

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
1 August 2006
Malachi 1-2

Before beginning to read from Malachi let's spend time in prayer, considering the love of God and its implications for our lives in Christ. Let's ask God to help us:

1. **Remember** His love for us and see it in every circumstance;
2. **Worship God** always with reverence, offering what is acceptable in His sight;
3. **Seek** the grace of God and honor His name before all people;
4. **Fear** the name of the Lord and not profane it;
5. **Give glory** to God in all we do – especially in serving God;
6. **Handle** God's word correctly and with reverence and live accordingly, and
7. **Honor** God in our family relationships.

Malachi ministered among the exiles in Jerusalem shortly after the time of Nehemiah, around 397 BC. He was the last of the prophets before Jesus came. After Malachi the prophetic word fell silent for over 400 years – until John the Baptist came on the scene. Formalism and skepticism had already begun to mar the religious practice of Israel. These two issues would eventually lead to the creation of the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day. Other groups, such as the scribes and chief priests and Lawyers would also come out of the skepticism and formalism of Malachi's days. One could say that much of what Judaism is today came out of the issues identified by Malachi in his prophecy. Most of the issues in church history have sprung from these two issues as well.

(1:1-5) The root issue in both skepticism and formalism is the same: the failure to recognize God's love for us, and the failure to see God's love at work in our lives. God confesses His love for us. We ask, "In what way have You loved us?" God points to the covenants he made with us – covenants based solely on God's mercy. God points to those who were not blessed with God's grace in case we need proof. The name of the Lord is magnified beyond the narrow confines of God's people. Do we see God's name magnified? Do we give witness to God's love at work in our lives? Are we looking at our inheritance in Christ? Or are we measuring by human standards?

(1:6-8) God ought to be honored by those who are the beneficiaries of His grace and promises. God should be honored by His children. To often God is dishonored by those who have experienced His grace – even by the priests! God is dishonored when we offer that which is defiled to God. When we offer our own good works, or our religious rituals we are offering that which is unacceptable to God. This is the error of formalism, where ritual and reality are miles apart. God wants our hearts, hearts cleansed by His blood. When we go to the other extreme and turn our back on all worship and fellowship with

God. This is skepticism. Sometimes skepticism and formalism are combined as we offer God sloppy service and unclean sacrifices while maintaining the forms carefully. The question is simple: would earthly rulers or bosses put up with this kind of thing? Why should God put up with such disrespect?

(1:9-11) What should we do when we find that our love and worship has grown lukewarm? We should beg for God's favor and His grace! We should put an end to that unacceptable worship and come in simple honesty, humility and repentance. We should be brave enough to close the doors and turn our backs on traditions that don't please God. Instead, **all** our life should be given to God, **wherever** we are, offering **continual** prayer, and offering **ourselves** wholly to God's service. God's name is what must be great in all the nations.

(1:12-14) We profane God's name when we allow other things to replace worship and prayer and God's word in our lives. When our attitude toward the things of God is wrong, it shows in our walk. We offer God what is not ours, or that which is not our best. We break our vows to God. But God is a great King, to be feared in all the earth. We can avoid profaning God's name by living always in the presence, fear and reverence of God.

(2:1-6) The issue is our hearts. Will we take it to heart to give glory to God? Or will we misrepresent God in this world? When we put God in a bad light God puts us in a bad light – that we might remember His covenant with us. The covenant with Levi, the father of the priestly line, was a covenant of life and peace – given to them that they might fear God. And the priests of Levi learned to fear God – or die as a consequence of profaning God. God's word is to be the law of truth in our mouths – speaking the truth about sin and about righteousness in Christ. Justice, peace and equity are to mark our ways in Christ. And we are to be those who are turning many from their iniquities.

(2:7-9) Central to walking rightly with God is the need to give proper attention to and handle rightly God's word. Our lives must be the examples of the truths we read and teach from God's word. Is this the salient feature of our lives? We look for practical ways to live for God. The Bible is filled with great teaching concerning living for God.

(2:10-17) Malachi brings these ideas home – literally. We are not to marry those who worship other gods, lest we be drawn into idolatry. We are to honor the vows made before God and the responsibilities to our spouses. A neglected marriage can lead to a broken relationship with God. Nobody doing evil is good in God's sight. God's judgment comes against **all** ungodliness and unrighteousness. God is just and His standards are not relative.

P.S. Recordings of these studies in John and the Prophets and copies of these notes are now available on a new website at <http://www.jstoker.name> . A new podcast is also available there or at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast> .