

God Are You Really There? - Part 5

Sunday, August 6, 2023

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.

Next 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

Two weeks ago we dealt with the first part of Chapter 2 and saw that God's next Message to His people was a plea to 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
 - 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)
 - Causes the blessings that God wants to bring us to disappear
 - 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

- Listening requires positioning ourselves to hear
 - Close enough to the Source
 - God in his grace gives us the ability to hear - But the choice to listen belongs to us
 - 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.
 - Removing the blockages that keep us From Hearing
 - Blocking out the other noises that compete for our attention
- Listening means not being selective in what we hear
- Listening means more than hearing, it means doing
- Listening means preserving the integrity of what we hear

UNFAITHFUL - CHAPTER 2:10-17

Malachi 2:10-17 (NLT)

10 Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why do we betray each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors?

11 Judah has been unfaithful, and a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. The men of Judah have defiled the Lord's beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols. 12 May the Lord cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

13 Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure. 14 You cry out, "Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?" I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows.

15 Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. 16 "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife."

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. You have wearied him by saying that all who do evil are good in the Lord's sight, and he is pleased with them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

In this message from God to his people, God uses two variations of the picture of the Marriage relationship to highlight and illustrate their unfaithfulness to Him. Now understand, these things were actually happening in Judah and God was not pleased with these actions. He was addressing their sin, but their actions also had Spiritual implications and application to their relationship with God. God was revealing their unfaithfulness to each other but also their unfaithfulness to their God.

The first is seen in verses 11 & 12 and is represented by the men of Judah who had entered into marriage with "women who worship idols" "Yet {they bring} an offering to the Lord of Heaven's Armies"

11 Judah has been unfaithful, and a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. *The men of Judah have defiled the Lord's beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols.* 12 May the Lord cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this *and yet brings an offering to the Lord of Heaven's Armies.*

The second picture is seen in verses 13 through 16 and is represented by those who have been unfaithful in their marriage vows and even divorced their spouse, even though the spouse had been faithful to their marriage vows. Oblivious to their sin, they still want God to receive their offerings and their worship and can't understand why God doesn't bless them.

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But let's step back for just a minute and take a look at the issue that is at the core of all the behavior that God addresses in the messages of the book of Malachi. These two pictures are bookended by the same core problem - The fact that they had lost their faith in the reality of God's existence and presence in their lives. Thus our series title "God - Are You Really There?"

10 *Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God?* Then why do we betray each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors? (In other words, if we really believed that God was there we wouldn't treat each other in such ways because we would realize that we are all His Children)

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. "How have we wearied him?" you ask. You have wearied him by saying that all who do evil are good in the Lord's sight, and he is pleased with them. You have wearied him by asking, "*Where is the God of justice?*" (It doesn't really matter how we act because God isn't really there)

Now, let's go back and consider the Spiritual application to these two pictures

- Marrying women who worship idols
 - Represents those who want to have a relationship with the World and with God
 - They want it both ways (They want to bring an offering to the lord but they don't want their relationship with God to affect their ability to be friends with - married to - the world
 - The problem was that these foreign women they were marrying were bringing their foreign gods (idols) into the marriage relationship... They were still actively worshiping idols.
 - Even in the New Testament Church this was still a problem. That's why Paul gave the following instructions to the Corinthian believers.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial[a]? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

He had already written them in his earlier letter...

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

The Apostle John put it this way...

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

- Unfaithful to their marriage vows and divorce
 - though she remained your faithful partner
 - The implication is that these guys were cheating on their wives and then eventually divorcing them so they could marry younger more worldly women
 - God is our faithful partner
 - We are supposed to be one, but we have broken that oneness with God
 - The picture is that we, who are supposed to be married (one in relationship with God) are cheating on Him.

- Stop cheating on God... What do people see... do they see you hanging out with other women, (women other men)... Do they know that you are married (are a Christian) but see you cheating on your spouse (willfully living a life of sin). Let that picture of infidelity sink in to you.
- Do you really think these women would be ok knowing their husbands were out sleeping with (temple prostitutes - women who worship idols) and them coming home and still saying "I love you" or worse yet do you think they would be ok with these husbands bringing home these women who they were being unfaithful with and telling their wives that they were going to live with them.
- But that's what we do with God. We want Him to be o.k. with our sin. Instead repenting of our sin and seeking His forgiveness and deliverance from our sin, we want to bring it home and ask Him to be ok with it living in His house (us).
- I hate divorce - God is speaking so clearly of our relationship with him but he is also talking about our everyday lives
- But in order for that picture to sink in, we have to truly believe that God is real, that He loves us and wants a real relationship with us and that His ways are true (all who do evil in are good in the Lord's sight - in other words there is no right and wrong because God isn't really there)
- If we really believed that God was there and that He was not only watching but involved in our everyday lives, would we not honor Him in everything that we do?
- Verse 15 "Godly Children from your union" God wants offspring - new life - that springs forth from our relationship with Him

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Romans 6:12-13 (NLT)

12 Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. 13 Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

"I am a new creation in Christ. All of my sins have been forgiven and forgotten. My old life and everything associated with it has passed away. I have new desires pleasing to God, and new goals for a life of peace, prosperity, and joy. I am committed to living a life of honor and integrity. I am committed to let God's love and light shine through me, and His wisdom guide me, change me, and mold me into what He desires I become. The old me is dead, there is a new person living on the inside of me. The Spirit of the Lord now lives in me and my mind will focus on those things that are pure. I am a new creation in Christ and His life within me will be evident for all to see.

– **Provance, Jake; Provance, Keith. I AM: What God Says I Am**