

**A PERSONAL
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

MALACHI

SHARON CRAVENS

Mal. 1:1 The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

The last book of the Old Testament consists of the message of the prophet Malachi, presumably the last prophet until John the Baptist. After this message from YHWH begins a period of about 400 years of silence between God and His people. Malachi's name comes from a root that means "messenger." His message is to the twelve tribes of Israel, the descendants of Jacob.

Mal. 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

Mal. 1:3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

The message starts in the form of a dialogue between YHWH and the people of Israel. It begins with a declaration of God's love for Israel. The people's response is basically, "How can we know this?" YHWH makes the point that Jacob was not an only son; his brother Esau was in fact the firstborn, yet God had a favorite—Jacob, from whom they were descended.

This was really an arrogant reply on the part of the people. Their history was full of God's miraculous provision for them. They seemed to have the attitude that is so prevalent today—But what have you done for me lately? Even that shows that they didn't appreciate the many blessings they enjoyed in life solely because of His provision.

The first statement in verse 3 used to be a problem to me, until I really studied the story of Jacob and his relationship to Leah and Rebekah.

Gen. 29:30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Gen. 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

The same Hebrew word for *hated* is used in both Malachi and Genesis. I finally realized that the scripture clarified itself—Jacob loved Rachel **more** than Leah (v30). Jacob obviously didn't hate Leah; he had six sons with her. Rachel, however, was his favorite. This is the same way God looked at Jacob and Esau; Jacob was his favorite. Personally, I can't help but connect this choice with God's omniscience; He knew which one would have a heart of flesh and which would have a heart of stone.

Esau was prideful and selfish and made some terrible choices, but by the time Jacob returns home, Esau has become quite successful. He does leave his father's land to go to Edom when Jacob returns, and chapter 39 of Genesis details his descendants. Sadly, his progeny followed in his footsteps and established themselves in pride against the children of Israel and became their enemies, and God did indeed lay their land waste in judgment.

Mal. 1:4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

In my research I found that Edom was taken captive by Babylon just as Israel had been. God had provided for His people to return home and begin rebuilding their nation. Edom, however, was not going to be given that privilege. No matter how strongly they declared their intent or how hard they tried to reestablish their nation to its former glory, they would not succeed. Why? Because God was going to ensure that they didn't. They were being judged for their treatment of Israel and, in turn, their insolence before God.

Mal. 1:5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

God declares that time will reveal that God's blessing is still on Israel; He hasn't changed His mind regarding Esau and Jacob.

Mal. 1:6 A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I be a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

The Lord now has the prophet give the people an illustration of the truth He is presenting. It is generally accepted that a son honors his father and a servant honors his master. YHWH had been clearly identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God of Israel. He had clearly provided for them as lovingly and far more miraculously than any human father could. He had also clearly established rules for His family and consequences for refusing to abide by those rules.

Deut. 10:20 Thou shalt **fear** the LORD thy God; him shalt thou **serve**, and to him shalt thou **cleave**, and swear by his name.

Deut. 11:26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

Deut. 11:27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

Deut. 11:28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

The people of Israel had surely not honored God as a father deserves, neither had they obeyed Him as their Lord. So the Lord declares that the priests have despised/dishonored His name. He also anticipates their response: "How have we dishonored Your name?"

Mal. 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible.

Mal. 1:8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

The Lord answers that their offerings are unacceptable. Even the bread is polluted because it is offered on a polluted altar. The altar is polluted because they have chosen to give God that which is imperfect. The book of Leviticus is very clear about acceptable and unacceptable offerings, and Moses had clearly declared this truth in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 15:21 And if there be *any* blemish therein, *as if it be* lame, or blind, or *have* any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.

The people were arrogantly ignoring God's instructions and bringing animals to offer that were blind, lame, and sick. God's point, try giving that kind of gift to your governor and see if he likes it and respects you for it.

Mal. 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

The Lord is basically saying, "Consider your actions. Do you think those kinds of offerings are going to result in a favorable response to your prayers from Me?"

Mal. 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

I think the NLT translation is much clearer:

"I wish that someone among you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not at all pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will not accept your offerings.

Sad to say, but there was not even one priest who was willing to declare the truth of God's instructions or take action to prevent the people from dishonoring Him by their actions. God is declaring that He would rather the temple be closed than have it functioning with such utter disregard of His honor.

I can't help but make application to the churches of today that function with a mentality of being very careful not to make people uncomfortable by preaching against sin. If the truth is not declared, how will people ever know they need a Savior, or how will they ever mature spiritually. We are to present the truth in love, but we are to speak the truth for the benefit of the saints. Paul wrote about this very subject.

Eph. 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Eph. 4:12 **For the perfecting of the saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph. 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Eph. 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Eph. 4:15 **But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:**

Eph. 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Mal. 1:11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be

offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

At this point, the message from the Lord makes reference to the far future. God is declaring that there is coming a day that His name will be great among the Gentiles from east (the rising of the sun) to west (unto the going down of the same). He then says that in **every place** *incense* (which is a reference to *sacrifice* in the Hebrew) will be offered to His name. And these offerings will be pure; in other words, they will honor God through obedience from pure motives. This has to be referring to the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus reigns as King for 1000 years on planet earth before sin and death are destroyed once for all. At that time God's name will be great among all the nations.

Mal. 1:12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

Mal. 1:13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

Mal. 1:14 But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

The prophet is declaring God's message that their actions are a reflection of their heart toward God. If our desire is to honor God, we will obey Him and give Him of our best. By bringing their undesirable and unwanted possessions to sacrifice to God, they were basically showing that they had no intention of honoring God; they were performing a ritual. Not only were they just going through the motions, they were weary of doing even that. Just as stated in the verses in Deuteronomy 11 above, the Lord is pronouncing a curse on those who would dishonor Him by an empty show of obedience with no regard for what has been declared acceptable by Him.

I think even the heathen nations that did not worship YHWH had a healthy fear of Him. This last phrase in verse 14 makes me think of the words of Rahab when she hid the spies.

Josh. 2:9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

Josh. 2:10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

Josh. 2:11 And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Though they did not worship God, they knew to fear Him through the knowledge of His mighty acts on behalf of Israel. I think at this time that fear was a result of knowing how He had acted in accordance to His word in bringing

judgment upon His own people and in again planting them once again in Israel to make a new start.