

God Are You Really There? - Part 4

Sunday, July 16, 2023
10:30 AM

In the first three parts of this series, we learned that the book of Malachi contains messages of God to His people that are intended to wake us up and call us back to Him - Finding our way back from "God, Are You Really There?" to "God, I Know That You Are There.

First we discussed how we can "Lose Our Way" as we progress from

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

Then we discovered that God's first and primary message to us is... "I Have Always Loved You" Even though we are unworthy of His love, He has met us time and time again and poured out His love, mercy and care in our lives. All we have to do is respond.

Last we dealt with God's convicting message regarding our love of Him and learned that we are not loving God when we don't...

1. Give Him the Best
2. Separate Ourselves From Sin
3. Obey His Commands
4. Love Others

Today we begin Chapter 2 and will see that God's next Message to His people is a plea to LISTEN

LISTENING

Key Text: Malachi 2:1-9 (NLT)

2 “Listen, you priests—this command is for you! 2 Listen to me and make up your minds to honor my name,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning to heart. 3 I will punish your descendants and splatter your faces with the manure from your festival sacrifices, and I will throw you on the manure pile. 4 Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites can continue,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

5 “The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and that is what I gave them. This required reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. 6 They passed on to the people the truth of the instructions they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin.

7 “The words of a priest’s lips should preserve knowledge of God, and people should go to him for instruction, for the priest is the messenger of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 8 But you priests have left God’s paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. 9 “So I have made you despised and humiliated in the eyes of all the people. For you have not obeyed me but have shown favoritism in the way you carry out my instructions.”

- Listen - 2 times in first 2 verses God cries out - "LISTEN!"

1 “LISTEN, you priests—this command is for you! 2 LISTEN to me and make up your minds to honor my name,”

- When we don’t listen to God there are serious consequences

2 Listen to me and make up your minds to honor my name,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning to heart. 3 I will punish your descendants and splatter your faces with the manure from your festival sacrifices, and I will throw you on the manure pile.

- It brings a curse on us as well as on those around us (i.e. descendants in verse 3 and many to stumble into sin in verse 8)

8 But you priests have left God's paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin.

- Causes the blessings that God wants to bring us to disappear

5 "The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and that is what I gave them. This required reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. 6 They passed on to the people the truth of the instructions they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin.

John 10:10 (NKJV)

10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

- The purpose of God's message of warning and the consequences of our refusal to listen to him are meant to bring us back to a place of right relationship with Him and so that we might be able to live in the blessings that He has for us

4 Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites can continue," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

Revelation 3:19 (NIV)

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

- Listening requires POSITIONING OURSELVES to hear
 - Close enough to the Source (If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one around to hear it does it make a sound? Though much has been debated the obvious answer is - You didn't hear it because you weren't there - you have to be close enough to the source to hear it)
 - Of course this assumes we have the ability to hear
 - Sometimes we take steps to get closer to God and thus we hear His voice. But often, especially in the beginning stages of our relationship with Him, it is God who takes steps to get closer to us in order that we might hear His voice
 - Story of the Widow of Nain's son (Also Lazarus) *Only God can speak in such a way that dead people can hear "I speak to dead people"

Luke 7:11-15 (NIV)

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

- Testimony from Johnny & Andrea Pangelinan
We also met this brave lady who is in the picture below. When she was diagnosed with cancer and told she only had 6 months to live, her husband left her. The day we met her and heard her story was exactly the 6-month mark. However, she is here today to testify of God’s healing and grace.

This lovely lady was dead while on the operating table, for an hour the doctors struggled to save her life. During this time something out of this world happened!! Without any knowledge of God or Jesus and without any brain activity whatsoever she said that she saw a man dressed in white. She said “This man came to me and verbally called out to me for me to wake up and then he lifted me to my feet. This is when I came alive and regained consciousness.” She also said that this man led her to come to this place, the church. It’s the only church in the entire village. We praise God for his intervention and now even her extended family have come to know Jesus.

- God in his grace gives us the ability to hear - But the choice to listen belongs to us (Over and over in the scriptures Jesus says... "He who has an ear let him hear). In other words, we need to receive it with a heart of faith (A belief that God is real, that He speaks and that what He says is true).

Hebrews 4:2 (NCV)

2 The Good News was preached to us just as it was to them. But the teaching they heard did not help them, because they heard it but did not accept it with faith.

- It is important that we continue to keep ourselves close to the source so that we can continue to hear what he is speaking to us. (i.e. The Word, Prayer, Worship, Bible Study, Church)
- Removing the blockages that keep us From Hearing

Exodus 6:9 (NLT)

9 So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery.

- Blocking out the other noises that compete for our attention

Psalms 46:10 (NLT)

10 "Be still, and know that I am God!"

- Listening means NOT BEING SELECTIVE in what we hear

5 "The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and that is what I gave them. This required reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. 6 They passed on to the people the truth of the instructions they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin.

9 "...For you have not obeyed me but have shown favoritism in the way you carry out my instructions."

- Listening means more than hearing, it means DOING!

8 But you priests have left God's paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

James 1:22 (NIV)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV) *At the close of the sermon on the mount

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

- Listening means PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY of what we hear

6 They passed on to the people the truth of the instructions they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin.

- Telephone Game (Or Pass It On) - VIDEO

7 "The words of a priest's lips should preserve knowledge of God, and people should go to him for instruction, for the priest is the messenger of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. 8 But you priests have left God's paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. 9 "So I have made you despised and humiliated in the eyes of all the people. For you have not obeyed me but have shown favoritism in the way you carry out my instructions."