EDIFIED EDITION

Malachi

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

4	55	Old	39
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Malachi 1 is the oracle of the LORD's word to Israel through Malachi. The LORD says He has loved them, and they ask, "How have You loved us?" Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet He loved Jacob and hated Esau, and Edom's ruins will never be rebuilt, so that Israel will see that the LORD is great beyond its borders. A son honours his father and a servant his master; where then is the honour due to the LORD? The priests despise His name by offering defiled food and blind, lame and sick animals, which they would not dare give their governor. The LORD wishes someone would shut the temple doors, for He takes no pleasure in them; from the rising of the sun to its setting His name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to Him. But they profane it, sniff at the service as a weariness and bring stolen and crippled animals. Cursed is the cheat who vows a male from his flock and sacrifices a blemished one, for the LORD is a great King, and His name is feared among the nations.

[1] An oracle: the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.[1]

[2] "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you ask, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet Jacob I loved,

[3] but Esau I hated. I have made his hill country a wasteland and left his inheritance to the jackals of the desert."[2]

[4] Edom may say, "We have been crushed, but we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD of Armies says: "They may build, but I will tear down. They will be called the Wicked Country, a people with whom the LORD is angry for ever.

[5] Your own eyes will see it, and you will say, 'Great is the LORD, even beyond the borders of Israel!'

[6] A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honour due to Me? If I am a master, where is the respect owed Me?" says the LORD of Armies to you priests who despise My name. But you ask, "How have we despised Your name?"[3]

[7] "By offering defiled food on My altar." But you ask, "How have we defiled You?" "By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible.

[8] When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you offer the lame or the sick, is

that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you or show you favour?" says the LORD of Armies.

9 "Now plead with God to be gracious to us! With such offerings from your hands, will He show favour to any of you?" says the LORD of Armies.

10 "If only one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on My altar! I take no pleasure in you," says the LORD of Armies, "and I will accept no offering from your hands.

11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting My name will be great among the nations. In every place incense and a pure offering will be brought to My name, because My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of Armies.[4]

12 "But you profane it by saying that the Lord's table is defiled and its food contemptible.

13 And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it," says the LORD of Armies. "When you bring animals that are stolen, lame or sick and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD.[5]

14 "Cursed is the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great King," says the LORD of Armies, "and My name is to be feared among the nations."

1 Malachi means 'My messenger' (compare 3:1). He prophesied after the temple was rebuilt in 515 BC, probably about 460–430 BC, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, who faced the same abuses (Nehemiah 13).

2 Quoted in Romans 9:13 ('Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'). 'Loved' and 'hated' are covenant words for choosing and not choosing (compare Genesis 29:31; Luke 14:26).

3 Malachi is built as a series of disputes: God makes a statement, the people question it, and God answers (1:2, 6–7; 2:14, 17; 3:7–8, 13).

4 The Hebrew can be read as present ('is great') or future. The early church saw here the worship of the Gentiles in Christ (compare John 4:21–23).

5 'Sniff at it' is one of the scribal corrections; the original may have been 'sniff at Me'.

Chapter 2

Malachi 2 warns the priests that if they will not honour the LORD's name, He will curse their blessings and spread on their faces the dung of their festival sacrifices. His covenant with Levi was one of life and peace; Levi feared Him, true instruction was in his mouth, and he turned many from sin, for the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, since he is the messenger of the LORD of Armies. But they have turned from the way, caused many to stumble and corrupted the covenant, so the LORD has made them despised. Then Malachi asks, "Do we not all have one Father?" Why then is Judah faithless, marrying the daughter of a foreign god? The men weep at the altar because the LORD no longer accepts their offerings, because they have broken faith with the wives of their youth, their partners by covenant. The LORD hates divorce and the violence that covers a man's garment; so they are to guard their spirit and not be unfaithful. They have also wearied the LORD by saying that everyone who does evil is good in His sight, or "Where is the God of justice?"

1 "And now, you priests, this command is for you.

2 If you will not hear, and will not resolve in your hearts to honour My name," says the LORD of Armies, "then I will send a curse among you, and I will turn your blessings into curses. In fact I have cursed them already, for you have not set your hearts on it.

3 I am going to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread dung on your faces, the dung of your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.[1]

4 Then you will know that I have sent you this command, so that My covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of Armies.

5 "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him; it called for reverence, and he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.[2]

6 True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many away from sin.

7 For the lips of a priest ought to guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the LORD of Armies.

8 But you have turned aside from the way. Your instruction has caused many to stumble; you have corrupted the covenant with Levi," says the LORD of Armies.

9 “So I in turn have made you despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in your instruction.”

10 Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why then do we break faith with one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?

11 Judah has broken faith; a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary the LORD loves by marrying the daughter of a foreign god.[3]

12 May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob every man who does this, whoever he may be, even if he brings an offering to the LORD of Armies.[4]

13 And this is another thing you do: you cover the LORD’s altar with tears, weeping and groaning because He no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

14 You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have broken faith, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

15 Did He not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let no one break faith with the wife of his youth.[5]

16 “For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and the one who covers his garment with violence,” says the LORD of Armies. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not break faith.[6]

17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you ask, “How have we wearied Him?” By saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the LORD’s sight, and He delights in them,” or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

1 The dung of sacrificed animals was carried outside the camp and burned (Exodus 29:14). The priests would be treated as refuse.

