

Answers

Introduction

1. An oracle is translated from *massah* (מַסָּה), meaning an *utterance, oracle* or *burden*. A *burden* or *oracle* is a prophecy of threatening character. This message from YAHWEH is meant to lay heavily on the prophet's heart
2. The term Word of the LORD is used. The message is thus not the prophet's own words, but the word of God. In all the prophets, a phrase such as, 'The word of the LORD came to the prophet...' is common. God spoke through the prophets as his special messengers.
3. Although it mentions 'to Israel', this prophecy was particularly directed at Judah (Malachi 2:11). When the northern kingdom of Israel ceased to exist in 722 BC, the southern kingdom of Judah was sometimes called Israel, as Judah came to represent the whole of Israel. When we read of the post-exilic prophets speaking to Israel, we have to discern whether they mean all the tribes or just Judah.
4. That of covenant recall, i.e. to call the nation back to the Word of God. We see this in Malachi 4:4, where Malachi reminds the Jews, "Remember Moses..."

Reflection & Application

1. Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.
2. 2 Peter 1:21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Study 1. The Love of the LORD

Malachi 1:2-5

1. 1:2 "I have loved you," says the LORD.
Something was very tender and touching, despite their adultery with other gods. God spoke to Israel with the softest tenderness. "I have loved you." Like the father in the prodigal son to the older brother. All of their history pointed to this love.
Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."
Hosea 3:1 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."
2. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'" They are defiant and disillusioned. They see no 'proof' of God's love.
3. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." i.e., Jacob is the child of the covenant.

4. Romans 9:4 ... the people of Israel. Theirs is the (1) adoption as sons; theirs (2) the divine glory, (3) the covenants, (4) the receiving of the law, (5) the temple worship and (6) the promises. Theirs are (7) the patriarchs, and from them is traced (8) the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, for ever praised! Amen.
5. This is not a literal hate, but a comparison, to show the intensity of God's love for Jacob. The contrast of God's love for Jacob is described as God's hate for Esau.
Malachi 1:3 "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."
6. ^{ESV} Genesis 29:30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and **he loved Rachel more than Leah**, and served Laban for another seven years. ³¹ When the LORD saw that **Leah was hated** (אָשַׁת), he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. The NIV translates is softer by saying Leah was not loved.
^{NIV} Genesis 29:30 Jacob lay with Rachel also, and **he loved Rachel more than Leah**. And he worked for Laban another seven years. ³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was **not loved**, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.
7. **Esau** would not be part of the covenant nation. Esau would not be the focus of God's special love.
8. This was God's purpose in election.
Romans 9:11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."
9. Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.
10. The answer is no, God is not unjust; he hates all evil, rebellion, and sin. In the sense of Malachi 1:4, we read:
Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD of Hosts says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD.
11. Romans 9:14 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.
12. This fact never negates human responsibility. The call always has been: "Turn to me!" and "Repent and be saved!"
These two things, God's sovereign choice and human responsibility, do not negate or contradict each other. No, both are true. Something very difficult for us to understand.
13. This devastation was followed by seventy years of Babylonian captivity, while Edom remained intact and seemed rather to benefit from Israel's loss? 1:4
14. Edom was later judged, while Judah was restored.
Malachi 1:5 You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD--even beyond the borders of Israel!'

Reflection & Application _____

1. Throughout the ages, mankind has refused to look at the tokens of God's love. They dwell in obstinate ingratitude on events that their sins have brought on them in the first place.
2. Vastly greater privileges than Israel ever had! They were all only shadows of the reality to come. Christ was the reality and fulfilment of it all.
3. You have the New Covenant sealed in the blood of Christ. You have the word of God in your home, the Bible. You have the fulfilment of the Law and the temple worship in Christ. You have the fulfilment of all the promises, the reality, not the shadows in Christ. You have the fulfilment of the divine glory in Christ.

