The Times of Malachi and The Malachi Song

Lynaya Doomy

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2016
Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

__________________________________
David K. Schmal, D.M.A.
Thesis Chair

__________________________________
David M. Hahn, D.M.A.
Committee Member

__________________________________
Lynnda S. Beavers, Ph. D.
Committee Member

__________________________________
James H. Nutter, D. A.
Honors Director

__________________________________
Date
Abstract

Malachi is an Old Testament book addressing Israel’s struggles with discontentment and complacent worship, issues that are strikingly similar to those in the church today. Israel had returned to their sacred land but had left their sacred ways behind. The heart for God had perhaps been left in captivity. Selfishness and disappointment reigned, as the nation felt oddly deflated by God’s lack of a “proper response” to their desires, while they simultaneously flaunted their disobedience to God’s laws. The main sins addressed by Malachi were: the corruption of worship and offerings, the rampant sin of divorce, marriage to foreign women, and the attitude of complacency toward these sins. Half-hearted offerings, self-serving choices, and an absolute denial of their sinful state calls to mind the heart of the modern church today. Malachi delivers a rally cry that rings throughout the ages and should batter the doors of our hearts and churches today, as much as it was intended to in the times of this God-sent messenger.

The words of this prophet were crucial during the times they were spoken, but their significance has not been lessened over time. This project includes a song based on principles gleaned from the book of Malachi. The Appendix of this thesis includes background information regarding the process of writing and recording this song. It also includes a music chart which reflects the recording.
The Times of Malachi and The Malachi Song

Context

There is debate regarding the authorship of the Old Testament book of Malachi. Although with other prophetic books the title and author are one and the same, many scholars are unsure whether the title Malachi is specific to the author or the content. Rex Mason, for example, states that “Malachi may have been his name (proper names of this kind do occur in the Old Testament), but more probably it is a title meaning ‘My messenger.’”¹ However, many scholars do believe that Malachi was the name of the prophet. Hindson and Yates say that the nature of the headings of other Prophetic books (Zechariah, Ezra, Haggai…) suggests “Malachi” is a name.² Irving Jensen believes it is simply the shortening of a common Hebrew name, “Malachiah,” which means “messenger of Jehovah.”³ Herbert Wolf states, “[I]t would be very strange indeed if the Hebrews preserved a prophetic book without giving the name of the author. Even as short a book as Obadiah does not lack the name of the inspired writer, although nothing else is known about him.”⁴ Pieter Verhoef points out his reason to regard the word Malachi as a name; “…when the expression be'ad is used to indicate the human instrument of God’s revelation it is normally followed by a proper name.”⁵ This term, be'ad, is used in the

---


book of Malachi in the introductory verses. This would indicate that Malachi is a proper name. Verhoef concludes, “In the absence of compelling arguments to the contrary it is logical to accept that the prophet was called Malachi.”

The question of when Malachi was written is more complicated to answer. Malachi fails to offer any notable identifiers as to the date of authorship. A basic frame of reference can be created, however, by the content of the book. Malachi is one of the three Postexilic Prophets, along with Haggai and Zechariah. “Postexilic” means “post-exile,” which would place this book after the return of Israel from the captivity of Babylon to the land of Canaan. This is believed by most scholars because Temple worship is addressed, and during the Babylonian exile and captivity, the Temple was destroyed. This gives us a very basic idea of when the book was written to Israel.

However, this does not clarify the specific date. There are several considered for the book of Malachi. Jensen writes about one popular theory that the book of Malachi should be placed right in the middle of Nehemiah’s timeline. This would mean that Nehemiah was back in Babylon, between his first and second term as Governor of Jerusalem. That would place the date of Malachi at about 433 B.C. The reasons that this makes sense are: The Temple is complete, a Persian governor rules over Jerusalem, and Nehemiah addresses similar issues when he returns from Babylon for his second term as Governor.

