

Malachi 2:1-9

As we continue our study of Malachi, we have been focusing our attention on the God of Israel, who is revealing Himself to His people over and over again in this prophecy as The Lord of Hosts. This title conveys for us the reality that this God is the commander in chief of an army of angels. He is the commanding officer of myriads and myriads of heavenly and earthly beings that do His complete bidding without fail.

From this title we have learned

1. In chapter 1:1-5 that
 - a. The Lord of Hosts has the freedom, right, and power to bestow His love, mercy, and grace on whomever He chooses.
 - b. Likewise, The Lord of Hosts has the freedom, right, and power to bestow His anger, wrath, and judgement on whomever He chooses.
2. Last week, in verses 6-14 we saw that The Lord of Hosts is so gloriously holy that His mighty Name will be magnified, great, and reverently feared from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
3. Now this morning we will see that The Lord of Hosts, by His very nature, demands honor from His people, disciplines His people, and keeps covenant with His people in spite of His people.

Read/Pray

As we think about the reality that the Lord of Hosts, by His very nature, demands honor from His people, disciplines His people, and keeps covenant with His people in spite of His people we will see 4 major things that affirm that from this text.

I. A Commandment v1

1. We saw the commandment that He is referring to last week in Malachi 1:6-14
2. Simply put, the command is: The Lord of Hosts is so gloriously holy that His mighty Name will be magnified, great, and reverently feared from Jerusalem to the Ends of the earth.
3. In other words, God's name is to be, and will be, honored and worshipped.
4. This is verified and affirmed in verse 2.

II. A Curse v2-3

The curse is four-fold.

1. He will Curse You v2

- a. The Bible says, "the" curse. What is the curse?
 - a. Likely the one they knew quite well described in Deuteronomy 28
 - b. Ruin, Disease, drought, famine, illness, defeat by enemies and ultimately destruction
- b. The sense would be: "This is no idle threat, for the curse is even now upon you because of your sin; you are condemned already!"¹

¹ Geneva 124

2. He will curse your blessings v2b

- a. This could mean that God will take their perceived blessings and make them curses
 1. Sometimes our blessings are really our curses because they short-circuit our appetite for God.
 2. Psalm 69:22-23 *May their table before them become a snare; And when they are in peace, may it become a trap. 23 May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, And make their loins shake continually.*
- b. It could also possibly mean that God will take their blessings and make them curses instead
 1. God will curse their blessings...the blessings that they pronounced upon the people.
 2. In other words their ministry becomes a plague rather than a blessing to God's people.
- c. He is sending these curses because they are not taking His Word to heart!
 1. Do we take God's Word to heart?
 2. Or is this just something that we do...but does it get into our hearts?

3. He will curse your offspring v3

- a. The curse will extend beyond their own private selves.
- b. I am led to think here of Eli in 1 Samuel 2-4.
 1. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas were despising God's Name, defiling God's altar, and displeasing God in worship because of Eli's passiveness as judge in Israel.
 2. The story ends tragically when the Philistines defeat Israel, kill Hophni and Phinehas in battle, and capture the ark of the covenant of God.
 3. When the news reaches Eli, he falls off of his stool backward and breaks his neck because he was old and frail and overweight.
 4. Then Phinehas' wife goes into labor with a son and dies after the birth. Before she passed away, she summarized the whole situation with the name she chose for her son: Ichabod, which means "the glory has departed from Israel."
 5. There was a trickle down effect because of their sin.
- c. Exodus 20:4-6 *"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."*

4. He will curse your worship v3b

- a. God will make them as despised and contemptible as possible among the people.
- b. By symbolically rubbing feces on their faces, a visual is given to them of what their worthless sacrifices look like to Him
- c. It seems as though they are rubbing filth in the very face of God every time they offer a sacrifice.
- d. But before we judge them too severely we need to recognize if we are trying to earn favor with God through our "good works" we are doing the same thing to Him.
- e. If we think we can be good enough, read enough, pray enough, go to church enough, or give enough to be worthy of His pleasure, we are rubbing filth in the face of God who gave His Son so that we might be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- f. Isaiah 64:6 *"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment..."*

g. Zechariah 3:1-5

1. Joshua is clothed in filthy garments
2. But those garments are removed and replaced by the angel of the Lord.
3. That is how it must be with us as well.
4. We bring all of our sin, iniquity, transgressions, and even our faux righteousness to Him and surrender it all.
5. He removes our filthy garments and clothes us with clean garments.