Study 2. The Honour of the LORD

Malachi 1:6-10

1. No, they failed to honour him and showed contempt for his Name.
Malachi 1:6 "A son honours his **father**, and a servant his **master**. If I am a father, where is the honour due to me? If I am a master, where is the respect due to me?" says the LORD of Hosts. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name."
2. It was a name that carried immense weight. YAHWEH was and still is a dangerous God, and he should be shown the utmost reverence and awe.
3. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name."
They were showing contempt for God's Name
4. This verse mentions the priests particularly, as the party that should have known better. As the priest is the intermediary, the go-between for man and God, they were responsible for the way God was worshipped, honoured and respected by the people. However, they did not honour and glorify God! Rather, they displayed contempt for the name of God.
Despite calling him *Father* and *Master*, they showed him no respect. In the end, the accusation included all of Judah.
5. "But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'"
Once again, there is the insolent reply: "How have we shown contempt for your name?" There was no sign of a repentant attitude and rectification of the matter. People may often call God 'Father', or themselves 'Christian', yet they actually deny it with their actions.
6. Malachi 1:7 "You place defiled food on my altar."
The reason was blemished sacrifices. The way that they worshipped the LORD showed contempt, not reverence and awe. Yet they expected God to bless them.
7. "But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?'"
8. Malachi 1:7 "By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible."
9. Israel was told in the OT to offer unblemished animals for sacrifice. An animal without defect. The best of their flocks. Yet, they brought unacceptable sacrifices to the LORD. God did not need the meat, as burnt offerings were destroyed anyway.
Malachi 1:8 When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong?
10. They showed more respect to their human governor than to YAHWEH.

Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD of Hosts.

11. Malachi 1:9 "Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?" --says the LORD of Hosts.
They expected blessings from God for their sham devotion to him. They would piously pray to God to bless them and be gracious to them. However, the LORD was not impressed, nor fooled by such superficial and hypocritical worship.
12. One can hear God's indignation. (Malachi 1:8-9) "Do you think I'm blind? Do not show contempt for me! Do you really think I will bless you for this? After all the love I have lavished upon you, this is the way you are treating me?"
13. He rejected them, just as he rejected Cain's offer.
Malachi 1:10 "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of Hosts, "and I will accept no offering from your hands."

Reflection & Application _____

1. If we do not take the worship and veneration that God expects from us seriously, we insult him (Malachi 1:7). Everything belongs to God. This whole principle is illustrated with Jesus's actions in the gospels, e.g. in Mark 12:
That which belongs to God (Mark 12:17).
The Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:30-31).
A widow who gave everything (Mark 12:44).
2. No, he does not. But when we do give, he expects our very best. God will not despise the widow's mite, but he will despise the miser's mite. We often treat God the way we would not treat a human ruler (Malachi 1:8). We make offerings to God that no human would accept. Prayer without corresponding practice is a mockery (Malachi 1:9).
3. 2 Corinthians 9:10 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 made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.
4. Because of who He is!

Study 3. The Name of the LORD

Malachi 1:11-14

1. The LORD created all things, and all of creation declares his glory.
Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."
2. God does not need you or me, and he will raise up others to honour him if we do not. He will receive glory whether we give it to him or not.

Malachi 1:11 My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of Hosts.

3. Hosea's prophecy (Hosea 2:23; 1:10) is taken up by the apostle Paul in Romans. They will be called my people who are not my people.
Romans 9:25 As he says in Hosea: "I will call them 'my people' who are not my people; and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one," 26 and, "It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God'."
4. Do they see honouring God as a burden? Do they not have reverence for his altar?
Malachi 1:12 "But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled', and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' 13 And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD of Hosts.
5. No, he never will.
"When you bring injured, crippled, or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD.
6. We can deceive ourselves, but we can never deceive God. God will curse those who try to cheat him. The LORD follows up his rebuke with a solemn curse.
Malachi 1:14 "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD of Hosts, "and my name is to be feared among the nations.
7. Remember Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, who tried to cheat God?
How do we treat God? God still curses those who profane His Name. It is the same God today!
1 Corinthians. 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

Reflection & Application _____

1. To see God as the Creator of all things for his glory. To approach him in reverence and awe. To honour the Name of the LORD. The message of Malachi is still very much valid today. People often call God 'Father' or themselves 'Christian' in words.
Yet they deny it with their actions. They treat God in a way totally inconsistent with who He is.
2. You can never fool God; He sees your heart! The outward motions of religion will never please him. I pray that you will re-evaluate your commitment and service to God. Do you honour and glorify Him? He is worthy to receive honour, glory and worship. Do not profane His name by the way that you serve Him.
3. Evaluate your effort, commitment, giving of yourself and means applied to God's work. See if you give your best to your work, sport, leisure, etc. Does God get the scraps? You will never receive His blessing if you give your second best. God loves you. You have experienced much more of God's love than Israel ever did. Honour and glorify Him!
4. Seeing God for who he really is: the Creator of all things to whom creation gives glory.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.

For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. Psalm 57:5, 9-11

5. Time. How do we keep the best of our time and offer God the remains? Service. We will let nothing stand in the way of making money and working to get ahead, yet for God, everything is a drag.
Money. We will buy and gather together, but for God's Kingdom, well, if there is something left at the end.

