

Malachi • “Talking” vs. “Walking”

Introduction

1 Peter 2:9-10, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

God speaks through Malachi for the last time before engaging in over 400 years of silence, broken by the announcement of the angel to Zacharias of the impending birth of John the Baptist, the messenger spoken of through Malachi. Malachi’s message is largely directed at the priesthood’s miserable personal walk with the Lord and their public teaching of the people at large to change and facilitate the right relationship with God, followed by the promise of a messenger whose personal example and teachings would properly prepare the hearts of the people for a relationship with God through the Messiah. It’s a lesson to us – the new priesthood – of our personal accountability in our relationship with God, our example to others, and our role in preparing others to accept Christ as their personal Savior.

Through Malachi, God identifies the issues through the posing of several questions in the people’s own words followed by the contradiction of their life’s actions with the Word of God and the message it sends to the people around them.

¹The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

²“I have loved you,” says the LORD.

But you say, “How have You loved us?”

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob; ³but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” ⁴Though Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins”; thus says the LORD of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever.” ⁵Your eyes will see this and you will say, “The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!”

[Read 1:1-5]

Q: What is the answer to the question in v.2, “How have You loved us”?

A: God has chosen them; not just over all the other nations of the earth but even within the same family (Jacob & Esau were brothers).

Ephesians 1:4, “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him...”

This verse plainly states that our calling is to be “holy and blameless before Him” – that is, separated and devoted to God’s kingdom, not the kingdom of this world.

Q: What might we surmise from v.4 is the current situation with Esau or those that were NOT chosen?

A: They’re currently “building” or “on the rise”. At the time of this writing Esau is not subdued and, historically, Edom (the descendants of Esau) will have a prominent role in the intervening centuries between Malachi and John the Baptist.

Q: Are non-believers sometimes “doing better” in life than believers? Why is that and what point of view should we take?

A: They’re only temporarily better off from an earthly point of view. We are chosen from God’s much greater, eternal point of view. Our service extends beyond the limitations of this present life.

Point: We must not lose sight of the fact that we are God’s chosen regardless of the current situation, knowing that in the end we will prevail through Him.

⁶“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name.

But you say, ‘How have we despised Your name?’

⁷“You are presenting defiled food upon My altar.

But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’

In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’ ⁸But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts. ⁹“But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says the LORD of hosts. ¹⁰“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from you. ¹¹For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD of hosts.

¹²“But you are profaning it, in that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’

¹³You also say, ‘My, how tiresome it is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it,” says the LORD of hosts, “and you bring what was taken by robbery and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering!

“Should I receive that from your hand?” says the LORD. ¹⁴“But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the LORD, for I am a great King,” says the LORD of hosts, “and My name is feared among the nations.”

[Read 1:6-14]

Q: What is the answer to the questions in v.6 & 7, “How have we despised Your name?” and “How have we defiled You?”

A: They are allowing blemished – in other words, unclean – sacrifices.

Q: What’s the big deal about “blemished” sacrifices? What do clean vs. unclean sacrifices represent?

A: It’s the allowance of sin to be a normal part of what we give to God. It’s a spirit of compromise which allows unholiness to co-exist with holiness, a situation God cannot tolerate.

Q: Why, according to v.10, does God desire his gates to be shut?

A: Sacrifices are supposed to be the **END** of the process, a celebration of repentance before God. First the heart is supposed to change and **then** the sacrifices are to be given to **celebrate** the change of heart. The sacrifices are not a “safety net” or ritual to simply cover sin. Compare this with Jesus’ example in Matthew 5:23-24:

“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Point: *We are not to mix unholiness with holiness, to serve God with unconfessed sin in our life. Preparation for our personal service before Him involves taking the necessary steps that prepare a devoted, uncompromised heart.*

¹³“This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴“Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’

“Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

¹⁵But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶“For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the LORD of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

¹⁷You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?”

[Read 2:13-17]

Q: According to v.16, what are the things they’re doing that have “wearied Him”? What does it mean to cover ones “garment with wrong”?