---


8. Ibid.
Governor. Wolf would agree, but goes a bit farther, “The correspondence between the list of sins in Nehemiah 13 and those against which Malachi preached suggests a date during Nehemiah’s second period as governor or just prior to his return.” Wolf would possibly place Malachi during Nehemiah’s second period of governorship. This would mean that the governor in the book of Malachi was Nehemiah himself. Wolf would also place the date “tentatively” around 433 B.C. Mason, however, insists that “…the date of the book must still be regarded as an open one.” He points out plainly that “it is true that some of Nehemiah’s reforms during his second period of governorship, recorded in Neh. 13, correspond to abuses attacked by Malachi, but there are also differences. Nehemiah does not apply himself to the question of divorce while Malachi has nothing to say about the Sabbath observance.” It may be hasty to presume that since some of the information aligns between the books, the date can be certain.

Mason is not the only skeptic regarding this theory. Richard Taylor and R. Ray Clendenen both state in their New American Commentary that the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles “may have been written later” than Malachi, which would


13. Ibid.

mean that Nehemiah had little or nothing to do with the times of that prophet. Although a precise year cannot be determined, it is clear that most believe Malachi to have been written around 400-500 B.C.

It is interesting to observe the style of the book of Malachi. Mason briefly describes it as “prophetic dispute.”15 This style is presented in a question and answer format, or “Charge/Accusation.”16 Jensen briefly describes this format through an example found in Malachi 3:8: ““You have robbed me,” Interrogation “How have we robbed you?” Refutation “Answer.””17 The answer is where God explains the guiltiness of Israel. There are twenty-three such questions presented in the book of Malachi.18 In proportion to its size, the book of Malachi has the most words directly from God of any prophetic book. Forty-seven verses out of the total fifty-five are spoken directly by the Lord; the book also holds the last recorded words of the Lord in Old Testament times.19

There is no doubt from whom Malachi received this revelation. Herbert Wolf counts “twenty times within the fifty-five verses, the notation “says the LORD of hosts” appears”.20 Since the message in the book of Malachi is one of correction, it is appropriate that the words came from the Lord and not from man.


17. Ibid.


Although not considered one of the poetic books of the Old Testament, there are certain elements about the text that are reminiscent of Hebrew poetry. Verhoef points out that “…the author has indeed employed literary devices in order to convey his meaning, not only within the various periscopes but also in the book as a whole.”\(^{21}\) Although Malachi includes some poetic elements such as parallelism—which is strongly used in the poetic books of scripture—Wolf summarizes the opinion most common to scholars: “Perhaps “lofty prose” is still the best way to describe the style of Malachi.”\(^{22}\) Now that all the elements of context have been briefly studied, it is possible to delve into the content with better clarity.

Last, the reader should consider the audience and purpose of the book. Malachi was written to God’s people—Israel. The reason the book of Malachi was written was for God to correct Israel. These were not easy words spoken to adoring fans. “Malachi’s sermons were directed to a tough audience. His congregation included the righteous, the disillusioned, the cynical, the callous, the dishonest, the apathetic, the doubting, the skeptical and the outright wicked,” Andrew Hill reflects.\(^{23}\) Surely Malachi’s message had little favor in the eyes of the people. As in other times of history, Israel was not fond of the correction God was bestowing upon them.

---


Content of Malachi

Israel and the Forgotten Love

Malachi shows God’s people to be in an unruly state. They are off balance and have forgotten the greatness and fearfulness of their God. Peter Adam says, “The people have accused God of inconstancy and of unreliability. They are in a downward spiral; they doubt God’s love, so they respond with inadequate sacrifices, inadequate ministry and faithlessness in marriage, distrust of God’s rule and general injustice in the community…” 24 Practically all of the estimated timelines for Malachi place it around a century after the Israelites’ original return to the land of Canaan. It has been a few generations since the excitement of the return to Jerusalem and their faith has begun to dissipate and turn to disappointment.25 In light of their doubt, God opens with an assurance of his love for them. God was not lacking in love toward His people; He was restoring them. Adam says, “What a striking start to this oracle! I have loved you, says the LORD (2) sets the tone of the book, gives reassurance and challenge, and places at the centre of the book the issue of what God has done and what God has revealed. The book does not start with a summary of what the people have done or not done, but what God has done. It does not start with what the people have done to God, but what God has done to the people. He has loved them.”26 God is trying to show them what He has done, before condemning them for what they have failed to do. He has loved them.


