

# THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES OF MALACHI

Allen Ross

## The Seven Messages

These seven messages by the prophet Malachi are filled with doctrinal and practical themes, and although they were delivered to an Israelite congregation several centuries before Christ, they are as meaningful and applicable today as they were then in the following ways:

### **1. *God's Faithful Covenant Love (1:1-5)***

The love of God is the basis for his covenant with his people - Israel then, and the church today. And that love will sustain the faithful through all persecution and trouble. With the new covenant in Christ Jesus we have a better understanding of the love of God.

### **2. *Worship That Dishonors God (1:6-17)***

The principles that inform this message are timeless—believers must fear and honor the Lord in the way that they worship. The outer form of worship with sacrifices and altars has been fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice, and this makes the standard for worship even higher. Treating the sacrifice as worthless and the ritual as drudgery betrays a corrupt minister and profane service.

### **3. *Teaching God's Word Faithfully (2:1-9)***

Those who are entrusted to teach the word have a sacred duty- they must believe it, live it, teach it faithfully, and apply it to turn people to righteousness. This has not changed, neither have the failures and violations of teachers from the days of the apostles now. What has changed is that we have more Scripture to proclaim, and therefore the material in the prophetic literature has to be seen through the revelation of the new covenant.

### **4. *Profaning the Holy Covenant of Marriage (2:10-16)***

Here too the message is still valid. In fact, it is more urgent given the modern corruption of the idea of marriage as it was instituted by God. The reminder of Malachi of the relationship between the man and the woman in marriage fits very well with pastoral counseling for marriage. And violation of marriage still is a sin, still causes great pain to people, and still ruins worship. All of this calls for diligence not to act treacherously and break the marriage vows.

### **5. *God's Justice and Faithfulness (2:17-3:5)***

People still want God to come and judge the wickedness in the world. But the cry for the God of justice can reflect a spirit of self-righteousness as much as a cry of pain. He is coming and no one can stand. But by his grace he has preserved his people from the destruction to come. In this passage we move from a purely Old Testament setting to the prophecy of the coming of Christ. We therefore have the advantage of looking back to see John the Baptist and Jesus Christ as the prophecy becomes clearer. That should not simply clear up some questions; it should inspire to greater faith as we realize the truth of God's word.

### **6. *Gods Faithfulness to the Faithful (3:6-12)***

Here we focus on stewardship. It is one passage in Malachi that is used most frequently in the churches today. The principle is clear: devout worshippers are called to honor God with their stewardship. The details of Israelite sacrifices, offerings, and tithing may not all be carried forward



literally to the New Testament, but the principles behind them are. Giving to God is an act of gratitude and faith - gratitude for all that he has provided and faith that he will continue to meet our needs. But the details of God's blessings for the faithful might change, especially if we are thinking of other countries where rain is in abundance already. God provides physical and material blessings in different ways, and he gives spiritual blessings for the faithful, now in this life and in the rewards in the life to come. So again, the principles remain, but the details are expanded in the new covenant.

### ***7. Preparing for the Coming of the LORD (3:13-4:6)***

The message of this passage is the same for us as it was for Israel. The difference is that we know much more about the first coming and the second coming. But we know of the great judgments on earth to come and the final judgment on the wicked. The church, like the earlier messengers of God, must encourage one another in the faith and warn people of the judgment to come. These principles do not change, even though we have a better knowledge of salvation and judgment because of the new covenant.