeping God.
 - God has promised to always keep a remnant of his people. (Jeremiah 23:3; Zechariah 10:6)

- In verses 8 to 10, God tells the people that they are robbing him by failing to bring their full tithes to the Temple and failing to make offerings as well.
 - A tithe represented 10% of one's income or increase and it was given throughout the year.
 - As you read in your lesson from Leviticus 27:30, a tenth of all produce from the land was to be set aside as holy to the Lord.
 - The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; Psalm 24:1
 - Numbers 18:25 states that this tithe was for the Levites as part of their inheritance, since they owned no land.
 - The Levites, in turn, gave 1/10 of their tithe to the priests. The Levites and their households were entitled to eat the remaining 9/10 as their wages for their work in the Temple. The priests could eat the tithe given to them by the Levites for their work as priests.
 - The Levites' duties including assisting the priests, ensuring that no unauthorized people approached the sacred areas, leading song and music during worship services, maintaining the Temple furnishings and storerooms, and instructing the people in God's laws.
 - During the interval when Nehemiah had returned to Susa (which is the period in which Malachi prophesied), the people were failing altogether to bring their tithes into the Temple (Nehemiah 13: 10).
 - Therefore, the Levites and the musicians had moved back to their fields to grow crops and raise animals for their food. Per Numbers 35:1-3, the Levites had towns to live in which were a part of the land given to the other 11 tribes. They were also granted pasturelands outside of these towns for their cattle and other animals.
 - Because the Levites and musicians were not at the Temple, their Temple duties had been neglected.
 - Nehemiah recalled the Levites and musicians to their duties. Nehemiah appointed more trustworthy officials to supervise the storerooms and to distribute the tithes and first fruits to their fellow Levites.

- Nehemiah rebuked the officials who had not been distributing food to the Levites and ensured that the people brought their tithes to the Temple.
 - How is failing to bring tithes to God robbery? Very simply, the tithe belongs to God. Keeping something from the owner is robbery.
 - Because God commanded the tithe, failing to deliver it was disobedience and broke God's covenant.
 - But why does God say he is being robbed when the people failed to bring offerings to his Temple?
 - Remember that, except for the burnt offering, the priests were entitled to eat portions of the other offerings. This is how they and their households were fed, as they also, as Levites, owned no land.
- In verse 10, God says the following:
 - 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 there will not be room enough to store it.
 - We should look carefully at what is meant and not meant by this verse.
 - This verse does not mean that individual tithers will become prosperous if they tithe.
 - It does not give permission for partial tithing.
 - God himself is authorizing people to test his generosity.
 - The promised blessings are meant to be communal, not individual.
- In verse 11, God says that he will prevent the Judeans' crops from being devoured by pests and wilted by drought.
 - The nations around Judah will call its land delightful and blessed, because of the abundance of its crops.

- He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. Isaiah 30:23
- Returning to verse 7b, “Return to me and I will return to you,” God will lift the curse he has placed on the nation (Malachi 3:9).
 - When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, ² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you Deuteronomy 30:1-3
 - Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, ¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 30:9-10

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God, who is enthroned from of old, who does not change—he will hear them and humble them, because they have no fear of God. Psalms 55:19

1. Which attribute of God does God state in Malachi 3:6a?
God is immutable (unchanging).
2. Malachi 3:6b says, “So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.” Why does God state this? Give some scriptural references to back up your answer.
 - Because God does not change, he has kept his promises not to destroy his covenant people. God has always protected a remnant of his covenant people, despite their repeated sins against Him.
 - I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions. Genesis 26:4-5
 - Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. 2 Samuel 7:16
 - I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. Jeremiah 23:3
 - I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile. Jeremiah 29:14
 - I will strengthen Judah and save the tribes of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. Zechariah 10:6
3. How have the people turned away from God?
Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Malachi 3:7

4. Can you think of some specific examples?
 - The kings of the northern kingdom of Israel introduced Baal worship and led the people of Israel into idol worship.
 - Offering improper sacrifices to God, as pointed out by Malachi in Malachi 1
 - Adultery; perjury; sorcery; mistreating widows, orphans, and foreigners (Malachi 3)
5. What is the rhetorical question Malachi asks for the people in Malachi 3:7c?
“But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ Malachi 3:7
6. What is God’s response and what do the people reply to God’s statements?
“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ Malachi 3:8
7. Specifically, how are the people robbing God?
“In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse —your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Malachi 3:8-10
8. What has God done as a result?
God has cursed them. God has sent pests to devour their crops, and their vines wilted before the fruit could ripen.
9. Read Nehemiah 13:10, Leviticus 27:30, and Numbers 18: 25-26, 30-31. How do these verses add context?
 - I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to them, and that all the Levites and musicians responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields Nehemiah 13:10
 - A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. Leviticus 27:30
 - The LORD said to Moses, ²⁶ “Speak to the Levites and say to them: ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD’s offering. Numbers 18:25-26

- Say to the Levites: ‘When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress.’³¹ You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the tent of meeting. Numbers 18:30-31

10. In what ways do we rob God today?

- We do not tithe.
- We do not obey God.
- We do not worship God.
- We do not treat our bodies as a temple.
- Preachers distort God’s Word.

11. What does God instruct the people to do in Malachi 3:10a?

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Malachi 3:10

12. What is the difference between a tithe and an offering?

- A tithe is 1/10 of our income, off the top.
- An offering is a freely given gift.

13. What did Nehemiah enforce in Nehemiah 13:12?

All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil into the storerooms. Nehemiah 13:12

14. What will be the results of following God’s instruction from Malachi 3:10a?

see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Malachi 3:10

15. In Malachi 3:10b, God invites the people to test him. Yet, in Deuteronomy 6:16, God tells the people not to test him. What is the difference?

- Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah. Deuteronomy 6:16

- The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?” ³ But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?” ⁴ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” Exodus 17:1-7
- The difference in the 2 situations is that God is inviting his covenant people to test his promise that he will produce abundance from their tithes. In the wilderness, the people were testing God’s ability to provide them water when he had already demonstrated his ability to sustain them in the wilderness. God does not like to be directly challenged by a sinful people.

16. What else will God do, according to Malachi 3:11?

I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 3:11

17. Putting together Malachi 3:11 with Malachi 3:9, what curse had God placed upon Judah?

No rain; pests; crop failure

18. What will be the results?

“Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 3:12

19. According to Ezekiel 22:4c-5, what have the nations been thinking about Judah?

Therefore I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughingstock to all the countries. ⁵ Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, you infamous city, full of turmoil. Ezekiel 22:4-5

20. What did Jesus have to say about tithes in Matthew 23:23-24?

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Matthew 23:23-24

21. What did Paul say about giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 and how does it expand upon God's commandment in Malachi?

- Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ **Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ **You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.** ¹² This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others 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. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- God is commanding the tithes in Malachi. Paul is encouraging believers to give offerings in addition to tithes. Furthermore, Paul is encouraging believers to be generous with their offerings.

Malachi Lesson 6

Malachi 3:6-12

Malachi 3:6

- Joyce Baldwin: This Verse Forms a Close Connection Between the 4th and 5th Disputations
- In the 4th Disputation, the People Asked, “Where Is the God of Justice?”
 - God Answered Them by Showing How He Would Send the Lord the People Were Expecting to Judge Israel
 - God Has Always Been a God of Justice and Will Continue to Be a God of Justice, in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ, to Whom God Has Granted All Judgment (John 5:22)

The 5th Disputation

- God Tells Judah That He Does Not Change and Neither Do They
 - NEB: "I Am the Lord, Unchanging; and You, Too, Have Not Ceased to Be the Sons of Jacob."
 - NIV: "I the Lord Do Not Change. So You, the Descendants of Jacob, Are Not Destroyed."
 - A Tongue in Cheek Statement
 - The Descendants of Jacob Continue to Sin, but God, Who is Merciful to Forgive, Has Not Destroyed Them
 - God Is a Covenant Keeping God
 - God Has Promised to Always Keep a Remnant of His People (Jeremiah 23:3; Zechariah 10:6)

Malachi 3:8-10

- The People Are Robbing God by Failing to Bring Their Tithes and Offerings to the Temple
 - A Tithe = 10% of One's Income or Increase; Given Throughout the Year
 - Per Leviticus 27:30, 1/10 of All Produce from the Land Was Set Aside as Holy to the Lord
 - Psalm 24:1
 - The Tithe Was the Levites' Inheritance (Numbers 18:25)
 - The Levites Gave 1/10 of Their Tithes to the Priests
 - The Levites Could Eat the Remaining 9/10 as Their Wages for Their Temple Work
 - The Priests Could Eat Their Tithe

Malachi 3:8-10

- The Levites' Duties:

- Assisting the Priests
- Ensuring that No Unauthorized People Approached the Sacred Areas
- Leading Song and Music During Worship Services
- Maintaining the Temple Furnishings and Storerooms
- Instructing the People in God's Laws

Nehemiah and Tithes

- After Nehemiah Had Returned to Susa (the Period in Which Malachi Prophesied), the People Failed Altogether to Bring Their Tithes to the Temple (Nehemiah 13:10)
- The Levites Moved Back to Their Fields to Grow Crops and Raise Animals for Food
- Numbers 35:1-3 Gave the Levites Towns to Live in
- They Were Also Granted Pasturelands Outside of These Towns
- Because the Levites Were Not at the Temple, Their Temple Duties Had Been Neglected
- Nehemiah Recalled the Levites and Musicians to Their Duties
- Nehemiah Appointed More Trustworthy Officials to Supervise the Storerooms and Distribute the Tithes and First Fruits to Their Fellow Levites
- Nehemiah Rebuked the Officials Who Had Not Been Distributing Food to the Levites and Ensured the People Brought Their Tithes to the Temple

Robbing God

- How is Failing to Bring Tithes to God Robbery?
 - The Tithe Belongs to God
 - Keeping Something from the Owner is Robber
 - Because God Commanded the Tithe, Failing to Deliver It Was Disobedience and Broke God's Covenant
- Why Is Failing to Bring Offerings Robbing God?
 - Except for the Burnt Offering, the Priests Were Entitled to Eat Portions of the Other Offerings; This Is How They and Their Households Were Fed
 - The Priests, as Levites, Owned No Land

Malachi 3:10

- Look Carefully at What This Verse Does and Does Not Mean:
 - It Does Not Mean Individual Tithes Will Become Prosperous if They Tithe
 - It Does Not Give Permission for Partial Tithing
 - God Himself is Authorizing People to Test His Generosity
 - The Promised Blessings Are Meant to Be Communal, Not Individual

Malachi 3:11

- God Will Prevent the Judeans' Crops from Being Devoured by Pests and Wilted by Drought
 - The Nations Around Judah Will Call Its Land Delightful and Blessed, Due to the Abundance of Its Crops
 - Isaiah 30:23

Malachi 3:7b

- “Return to Me and I Will Return to You”
- God Will Lift the Curse He Has Placed on the Nation (Malachi 3:9)
 - Deuteronomy 30:1-3
 - Deuteronomy 30:9-10