

Malachi 1:1-5

1. The word "oracle" could also be translated as "burden." What does this imply about the message of the prophet?
2. Note the LORD's statement, "I have loved you." and the response in the form of the challenging question, "How have you loved us?" What does the response indicate?
3. Why would these people question God's love for them?
4. When do you feel God's love, and when do you not? What makes the difference?
5. What response did the LORD provide as an explanation and proof of his love for his people?
 - a. How does the reference to Jacob and Esau explain God's love for his people? (See Gen 25:21-34, Jer 46:27-28, & Rom 9:8-16)
 - b. Who was heir to the promise, and who was not?
 - c. Considering Israel's history, how was God's love expressed to "Jacob"?
 - d. According to Obadiah 1:1-4, why was Edom destroyed?
 - e. What is the point of the striking comparison between Jacob and Esau? (Judah & Edom)
 - f. Using Jacob as an example, on what does God's love depend?
 - g. Regardless of how we feel, how has God shown his love for us?
6. What does "Great is the LORD – even beyond the borders of Israel" express about God's love? (See Gen 12:1-3, Is 2:2-4, Is 11:10, Is 42:6, Is 49:6, Rev 7:9-10)

Malachi 1:6-14

1. Note the LORD's statement, "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name." The response was in the form of the challenging question, "How have we shown contempt for your name?" What attitude does the response indicate?

Contempt—(law) willful disobedience to, or open disrespect of, a court of justice; the feeling with which one regards that which is esteemed mean, vile, or worthless; scorn.
2. Why, in this case, are the priests held responsible for "contempt?" What did the Law require? (See Ex 12:5, Lv 1:3,10)
3. Note the analogy of the father-son relationship. Considering the 5th commandment (Ex 20:12), explain how the analogy illustrates the "contempt" of the priests?
4. Note the analogy of the governor (possibly Nehemiah). Explain how the analogy illustrates the "contempt" of the priests?
5. Is what you do not prize, or what you do not need, a sacrificial gift?
 - a. Does God need our offerings?
 - b. Can we receive more love from God by our offerings? Why? Or why not?
 - c. How can we be sure of God's love for us?
 - d. What are our motives for giving offerings? How can wrong motives for giving offerings show contempt for God?
6. How does God view our offerings? What "scale" does he use? (See Malachi 1:14, Luke 21:1-4, and Ps 51:15-17.) Describe the contrast between "a broken and contrite heart" and "contempt"?
7. Considering Malachi 1:10, what is more important than what?

8. How can ministry or worship become a "burden"? (See Malachi 1:13)
 - a. If ministry becomes a burden, what's wrong with the minister?
 - b. If worship becomes a burden, what's wrong with the people?
9. Note the repetition in Malachi 1:5, 1:11, and 1:14. Why is God's name and reputation important to him? How could the priests' contempt affect God's name and reputation to the surrounding nations?
10. What can we do today to avoid "worthless worship"?
 - a. In what ways is "worthless worship" evident?
 - b. How should we worship God?

Malachi 2:1-9

1. To whom is this section addressed? What is the prophet calling the priests to do?
2. Note the graphic picture given in Mal 2:3. ("Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and I will put you out of my presence." RSV.) Why is this pronouncement so severe? Why are the priests singled out?
3. What comparison did Malachi make for the priests of his day?
 - a. What standard did he use? See Deut. 4:40, 6:2, & 30:15-20.
 - b. What were the qualifications for the priests listed in Mal 2:5-7?
 - c. Why is each of them important?
 - d. Compare these characteristics to the attitudes of the priests in Malachi 1:10-14.
4. What of these qualifications are appropriate for pastors in the contemporary church? What are the characteristics of a true minister of the Gospel?
 - a. Compare these OT qualifications for priests to NT qualifications for pastors and elders. (See I Tim 3:1-12) How can ignoring these qualifications cause "many to stumble" (Mal 2:8)?
 - b. What effect do these characteristics of pastors and elders have on the following issues:
 - i. Their own conversion
 - ii. Their call to service
 - iii. Their devotional life
 - iv. Their message
 - v. Their social concern
 - vi. Their evangelism
 - vii. Their relationship to their fellow ministers
 - c. Consider I Peter 2:9-12. To what degree should these characteristics apply to us, the laymen of the church? Why?
 - d. How do these qualifications affect God's people, and how do they affect God's name and reputation in the world? See Romans 2:17-24.
5. How can we positively encourage our pastors and elders (as well as each other) to adhere to these qualifications?

Malachi 2:10-16

1. Malachi refers to "one Father" and "one God" in verse 10. If this implies a brotherhood, what kind of brotherhood is he talking about?