2 Compare Numbers 25:12–13, the covenant of peace with Phinehas, and Deuteronomy 33:8–11.

3 Marriage to women who worshipped other gods (Ezra 9:1–2; Nehemiah 13:23–27).

4 ‘Whoever he may be’ is literally ‘one who wakes and one who answers’, perhaps meaning everyone.

5 The Hebrew of this verse is very difficult, and many renderings are possible. Compare Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6.

6 Or ‘The man who hates and divorces covers his garment with violence’. Spreading a garment over a woman was a sign of marriage (Ruth 3:9).

Chapter 3

Malachi 3 answers the question of 2:17. The LORD is sending His messenger to prepare the way before Him, and the Lord they are seeking will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant in whom they delight. But who can endure the day of His coming? He will be like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap, purifying the Levites so that their offerings please the LORD as in former days. He will come near for judgement against sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, and those who cheat workers, oppress widows and orphans and turn away foreigners. Because the LORD does not change, the descendants of Jacob are not destroyed. They have cheated God in tithes and contributions; let them bring the whole tithe into the storehouse and test Him, and see if He will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessing. They have said it is futile to serve God, since the arrogant prosper. But those who feared the LORD spoke together, and a book of remembrance was written before Him; they will be His treasured possession on the day He acts, and they will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked.

1 “See, I am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight; see, He is coming,” says the LORD of Armies.[1]

2 But who will be able to bear the day He comes? Who will keep his feet when He shows Himself? For He will be like the fire that refines metal, like the soap that bleaches cloth.

3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they will bring offerings to the LORD in righteousness.

4 Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

5 “Then I will come near to you for judgement. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers and adulterers and those who swear falsely, against those who defraud workers of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, and who turn aside the foreigner and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of Armies.

6 “For I the LORD do not change; that is why you, the children of Jacob, are not destroyed.[2]

7 From the time of your forefathers you have strayed from My decrees and failed to keep them. Come back to Me, and I will come back to you,” says the LORD of Armies. Yet you say, “In what way shall we come back?”

8 “Can a mere man cheat God? Yet you are cheating Me!” You ask, “In what way do we cheat You?” “In the tithe and the contribution.[3]

9 You are under a curse, the whole nation of you, because you are robbing Me.

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. Put Me to the test in this,” says the LORD of Armies, “and see whether I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you a blessing until there is no more need.[4]

11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your soil, and the vine in your field will not fail to bear,” says the LORD of Armies.

12 “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight,” says the LORD of Armies.

13 “Your words have been harsh against Me,” says the LORD. But you ask, “What have we said against You?”

14 You have said, “It is useless to serve God. What did we gain by keeping His requirements and walking as mourners before the LORD of Armies?

15 So now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper; they put God to the test and escape.”

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another, and the LORD paid attention and heard. A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the LORD and honoured His name.[5]

17 “They will be Mine,” says the LORD of Armies, “My treasured possession on the day I act. I will spare them as a man spares the son who serves him.[6]

18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.

1 The first messenger is John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27), where Jesus’ words have ‘ahead of You … before You’: the way prepared for the LORD is prepared for Jesus. The Lord who comes to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant, is the LORD Himself.

2 Compare Numbers 23:19; James 1:17.

3 ‘Cheat’ (qaba) sounds like Jacob (ya’aqob), whose name means ‘he cheats’ (Genesis 27:36).

4 The storehouse was in the temple courts (Nehemiah 10:38; 13:12). This is the only place where God invites His people to test Him.

5 Compare Psalm 56:8; Daniel 12:1; Revelation 20:12.

6 ‘Treasured possession’ (segullah) is the word used of Israel at Sinai (Exodus 19:5).

Chapter 4

Malachi 4 announces that the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and evildoers will be stubble, left with neither root nor branch. But for those who fear the LORD’s name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and they will go out leaping like calves released from the stall and trample the wicked like ashes under their feet. They are to remember the law of Moses, the LORD’s servant, the statutes and rules He gave at Horeb for all Israel. Before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes, He will send them Elijah the prophet, who will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, so that He does not come and strike the land with a decree of destruction.

1 For see, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble. The day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of Armies, “so that it leaves them neither root nor branch.[1]

2 But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.

You will go out and leap like calves let out from the stall.[2]

3 You will trample on the wicked; they will be dust and ashes beneath your feet on the day when I act," says the LORD of Armies.

4 "Remember the law of My servant Moses, the statutes and rules I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.[3]

5 Look, before the LORD's great and fearful day arrives, I will send Elijah the prophet to you.[4]

6 He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, so that I do not come and strike the land with total destruction."[5]

1 In Hebrew 4:1–6 are numbered 3:19–24.

2 The 'wings' of the sun are its rays. Charles Wesley drew on this verse in 'Hark! the herald angels sing'.

3 Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai.

4 Jesus said that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come (Matthew 11:14; 17:10–13), who came 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17).

5 'Total destruction' (herem) means a ban, something devoted wholly to God for destruction. In the Hebrew Bible the Prophets end here.