

God's Love For His People

Malachi 1

Hidden away at the end of our Old Testament is the little book of Malachi. His name means 'My Messenger'; who was he? Well, ... we don't know anything about him, except that he wrote c. 450 B.C. and addressed his prophecy to God's special nation, Israel. He was "God's man in God's place in God's time".

You will remember that while Israel wandered in the desert God had chosen to make a *covenant* with them. He had *promised* to bless them, and they had promised to be obedient to Him. God had proved Himself faithful for He had 'kept' His side of the bargain, but Israel had turned away into materialism and idolatry (1:7-10; 3:8).

Consequently, the early zeal for the rebuilding of the Temple had died out and as the people of God had become so caught up with their own comforts a situation of moral and religious decline had set in.

So, what does a father do when his children are disobeying him? What does he do when they insist upon travelling in a completely opposite direction to how he wants them to go? He speaks to them and tries to counsel them, in order to return them to the proper paths. *That was what God did.* Through His servant, Malachi, this prophecy was brought to the children of Israel. It has only 55 verses, - 47 of which are spoken by God.

AFFLICTION

- * In the opening verse of this prophecy is an important word, - *burden*
- * It is a Hebrew word and it describes the type of person Malachi was.
 - * We also have descriptions for people: 'stick-in-the-mud', 'gripe', 'happy-go-lucky'
- * Malachi's state is described as *massa*
 - * while all around him was quiet and calm because of 'social development', etc. you would have known Malachi if you had seen him in the streets.
 - * he would have looked anxious,

- * other times he would have looked angry,
- * and sometimes he would have been in tears.
- * Because of this “burden” he had a tremendous weight pressing down upon his mind and upon his heart.
- * He was suffering tremendous affliction because of what he saw going on around him.

But there was also another AFFLICTION in the land.

- * It was not a physical illness, nor even a psychological illness,
- * It wasn't even a foreign disease that they had 'picked up'.
- * It was far more serious than that, - ... a terrible 'home-grown' disease was afflicting the Israelites. *It was a disease of ...*

Pollution = contamination of the environment, when chemicals damage and interfere with the surroundings.

- * This pollution, however, did not damage the waters/air/ground, ...
- * This pollution was in the hearts and minds of the children of Israel.

Paralysis = a loss of power of motion, or sensation.

- * However, this paralysis didn't effect the limbs, - the legs, arms, etc.
- * This paralysis was a spiritual paralysis in the hearts and minds of the children of Israel.

Profanity = an utter contempt for God.

- * They had unashamedly turned their back on the things of God., and the worst about it was, - they hadn't even realised it.

Let's take a deeper look and learn of the warnings for our own times.

Firstly, Jesus Christ is coming back again soon. He is coming back for His people. His Word warns us that prior to His coming again:

- * “the love of many shall wax cold”
- * This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded,

lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

- * Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?
- * Jesus Christ is coming back to earth at a time when *great confusion* and *great collusion* is taking place, - we have that already!
- * We have saved men and women 'whoring after' apostate religion,
- * We have a falling away because God has placed 'Ichabod' [*The glory is departed from Israel*] over man a church door,
- * We have Bible teachers talking about the coming of the Kingdom, - Jesus never taught *that*,
- * They are erroneously trying to usher in a period of God's rule on earth, - *completely unBiblical and has no foundation in Scripture*,
- * Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.
- * The Kingdom of God has neither part nor parcel with this world, - it consists of the immediate presence of perfect communion and fellowship with God in Heaven.
- * God's Church will never establish a kingdom on earth.
- * Yes, we must learn from the message of Malachi as he addresses the backsliding people of Israel

Look at the ABHORRENCE

- * It stretched across the community
- * ... yet here were a people who owed everything to God.
 - * He had been their salvation as He brought them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea and wilderness,
 - * He had protected them against the Philistines,
 - * He even brought them back from Babylon to Jerusalem,
 - * Ps. 126:1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

