

# Malachi chapter 1

Sunday evening, 11th April 2021 | Deal Christian Fellowship | Simeon Forder

Reading: Malachi 1:1-14

Good evening. **Let's pray.**

## Introduction

Tonight, we are going to begin a verse-by-verse study of Malachi, a book that we've not dug into as a church family since 2012. And I think we'll all be challenged in one way or another as we do that - both tonight, and the following 2-3 weeks.

To get started, let's start with a birds-eye view of the book:

- It's the 39th book in the Bible (39/27 split OT/NT)
- Last book in the Old Testament
- Written 433-424 BC around the time Nehemiah is rebuilding (some believe 557-525BC) (yet still deeply relevant today, most news outdated by the next day)
- 4 chapters (similar in size to Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy)
- 55 verses (the whole book is shorter than some chapters elsewhere in the Bible)
- Quoted by Paul in Romans 9:13
- One of three prophets after the exile in Babylon, the others being Haggai and Zechariah. Though you could argue he is the second to last of the OT prophets. John the Baptist technically WAS the last of the OT prophets as he came before Christ. It was at Jesus death and resurrection that the New Testament started.
- Malachi's name means "my messenger" - but beyond that we don't know much else. But therein is a helpful lesson, for it's the message, not the messenger that is important. Dave is our DPD delivery driver, and I know nothing more about him. However, I'm very interested in what he delivers. For all I know, Dave might not be that interesting. But as long as he delivers what I need, he's a good delivery driver. Remember that if you teach the Bible in any context. It's not about you - just faithfully deliver the message - for that message is what people need.
- As books of the Bible go, this has the highest highest percentage of direct, first-person speaking from God
- Theme: Accusations from God and denials from Israel that He is rightfully accusing them of evil. (There are 14 accusations from God and 10 rebellious answers from Israel, and 32 sins noted).

One intro I read notes that "Malachi probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. So sinful has the nation become that God's words to the people no longer have any impact." (NKJV intro)

And of course, when you're questioning the accuracy of God's own statements – that's a clear indication you're not in a good place.

But as always when looking at the Old Testament, we need to be careful to not come down hard on Israel's behaviour, and fail to apply what we read to our own behaviour. Indeed we should make a point of remembering what we read in Romans 15:4...

***Romans 15:4***

*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

So, these things are not merely a rebuke of Israel, but of us too. Let's hope we learn today.,

Zooming in a little more, let's take a look at what's ahead in these four chapters:

**Chapter overview**

1. Israel is loved by God, but has despised God
2. Corrupt priests, broken relationships
3. The coming messenger, we must not rob God
4. Justice will be done - the day is coming

Taking another more step closer, here's what we have ahead of us in chapter 1 this evening – if you're a note taker, then these are the highlights – and we'll come back to these at the end of tonight's study:

**Summary of chapter one**

- God loves us; we must not forget what He has done for us!
- Be humble enough to recognise your sin
- Don't give God your leftovers; give Him your best!
- Never pretend you are giving your all (when you are not)

## Chapter 1: Verse by verse

So, now we've wet our toes, so to speak, let's dive into chapter one.

We read in verse 1:

### ***Malachi 1:1***

*The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.*

The burden of the word. This opening phrase is also used by Nahum and Habakkuk, and the use of the word burden is interesting to me - the Hebrew word behind it giving the idea of a weight, or load. No doubt Malachi felt the burden to share - but I wonder if it was also weighing heavy on his heart at the rebuke that he was to deliver?

He continues:

### ***Malachi 1:2-3***

*"I have loved you," says the LORD.*

*"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'*

*Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"*

*Says the LORD.*

*"Yet Jacob I have loved;*

*But Esau I have hated,*

*And laid waste his mountains and his heritage*

*For the jackals of the wilderness."*

This is shocking. How easily Israel forgot all that God had done for them, saying "In what way have you loved us?". But oh, how easily we do too. We get used to being a Christian, we get used to God's salvation. One week we're reading: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!". And the next we're complaining that God isn't doing what we want!

It's not a pretty sight when a child is ungrateful to their parents, right? But we're God's children and don't we do the same? The problem is, we want God to continually bless us, turning Him into some sort of machine for blessing men. And God does want to bless us - but he wants us to be holy more.

We must not forget what God has already done for us. We must not forget the price that Jesus had to pay for our sin to be forgiven. And we must not be ungrateful children. God has done so much for us, even beyond our salvation.

Here, Malachi relays God's words, showing how well Israel were treated in comparison to the Edomites, with this contrasting statement of how He loved Jacob, whom the Israelites were descended from, and hated Esau, whom the Edomites were descended from.

Many get stuck with these verses. How can God hate Esau? Well, as Charles Spurgeon put it - I'm amazed that God loved Israel! If there is a problem here, it's with that half - not that God hated Esau!

But we know from the Bible that the Edomites had been enemies of Israel, constantly waging war against the people of God, despite being family. And when some of the Jews fled at the time they were taken into captivity, the Edomites delivered them up to the Babylonians and then looted the land! Some family huh?!