Israel Angered by Disappointed Expectations

The people believe that the wicked have not been dealt with in a timely manner. They are outraged that things have not come to pass as they assumed they would. Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah had spoken about how soon God would fully restore the glory of Israel and punish their enemies. Hindson and Yates state, “The people question God’s love, dispute the charges the Lord brings against them, and believe that God is unjust because He was not blessing them in the way that they believed He should.”

They had expected their return to Jerusalem to be a much more gratifying experience. When God did not deliver what they expected him to, the Israelites became embittered. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. sees the irony in their selfish attitudes: “The problem was not to be found in God, but rather in Israel who had continued to rebel against her Lord since the time of her founding fathers, even though they continued to regard themselves as holy and righteous.”

The book of Malachi is full of documentation that proves Israel had fallen from their state as a righteous nation. It is not possible to be in right standing with God, while also completely disobeying his orders. Taylor and Clendenen address this faulty mindset of Israel’s: “Their carelessness in teaching God’s ways truthfully and in overseeing Israel’s worship had so corrupted the sacrificial system that it was an insult to God. Their treatment of his blessings gave them no right to ask for or expect God’s favor.”


Israel and a Legacy of Failure

One of the most unfortunate realizations associated with this book is that this is not the first time Israel has behaved in this manner toward the Lord of Hosts. There has been unfortunate consistency with Israel’s backslidings. The very reason for their exile and Babylonian captivity was their unfaithfulness and blatant disobedience. Jewish scholars Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin speak about this in their book regarding the Exile and its crucial importance to Israel’s history, “In the Old Testament itself, the Exile constitutes a theological concept, and is hence very much more than the record of what may perhaps have taken place in the sixth century. It counts as punishment for Israel’s falling away from its God.”

The happenings that led to the Babylonian Exile are mostly documented in the book of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah was tasked with the duty of warning the people to turn from their sins or face the consequences. The largest accusation brought before Israel was that of their idolatry. Hindson and Yates say, “The people traded their relationship with the living God for gods who did not exist and would never satisfy their deepest longings.” This sin brought seventy years of exile. Most of those who were taken away did not live to see Israel restored. It is so unfortunate to read the history of Israel and see them fall time and time again into sin. The LORD corrects them, punishes them, restores them into favor and to the land, yet soon Israel chooses sin over God’s faithfulness and repeats the cycle yet again.


This unfortunate cycle dates back to Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. Israel was given instructions from a mighty God who, before their eyes, had performed miracles. Even after seeing him do wonders, they doubted his power to deliver the Promised Land to them.\textsuperscript{32} The book of Numbers documents the forty years spent in the wilderness while the faithless generation died, never having seen the Promised Land.\textsuperscript{33} This was not an exile under the hands of a mighty King as in the case of the Babylonian Exile, but it was forty years spent to restore Israel to a right standing with the Lord. Good did come out of Israel’s time in the desert. God utilized that forty years to solidify Israel as a nation, to raise up leaders for their future endeavors, etc. God used it for good, however these could have been cultivated in the promised land had Israel acted in obedience. There are several other instances where God had to punish Israel for haughty or disobedient behavior. Wolf reflects on these happening by sorrowfully stating, “God desired to bless His people abundantly, but their wayward behavior forced Him to curse them repeatedly.”\textsuperscript{34}

They were not being hated by their God but were shown favor more than any other nation on earth. God had chosen \textit{them} to be the only nation to have atonement for their sins. Although they were not able to receive a full pardon, as Christ had not been sacrificed, they were still able to cover their sins before the Lord through means of the sacrificial system. No other nation was given that blessing or privilege. Wolf summarizes, “The descendants of Abraham and Jacob were singled out as people of a


special destiny, and it seems strange to find God having to prove His love to Israel.”

