

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
8 August 2006
Malachi 3-4

Before beginning to read from Malachi let's spend time in prayer, considering the coming of Christ and how we ought to live in light of that. Let's ask God to help us:

1. **Be ready** so that we can delight in His coming;
2. Live **Holy** lives in fear of God that we not be judged;
3. **Return** to God that He might return to us;
4. **Give** God what is His that He might bless us freely;
5. **Speak rightly** concerning God and the service of God;
6. Always **speak well** of God that He may treasure us and we may have discernment, and
7. **Fear God** and walk in all righteousness and holiness as we await our Lord's return.

Malachi has dealt with the problems of a religious people whose hearts are not right with God. Now Malachi turns to look toward the future, to the coming of Christ. Christ will come suddenly and purge His people of sin. This hope is cause for righteous living (I John 3:2-3). The call is to repentance: "Return to Me, and I will return to you!" Self-righteous people see no cause for repentance. God gives cause: "You have robbed God!" If we give God His due joyfully, from our hearts then God will richly bless us. We also need to speak rightly concerning the joy and rewards of serving God. God treasures and remembers the good words spoken of Him. The Day of the Lord is coming! Pride will be broken and the fear of the Lord rewarded. So we must heed the word of the Lord lest we fall under God's curse – we must put our faith in Jesus Christ.

(3:1) We see the prophecy of John the Baptist. John the Baptist went before Jesus in the power and authority of Elijah at Jesus' first coming. He came as a messenger (like the name Malachi!) to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry. At His first coming Jesus appeared suddenly in the temple, at His dedication, in His youth, and again when He cleansed the temple several times. The people weren't ready for Him or His teaching. Jesus comes as the Messenger of God's new covenant – the covenant made in His own body broken and blood shed on the cross. In spite of their professed delight in the hope of Messiah, Jesus was crucified. Yet He is coming again! He is risen! He is exalted!

(3:2-5) The cleansing of the temple should have been a sign to the people. Messiah comes to cleanse His people – at both of His comings. The problem Malachi dealt with in the first two chapters was that of offerings unacceptable before God. When Jesus returns and is embraced by the Jewish people they will offer an acceptable sacrifice. Sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers and oppressors will have no place in Judah or Jerusalem. Why? They have no place because they do not fear God. Are we living in the fear of God?

(3:6-7) God does not change. God keeps his promises to Jacob. We do change and often walk away from God. God says, "Return to Me, and I will return to you!" If we are looking for revival, we must start by returning to God and obeying His word to us! Yet we ask for more explicit direction from God: "In what way shall we return?" Cheeky!

(3:8-12) When we do not recognize God's love we soon start robbing God by withholding that which is rightly God's. Tithes and offerings are our way of recognizing God's love. They are to be given joyfully, from the heart, as our response to God's love. Usually it is a sin to try God. Here, in this area of giving, God says "Try Me! See if I won't bless you beyond your wildest dreams and make you an example to the whole world of my love!"

(3:13-15) When we suggest that we have wasted our time serving God we speak against God, calling His goodness and love into question. In looking at the immediate rewards instead of the eternal rewards we exalt those who are wicked and those who try God's patience and forbearance. God is good, and forbearing, and longsuffering that He might bring us to repentance – not that He might reward wickedness or overlook it.

(3:16-18) God keeps a scrapbook. He saves as mementos those good things we say about Him and think about Him. God treasures not only the words, but the people who glorify God. God rewards such people with the ability to discern good and evil. How can we get more discernment in this confusing day and age?

(4:1-6) The day of the Lord is coming! The proud will be consumed. Those who fear the Lord will be rewarded, healed and provided for abundantly. The humble shall at last trample the proud. So what should we do? Remember God's word and God's servants. Hear the prophets sent to prepare our hearts. Elijah comes as one of the two prophets before Jesus' second coming. The purpose of God's word is to turn God's people back to the faith of their father Abraham – faith in God's Messiah. Hearts which are not turned will come under the curse of God's wrath poured out on a Christ-rejecting world. Let us humbly come to Jesus in repentance asking that we and all ours might escape that wrath!

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> .