

The Message of Malachi

A Bottleneck In the Leadership

Introduction:

1. Some wit said, “You will never outgrow your leadership!”
2. That gives us all the more reason to follow the Lord, but human leadership often masks, distorts and even contradicts the leadership provided by the Lord.
3. Such was the case during the days of prophecy of Malachi.
 - a. His book is generally dated (about 450 B.C.) after the days of the exile, but probably a little before the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.
 - b. It probably originated in Jerusalem and was designed to remind the people that they were the specially chosen people of God, but their leadership was undisciplined and was leading the way in disrespect, dishonor and even contempt for the Lord.
 - c. Sometimes this is the way it is today. There is a bottleneck in human leadership that hinders the development of the people of God.
4. The Lord had a stern message for these leaders. He would come near them with judgment, but it would involve a call to repentance and all those who would fear the Lord and give attention to Him would be spared.
5. The text opens with a reminder of God’s focusing His love on Jacob (They were descended from Jacob.) rather than Esau (1:1-5).

Discussion:

- I. The priests are not honoring, nor showing respect to the Lord (1:6-14).
 - A. The reading reveals a style of address known as “the didactic-dialectic method.”
 1. In this type of teaching an assertion or charge is made; an objection is then raised, followed by a refutation of the objection.
 2. The Lord charges the priests, “If I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect? O priests who despise My name.”
 3. The objection: “How have we despised Your name?”
 4. The refutation: “You are presenting defiled food upon My altar.”
 - B. The contrast is between what they say and what the Lord says.
 - C. What are they doing?
 1. They are presenting defiled food on the altar.
 2. They are presenting to God the blind, the lame, the sick for sacrifice.
 3. They are defiling and despising the table of the Lord.
 4. They are complaining, “How tiresome it is.” They are contemptuous.
 5. God would that someone shut the gates and stop the offerings.
 - D. Are you contemptuous toward the things of God? Does what He says stand in stark contrast to what you say? Do you find yourself disagreeing with what the Lord says?
 - E. God twice says, “His name will be great” (1:11, 14).
- II. These priests stand in contrast to Levi (2:1-17).

- A. God had a covenant with Levi.
 - 1. It was a covenant of life and peace.
 - 2. Levi's response was to revere and stand in awe of God.
 - 3. He acted as a good leader and gave good instruction from the covenant given by God.
 - 4. His lips preserved knowledge and people sought instruction from his mouth.
 - 5. He was recognized as a messenger from the Lord for he walked with the Lord, no unrighteousness was in him and he turned many back from iniquity.
- B. The current priests.
 - 1. Had corrupted the covenant.
 - 2. They caused men to stumble.
 - 3. They showed partiality in instruction.
 - 4. In addition they married the daughter of a foreign god and dealt treacherously with their wives by divorcing them (10-16).
 - 5. They wearied the Lord by saying, "Everyone who does evil is good."
 - 6. They asked, "Where is the God of justice?" He was on His way!

III. God will be sending His messenger (angel) to clear the way for His own coming (3:1ff).
The bottleneck is about to be removed.

- A. The Lord will suddenly come to His temple.
 - 1. Ezekiel had seen in a vision the presence of the Lord leave the temple preceding the exile.
 - 2. Although the temple was rebuilt in the days of Nehemiah His presence had not been manifest there.
 - 3. But He was coming. His coming would not be what they expected.
- B. God would send His messenger of the covenant.
- C. He will be a refiner (2-3).
- D. The Lord will draw near in judgment (5-6).
 - 1. He does not change. He is just.
 - 2. He does not change. He is gracious.
- E. He calls them to repentance (7).

IV. God blesses those who repent (3:8ff).

- A. Those who have robbed God, but repent will be blessed (8-12).
- B. Those who have been arrogant, but repent will be remembered (13-18).
- C. The day of judgment approaches. Elijah's coming will mark its beginning (4:1-6).
 - 1. The Book of Luke opens with an angel speaking to Zacharias, a priest, who had been praying for God to act in the accomplishment of His purpose (1:8ff).
 - 2. Zacharias' son, John, would be the Elijah that would be God's messenger clearing the way before the Lord (1:16-17).
 - 3. Approximately 400 years has passed since Malachi's message.
- D. John called people to repentance (Matt. 3:1-12). He was a messenger after God's own heart. He would turn the father's hearts toward the children and the children's hearts

toward their fathers.

V. What does this mean to me?

- A. If you find yourself manifesting a similar attitude to these priests—negligent, disrespectful, despising the Lord, leading others to stumble, mixing with the world, turning evil into good--then the message of Malachi is REPENT!
- B. Remember the law (4:4).
- C. The message of Malachi is the Lord is coming. The message to us is the Lord has come and He is coming again. The time for repentance is now.
- D. Some seem to miss the message.
 - 1. Young people who have not put on Christ in baptism? If you know what to do why do you wait?
 - 2. Others who assemble with the saints, reflect on the things of God and make no decision . . . why do you wait?
 - 3. If you believe the truth . . . How long will you wait before you obey?
- E. As a leader are you leading people to stumble? Is your life characterized by withholding from the Lord?
- F. Zacharias was praying for the accomplishment of God's purpose. He was blessed with a son who would announce the coming of God into the world. Is your praying like his? Is your leadership? Do you need to make changes for the coming of the Lord?

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you part of a bottleneck in leadership?
- 2. Are you more like Malachi, Zacharias and John? Are you leading people to the Lord?