

**MALACHI**

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# **THE FINAL WORD**

**THE PROPHETS SPEAK OF JESUS**

## ONE GENERATION FROM DEMISE

*This is the message that the LORD gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.*

MALACHI 1.1

- ▶ It had been 100 years since the Jews first returned from exile by decree of King Cyrus and under the leadership of Zerubbabel. Successive returns, spiritual renewals, and restoration efforts had occurred under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. And yet, despite repeated spiritual revivals and powerful times of renewed consecration to God, the current generation was serving God on their own terms; they had replaced His perspective with their own.

- ▶ In God's eyes, their approach to worship was egregious; they were—
  - ▶ casual, not conscientious;
  - ▶ dismissive, not devoted;
  - ▶ self-oriented, not sacred—set apart.
- ▶ When God addressed their manner of worship, He contrasted them with the people of other nations who did not have the same spiritual heritage and advantages—

*But My name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of My name. For My name is great among the nations,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “But you dishonor My name with your actions.” 1.11-12*

- ▶ Their attitude: “Really? So just how are we dishonoring Your name?” Instead of responding with humility, repentance, and conscientious devotion when God addressed their lax and self-oriented spirituality, they were cavalier, contentious, and dismissive.

*“I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned My decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.*

*“But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’ ” 3.6-7*

Their viewpoint had become so skewed and self-oriented that they were utterly incapable of seeing in themselves what God saw. In just one generation, they had become spiritually worthless to God.

## COMMITMENT ON ~~HIS~~ MY TERMS

- ▶ Eight times God addressed the spiritual condition of their hearts and their actions in relationship with Him. On every point they disputed God's characterization of their spiritual perspective and behavior. Among those issues:
- ▶ They didn't value God's historical covenant of love; instead they measured God by what He had done for *them—now*, and not by His calling for them to represent His purposes in their generation.

- ▶ They figured God should be pleased with *anything*—whatever—they decided to give to Him as an offering.

*“You say, ‘It’s too hard. . . you turn up your noses at my commands,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. . . . “Should I accept from you such offerings as these?” asks the LORD .*

*“Cursed is the cheat . . . .” 1.13-14*

- ▶ They had devalued and discredited marriage as God had defined it in His original creation; what *they* wanted out of a relationship was what mattered—not the covenant character and revelation that He designed marriage to represent.

*“Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are His. And what does He want? Godly children from your union. . . . I hate divorce!” 2.15-16*



- ▶ They asserted self-deity over their income assets. They redefined “tithe” by substituting a personal and self-benefitting calculation for the standard set by God.

*“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated Me! “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ “You have cheated Me of the tithes and offerings due to Me.” 3.8*

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” 3.10*

- ▶ They had honored the perspectives and agendas of those who were godless, instead of trusting God’s agenda and faithfulness.

*“You have wearied the LORD . . . by asking, “Where is the God of justice?” 3.17*

## THE COMING MESSENGER AND THE COMING DAY

*“Look! I am sending My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The Messenger of the Covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.* <sup>3.1</sup>

- ▶ When the “Lord of Heaven’s Armies” concludes this message, there will be silence. For 400 years God will say nothing to His people—the same period of time God predicted to Abraham that his descendants would be “enslaved and mistreated in a country not their own” (Genesis 15.13). But God is not disengaged: He is fulfilling His agenda revealed to Daniel regarding historical empires and rulers.



- ▶ These words regarding “messenger” have a *future* fulfillment and an *ultimate* fulfillment. The future fulfillment occurred when God next spoke, four hundred years later, through John the Baptizer.

*The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, “He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the LORD ’s coming! Clear the road for him!’ ”*

MATTHEW 3.3

- ▶ The ultimate fulfillment: the coming of the “Messenger of the Covenant”—

*Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son. . . . The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.*

HEBREWS 1.1-3

- ▶ This promised coming describes the “Messenger of the Covenant” in a manner that is severe, arbitrary, unaccommodating—completely at odds with the Jesus of our expectations and preference.

*“But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.” 3.2-3*

*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

## ► The Apostle Peter then wrote—

*But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.”*

1 PETER 2.7-8

## Jesus himself declared in the most unaccommodating terms—

*“Don’t think that I came to bring peace to earth. I didn’t come to bring peace but conflict. I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. . . . The person who loves [anyone] more than me does not deserve to be my disciple. . . . Whoever doesn’t take up his cross and follow me doesn’t deserve to be my disciple.”*

MATTHEW 10.34-36

*“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

JOHN 14.6



- ▶ God has been measuring His people and now He tells them that there is coming a final measurement: a day of judgment.

*The LORD of Heaven's Armies says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. On that day the arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw. They will be consumed—roots, branches, and all. "But for you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. 4.1-2a*

In his eschatological (future events) letters, the Apostle Paul wrote:

*This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.*

- The Apostle Peter further described that final day and how we must live in light of its inevitable finality:

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?*

*You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

*So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him.*

## ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TODAY

*Then those who feared the LORD spoke with each other, and the LORD listened to what they said. In His presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared Him and always thought about the honor of His name. “They will be My people,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, they will be My own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.” 3.16-18*

- ▶ Jesus is the final word and the final authority. He is the way to eternal life and through him we become God’s treasured possession— but he must not be taken for granted or redefined on one’s preferred terms.



- ▶ On the last and final page of Scripture are the final recorded words spoken to us by Jesus Christ—

*“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

*“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*

*“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”*

*But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.*

JUDE 20-21

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*

HEBREWS 10.23-27