- a. To what family did Malachi refer in 2:10?
 - b. To what Father did Malachi refer in 1:6?
 - c. To who does the pronoun "we" in 2:10 refer?
2. On what basis did Malachi conclude, "...marrying the daughter of a foreign god desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves"? (Mal 2:11)
 - a. What does "daughter of" imply?
 - b. What had been the effect of mixed marriages in Israel in the past and in Malachi's day? (See Neh 13:23-24, 26-27) What was at risk?
 - c. Consider the effect of Solomon's disobedience in I Kings 11:1-13.
 - d. Why were mixed marriages such as Boaz & Ruth (Ruth 1:16) and aliens living among the Israelites Ex 12:38, 48) approved?
 - e. What is the basis for Paul's prohibition of mixed marriages in II Cor 6:14?
 - f. What is the main thing for you to have in common with your spouse? Why?
 3. How had the people of Judah broken faith with each other and with the Father?
 4. Why did Malachi use divorce and mixed marriages as examples of broken faith? Which did he emphasize in Chapter 2?
 5. Why did Malachi connect broken faith to desecrating the sanctuary?
 - a. Where were you married?
 - b. Who witnessed your marriage?
 - c. Who performed the ceremony?
 - d. What scripture was read at your wedding?
 - e. What vows could be more solemn than the marriage vows made in God's house before God's people?
 - f. What is the source of the institution of marriage? (See Gen 1:27; 2:18-25)
 - g. What is the difference between the Biblical view of Marriage and that of contemporary civil law?
 6. What is the LORD's view of divorce? Why does he connect it with "violence" in verse 16?
 7. Paul used the concept of marriage to explain the relationship between Christ and his Church? See Eph 5:22-33. In view of this reference, what is the evil of divorce?
 8. Why did Malachi repeatedly use the phrase "the wife of your youth?" Where else have you seen this phrase? See Proverbs 5:15-23. What is the implication of the phrase?
 9. Why is divorce among Christians as common as non-Christians?
 - a. What forces are active today to move Christians in that direction?
 - b. How have contemporary cultural values affected Christian marriages?
 - c. What are the causes of divorce among Christians? What are the underlying failures?
 10. How has the contemporary Christian church contributed to the problem of divorce among Christians?
 - a. What is being taught, and what is not being taught about Christian marriages in Evangelical churches today?
 - b. How has the standard been lowered with a permissive attitude?
 - c. How have the professional clergy been examples?
 - d. What is published in Christian books today?
 - e. What are legitimate, Biblical reasons for divorce?
 11. What does it mean to "guard yourself in your spirit," and how can you do so?
 12. How does the institution of marriage affect other institutions of society? Conversely, what damage is caused by divorce?

13. How can breaking faith with others affect our relationship with the LORD? (See Mal 2:13-14) How will it affect your prayer life? (See I Peter 3:7)

Malachi 2:17 - 3:5

1. Note the LORD's statement, "You have wearied the LORD with your words." The response was in the form of the challenging question, "How have we wearied him?" What does the response indicate?
2. What wearies the LORD?
3. Why would the people of Judah say, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD"?
4. Does an over-expectation of justice and fairness in the world "weary the LORD"?
 - a. How do you view the apparent prosperity of evil people in the world?
 - b. Consider these questions: "Why do good people suffer?" "Why is life unfair?" "Where is the God of justice?"
 - i. How can these expressions be cynical, showing unbelief, disillusionment and a failure of faith?
 - ii. How can we answer others who ask these and similar questions?
 - iii. What is the difference between grace and fairness?
5. What two messengers are noted in Mal 3:1? What are their functions as listed by Malachi? Why are these functions important? (Also see Luke 4:17-19 and Matt 11:2-6)
6. Why does the LORD need a messenger to prepare the way for his coming?
7. When did the LORD's messenger come, and what did he do? (See Matt 3:3, Mark 1:1-8, Is 40:3-5, John 1:15-28, Matt 11:10-15, Luke 3:3-6, and Mark 9:9-13)
 - a. When did the LORD come into his temple, and what did he do there? (See Mark 11:11-19, 11:27-12:43)
 - b. To what degree was the LORD's justice evident in these Mark references?
 - c. To what degree was the prophecy in Malachi 3:1-5 fulfilled? What remains unfulfilled?
 - d. According to Jesus, who will perform the judgment prophesied by Malachi? (See John 5:22-23, 30)
 - i. What is the point of the rhetorical questions in verse 2, "But who can endure the day of his coming?" "Who can stand when he appears?"
 - ii. Note the imagery in Malachi 3:2-5. What are the purposes of his judgment, and what will be the results? Who will receive judgment, and who will be refined?
 - iii. Which of these do we need from the LORD: grace or fairness? Why?
8. At this time in history, with so much injustice in the world, how should we perceive the apparent silence of God? Considering the message of Malachi, what should we do?