Study 4. The Covenant with Levi

Malachi 2:1-9

1. They do not listen to his rebuke, and they do not set their hearts to honour him. Because they broke their covenant with him, he will curse them.
Malachi 2:1 "And now this admonition is for you, O priests. 2 If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honour my name," says the LORD Almighty, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honour me.
2. God will curse them.
I will send a **curse** upon you, and I will **curse** your blessings. Yes, I have already **cursed** them, because you have not set your heart to honour me.
3. Dire Warning: They would be held responsible by God.
False teaching and unrighteous living ultimately lead to death.
False faith, false doctrine and unrighteous living can save no one.
Malachi 2:2 If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honour my name," says the LORD of Hosts, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honour me. ³ "Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it."
If the priests do not heed the warning and change their ways, the LORD will curse them. In fact, the curse was upon them already. The LORD would spread the offal of the sacrifices on their faces. Dung on your face was the highest possible insult. They would be carried away with it, and the indignity would be permanent. It would even affect their descendants.
4. Restoration and continuation of the covenant.
Malachi 2:4 And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of Hosts.
5. God established His Covenant with Levi to be the priesthood. We get a picture of this Levitical covenant in the story of Phinehas. Phinehas was a Levite who was consumed with passion for the holiness of God's name.
Numbers 25:10 The LORD said to Moses, ¹¹ "Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honour among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. ¹² Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. ¹³ He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honour of his God and made atonement for the Israelites."
6. The LORD would honour his self-assumed side of the covenant, which was to bless them with life and peace.

- Malachi 2:5 "My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name.
7. Levi revered God and stood in awe of God's Name, whereas these priests showed contempt for God's Name (Malachi 1:6-14).
 8. Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with **reverence and awe**,²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire." Reverence & awe. The focus should be on God and who He is and what He requires. It is about God. The glory of his name. To Him belongs the power and honour and wisdom and strength and glory for ever and ever!
 9. The main task of a priest was not sacrifice, but teaching the truth! He had to guard God's Word / Covenant. Priests were to teach and instruct what was already there, i.e. the Torah. The prophet was the one who had a direct word from God. The priest was also a go-between for man and God
Malachi 2:6 True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.
 10. He turned many from sin.
 11. Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction--because he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts.
The Name of the Lord is to be honoured and revered, for he is a Messenger of the LORD of Hosts.
 12. They turned from the way and God's covenant.
 - They violated God's covenant.
 - They caused many to stumble by their teaching.
 Malachi 2:8 But you (priests) have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the LORD of Hosts.
 13. The **salvation of souls** and the **continuation of the Covenant**. They did not turn any from sin, but instead caused many to stumble
Malachi 2:4 And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of Hosts.
 14. The LORD would humble them and reject them.
Malachi 2:9 "So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."

Reflection & Application _____

1. They took the place of the firstborn males spared in Egypt, whose lives were forfeit.
Numbers 3:11 The LORD also said to Moses,¹² "I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine,¹³ for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD."
2. You may find any of a variety of things happening:
 - Entertainment – shows/drama/circus.

- Philosophy / Psychology.
- Social gospel / Humanistic.
- Tradition / Ritual / Dead orthodoxy.
- Total chaos / Pandemonium / A lot of heat but no light.
- Self – esteem / Feel-good / Power of positive thinking.
- Cerebral / Intellectual / Rationalistic / Emasculated / Puerile excuse for the gospel.
- Not being willing to confront sin.
- To deny or change clear Biblical doctrine.

Study 5. Judah's Faithlessness

Malachi 2:10-16

1. By harming the covenant community through their unfaithfulness.
Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?
2. By marrying the unsaved/ ungodly/ pagan, they were breaking faith not only with God, but also faith with the people of God's Covenant community. Breaking faith with God the Father is also breaking faith with the covenant family.
Malachi 2:11 Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god.
3. Malachi 2:12 As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob-- even though he brings offerings to the LORD of Hosts.
In Malachi's day, the wish was that such a person be cut off from the covenant nation. What they did affected the purity of the Covenant nation. It is of no use bringing sacrifices if you deliberately go against God's word.
They did not learn from history, as this was exactly what King Solomon did. cf. 1 Kings 11:1-11
4. They mourned God's judgement, lamenting that he no longer accepted their offerings.
Malachi 2:13 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.
5. Breaking faith with your marriage partner is a serious sin. You break a covenant made before God, and he will not overlook that.
2:14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.
If you break faith with your marriage partner, the wife of your youth. God will act as a witness against you. He will not accept your offerings. Whether you wail, fast, or bring all sorts of sacrifices, do all sorts of things. The main idea of offering is to please God. If you come to Him with this sin, nothing you do will please Him.
6. Your wife has to have the place of honour in your life, except for God. The one with whom you have to share your deepest secrets, hopes, joys, fears and ambitions. You are one! She is the one you should pray and study the Bible with. She is your confidante, helper, soulmate, counsellor and friend. No other

