



Sun of Righteousness

SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Malachi 1-4

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

The Lord heard the people say, “Look, what a nuisance,” as they scorned His table. The people asked: “Have we wearied the Lord? How can we return? What have we spoken against you?” God’s people were ignorant about how their words, actions, and heart condition affected the Lord. However, on the Day of the Lord, everyone will witness the arrogant and those who commit wickedness become stubble. But, *for those who fear God’s name*, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and they will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall.

Like the Israelites, God hears you when you mock Him. Yes, He sees you in your rebellion. Yes, He knows your thoughts. And He will consume you with fire if you do not turn back to Him. However, *for those who seek the Lord and fear Him, be prepared to dance and sing and play! The Day of the Lord will be upon us.* Stop arrogantly questioning God. Stop trying to figure out how far you can push it with Him. He sees you, He hears you, He knows you, and He wants your heart to be surrendered to Him. *That’s it.* Then you will have joy, peace, and salvation. Jesus will be enough, and this truth will set you free to playfully jump like a calf!

“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing,” says the LORD of Hosts.

— Malachi 4:2-3

FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Psalms 16:11* — “You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.”
- *Psalms 73:25-28* — “Who do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever. Those far from You will certainly perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You. But as for me, God’s presence is my good. I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, so I can tell about all You do.”
- *Malachi 3:13-14* — “‘Your words against Me are harsh,’ says the LORD. Yet you ask: ‘What have we spoken against You?’ You have said: ‘It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping His requirements and walking mournfully before the LORD of Hosts?’”



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Teaching Notes

INTRO

the Old Testament was inspired by Matthew 5:17: "Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Throughout the Minor Prophets, we've seen how Jesus came to fulfill the prophecies. Jesus has also been evident throughout the entire Old Testament.

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament in both order and in historical chronology. God closed the canon of the Old Testament with His message through Malachi before a period of 400 years of His being quiet. Malachi's name means, "The Lord's Messenger." According to MacArthur, Jewish tradition placed Malachi in the Great Synagogue, a precursor to the Sanhedrin.¹

Malachi prophesied in the late fifth century BC. Many scholars believe Malachi's ministry coincided with Nehemiah's return to Persia around 433–424 BC. Sacrifices were made at a physical temple during Malachi's ministry. Haggai and Zechariah had encouraged the people to finish building the temple. Malachi described offerings being made in this, the second temple, which was called Zerubbabel's Temple (Malachi 1:7–11). The second temple was finished in 516 BC. In less than 100 years after the second temple was completed, MacArthur notes the priests had already become "complacent and corrupt."²

In addition to corrupting sacrifices, the Israelites were taking foreign wives, withholding tithes, and committing social injustice. It is almost as though the Israelites' history had reset after they returned from exile only for them to fall into the same pattern of sin and rebellion all over again. If Malachi did prophesy during Nehemiah's return to Persia, then the sins Nehemiah addressed on his return (Nehemiah 13:6) would be those described by Malachi.³

There would have been about 50,000 exiles who returned to Jerusalem from exile during Malachi's ministry. The temple had been rebuilt and the sacrificial system had been reinstated. But after a century of being back in the land, the people developed a hard-heartedness toward the Lord. Malachi rebuked the people and called them to repentance. As the Old Testament closed, MacArthur notes: "As over 2,000 years of Old Testament history takes place, since Abraham concluded, none of the glorious promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, or the New Covenant have been fulfilled."⁴ Malachi's primary prophecy was that the Messiah would not return until Israel repented of their sin.

TEACHING

Malachi 1:1–5: Malachi opened with a picture of God's love for Israel (vv. 1–5). God pointed out how He chose Jacob over Esau. Even in Malachi's day, God's judgment on Edom, Esau's descendants, showed His care for Israel.