Hate is used here as an idiom of preference, as in Luke 14, not a term expressing personal malice or jealousy in the sense we're familiar with. Rather here, it was because of the attitude toward Him. Esau was a fornicator and destitute of hunger for God in his life, while Jacob was the type that loved the Lord and hungered to do his will.

God is not unjust. And Paul, having already quoted verses 2-3 from Malachi, deals with this in Romans chapter 9:

***Romans 9:14-18***

*What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

So Paul, in these verses, also uses the example of Pharaoh, showing how in the same way that the same sun melts wax or hardens clay, the heart of the individual responds differently to the same God - not because of partiality on His part, but because of attitude on theirs.

And now, here in Malachi, prophecy has been fulfilled, with the land of the Edomites desolate. We read...

***Malachi 1:4-5***

*Even though Edom has said,  
"We have been impoverished,  
But we will return and build the desolate places,"  
Thus says the LORD of hosts:  
"They may build, but I will throw down;  
They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness,  
And the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever.*

*Your eyes shall see,  
And you shall say,  
The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel.'*

Back in verse 2, Israel are asking "When did you love us?" – God now points out – look over the border, and see how your blessing compares to the desolate land of Edom.

Don't forget what God has done for you. One look at the world around us should remind us of that. Not so we can gloat, but so we can be grateful.

In verse 6 we read...

***Malachi 1:6***

*"A son honours his father,  
And a servant his master.  
If then I am the Father,  
Where is My honour?  
And if I am a Master,  
Where is My reverence?  
Says the LORD of hosts  
To you priests who despise My name.  
Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'*

In verse 6 we see God question where Israel's hearts are at. And we see that Israel - even the priests - were so far removed from a close walk with God that they were ignorant that a problem existed. How this should remind us of what we read in Matthew 7:

***Matthew 7:21-23***

*"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

We find our response required of us in 2 Corinthians...

***2 Corinthians 13:5-6***

*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.*

The worst possible thing you could do with your life is to be a churchgoer, but not a Christian. To know about Jesus, but not know Him. If you do not know Jesus as your Saviour, that is the one thing you must resolve.

The Lord continues in verse 7:

***Malachi 1:7***

*"You offer defiled food on My altar,  
But say,  
'In what way have we defiled You?'  
By saying,  
The table of the LORD is contemptible.'*

You see, going to the temple often didn't prove anything. Neither does going to church often. It is not your GPS position, but the position of your heart that is key. And here, Israel are questioning what God is saying to them - "in what way have we defiled you?" - but really only further exposing their attitude.

May we note from this how we must be humble enough to recognise our sin. If not before man, we certainly should before God. Charles Spurgeon commented:

A man who says "I was wrong" really in effect says "I am a little wiser today than I was yesterday"

**Charles Spurgeon**

Verse 8 continues by showing how they despised their offerings to God:

***Malachi 1:8***

*And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice,  
Is it not evil?  
And when you offer the lame and sick,  
Is it not evil?  
Offer it then to your governor!  
Would he be pleased with you?  
Would he accept you favourably?"  
Says the LORD of hosts.*

So, what is going on here is that Israel were not just avoiding offering their best - they were offering their worst.

It's like this, guys - can you picture the scene if you buy your wife a kitten or puppy for her birthday, but you choose one with only 1 eye. Or one with 3 legs? "Hey honey - look how much I love you!". Or bringing home some flowers that you found in a bin. Or ladies, can you picture serving a special meal to your best friends or loved one's birthday with your leftovers.

If you LOVE someone - you will give them your best. What then, do we do in our service, our offering to God. Do we really give Him our best? I fear we do not.

God says here in verse 8, try this with your Governor! So imagine for a moment, how your boss would take it if you worked half-heartedly. If you turned up late, left early. Only went to work on days you felt like it. Or perhaps if you fell asleep in meetings (actually I did that once), or didn't take notes in meetings. What if you failed to do the things you said to them you'd do. Or didn't bother turning up to meetings when your favourite sport was on. Do you think they would tolerate it if you worked for a competitor? Do you give God your best?

We are not to give God our leftovers. Don't bring God what's left over of your time or finances, energy or ability. Do we devote more time to our hobbies, than we do to our Lord? Do we pay more in taxes than in tithes? Perhaps the real question is are we more willing to pay taxes? Consider who has done more for you; the Government, or God?

J Vernon McGee said:

Are you giving what you give for a good meal when you eat out? Are you giving as generously to the Lord's work as you do to other things where it makes a show? My friend, the old sick cow is still being taken to church today. That is the method that Israel used; and, believe me, the Lord didn't let it pass.

**J Vernon McGee**

Of course, God wants a willing heart. But if you won't do it out of love, will you at least do it out of duty? Or out of sheer thankfulness for all He has done for you?

***Malachi 1:9***

*"But now entreat God's favour,  
That He may be gracious to us.  
While this is being done by your hands,  
Will He accept you favourably?"  
Says the LORD of hosts.*

Are we really so rude as to ask for God's blessing when we're not even giving back to Him?

