

LAST WORDS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Here's a list of some final pronouncements – the last words uttered before death...

"You can make it easy, the train isn't coming so fast... Gimme a match. I think my gas tank is empty... Let's see if it's loaded... Honey, these biscuits are hard as a rock... Step on it, we're only going 75... Just watch me dive off that bridge..." And finally, "*What? Your mother is going to stay a whole month?*"

Malachi is also an example of some final pronouncements. It's the last words of the Old Testament. In between Malachi and Matthew we

have what scholars call the 400 silent years. The Babylonian Talmud, a Jewish commentary on Scripture, states, "Malachi was last written, and the Spirit departed." Malachi was the last word God would speak to Israel, before He sent the living Word, Jesus Christ.

That's why this book is so important. It's the message God wanted ringing in the ears of His people for four centuries. He gave them 400 years to chew on this message. These were the words God used to prepare His people for His Son.

MALACHI ON THE TIME LINE

Malachi 1:1 is an introduction, "The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi." The prophet Malachi was part of the post-exile period of Israel's history. When Persia conquered Babylon the Jews were allowed to return home, and they came back to the land in three waves of immigration over a 90 year period.

In 536 BC, a governor named *Zerubbabel* returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to encourage Zerubbabel.

In 458 BC, *Ezra* the priest led a second homecoming. He reestablished the authority of Scripture and role of the priesthood. Ezra rebuilt the people.

And in 444 BC, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city's walls. At Nehemiah's request the Persian King Artaxerxes commissioned the project. And despite fierce opposition - *with a sword in one hand and a shovel in the other hand* – the men under Nehemiah's command were able to complete the mission.

Twelve years after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to Persia to report on the status of the walls to Artaxerxes. But you've heard the saying, "While the cat's away, the mice will play" – that's exactly what happened to the Jews...

During Nehemiah's trip to the pagan land of Persia the Jews he'd left behind began to act like pagans. They ignored God, neglected the temple, and forgot the Scriptures. They came *back to the land* only to turn their *backs on the Lord*.

Nehemiah eventually returned and served a second term as governor, but in his year-long absence God raised up the *Prophet Malachi* to confront the people's sin, and call them to repentance. Malachi paved the way for Nehemiah's return, and Nehemiah initiated reforms to correct the sins Malachi had exposed. Nehemiah 13 is a good commentary on the message of Malachi.

Devotion Box - How's Your Serve?

Malachi 1:11 tells us that God's name will be great among the Gentiles, but among His own people, the Jews, He says in verse 12, "But you profane it, in that you say, 'the table of the LORD is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.' You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," says the LORD of hosts."

They viewed their worship and service to God with disdain. They saw it as a drudgery, a burden, a duty, rather than a joy. They said, "Oh, what a weariness!"

Have you ever caught yourself saying, "*Oh no, another Sunday. I've got to get up and go to the church. It's my morning to sing.*" "*Man, I wish I could get out of teaching Sunday School today.*" "*Wow, I can't believe it's my turn already to mow the grass... or do the nursery... or usher. Can't they find someone else?*"

The Jews had forgotten it's a honor and privilege to serve the Lord.

Remember what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:7, "God loves a cheerful giver." In the Greek language it's literally, "God loves a hilarious giver." Worshipping and serving God are a delight, a thrill, a joy. When they're not, it's time to find the problem.

DL Moody once said, "I may get tired *in* the work, but I never get tired *of* the work." Hey, serving a God you love intensely will never get old and boring.

**"I may get tired *in* the work,
but I never get tired *of*
the work."**

- Dwight Moody

MALACHI ONE - THE ANATOMY OF A HYPOCRITE

A man was backing his car out of a crowded parking lot when he accidentally hit the car behind him. He got out, surveyed the damage, then took out a piece of paper and scribbled a note, which he stuck to the windshield of the damaged car.

Of course, the bystanders watching him assumed he'd written down his name and number and insurance information - and had been honest about his mistake.