How can this nation, so blessed with the favor of the Almighty God, think that this God should be required to prove anything to them? It is an arrogant people indeed who look at the blessings from the Creator and say that what he has done is not enough or is not being accomplished to their satisfaction.

**The Problematic Response of Wrong Worship**

**Robbing God in Sacrifices and Tithes**

The discontentment of the people was evident by their attitudes of worship. Dissatisfied by God’s lack of action, the people felt justified in their mediocrity. They still brought offerings and sacrifices, but these sacrifices were pitifully below the standards set in Mosaic Law. Malachi chapter 1:7-8 discusses the evil done by the priests regarding their sacrifices. They were clearly offering lame and blind animals as sacrifices to the Lord, though Mosaic Law required a blemish free sacrifice. Mason points out that this would cause a trickle-down effect, “Such conduct was not just a breach of ceremonial regulations. It betrayed a neglect of God, which affected the whole community.”

Kurtz gives an excellent definition of what an offering should be: “The term offering when used in a general sense in connection with divine worship, usually denotes, according to its derivation from offerre, the dedication of any suitable possession to God,

---


The key word in this definition is the word suitable. Israel was not presenting anything that could be considered a suitable sacrifice. Israel was giving not what cost them but what was convenient. Sacrificing the deformed or sick animals removed them from the owner’s fields, clearing his stock of any damaged livestock. This was a grievous insult in the eyes of God. “Their [The Priests] failure to give the Lord their best in worship reflected their lack of love and reverence for Him.”

God clearly states that Israel is guilty of robbing Him. Malachi 3:8 says that the people had robbed God. Their insulting lack of reverence was not something the Lord was going to look over. Christian Eberhart excellently describes the situation:

[A] ritual sacrifice is a gift of reverence or reconciliation for God. It conveys both the submission of the offerer and his or her acknowledgment of the superior status of God. This is the ultimate reason why sacrifices must be of high quality—Only a precious gift truly displays human respect (Lev 21:17-25, Deut 17:1). Consequently the prophet Malachi criticizes the practice of offering blind, lame, or sick animals for God; such sacrifices send the opposite message because they indicate that the offerer despises God (Mal 1:6-14).

It was not just the state of the offering that was so disdainful to God but the state of the hearts of those who served the Lord. The priest’s actions showed that serving God had become simply a “tiresome chore” in their eyes. David Petersen addresses how powerful the accusation of Malachi was: “…[N]o priest would ever say, “The table of Yahweh is despised.” And yet, that is precisely the speech that the author has placed on

---


their lips. To what effect? The author apparently thinks the priests act as if they despise Yahweh’s table.”

Although their actions may have reflected this, no one in service to the Lord would have stated it outright. The Lord was not in the business of playing games with Israel. He would not coddle them into submission, but demand it. He is the Lord of Hosts and will be served properly.

**Divorce and Marriage to Foreign Wives**

There were other areas of their lives where Israel showed selfishness and discontentment. The marriages of the nation of Israel were falling apart. Not only was divorce prevalent, but marriages were taking place to foreign women instead of to Israelite women. God makes his views of divorce very plain in Malachi 2:16 when He says He *hates* divorce, even comparing it to extreme violence.⁴³

The reason these marriages were displeasing is two-fold. The first is simply that it is unacceptable to marry, divorce, and then remarry; “It is clear that God regarded marriage to be a lifelong commitment broken only by the death of one of the partners.”⁴⁴ Even if it were completely necessary for a divorce, it was never acceptable to pursue a second marriage while the “wife of your youth” lived. This rule was clearly being bypassed to make room for the preferences of the people. This reflects on the self-serving nature of their society which was displeasing to the Lord.

