

God Are You Really There? - Part 1

Sunday, June 25, 2023
10:30 AM

Today I want to introduce a new Series based on the book of Malachi. This morning I just want to introduce this book to you and set the foundation for where I want to go as we work our way through each chapter of this important message from God.

And that's what it is... A MESSAGE from the Lord... As we read in the first verse...

Malachi 1:1 (NLT)

1 This is the message that the Lord gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

In fact, the Prophet's name is a play on the fact that God has a message for the people.

The Name Malachi means "My Messenger."

So, God's Messenger brings a message from God.

The book contains 6 Messages from God to the People

1. I have loved you and continue to love you.
2. Israel's priests and people have dishonored me and broken my covenant laws.
3. I do not accept your offerings.
4. Judgement is coming.
5. Repent and Return to The Lord
6. You have said terrible things against me, but I have a scroll of remembrance for those who fear me.

The people responded to each declaration of God with rhetorical questions (questions whose answers are so obvious that they need not be answered verbally) but which showed their attitude towards God. They meet each message with questions of unbelief that God would say such things. The people couldn't conceive that what God was saying about them was true. "How?" they cry out. "In What Ways have we done these things?" they declare. "Why won't you accept our offerings?" "What have we done wrong?" "How have we dishonored you?" "What have we said against you?" "What have we gained by obeying your commands?"

The events of the book of Malachi take place about 100 years after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from exile. During that time there had been periods of great revival and renewal. The Temple and city were rebuilt. The sacrifices restored. The walls were restored. But *the people had become discouraged because the glorious events spoken of by previous prophets had not yet occurred. (e.g. the Lord had not yet come to his temple; their enemies had not been removed; God's people had not been honored among the nations). They expected these things to happen right away. Because it had been longer than they expected, they became spiritually careless and turned back to their ungodly behavior. Spiritual laziness and dullness had filed the hearts and attitudes of the priests and the people. Few took God's laws seriously. The people had become unbelieving and distrustful toward God. They doubted his love and his promises, and they questioned his justice. They believed there was nothing to be gained by obeying his commands. As their faith weakened, their worship became routine, lacking true respect (fear) and love for God.*

Charles Ryrie: About 100 years had passed since the return of the Jews to Palestine. The city of Jerusalem and the second Temple had been built, but initial enthusiasm had worn off. Following a period of revival under Nehemiah (Neh. 10:28-39), the people and priests had backslidden and become mechanical in their observance of the Law. Though lax in their worship (1:7) and delinquent in their tithing (3:8), they could not understand why God was dissatisfied with them.

Yet God had a message for this generation. There would not be another prophetic voice for 400 years after Malachi. His was the last voice between the Testaments. The prophet's message focused strongly on faithfulness to God's Covenant (Something we need for our day as well. Faithfulness to God's Covenant of Grace through His Son, Jesus Christ.)

It's as if God was saying "Don't give up. Don't grow cold and complacent. I am still here. I am still carrying out my plan." "My true message (The Messiah) is coming. All my promises will be fulfilled. But will you be ready?"

And no, it wouldn't happen in their lifetime, but God still wanted them to be prepared.

So, it is with us today. We are a generation between the testaments. Between the fulfilment of promises. The promise of his first coming, his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave - his ascension to the right hand of the Father and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit

And the waiting for the promise of his return, the rapture of the church, the final defeat of the enemy and the creation of a new heavens and new earth.

God's message through Malachi is relevant to our generation as well.

"Don't give up. Don't grow cold and complacent. I am still here. I am still carrying out my plan." "My Son is coming back. All my promises will be fulfilled. But will you be ready?"

We too live in a generation that has grown spiritually dull and lazy. We have been discouraged by the things happening all around us. We have become filled with doubt and distrust of God's plans, promises, and purposes. We question whether it is worth it. Our hearts cry out - "God, are you really there?"

Through the Holy Spirit, Peter wrote about these days.

2 Peter 3:2-14 (NLT)

2 I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles.

3 Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. 4 They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."

5 They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. 6 Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. 7 And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

11 Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, 12 looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. 13 But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

So how did they get to the point that they questioned God's love, care and even existence? How do we?

Losing Our Way

1. Lose our Passion for God
2. Lose our Devotion to God
3. Lose our Dependence on God
4. Lose our Confidence in God
5. Lose our Belief in God

God sends his messenger to us and draw us back to himself.

His messages will challenge us.

His messages will convict us.

His messages will reveal our true condition.

Our responses only reveal our true lack of understanding of our spiritual condition. We think we are ok (Laodicea), but God says different.

Revelation 3:15-19 (NLT)

15 "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! 16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! 17 You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. 18 So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.