This is the power of the gospel. It is the exact opposite of the curse!

III. A Covenant v4

After all of these curses...then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that (SO THAT) My covenant may continue with Levi, say's the Lord of Hosts.

1. So that...He is disciplining them because He wants His covenant to continue with them...but it can't continue as it is...so He disciplines them
 - a. Out of that discipline they will come to know that He sent the command
 - b. Out of that discipline His covenant will be able to continue with Levi
2. He is faithful to them and to His covenant promises.
3. Hebrews 12:5-6 *“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”*

God is extremely serious about His covenants. He approached His covenant with Levi no differently.

V5

This covenant was one of life, peace, and reverence.

1. The word reverence here is placed alongside “stood in awe” which literally means “to be shattered.”
2. The implication is that when Levi understood this covenant of life and peace he revered God and was broken into pieces.
3. If we see the holiness of God and the sinfulness of ourselves and the mercy and grace of God in Christ, we will be broken into pieces! We will be spiritually shattered.
4. We cannot encounter the gospel of life and peace without being impacted, broken, and transformed.

v6

Levi was a faithful priest. True instruction was in his mouth. Unrighteousness did not come from his lips, but rather he turned many from their sin back to God.

It is just logical that men should seek instruction from the priests since they are God's messengers, literally in the Hebrew, malach.

1. Yet, now we have a messenger, literally in the Hebrew malachi, coming to the messengers (malach) to rebuke them for failing to be faithful malach!
2. Assuming Malachi was indeed the prophet's name instead of his title, is it not ironic that God would send a man with a name which means "my messenger" to rebuke His messengers who were no longer faithful messengers like Levi?

IV. A Corrupt Priesthood v8-9

The priests of Malachi's day did not reflect their fore-father, Levi. Their corruption was three-fold.

1. They Turned Aside from the Way v8a

- a. Their lives fell short of the standards of the truth that they were supposed to teach and model.
- b. They were not keeping God's ways per verse 9

2. They were Causing many to Stumble v8b

- a. They were showing partiality in their teaching per v9
 1. Give God the sacrifices that will leave you with the most money.
 2. Give the people the teaching that will bring in the most money.
 3. You play to your audience. You say, "Peace! Peace!" when there is no peace.
 4. Micah 3:11 *Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst?"*
- b. They were causing many to stumble by their greedy, partial preaching.
 1. This is a frightening accusation, especially when you consider Jesus' words.
 2. Mark 9:42 *Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.*

3. They Corrupted the Covenant v8c-9

- a. They were supposed to be faithfully, and without partiality, judging the people
- b. They were supposed to be interceding for the people and offering acceptable sacrifices for the people
- c. Instead they were corrupting the covenant!
- d. So, God made them despised and abased...I would say so (v3).

This is where the OT leaves off...with a corrupt priesthood...and then 400 years of silence.

1. Thank God the NT begins with the coming of a high priest who would live, die, and rise to save us once and for all.
2. The Gospel

Hebrews 9:11-15

Questions for Reflection:

1. What do we learn about God the Father from this text? What about God the Son? God the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the main theme of the text?
3. What are some perceived blessings that have become curses in our day and time?
4. Read Zechariah 3:1-5. Discuss what we learn about God, man, and the gospel.
5. Was there anything from this sermon that was difficult to understand or that didn't make sense to you? Discuss it with the group to try and get a better understanding.
6. What do you believe was the most impactful part of the sermon Sunday? Discuss.
7. How do you plan to apply some portion of what you learned to your life? For example, "In response to this sermon, I will _____"