---


The second issue pertained even more to their spiritual development. The women they were marrying were not other Israelites. They were not women who served the Most High God. These women would have served pagan gods, a thing that had contributed to the downfall of Israel only a few years before, leading to the Exile period. It was not a situation in which God was against the other races purely for racial reasons but for their spiritual blindness, as Hindson and Yates point out: “The problem with these marriages was spiritual rather than racial…God knew it was especially important at this time for this struggling remnant of Jews to maintain their spiritual identity.”46 Now was the time to cultivate strong families, walking in the light of the Lord, not to entertain thoughts of paganism or idolatry. The temple of Yahweh was restored! Now was the time to bring Him the glory due His name, not invite more opposition to worshiping the Holy One.

There is one other consideration to ponder pertaining to these marriages. Although there is no direct indication in scripture, some scholars believe it possible that the people desired to have foreign women because these foreign families might have become more established and wealthy while Israel had lived in destitution or exile. They might have desired to marry foreign women for the land and power cultivated by their families.47 If this were the case, it would indeed coincide with the self-gratifying mindset that had permeated Israel at this time.


47. Ibid.
The Attitude of Complacency and Denial

In light of all this proof of guilt, the attitude of feigned innocence is overwhelming. Although with both the issues of divorce and worship, the prophet brings forward very plain accusations, the people object to their guilt. Kaiser points out the consistency of their denial: “…Israel failed to acknowledge her problem and instead gave that whimper of innocence by saying in effect, ‘Who? Us? We need to repent? We need to turn back to God? We never went away. So why do we need to turn anywhere?’” Not only do the Israelites persist in their faulty and insulting worship, but they insist that there is nothing truly wrong with what they are doing.

They are not just denying guilt but doing so with arrogance and disrespect. Hindson and Yates discuss their spiteful demeanor: “The recurring expression, ‘but you say’ on the part of the people reflects how they have responded to God in an argumentative and disrespectful manner.” Constantly throughout the book of Malachi, Jehovah God presents a statement regarding the wrongdoings of Israel. To this they only respond incredulously. Their attitudes say, in effect, If God will not do what He has promised, then neither will we. He has not destroyed our enemies, we will not serve him whole heartedly. Israel expects God to punish the wicked as had been foretold, yet in their demand for God to punish the evil ones, Israel has become corrupted by wickedness

---


and evil. Says Kaiser, “With such impenitence, how could God ‘turn’ in the blessing the people so desperately craved?”

Perhaps there was some element of genuine surprise at the anger of the Lord. Mason sees in their questioning attitude perhaps a little less of an affront to God and a bit more sorrow, “...[W]e hear the disheartened questions that must have been asked by a people who had so often been disillusioned by the apparent non-fulfilment of the promises of the prophets.” Yet, in all of this they had not fully left the Lord. Israel is still very aware of the power of God. Adam compares this to an unhappy spouse rather than a rebellious child: “They have not had the nerve to abandon God; it is more like an unhappy marriage than a divorce! God’s remedy for this broken relationship is for his people to turn to him, just as he turns to them.” They are going through the motions, not willing to give up the Lord, but also not willing to serve Him wholeheartedly in light of His apparent neglect. Their marriages were corrupt between themselves, and their marriage with the Lord was also in disarray.

The Similarities Between The Days of Malachi and the Modern Church

Unfortunately, the cries of Malachi to the people of Israel hit far closer to home for the modern church than they should. It is easy to pick apart the happenings of over two thousand years ago and see the faults and depravity. It is not quite as comfortable to see the ways in which these same depravities apply to the church in this age and time.


Verhoef contemplates the importance of the book of Malachi as it applies to the church now by saying, “One should not condescend to a subjective comparison of the significance of the different books of the Bible, but one can assert positively that the preaching of the book of Malachi delves into matters that are fundamental for all time and therefore conveys an important message even to us and our generation.”