- woman. If any prominent place in your life has been taken by another woman, get out as fast as you can!
7. Paul warns Timothy about his danger, and he instructs:
1 Timothy 5:2 *Treat* the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity.
 8. It is inexcusable and a slippery slope.
Ephesians 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.
 9. The believer must avoid it at all costs.
1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. See also Proverbs 5:1-23 and Proverbs 7:1-27.
 10. To produce godly offspring and so protect the covenant community.
Malachi 2:15 Has not *the LORD* made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.
NASB: Malachi 2:15 "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.
 11. God hates divorce. Divorce is never God's will. Jesus also made that abundantly clear. There is no good enough reason for it, except marital faithfulness and abuse. Those of you who have experienced divorce know. You will be surprised by how many people have experienced divorce, either personally, or by being the child of a divorce, or have a son, daughter, brother or having a son, daughter, brother, or sister that have gone through divorce.
Malachi 2:16 "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of Hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."
Malachi 2:16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself {Or his wife} with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.
 12. Violence and breaking faith.
Malachi 2:16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD of Hosts. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. NASB
 13. There are no winners in a divorce, only losers. Divorce is never the end, only the beginning of something that is only terminated in death. The result is always pain, suffering, terrible consequences and loss of blessings. No one stands to lose as much as the children in a divorce. They often carry the scars till the day they die. The cruellest thing in a divorce, and it happens in nearly 100% of them, is when one or both of the divorcing parties tries to manipulate the children to choose between the love of the two parents.
 14. God allows divorce in certain cases because we are not living in a perfect world:
 - When a marriage partner has committed adultery, you may leave him or her.
 - If you are married to an unbeliever and he or she decides to leave you, then you must let him or her go.
 However, the believer is not permitted to leave the unbelieving partner.

These two conditions are the only clear conditions given in Scripture for divorce; however, divorce is never God's will!

- A case of marital unfaithfulness may also be made for physical abuse.

Reflection & Application _____

1. Marrying a non-Christian will most often lead you to apostasy, not the other way round. There is much pain and suffering along this route for anyone marrying an unbeliever. When people get married when both are unsaved, or the Christian partner might not be serious about his or her faith at that time, the Christian grows in one direction and the other partner in another, as time progresses. It becomes increasingly difficult and leads to untold misery. Even more importantly, it affects the church. The Bible in the Old and New Testaments is absolutely clear on this matter. What do a Christian and a non-Christian have in common? They are in two different Kingdoms. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, not speaking about marriage specifically: 2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
Today, Christianity, as we perceive it, is very much about self. But there is a community aspect. You are breaking faith with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The non-Christian partner will affect your relationship with and effectiveness in the Church.
2. It will affect you spiritually, and it will affect the Church. It is for our own good. And for the good of the covenant community. If God has not given you a Christian marriage partner, do not marry a non-Christian!
3. God hates marital unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness starts long before adultery. It occurs whenever a third party takes the place in any area of your life that rightfully belongs to your husband or wife. God will stand as a witness against you. He is the witness to your marriage covenant. God hates divorce. It is never the solution. Once again, it is for our own good. The price we pay if we don't heed this is indeed a heavy one.
4. The LORD is our husband, and the believers are his bride.
Isaiah 62:3 You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ⁴ No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, {Hephzibah means my delight is in her.} and your land Beulah; {Beulah means married.} for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. ⁵ As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons {Or Builder} marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.
You can only be part of an eternal and perfect marriage covenant (Revelation 19:7-16). The bride of Christ is the Church. He laid down his life for you to be part of his bride. You can be part of this bride if you accept him as master, Lord and God.

Study 6. The Justice of the LORD

Malachi 2:17-3:5

1. *You* in 2:17 are the insolent or rebellious covenant people; the people of Judah.