A: They are tolerating sin, wearing it openly alongside the few things in which they’re obedient to God. This compliments the previous condition as another example of allowing sin to coexist with what is claimed to be holy – ourselves.

Q: What was the Old Testament standard for divorce? How did it work on the technical, legal level?

A: Deuteronomy 24:1, “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,” The husband writes the wife a certificate of divorce and sends her back to her family.

Q: How do you interpret the statement in v.14, “....she is your companion and your wife by covenant” in contrast to the law of divorce?

A: Relationships have a higher calling and accountability than just a legal status. What is implied is the application of love to the law and the deeper commitments that it brings out rather than doing just enough to “legally” comply. Obedience from the heart is required, not merely a disciplined life.

Point: We cannot, in the name of pursuing God’s service, neglect the application of love to the law and our relationships. Devotion to God is revealed in our devotion to others.

⁷“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’

[Read 3:7]

Q: What is the answer to the question, “How shall we return?”

A: Obedience. Becoming a “doer” of the Law, not just a “hearer”.

Point: A key characteristic of a priest is obedience to the Word.

⁸“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!

“But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’

“In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. ¹²“All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.

[Read 3:8-12]

Q: The example of robbery is not giving God their whole tithe and offering. Is God really concerned with money?

A: Tithes and offerings are not a system of taxation but is taught in the OT as being “worship.” Imagine coming into God’s presence to only worship Him with 75% of your being.

Point: We never come to withhold even 1% of our worship from Him. When we bring 100% we receive many more times that in return. Note that 100% of \$1 is the same as 100% of a \$1,000.

¹³“Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’”

¹⁴“You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?’”

¹⁵So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.”

[Read 3:13-15]

Q: What is the real feeling behind the assertion that there is “no profit” serving God?

A: They are looking at their immediate condition. The wicked “appear” to prosper in this life and the people have lost sight that God’s rewards are promised for the coming life, not necessarily for this one.

Matthew 6:19-21, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Point: The true priest understands **true** rewards and the difference between **temporary** earthly things which will fade and **eternal** heavenly things which will remain forever. He’s committed to the long-term vision of God, not the short-term vision of Satan.

⁶True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

[Read 2:6-7]

Q: What are the key characteristics of the righteous priest?

A: They both “talk the talk” **AND** “walk the walk”. They are an example in both the integrity of their personal life and in their instruction of others.

¹“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the LORD, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.

²“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

[Read 3:1-4]

Q: Obviously the priesthood at the time of Malachi was not living up to the standards of 2:6-7. According to this passage, how would that be rectified?

A: v.3 indicates that there will be a purification process to ensure that those that serve God do so in righteousness.

⁵“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. ⁶He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

[Read 4:5-6]

Q: What is Elijah’s primary purpose?

A: To restore the hearts. (Think about this in relationship to all the characteristics discussed to this point.)

Q: How does this relate to the questions asked in Malachi and the example of 2:6-7 of the righteous priesthood?

A: Through a refining process their hearts will be restored to the right condition of obedience in both their personal lives and in their example to, and teaching of, others.

⁵In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

[Read Luke 1:5-17]

Q: What are the key accomplishments prophesied in v.16-17 for John the Baptist?

- (1) Turn many back to God
- (2) Go as a forerunner before Christ
- (3) Make ready a people prepared for Christ.

Q: Obviously a pattern for our own lives, what are the 2 key prerequisites according to v.15?

A: Separation to the Lord (not just minimal obedience to the law) and filled with the Spirit.

Q: How did John fulfill God’s word in Malachi of a refining process of the people?

A: Luke 3:4-6, “as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness,

*‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.
EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED,
AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW;
THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT,
AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;
AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.’”*

⁸Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, ⁹according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

¹¹And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹²Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. ¹³But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. ¹⁴You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Showing the people how to remove, fill in or overcome any spiritual obstacle in their life preventing them from coming before God 100%, without the compromise of sin. John’s message and baptism was the beginning of the process allowing them to come to Christ divested of the sinful practices they allowed to live side-by-side with their adherence to the law. It began the fulfillment of the law through Christ’s love.