

“Past, Present And Future” Malachi 1-4

INTRODUCTION

We have just finished the first chronological chapter of the Old Testament - Genesis 1. Turn to the last chronological chapter of the Old Testament. Many will turn to Malachi, which is the last prophetic word before the closing of the OT. But the prophecies and judgments of Malachi actually take place after chapter 12 of Nehemiah. Therefore, the last chapter chronologically of the OT is Nehemiah 13.

NEHEMIAH Chapter 13

Summary of Nehemiah 1-12:

- Nehemiah get permission from Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem to build walls
 - He completes the job amidst adversity
 - Incredible picture of God's people coming together and celebrating what God has done through Ch. 12
 - He then returns to Persia as he promised Artaxerxes

During the approximately 7 years that Nehemiah has left Jerusalem and returned to Persia...problems arise and that is where Malachi comes in and proclaims against it

When Nehemiah returns he finds:

- A. Tobiah in the temple storehouse
 - he was an Ammonite which was a group accursed by God not to be of the assembly; not to be allowed in the temple
 - he had previously mocked the Jewish people in their work at building the wall
 - **"Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should [a]jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!” Neh 4:3**
 - he was protected by the chief priest
 - he threw out the supplies for the priests
 - he put himself in God's house
- B. The temple servers have left their jobs
 - their provisions have been displaced by Tobiah
 - they have to return to their fields and neglect their work in the temple and provide for themselves
- C. The people are being disobedient - no tithes, breaking the Sabbath
- D. The men have divorced their wives and remarried foreign wives

Ultimately, Nehemiah purifies the temple and sets things in order - he is actually physical in getting people out of there.

So, what did God have to say about that time when Nehemiah was away?

In the words of Paul Harvey.....what was the rest of the story?

Malachi

Proposition: Through Malachi, God identifies three failures:

1. Failed memory of the past
2. Failed leadership of the present
3. Failed perspective of the future

1. Failed memory of the past

A. Truth: God loves his people

v. 2a - " "I have loved you" says the LORD. "

- that is the truth of the past
 - that is fundamental
 - it breaks the stereotype of the typical OT prophet where you would have condemnation and judgment
 - God begins with the basic truth that has been there from the beginning of time
 - in the Hebrew it would read '*love you says Yahweh*' - the first word is love

Love - in the perfect tense: past act with continuing effect

You - direct object; not a generic vibe, aura or force but there is a specific recipient

Says - communication (communicable attribute) - not distant but there is a relationship, understanding

Yahweh - the most used and personal name of God

B. People's response:

v. 2b - "But you say, "How have You loved us?"

- the entire OT has shown the narrative/facts of God's love

Nehemiah 9 - this is what the people are proclaiming as part of the incredible celebration of what God had done - how could they forget??

1. Spiritual amnesia?

-we understand physical memory loss

Illustration: When I play flag football in college, I hit my head and temporarily lost my short term memory due to a concussion. There was a physical cause for my memory loss.

- here we do not have a physical act of memory loss, but a failure of perspective of the past
 - **vv. 2b-4** - recounts the history, they had to remember that BUT more than just a history lesson
 - **v.5** - explains the perspective to remember

They have grown comfortable in their new freedom, in their fortified city. Their walls, their buildings, the work of their own hands has become their pride and there is no room for God.

Application: It's not about you. It's about God and his Name being magnified.

2. Forgot their mission

vv. 5-6 - "Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!" "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?'"

They forgot their mission was to bear the name of Yahweh for His glory.

Deut 7: 6-9 - chosen by God, not base on worth but on God's love

- they were the smallest nation

1 Peter 2: 9-10 - a holy nation separated by God for His glory and purpose

Application: Do you have a proper perspective of the past? Do you live in light of that truth that God loves you, has set you apart, and has saved you? Is that what motivates you to give God the honor and glory? Or are you complacent - lukewarm - like the church of Laodicea in Revelation 2.

2. Failed leadership in the present

a. God first talks to the priests

Main accusation: they fail to give honor to God's name

vv. 1:6, 1:14 - 2:2 - priests aren't' serving for the right reason - to bring glory to God

How they do not honor God's name:

- they don't see God as master so they see no need to give God the best. No fear.

Application: v. 1:8 - Would our ministry acts be acceptable in other social contexts? In the context of your work?

John 15:8 - "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

- the command to Jesus' disciples: God be glorified by their actions

v. 1:10 - God describes bad leaders: to the point of telling them to shut the doors.

- how many churches today would God say that to?

v. 1:11 - God will accomplish His purpose - to bring Himself glory

v. 1:13: Our service should make us tired but not tiresome of the work.

Illustration: Consider fanatical football fans traveling through the night after seeing their team

play. They arrive at church to serve the following morning. Are they tired? Absolutely! But the ministry of serving at church is not tiresome.

Picture of a godly leader - Levi:

2:5-7 - "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

God is identifying the contrast between what they are doing and what God had seen in Levi, whom God had ordained as the first priest there.

Picture of 5 aspects of a godly leader:

- he displayed reverence, awe of God
- he was incorruptible in doctrine; people learned truth from him, not unrighteousness
- he was devout in conduct; he was at peace with God in obedience
- he was effective in raising people up; not lowering their standards
- he knew his rank; to be a messenger of the Lord

We need to follow those kinds of leaders.

We need to support these kinds of leaders.

We need to be that type of leaders.

Application: Men's weekly Bible study - 1 Timothy

b. God speaks to husbands - leading at home

v. 1:10-16

God condemns them for leaving their own Jewish wives and marrying other gods.

v. 14 - companion and wife by convenient

Application: What are you doing, men, to strengthen your marriage?

- start with understanding God's name

Part of this is managing your household well - elder qualification - **1 Timothy 3**

3. Failed perspective of the future

2:17 - they have wearied the Lord by not trusting His divine judgment

Chapters 3 and 4: Malachi describes the future punishment:

3:2-3 - refiner's fire, purifier

3:5 - judgment

4:1 - furnace, like chaff

God is now telling them that they must understand and not have the wrong perspective about the future - not to doubt what God is going to do about it. He will condemn the unrighteous.

BUT right after the condemnation of the evil, there is the hope....

3:16-18: Those who fear God will be saved.

4:2-3: But those who fear Him, will be healed and free!

Their failed perspective of the future was not that there would just be judgment but that there is hope.

Back to **Nehemiah 13:**

On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses and that's when they understood again what they were supposed to do.

Neh 13: 31 "Remember me, O my God, for good."

- chronologically, the last written statement of the OT
- after all the Nehemiah has done in his leadership role to bring about the change God had wanted, it is personal
- it is not about the Israelites
- it is not about his family
- it is about his personal relationship with God

CONCLUSION:

God has a personal relationship with those who call upon the name of the Lord in a way that fears Him and honors Him. Do you proclaim Him, understand Him and want Him to be glorified?

Romans 10:13 "for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

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