2. Lamenting the prospering of the wicked and asking where God is, if he even cares, or perhaps even if he was just.
Malachi 2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. By saying, "**All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them**" or "**Where is the God of justice?**"
3. That God approved of evil. They formulated this by saying that: "Those who do evil are good in the LORD's eyes."
4. One needs to be very careful to appeal to God for his justice. When one appeals for God's justice, you are appealing for your own death. Not just physical death, but eternal death. We must always appeal for mercy, because if God is truly just, we will die. Just because God does not judge what we want does not mean he approves of evil. Isaiah 30:18 tells us that the LORD is a God of justice.
5. In answer to their 2nd reproach: "God is absent!" Where is he?
The LORD said he would come suddenly, but he would announce his coming with a messenger. How would God announce or prepare for his coming? 3:1
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 of Hosts.
God would send a messenger ahead to prepare the way for his personal coming. The custom in the ancient Near East was that a special envoy went before a King to prepare the way for his coming.
6. He is also the messenger of the covenant they desire. Covenant – God's peace treaty with Judah. 'The Lord' will also be 'the Messenger of the covenant'. This is parallelism. "Will come" is said twice – because it is absolutely certain that he will come. There was an expectation that a Messiah would come to bring in a new covenant. The prophets such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah predicted this. He would come to his temple, that is, God's temple.
7. The Lord you are seeking. God himself will come! Also Malachi 3:5 ... I will come near...
They were looking for God. They asked, "Where is the God of justice?" The 'Lord you are seeking.' The one that will come is: *ha-adon* from *adon* (אֲדֹנָי) meaning *lord*.
Usage: Lord, master used more than 300 X. Used for God more than 400 X.
8. The context tells us that this adon is certainly no earthly lord or master! He is God!
v. 3 I will send – says LORD of Hosts, One who will prepare the way before me.
v. 5 I will come near to you
9. He will come to Judge. Judah expected that this Lord would come to judge those who oppress them and set them free from foreign rule. They were expecting light and blessing for themselves, but the opposite was true. This will be the answer to their first reproach: God approves of evil! You are looking for justice! You will have it, God says. The Lord will come to judge. He will not only look at those they regard as evil – he will judge everyone. No one would be able to stand before Him.
10. The Levites. Those making these insolent and blasphemous charges in front of the people in word and action.
Malachi 3:2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.

- He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify **the Levites** and refine them like gold and silver. This Lord would be God's King.
11. Not beauty soap. More like caustic soda for a blocked drain – it dissolves the muck that sits there. He will wash away all unrighteousness.
Refiner's fire. He will burn away all impurity. As gold or silver is heated to thousands of degrees to melt. The dross floats to the top and is skimmed off. So he would purify them.
 12. Who could stand the day of his coming? No-one!
He would refine the Levites - the priests. Specifically them – as they were the mediators between God and the people. They were the ones who, in word and deed, had to teach the people about God, but instead:
 - They gave false teaching
 - Accepted blemished sacrifices
 - Did not exhibit reverence and awe for God's Name.
 13. But the people are also included:
3:3 men - He would have men bringing offers in righteousness.
3:4 Judah and Jerusalem would bring acceptable sacrifices.
 14. His coming would be a coming in judgement as well as salvation.
God will accept the Righteous.
Malachi 3:3 Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, 4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.
 15. 3:5 "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against (1) sorcerers, (2) adulterers, and (3) perjurers, against those who (4) defraud labourers of their wages, who (5) oppress the widows and the fatherless, and (6) deprive aliens of justice, but (7) do not fear me," says the LORD of Hosts.
 16. No never! He will come in judgement to these serious sins:
Sorcerers – the penalty was death.
Adulterers – the penalty was death.
Perjurers – those who swore falsely in God's name.
Those who ride roughshod over people: Defraud labourers of their wages, oppress widows and fatherless, aliens of justice.

Reflection & Application _____

1. Jesus is the Lord Malachi spoke about and God's King. He is the messenger of the New Covenant:
This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus: In Mark and Luke (synoptic gospels), we read the direct quote from Malachi 3:1 in Mark 1:2. The second part of the quote in Mark 1:3 is from Isaiah.:

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "**I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way**"-- ³ "a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" ⁴ And so John came, baptising in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
Zechariah says of baby John: Luke 1:76 and you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