But when the damaged car's owner returned, he took the note and read these words, "I've just smashed your car. The people who saw the accident are watching me. They think I'm writing my name and address. I'm not. Good luck." The culprit had made people believe he something that he was not. He was a hypocrite.

Malachi 1 is the anatomy of a hypocrite.

Here's Malachi's message in the words of the old country preacher, "Be who you is... cause if you ain't who you is, then you is who you ain't." The hypocrite is A person *who is who they ain't*.

It's been said, "A hypocrite is like a straight pin... pointed in one direction, but headed in another." A hypo-

crite is an actor. He says his lines, plays his part, musters the expected emotions, but he is someone else.

Jesus saved His harshest words, not for the *blatant sinner*, but for the *bogus saint*. The Pharisees were the hypocrites of Jesus' day. They wore a mask of respectability. They were *outwardly righteous*, but *inwardly rotten*.

Guys, far be it from me to call anyone a hypocrite - but I suppose, if all of us were sandwiches - there would be a slice or two of baloney in each of us. There are areas in all our lives where *we're not what others think we are - we're not what we know we should be - we're not even what we want to be*. Malachi will dissect our motives and challenge any hypocritical tendencies.

Three issues are addressed in Malachi 1:

In verse 2, the people *deny God's love*.

In verse 6, they *despise God's name*.

In verse 7, they *defile God's altar*.

And they defile it in three ways: *in what they bring to the altar* (verse 8) - *in why they come to the altar* (verse 10) - *in the way they behave at the altar* (verse 13).

Devotion Box - Denying God's Love

Malachi begins, verse 2, "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' The Jews denied God's love for them. When you fall away from the Lord sin creates a haze, a smog, that obscures your view. Truths you once held dear, become distant. For a hypocrite to harden his heart, he has to deny God's love.

The love of Jesus is so compelling, and alluring, and captivating a person preoccupied with His love will always stay close to God's side. Hey, if you don't want to draw close to Jesus, then deny and stay away from his irresistible love. Once you're caught in it's gravitational pull it's nearly impossible to escape.

Devotion Box - Despising God's Name

But not only did the Hebrews *deny God's love*, they also *despised God's name*. In verse 6, God asks, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name." The Jews claim a relationship with God. He's their Father, their Master, but in practice there's no substance to that relationship. It's a kinship in name only. It's like a wife taking her husband's name, yet not wanting to live up to the terms of the marriage. By treating it flippantly she has despised her husband's name.

To use the terms "*Father*" and "*Master*" implies you're being *a respectful son* and *an obedient servant*. The Jews were neither. They were spiritual name droppers - but Malachi says *a name dropper* is actually *a name despiser*.

The same mistake can be made by followers of Jesus. In Luke 6:46 Jesus warned of people who lay claim to a relationship they don't really possess. He says, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not the things that I say?" The term *Lord* also implies a relationship. For Jesus to be my Lord I must be His subject. If He's my Lord, then I am no longer the captain of my own ship. So often we want God on our own terms. That's not the way it works. Here's a poem, "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I want ecstasy not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I'd like to buy \$3 worth of God, please." Guys, God doesn't come in small quantities. He comes in bulk only!

Devotion Box - Defiling God's Altar

Verse 7 tells us the Jews also *defiled God's altar*. They trivialized the things of God. They watered down worship. The smoke-stack of religion rose high from it's deck, but there was no fire in it's belly.

The Lord says to Israel, "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.' They offered worship to God, but begrudged the time and effort it required. It's been said of our society, "We worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship." Seldom are we really serious about what we believe. The Jews played at religion, but they lacked a passion for God.

And they defiled God's altar in three ways: *by what they brought* (they gave God the leftovers), *by why they came* (they were going through the motions), *and by the way they behaved* (they grudgingly served the Lord).

MALACHI ON MARRIAGE

The Jews of Malachi's day at marred marriage in two ways: First, they'd married unbelievers, and Second, they had practiced unbiblical divorce.

