

B.C.: BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Malachi: A Sign of Love

12-26-21

Malachi 1:1-2 - An oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. ² "I have loved you," says the Lord. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'"

Malachi 3:1 - "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

- **400 years, nothing from God. No more prophets. No more words from the Lord.**

Luke 1:11-12 - Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

Luke 1:28-32 - The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God." ³¹ You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

Luke 3:16 - John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

1. If you ever doubt you are loved, just _____ to the cradle.

Matthew 1:21 - "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

- Shalom (shaw-lome'): rest, tranquility, wholeness, completeness.

Matthew 1:23 - "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him 'Immanuel'—which means, "God with us."

- **Jesus in the cradle means that God loves us enough to be with us in this sin-soaked world.**

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

2. So if you still doubt he loves you this Christmas, look beyond the cradle to the _____.

Three ways to respond:

1. _____ back to Jesus.
2. _____ spiritually with Jesus.

John 4:23 - Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That's the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. MSG

- Sign up to serve.
- Commit to Next Steps in February.
- Find or start a community group in January.

3. _____ Jesus with others.