Misguided Disappointment

Much like Israel, our modern society is filled with unwarranted disappointment in God. We so often feel as though His ways are not acceptable to us or how we would have ordered the events of our lives. Taylor and Clendenen remark on how well the message of Malachi interacts with today’s world: “It [Malachi] was crafted to speak to the hearts of a troubled people whose circumstances of financial insecurity, religious skepticism, and personal disappointments are similar to those God’s people often experience or encounter today.”

Our disappointments are not based on a perceived unfulfilled prophecy as Israel’s was, but they are often based on our faulty assumptions that walking with Christ will make life easy. Ray Comfort addresses this in his book, The Way of the Master: “It may sound admirable—even biblical—to imply to sinners that Christianity promises to make their lives better, but it’s just not true.” Comfort goes on to discuss the many ways that Christians suffer persecution and hardships simply because they are believers in

---


Jesus. One does not need to go as far even as martyrdom to see Christians living through struggles or difficulties. Comfort points out that:

[N]on-Christians are told that they need to accept Christ to have peace and joy in their life. Yet many believers are missing peace and joy, and many Christians recommend that these turn to therapies such as cognitive therapy, a treatment that was developed in the secular world. Is this consistent? If cognitive therapy is the cure for the troubled mind, why do evangelists tell us that Jesus is the cure?\(^56\)

Believers in Christ still have struggles. They still face heartache, coping with dark pasts, depression, and much more. One hopes that believers seek out Christian counselors when they are struggling in these areas who will give Godly and Biblical advice.

However, this still begs the question, *why does a Christian need counseling, if life as a Christian is meant to be easy?* The answer is, life is *not* meant to be easy. This misleading message that has permeated the gospel in today’s society has led to discontented and misguided believers.

Comfort addresses this in another book, *Hell’s Best Kept Secret*, where he asks, “Are we like the mother who won’t discipline a naughty child because she doesn’t like the feeling she gets when she does it? She places her immediate concern over the long-term welfare of her child.”\(^57\) This example hits close to home to many in our society, where it is difficult to be the bearer of bad news. There is so much emphasis on the need to be happy that discipline is often laid aside and forgotten. The cry “unfair” is not only one of Malachi’s day, but it also can be heard in the homes of Christians and in sanctuaries across the world.

---


We not only expect God to do things He has never promised, but we also expect Him to do them in our time frame. When we want Him to move, we expect Him to do so, and are often disappointed when He does not act promptly. God is not in the business of meeting human expectations. He has His own goals and plans in mind, and we are blessed and privileged to take part in this story. When Christ came, He was not born in a castle, or in a mansion, or even in a country inn. He was born in a stable, wrapped up in rags, then laid to rest in a feeding trough. 58 Jesus was born to be the savior of the world, yet he entered in the humblest of manners. Years later, he was again misunderstood. People began to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but they did not realize what that meant.

Matthew 21 records what is called The Triumphant Entry. It is called that because the people of Jerusalem praised Jesus as the Messiah for the first and last time while he was on earth. Unfortunately again, the people expected Christ to come and save them their way—not the way of the cross.

The English Standard Version Study Bible discusses the triumphant entry and what took place:

Cloaks on the road symbolized the crowd's submission to Jesus as king (cf. 2 Kings 9:13). Branches (palms) symbolized Jewish nationalism and victory (see John 12:13). They were connected with prominent Jewish victories (e.g., 1 Macc. 13:51) and with the Festival of Tabernacles; palm motifs were common on both Jewish coinage and synagogue decoration. 59

Both coats and palm branches were laid at the feet of Christ as he entered Jerusalem. They were crying, Hosanna, “[M]eaning ‘O save’ (cf. 2 Sam. 14:4) Son of David. The


crowd acknowledges that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah.”\(^{60}\) Their cheers were not just praise to Jesus, but pleas for Christ to save them, not to die for them. They wanted Jesus to rise up and lead a rebellion against Rome perhaps, not to spill his blood to redeem their souls. Oh, how much sweeter was God’s perfect plan!