***Malachi 1:10***

*"Who is there even among you who would shut the doors,  
So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain?  
I have no pleasure in you,"  
Says the LORD of hosts,  
"Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.*

"Shut the doors of the temple," the Lord says. In other words, "isn't there even one person willing to put an end to the hypocrisy?"

Again, while we can look at Israel here and tut-tut - how lazy have we become? Are we so far removed from God that even the smallest of service to him is too much?

We say "I can't do that because I need to get the dinner on." Or "I need to spend some time relaxing." Or "I have a busy day at work tomorrow."

It's not about being unreasonable - but we must at least be reasonable. Any serving God will require some sacrifice.

Right at the end of 2 Samuel, we read of David's attitude.

**2 Samuel 24:23-24a**

*All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king."*

*And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you."*

*Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing."*

God doesn't expect more than we can give. But He does expect what we can give. Not just of your money, but of your time.

We read in verse 11:

**Malachi 1:11**

*For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,*

*My name shall be great among the Gentiles;*

*In every place incense shall be offered to My name,*

*And a pure offering;*

*For My name shall be great among the nations,"*

*Says the LORD of hosts.*

And of course, this was what David had written in Psalm 113:

**Psalm 113:3**

*From the rising of the sun to its going down*

*The LORD's name is to be praised.*

And in verse 11 we see this incredible prophecy, that the gentiles, as well as the Jews will hold God's name dear to them. This verse will be literally fulfilled in the millennium under Christ.

But even now we are the very people who should be praising God. But continuing in verse 12...

**Malachi 1:12**

*"But you profane it,*

*In that you say,*

*The table of the LORD is defiled;*

*And its fruit, its food, is contemptible.'*



Finnis Dake comments and says:

One would think that the priests would have acceptable tables with clean, good clothes on them, but they became careless and acted as if any kind of service was good enough for God; thus the tables and the fruit and meat thereof became contemptible.

**Finnis Dake**

And likewise our offerings should be pure - from a pure heart. And of course, we should consider the parallel to how we can mistreat communion. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:

***1 Corinthians 11:26-30***

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*

Oh, how heavy this burden of the word must have been on Malachi, for so deep was Israel's sin. So wrong was their attitude..

***Malachi 1:13***

*You also say,  
'Oh, what a weariness!'  
And you sneer at it,"  
Says the LORD of hosts.  
"And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;  
Thus you bring an offering!  
Should I accept this from your hand?"  
Says the LORD.*

The service and worship of God had become a drudgery to them, so naturally things in God's house were neglected. What a weariness, we read. But what of us? Are you bored at church? If so, I can guarantee it's your heart that needs to change first. We are not going to try and make the services more exciting with flashing lights, thumping music and smoke machines.

Again, we see here in verse 13 that Israel were pretty much bringing road-kill instead of pure animals. Sick instead of healthy, contrary to the law. Do we honestly think we can offer our minimum to God and say, "oh well, that'll do."?

But as this chapter concludes, it gets worse...

***Malachi 1:14***

*"But cursed be the deceiver  
Who has in his flock a male,  
And takes a vow,  
But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—  
For I am a great King,"  
Says the LORD of hosts,  
"And My name is to be feared among the nations.*

So even worse - Israel HAD healthy pure offerings, but kept them for themselves. How much of God's blessing do we keep to ourselves? We dedicate our children to the Lord, but then they become a barrier to us serving him because we are too busy.

We pray God will bless us with good jobs, and then get so consumed by them that we are too tired to serve, or too focused on them. We pray God will bless us with husbands, wives, friends, family - and spend every waking moment with them - and not with the God that gave them to us.

We pray that we will be close to God. Then do little, or worse absolutely nothing about it. James 4:8 says Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Not the other way around.

I guess we just need to get our priorities right.  
And by God's grace - Not through our own efforts.  
And we need to encourage each other in doing that.

Jon Courson notes...

The people weren't being indicted for their lack. They were being indicted for their failure to give back to the Lord the best of what He had already given them. In any area of our walk, the Lord only asks of us that which He has already provided.

**Jon Courson**

The deceiver in this case was a man who had perfect animals, but offered the imperfect to God, making it appear that this was the best sacrifice he possessed. Just like what we read of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 (and in case you can't remember, that didn't work out well).

# Summary

We've gone through this chapter, and by way of summary, I want to remind you of the key points:

## Summary of chapter one

- God loves us; we must not forget what He has done for us!
- Be humble enough to recognise your sin
- Don't give God your leftovers; give Him your best!
- Never pretend you are giving your all (when you are not)

Next week, we'll study all of chapter 2 - where we'll look at the corrupt priests, the broken marriages, and the wrong relationships of the people. I expect we'll be challenged by that too.

Tonight though, I want to close with some words from J Vernon McGee...

Let's put it on the line today: Do you have religion, or do you have Christ? Are you real, or are you just going through the form of it? Do you wear your Christianity like a garment that you can take off and put aside at any time, and do you generally put it aside when you are not in church? Perhaps you assume a certain pious attitude and can quote pious platitudes, but how real is Christ to you?

**J Vernon McGee**

**Let's pray.**