- * God said, “I have loved you”; the Israelites replied, “How have you loved us? Sure look what you let happen to us?”
- * They ‘talked back’ to God (v.2b)
- * When God addressed their priests, they denied that they had done anything wrong (v.6).
- * What about today?
 - * Lev. 18:22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.
 - * Lev. 19:30 Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.
 - * Lev. 19: 31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.
 - * Gambling: Lev. 19: 35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. 36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have
 - * Lev. 18:26 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

Look at the ABOMINATION

- * In Malachi’s time their Bible was the Torah,
- * During the period in captivity the Pharisees were set up and they instructed the people regarding the *Torah* (the *Midrash*, - the exposition of the Old Testament with its two divisions, *Haggada* and *Halachah*).
- * But they placed so much emphasis on peripheral matters that the people became ‘fed up’ with listening to all their laws that they began to ignore God’s true Word in the *Torah* and they wouldn’t listen to the true and faithful prophets.
- * Consequently, the people began to formulate a system of worship that was loosely based upon worshipping God.
- * They openly and blatantly disobeyed God’s Word,
 - * Dt. 17:1 Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.)
- * It doesn’t matter what intentions you have, - you may feel they are justified, but if they flout the word of God it’s disobedience and God judges disobedience harshly.

- * It is so sad when a church becomes a social club, a charity fundraiser, or when it becomes so depraved that it ‘jumps into bed’ with the enemies of Christ.
- * That was what was happening in Malachi’s day; there was an ...

ABANDONMENT

- * ... an abandonment of the things of God, - God’s Word, God’s teaching, and ultimately God Himself.
6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.
- * There is an abandonment today and it started first of all in our pulpits,
 - * men preaching a ‘cosy’ gospel,
 - * men preaching what the people want to hear, - a spurious gospel,
 - * men setting aside the unsearchable riches of Christ,
 - * men setting aside the preaching that you need to be saved and come to Christ and none other.
- * The real, genuine things of God have been abandoned and, in turn, God is abandoning many within the “church”.
- * I want you to see something else too:
 - * God is talking to a people for whom He has done much,
 - * Yet, they treat Him with contempt, - ‘second best will do’
 - * Here is what I want you to think about,
 - * ... if you were going to visit the Queen, what preparations would you make?
 - * you would look your best,
 - * you would carry yourself in a particular way ,
 - * you would treasure those moments in her presence.
 - * What about when you come into the house of the King of kings?
 - * what manner do you adopt?
 - * what mode of dress do you wear, - is it glorifying to God? Or is it like something you would feed the pigs with or go to a disco in?
 - * what is your preparation of mind for meeting with God and His people?
- * These are tremendously searching questions, and not just anything will do!

- * God said to these children of Israel whom He loved, “I have no pleasure in you” (v.10),
- * They abandoned God and God abandoned them.

Look at the APOSTASY

- * yes, they “worshipped” God, - i.e. they went to the temple and they offered up sacrifices,
 - * animals, - vv.8
 - * fruit, v.12
- * They went through the procedure, ... but that’s all it was.
- * Malachi had a burden, - his people’s sinful state;
- * They had their burden, v.13 and they couldn’t be bothered.
- * Look at that word that God’s Word emphasises at the beginning of v.14, “But *cursed* be the deceiver ...”
- * An apostate is someone who abandons the truth of God and exchanges it for error,
- * ... someone who offers up that which is polluted, and not their best.

CONCLUSION. We have considered harsh words this morning. It’s a message that is hard to preach and I’m very sure hard to listen to.

- * What kind of worship are you offering to God? Is it your best, or only your second best?
- * If you were to come to my house for tea and I set you down at the table and I offered you ...
 - * a plate of ham and you can make out my thumb-print where I hadn’t washed my hands, as I put the meat on the dish,
 - * and there was a salad, - the lettuce was so old it was fraying and turning up at the edges,
 - * and the tea had a scour on top of it.
 - * *How would you feel?*
 - * would you feel hungry?
 - * would you feel grateful?
 - * would you feel glad to be at my table for tea?
- * God will not accept anything, but our best, - *our very best!*

I trust that we will search our hearts before God today and that He will not lay before us the same accusations that were laid before the children of Israel in Malachi’s day.