Verse 11 says of Judah, "he has married the daughter of a foreign god." Understand, when God forbid the Jews from marrying other races he wasn't concerned about racial, but spiritual purity. Read Matthew 1 and the genealogy of Jesus contains racially mixed blood. Rahab was a Canaanite, and Ruth a Moabite.

The reason God told the Jews not to marry foreign women was he knew they'd drag His people into idolatry. God knows the power of marriage. A husband, a wife has tremendous influence on their spouse - for better or worse. God knew it was a short jump from climbing into bed with a idolater, and bowing before their idol.

Guys, if you want a happy, harmonious home, then be careful to marry a true, believer in Jesus. Marry an unbeliever and your home will be a battleground.

Olivia Langdon was raised in a Christian home, and had a vibrant faith. When she married the famous author, Mark Twain, she had high hopes of converting her husband. At first he seemed interested in her faith. He even read the Bible with her, but overtime he pulled away from God - and sadly, so did Olivia.

At the end of her life her husband saw her pain and agony, and encouraged her, "Livy, if it comforts you to lean on the Christian faith, do so." But Olivia answered, "I can't. I haven't any." By that point it was all too late.

Guys, I could fill several milk jugs with the tears that have been shed in my office by people who chose to ignore the Scriptures and marry an unbeliever. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul said to the Corinthians then, and to us now, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Be careful who you marry!

Then be careful how you treat the person to whom you're married... God's second complaint about marriage is expressed in verse 14, "the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant." Divorce had broken their covenant - the marriage vowed they'd taken.

Verse 13 says they make their offering to God, but they don't understand why He refuses to accept it - the answer is *their hypocrisy at home*. On the one hand they're violating the vow they took before God and their spouse, yet they expect God to just ignore it, and answer

their prayers like nothing's wrong. Come on!

Several years ago an article appeared in the Atlanta Constitution, "Bless this Divorce: Couple Seal Separation in Church." It described how a couple at the First Christian Church in Decatur wanted to end their marriage in a special church service. The pastor explained, "Since both are members of this congregation, it seems appropriate to ask God to approve the ending of the marriage."

It seems appropriate to ask God to approve of something His Word condemns? How ludicrous! Yet that was the attitude the people of Malachi's day had adopted.

Verses 15-16 are two of the most vital verses on marriage in the Bible. Malachi says, "But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit?"

More than a legal contract, a social institution, a domestic arrangement, a romantic expression - marriage is a spiritual union. In a mysterious, spiritual way marriage binds two people, and makes them one.

And why this oneness? Verse 15, "And why one? He seeks godly offspring." The best way to insure well-adjusted, emotionally-healthy, spiritually-solid kids is to give them two parents united and growing in a loving relationship. The best way to damage those kids, to wound them deeply, is to rip apart their parents. I can show you report after report of the devastating and lingering effects of divorce on the lives of the kids involved. God seeks godly offspring - and if for no other reason than the kids, a husband and wife need to keep their marriage intact.

Verse 16 says, "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence..." You don't normally think of divorce as a violent act, but it's like ripping a garment. When you tear a shirt it's not a nice, clean cut that can be neatly sewn back together. A tear leaves behind jagged and ragged edges. Repair it the best you can, but it's never like new. There's always a scar. And the same is true with divorce. A nasty scar is always there...

I heard of another report recently where divorcees were asked if they had to do it over again would they get divorced? The overwhelming answer was "No". They would've hung in a longer, worked harder, and found a way to work it out. In the midst of World War 2 Winston Churchill told the British people, "Wars are not won by evacuation." The same can be said of good marriages.

Hey, do it for yourself - do it for your kids - do it for the God you say you love and serve. Remember, "*the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce...*"

"I AM THE LORD, I DO NOT CHANGE"

Malachi 3:6 is important. God says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob." God is immutable. He never changes. In a world *where the only thing that's certain is that nothing is really certain*, what a comfort it is to know that God is faithful and changeless. God is an anchor in a sea of constant flux.