2. The gospel – ‘euangelion’ – is not only good news. It is momentous news, certainly, for that is what it means. The gospel is a double-edged sword! There are two sides to the gospel. The news of salvation, yes. But also that of judgement. Jesus did come to bring in the new covenant as Malachi predicted. But the new covenant – peace treaty was written in his blood. But he did not die for nothing. Some will be saved. Those who accept his offer of peace. But those who reject it will be lost.
John 9:39 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."
3. It is never clever to call on God's justice. It is a very foolish thing to do. None of us can stand before him when he comes. He is not absent; he will come again. He does not approve of evil; he will come in judgement.
4. Call on God's mercy. Call on the fact that Jesus has written the new covenant in his own blood. He died for your sins, so that if you accept his Lordship, that he is God's king, and that he has the right to rule your life, you will be saved. Your sins will be forgotten, washed away by the fact that he paid the penalty of death for sins on your behalf.
5. You will be able to bring offerings to God, which would be acceptable. Not because you are inherently righteous, but because you are seen as clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Like a beggar from the street, clothed with the gown and signet ring of the King's Son.
6. John preached a baptism of repentance in preparation for the King, and some came.
Mark 1:4 And so John came, baptising in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
7. Jesus came and announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand.
Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Many believed in Him
8. In and of ourselves, we are not righteous. But a righteousness from Christ is available to us if we accept Christ's offer of salvation.
Only if you are relationally right with God can you please God. The unbeliever does not understand his own unrighteousness before the LORD of Hosts. Does not understand the need to be saved – to be plucked as a firebrand out of the fire. He rejects the fact of Jesus' saving work for our unrighteousness on the cross. He does not submit to the Lordship and rule of Christ over all areas of his life. Such a person can never offer God anything with regard to righteousness.

Study 7. True Repentance

Malachi 3:6-12

1. Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD, do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.
Only because the LORD does not change, and he is true to his covenant promises.
The LORD was still committed to the descendants of Jacob as the covenant people. That is the sole reason they had not yet been destroyed, even though they have always gone against God's decrees and failed to repent.
2. They repeatedly turned away from the LORD since ancient times.

- Malachi 3:7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them.
3. The key: They must return to the LORD and he will return to them.
Malachi 3:7 Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of Hosts. "
 4. What God was asking for was repentance from their evil ways. There are only two ways to live: turning away from God or turning towards Him. Because of their sins, they have turned their backs on God. Turning to God means to repent!
 5. The result of repentance was a promise: If they return to God, he will return to them! There will be a mutual turning towards one another! The LORD still loved them. He had not shelved his covenant relationship with them. This is simply what the gospel is all about. Turn to God, and he will turn to you.
 6. **The LORD says they are robbing him.**
Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'"
 7. 3:8 "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me."
The outward sign of their turning away from God was that they were continuously robbing God (3:9) in withholding tithes and offerings (3:8). According to the Mosaic Law, a tenth of all produce was intended for the Levites, those who served in God's house. The Levites, in turn, had to give a tenth to God. These tithes and offerings were the firstfruits of the crops and flocks. The cream off the top, as it were.
 8. They did not give God what He deserved. They did not honour him. They were supposed to revere Him and stand in awe of Him. They were to show Him honour and respect. Yet, they had failed to do this in various ways.
 9. Curses: At present, they were under a curse because they were robbing God continuously.
Malachi 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me."
 10. How must they show repentance? By giving what they should.
Malachi 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.
 11. The result will be that their lives will turn from curse to blessing.
Malachi 3:10 Test me in this, "says the LORD of Hosts," and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."
 12. Malachi 3:12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD of Hosts.
 13. The curses were because of:
 - Blemished sacrifices (1:14).
 - False teaching and unholy living (2:2).
 - Robbing God, i.e. not giving to God what he deserved (3:9).
 14. For the blessing of the LORD, God's name is to be honoured and revered, glorified, and held in awe. This is to be shown by:
 - The way they live.
 - How they sacrifice.
 - What they teach.
 - How they treat their marriage partners.

- What they give to God.
15. Malachi 3:11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD of Hosts.
The present reality was :
 - There were pests devouring their crops.
 - Vines were casting their fruit.

The financial straits that they were in led them to give even less to God. The whole nation was robbing God. They did not realise the religious significance of the judgement. They were in this situation in the first place because they were not giving what they were supposed to. If they did, God would bless them.
 16. If they gave to God what He deserved, He would bless them.
Malachi 3:11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD of Hosts. 12 "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD of Hosts.
 17. They were invited to test the Lord in this. If they looked after God's temple, his work and his priests, they would receive blessings beyond what they could ever handle. They would not have enough room for it.

Reflection & Application _____

1. In other words, are you a Christian? Is your life a life of repentance and measured by your voluntary, joyful, sacrificial, proportional giving to the work of the Lord? Your giving is an indicator of salvation and an index of spiritual health/ God's grace
2. Giving is a measure of one's spiritual state.