Malachi 3:6-12

1. Note the LORD's statement, "Return to me, and I will return to you." The response was in the form of the challenging question, "How are we to return?" What does the response indicate?
2. Similarly, the LORD declared, "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me." The response was another challenging question, "How do we rob you?" What does the response indicate?
 - a. How did the LORD's indictment in Mal 3:8 answer the question, "How are we to return?"
 - b. Why did the LORD include his claim of immutability in Mal 3:6?
 - i. How had the descendants of Jacob changed in regard to their ways?
 - ii. How had Solomon changed?
 - iii. What good news in God's immutability did Malachi present to the descendants of Jacob?
 - iv. If God does not change, who must do so? How?

3. What was the purpose of the tithe in Malachi's day? Who and what did it support? (See Lev 27:30-33 and Deut 14:28, 29)
 - a. What was the condition of the temple as noted by Nehemiah? (See Neh 13:10-13)
 - b. What did the condition of the temple indicate about the priests and the people?
4. What are the New Testament's requirements for tithing?
 - a. If legalism should not be a part of our contemporary church, how much should we give? (See Mark 10:17-23, Acts 5:1-11)
 - b. If you tithe, what should be your attitude for the remaining 90 percent?
 - c. What does tithing require? What is the proper motivation for tithing? See Phil 4:4-7, 4:19; Rom 12:1-2, 12:6-8; Matt 6:1-4, 23:23-28.
5. What did the LORD promise in Malachi regarding obedience to the requirement for tithe?
 - a. What are the benefits for practicing the tithe?
 - i. For you.
 - ii. For the Church
 - iii. For the world
 - b. What is the implication in Malachi 3:12, "Then all the nations will call you blessed..."? Compare to Malachi 1:5, 11, & 14. How do the LORD's blessings on his people affect world evangelism?
 - c. How did withholding the tithe affect the LORD's relationship with Malachi's people?
6. Other than the tithe, what else do we withhold that belongs to the LORD?

Malachi 3:13-18

1. Note the LORD's statement, "You have said harsh things against me." The response was in the form of the challenging question, "What have we said against you?" What does the response indicate?
2. What additional cynical attitudes of the priests are evident in Malachi 3:14?
 - a. Why would they call the arrogant blessed, noting that "the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape?"
 - b. Why would the priests feel like mourners or think that serving God is futile?
 - i. What is their problem, and how is it connected to withholding tithes?
 - ii. What was their apparent motivation for serving God?
3. What is the accusation these people are making against God?
4. The seventh complaint is in Malachi 3:13. How is this complaint of the LORD and its response a summary of the previous six complaints?
 - a. How have you loved us? (Mal 1:2)
 - b. How have we shown contempt for your name? (Mal 1:6)
 - c. How have we defiled you? (Mal 1:7)
 - d. How have we wearied him? (Mal 2:17)
 - e. How are we to return? (Mal 3:7)
 - f. How do we rob you? (Mal 3:8)
5. What seven distinct transgressions are revealed by each of the seven complaints?
6. How have the people's responses indicated that they were blind to their sins?
 - a. When we deny blame for our sins, or when we rationalize to justify our sin, what are we saying to God?
7. What other encouraging reaction is presented in Malachi 3:16 in contrast to the seven responses above?
 - a. What are the characteristics of those who fear the LORD listed in Malachi 3:16?

- b. What is the benefit talking to each other about these complaints?
 - c. What does it mean to fear the LORD?
 - d. What can fearing the LORD lead to?
 - e. How can we honor the LORD's name?
8. Who will make up the LORD's "treasured possession"? (Mal 3:17)
 9. How is grace and justice envisioned in Malachi 3:17 & 18? How do these verses introduce Chapter 4?

Malachi 4:1-6

1. What is the "sun of righteousness?" (Mal 4:2)
Some commentators consider the phrase to refer to Christ, including Martin Luther. Others consider the phrase to refer to the consequences and effects of righteousness like the sun, which spreads light and warmth over the earth. In that sense, it is "the vindication and triumph of the righteous" (J. M. Boice)
2. What is the good news for those who have suffered injustice?
3. What is the ultimate hope for justice? Who will triumph over the wicked? Why?
4. What hope did Malachi give in verse 5? To what fathers and to what children does Malachi refer? (See Mal 1:6, 2:10, 3:3 & 4)

Assignment:

Complete either question I or J below:

1. List and comment on the major themes presented by Malachi?
2. Briefly summarize how the message of Malachi can be applied today. See Rev 3:14-22.