But don't get the wrong idea. God is *immutable*, but that doesn't mean He's *immobile*. His standards and principles never change. His motive never changes. His faithfulness never changes. His character never changes. But God is quick to change His means and methods when necessary. He's always doing a new work. Here's a good way to put it, "God is timeless, but He is also very timely. His motives are *forever changeless*, but His methods are *forever changing*."

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - July 15, 2001 - Please pray for the children and adults attending Kids' Camp this week! - Men's Retreat with Gayle Erwin, August 10-11- Baptism, August 12 (between our morning services) - Communion, August 5 - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year. - Middle School Youth: Christmas in July, July 20, and Monday Night Live, July 30.

“ to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings... ” - Malachi 4:2

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

ARE YOU ROBBING GOD ?

God says in 3:8, "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." Hey, robbing God - looting from the Lord - stealing from the Savior - is a serious offence.

We think of Judas Iscariot, treasurer of the disciples, and how he stole from the petty cash. How low can you go... to take money from the coffers of Jesus Himself.

But there are people in this room tonight who are no different than Judas in that they too have stolen from God. They have withheld their tithes and offerings.

In the Old Testament the tithe was not the people's to give. It literally belonged to the Lord. Their stinginess didn't mean that they were simply not giving - it meant they were stealing from God what really belonged to Him.

Understand, the term "*tithe*" means "*tenth*". When Abraham went out to meet the High Priest he gave him a tenth of his spoils. Of course, the Mosaic Law called for a number of tithes which added up to about 33% of a person's income.

The question comes up, *are New Testament saints obligated to tithe?* And the answer is a "*conditional no*". Just as we are free from Old Covenant obligations like feast days, fasts, sacrifices we're also under no command to tithe.

But understand, tithing predates the Law of Moses. In fact, it originated not with Moses who represented the Law, but Abraham who is the father of all those who walk by faith. And the New Testament is clear, Abraham is our example. His life shows us what faith looks like. To me, it's impossible to say you trust God with your life if you don't trust Him enough with your money to give him 10%.

In Medieval times whole armies were converted to Christianity, but often when the soldiers were baptized they'd keep their sword hand out of the water. Later they felt justified in wielding their sword as indiscriminately and brutally as ever. I know Christians who must've held their wallet out of the baptismal water. They're willing to trust God with every area of their lives, but their money.

In Luke 6:38, Jesus told His followers, "Give, and it will be given to you..." Jesus tells us to give - and according to a man of faith like Abraham 10% is a good pattern - but we need to let the Holy Spirit lead us in our giving... Why restrict God, maybe the Lord will lead you to give more than 10%!

In verse 10 the Lord challenges us, "and try 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 such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

This is the only place in the Bible where God challenges us to try Him or test Him. Often we're warned not to presume on God's mercy, but here He dares us to tithe, and see if He doesn't open windows in heaven and pour out blessing on us.

Once a well known philanthropist was asked, "How is it you give away so much, yet you have so much left?" He answered, "I shovel out, and God shovels in, and God has a bigger shovel than I do." Here's a jingle to remember, "A man there was, and they called him mad; the more he gave, the more he had." Hey, God dares you, *try to out give Me, and I'll show you that you can't!*

LAST WORDS

Note the last word of the Old Testament, "curse." That's what the Law produced, *a curse*. But the last word in the New Testament is *grace*. Revelation 22:21 reads, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The Law of Moses left mankind under sin's curse, but the cross of Jesus brings us into the grace of God. Galatians 3:13 tells us that on the cross *Christ became a curse for us...* Today God's Word to you and me is not a curse, but grace!

ELIJAH

In 4:5, God tells us that before the second coming of Jesus, Elijah will make an appearance.

Revelation 11 records the ministry of two witnesses who appear on earth in the midst of the Great Tribulation. They're given miraculous powers. They're able to cause drought, and call down fire from heaven - both characteristics of Elijah's ministry. I believe one of these two witnesses will be the prophet Elijah.