Study 8. The Righteous and the Wicked

Malachi 3:13-18

1. The wicked once again make serious accusations against the Lord. According to them, as righteous or good people, who they considered themselves to be, it was futile to serve the LORD. They considered themselves not to be as bad as some other people they knew, and yet were not rewarded. They observe that 'the arrogant are blessed' and 'evildoers prosper', 'even those who challenge God escape. The Lord himself answers in the first person.
Malachi 3:13 "You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?' ¹⁴ "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD of Hosts?'"
2. They went like mourners before the LORD. Their whole attitude in 'serving' God bore witness to their spiritual condition. They carried out external requirements while acting like mourners. There was no joy in their service to God. Maybe you feel like that today? Serving God is a stern, dreary, and joyless exercise.
3. Malachi 3:15 "But now we call (1) the arrogant blessed. Certainly, (2) the evildoers prosper, and (3) even those who challenge God escape."
4. Themselves! What they did not realise was that they were challenging God. They were actually arrogant; they were the evildoers. They were presumptuous and insolent. It was certainly futile to serve the Lord in the way they did.

5. Bringing blind and diseased animals for sacrifice. 1:8
 - Priests teaching heresy and living immoral lives. 2:8
 - People dishonouring their marriage covenants. 2:14
 - Accusing God of being oblivious to injustice. 2:17
 - Not repenting of their ways. 3:5
 - Robbing God with tithes and offerings. 3:8-9
6. External and superficial religion never did and never will bluff God. Merely going through the motions will never lead to joy, peace or blessing. It has never pleased God, and it never will. God desires a change of heart. Repentance: a change of mind, as proved by actions! Romans 12:1-2
7. Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard.

The righteous here does not denote a group that is without sin, or who consider themselves morally superior to the previous group. Their heart attitude is simply different.
8. The Lord truly hears, sees and remembers. To their charges, God answers as in 2:17- 3:5.
9. It is not a group that has achieved a certain level of sinlessness. The name righteous simply indicates that they are a different group from the wicked. They actually fear the Lord. They are not the ones making harsh accusations against God. They knew that if God held them accountable for their deeds, they would be in great trouble.
10. The righteous, as the second group, do not agree with the wicked.

There has always been a small remnant that has revered and honoured God. They have stood in awe of God's name. God has listened, and he has heard. He has taken note. That a scroll of remembrance is written in his presence.
11. In Revelation, we read of the books that are opened.
 - The book of life.
 - The book of deeds.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and **books were opened**. Another book was opened, which is the **book of life**. The dead were judged according to what they had done as **recorded in the books**.
12. Malachi 3:16 A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.

The righteous not only feared, but they also honoured. Fearing God is not necessarily an indication of right standing. We are told that the demons fear the Lord in the gospels and in James 2. The lazy servant who misused his talents feared his master. The wicked on the day of the Lord will call on mountains to fall on them and hills to cover them. Revelation 6

However, this fear is a different kind of fear. It is a reverent fear. It is the fear of a child for his loving, but just and righteous father. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom that the Psalms speak about.

This group talks with one another. What do they discuss? They see that things are not as they should be, and it seems as if the wicked prosper. But they fear and honour God, and know that being wicked and living their own way is not the answer. They disagree with the wicked. They don't think that the LORD is absent. They don't think that the Lord blesses the wicked.

13. Malachi 3:17 "They will be mine," says the LORD of Hosts, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession.
I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.
14. It will be a terrible day. It will burn like a furnace. The wicked will be destroyed like hay and stubble in a furnace. Evildoers will not prosper. Those who challenge and test God will not escape!
¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.
As the righteous can distinguish themselves from the wicked, so too can the Lord. And he answers the wicked. The wicked will be proved to be wrong on two counts:
15. God answers their first accusation (3:14). It is not futile to serve God. The righteous will indeed be rewarded. They will belong to God. He will spare them, and they will be part of his treasured possession. A distinction will be made between the righteous and wicked. Between those who serve God or do not.
Malachi 3:17 "They will be mine," says the LORD of Hosts, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.
16. Malachi 3:18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.
In answer to their second charge (Malachi 3:15), that evildoers prosper and even those who challenge God escape, the LORD makes it clear that there will be a distinction made between the righteous and the wicked. Evildoers will not escape!