Malachi 1:6–14: God's complaint against His people included the priests. As God made His accusations, the people responded with sarcasm (vv. 6–7). The priests had robbed God of the honor due Him by bringing blind and lame animals to sacrifice to the Lord. In verse 8, the Lord challenged them to bring such offerings to their governor: "Would he be pleased with you or show you favor?" J. Vernon McGee pointed out that Israel's "hearts were polluted."⁵ As a result, Israel should not expect to receive the Lord's favor. The Lord went so far as to say Israel should just shut the doors to the temple; He would "accept no offering from your hands" (v. 10), because God's people had misrepresented His name among the nations (v. 11). His people had backslidden to the extent that God had become boring to them.

Malachi 2: God warned the priests in regard to how they had led the people astray (vv. 1–7). The priests had turned away from God, so God pronounced that He had turned away from them (vv. 8–9).

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 1077.

² MacArthur, pp. 1077–1078.

³ MacArthur, pp. 1077–1078.

⁴ MacArthur, pp. 1077–1078.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary Series: Malachi* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1991), n. p.



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Teaching Notes

Malachi 3:1-7: The “messenger” referred to in verse 1 would be John the Baptist. His role was to clear the way before Christ. Jesus quoted this passage in Matthew 11:10: “This is the one it is written about: Look, I am sending My messenger ahead of You; he will prepare Your way before you.” After the messenger arrived, the Lord Himself promised to “suddenly come” (v. 1) at the temple. Part of the Lord’s work would be to cleanse and purge the people and the priesthood. When He did that, Israel would present offerings that “will please the Lord as in the days of old and years gone by” (v. 4). This was a clear reference to the sacrifice of Jesus. Because God is a God who keeps His promises, He would ultimately deliver His people (v. 7).

Malachi 3:8-12: God also accused His people of robbing Him by not bringing their tithes (vv. 8-10). If God’s people would give the way He commanded them to, God promised to bless them in such a way that “the nations will consider you fortunate” (v. 12). If not, God would judge them.

Malachi 3:13-18: God’s people had further defamed Him by saying how “useless” it was to serve the Lord. As evidence, they cited how wicked people prospered (vv. 14-15). But there was a group that heard the accusations, “who feared the Lord and spoke to one another” (v. 16). God noticed their regard for Him and promised to “have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him” (v. 17). The people would then see the true distinction between the righteous and the wicked by how God showed mercy to the repentant.

Malachi 4:1-4: The final chapter of Malachi began with a depiction of the Lord’s day of judgment. God promised that “all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness” will be consumed (v. 1). But those who fear the Lord will “go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall” (v. 2). Malachi 4:2 is the verse from which our phrase from Malachi comes: *Sun of Righteousness*.

Malachi 4:5-6: Malachi closed with the promise of Elijah coming to the people before the day of His judgment. His job would be to “turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers” (v. 6). If he did not come, the Lord would curse the land.

CLOSING

Israel had two options. They could either continue to turn away from Him by offering contaminated offerings and turning away from their wives or they could be the faithful remnant that feared the Lord and looked forward to the coming of the *Sun of Righteousness*. Then God will pour out a blessing on them and restore families and your hearts and faith back to Him!

This concludes the Old Testament.



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Reading Guide Questions

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1. Did Malachi 1:11 predict the gospel going out to the Gentiles in Acts 10?
 2. What issues did the Lord say He had with the offerings that were given to Him in Malachi 1?
 3. The Lord said that He “hates divorce.” (Malachi 2:16) Did God ever give permission for divorce? If so, in what instances? (Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:12–16)
 4. The Lord commanded His people to tithe to the “storehouse” in Malachi 3:10. In Malachi’s day, the storehouse would have been the temple. Today, the storehouse is where your soul is being fed. Do you tithe? Why or why not? Has there been a time that you knew the Lord was “rebuking the devourer for your sakes”? (Malachi 3:11)
 5. In Malachi 4:5, the Lord said Elijah the Prophet would be sent. Where else in Scripture was the coming of Elijah mentioned? (Matthew 17:10–12; Revelation 11:3)
 6. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in Malachi 1 —4 through the reading or the teaching?



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