Reflection & Application _____

1. How do you see this world? Maybe you are thinking the LORD is not all-loving, as there is so much heartache and pain and violence and destruction. If God is all-loving, why are these things so prevalent? Or maybe God is not all-powerful. If he were, why does he not stop crime, war, AIDS, etc? So, either God is not all-loving, or he is not all-powerful, and he actually approves of evil. Ultimately, we must trust God, as he is just and all-powerful.
2. We know things are not as they should be. Things are bad, not because God is limited or partly evil, but because He allows man to go his own way. Ultimately, as God states in Malachi, he will not allow evil to go unpunished forever.
3. Romans 1, handing them over. But this will not continue indefinitely. A day of reckoning is coming. The righteous fear God, and stand in awe of him. They know that if God's standard were held against their lives, they would be in trouble, too.
4. Talk together. Confess their sins to one another; confess their sins to God. The good news is that God takes notice. A scroll of remembrance is written. A day will come when he will make up his treasured possession. A distinction will be made between the wicked and the righteous.

Study 9. The Day of the LORD

Malachi 4:1-3

1. Only two outcomes. One for the Righteous and another for the Wicked. This will apply to every man, woman and child.

2. Malachi 4:1 "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD of Hosts. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 3 Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD of Hosts.
On that day, every evildoer, every rebel, all those who are arrogant, will be stubble. The act of rebellion, saying to God, "I will do it my way," will not go unpunished. That day that is coming will set them on fire. Nothing will be left of them. Their destruction will be total. The wicked will be like ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous. The roles will be reversed. The downtrodden will now trample down the wicked.
3. Malachi 4:2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.
The outcome for those who revere God's Name is that salvation will be consummated. The LORD will heal the righteous. They will be his treasured possession. In fact, on that day, they will be released as calves kept in a stall for a long time. They will leap, an expression of joy.
4. In the Sinai covenant, a peace treaty which God had made with Israel, He gave certain stipulations. If they were kept, the people were blessed. If they transgressed, they were cursed. The Sinai Covenant, the Old Testament, was a covenant of grace.
In the Tabernacle, there was an entrance towards the east. The rising sun would shine into the only doorway of the tabernacle. The sun shone past the altar of sacrifice in the inner courtyard, onto the screen, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This is the path the high priest trod once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would enter God's presence on behalf of his people. He would open up the path into the Holy of Holies into the presence of God, with the blood of the sacrifice.
5. The Old Covenant sacrifices were only a shadow of the New Testament reality. There was a way out. If people sinned/failed, they could offer certain prescribed sacrifices in repentance. These sacrifices did not do away with sin, but painted a picture of the heinousness of sin. The sacrifices had to be brought to the tabernacle. All these things were a shadow of the reality that would one day come, i.e., Jesus Christ, who came and tabernacled among us (John 1:14).
6. They will feel contempt for the wicked.
Malachi 4:3 Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD of Hosts.

Reflection & Application _____

1. It is Jesus.
Luke 1:76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."
Jesus is the fulfilment of the 'Sun of Righteousness'.

2. Jesus would open up the path into the Holy of Holies into the presence of God, with his own blood, once and for all. He is our high priest, through the sacrifice of his own blood for us.
3. Jesus is our sun of righteousness. Jesus is like the sun, without impurity. He is the fullness of God's salvation! He has washed our sins away and brought the healing of salvation to us. His righteousness will shine like the sun in us. When his light shines upon us, we are seen as clothed in his righteousness. Healing in its wings – will cover us all over as the sun crosses the sky.
Healing – by his wounds we are healed
Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Study 10. The Return of Elijah

Malachi 4:4-6

1. The Law of Moses.
Malachi 4:4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel."
2. Malachi 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes."
God would send a final warning via a messenger who would prepare the people for that great and dreadful Day of the LORD. He would come in the spirit and mould of Elijah.
3. Elijah came to proclaim divine justice on a wicked dynasty, an apostate nation, and a false priesthood. He would confront the priests of Baal.
4. For a greater prophet, Elisha. He did many miracles.
5. 4:6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."
The New Elijah would do the same as the old and confront the wicked priesthood of Israel. He would turn the hearts of the children to the faith of their fathers. Else, the LORD would strike the land with a curse.
6. The messenger of the New Covenant.
7. The Day of the LORD.

Reflection & Application _____

1. The fulfilment of this prophecy would be John the Baptist. John is the final prophet in the spirit and mould of Elijah, who had already come.
Luke 1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
2. He came to prepare the way for Jesus. He turned the hearts of the children, a remnant of the descendants of Jacob, back to the faith of their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That was the final warning, the coming of John.
3. When Jesus came 2000 years ago, that was the second last great event in world history. That was a Day of the Lord in a cosmic sense. A day of purification. On that day, a division was already made between the righteous and the wicked.

That day marked the beginning of the defeat of the kingdom of Satan. When Jesus came to earth, he came to make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked. The living and the dead have already been judged at Golgotha on the day Christ died. On the day of the crucifixion Satan was defeated.