If we learn to give God the control—that he already has—of our lives, we will live in much greater peace. Even if our lives do have struggles or trials, knowing that God will see them through with us is where we can find true assurance. A. W. Tozer writes, “The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather, he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself…In himself, nothing; in God, everything…He rests perfectly content to allow God to place His own values.”\(^{61}\) When we realize that God’s plan is better for us and greater in the long term, it is easy to let go and trust God to guide the path. That does not guarantee that things will be easier. Christ still died on a cross. Mary still had a baby in a stable. We may still walk through less than ideal circumstances. Fortunately, when we do, we walk with a mighty God who stands with us.

**Robbing God**

Israel is not the only gathering of people who are guilty of robbing God of what he deserves. We are blessed to live in a time when animal sacrifice in a Temple is not required. Tremper Longman shares that joyful news with us: “The wonderful news of the New Testament is that Jesus has fulfilled the sacrificial ritual by his own death and

---


resurrection. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, which all the animal sacrifices simply anticipated." 62 The sacrificial time period is over, so how can the church bring insufficient sacrifices that are reminiscent to those in Malachi? Although we do not bring defiled sacrifices to a literal altar, there are plenty of things that we either do not bring to God as required, or that we bring to Him halfheartedly. Peter Adam describes how the Church robs God, “We rob God when do not give him what we owe him. We owe him our trust, our love, our service, our obedience, our worship and our sacrifice. We owe him ourselves. And we owe him because he made us, and because he redeemed us in Christ: ‘you are not your own…you were bought with a price’ (1 cor. 6:19-20).” 63

The modern church is consumed with possessions, much like the Israelites in Malachi. Adam reflects on this fact, speaking specifically about the people of Malachi, “If we think we own all we have, then we are naturally reluctant to part with any of it. If we think that God owns all we have, then we are free to give it away on his behalf…We see in the people of Malachi’s day the dire results of being possessed with possessions.” 64 If Adam had not specifically addressed this to those living in the time of Malachi, it would sound as if he was speaking of the North American church. When we think of: ourselves, what we earn, how hard we work, how little time we have, it is easy to say that we might not have time or money for God. But that is simply not the case. God has provided all of these tremendous blessings, from the jobs that we work to the money we


are privileged to earn. When we see it in light of a gift from God, it is easy to give back to Him or to do with it as He would see fit.

A. W. Tozer reflects on the pitiable state of affairs when the importance of mere things and God himself are skewed by our self-centeredness, “The roots of our hearts have grown down into things, and we dare not pull up one rootlet lest we die. Things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God’s gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.”65 It is simply more convenient for human nature to hold on to the good, healthy sheep (our things, our money, our time), and to give God the sick or the lame sheep (what is left over) instead. It is wrong to live with one’s best in reserve for oneself, instead of giving it to God. He provided them in the first place.

The Church and Marriage

The book of Malachi is full of rebukes toward Israel for the state of their marriages, but our church today is not devoid of failures in this area either. We hear constantly that divorce ratings are just as high inside the church as outside the church. According to Ed Stetzer of Christianity Today, “…[N]o reputable study has found that 50% of marriages end in divorce—ever—though that does not stop it from spreading because people love bad stats.”66 This is an interesting point, but is it truly a victory for the church to say that no one can prove that the church has the same failing marriage rate as the world? We believe the statistic because we have seen it. The very fact that the


church, as a whole, cannot strongly object this common statement reflects on our marriage values.

Some Christians rationalize divorce by pointing out that Paul allows it. However, this is only in the case of abandonment by a nonbelieving spouse.\textsuperscript{67} The Mosaic Law allowed this also for the case of adultery, which Jesus affirmed, but he also pointed out that this was only put in place because of how unwilling people were to forgive.\textsuperscript{68} David Instone-Brewer points out that allowance does not equate requirement or even suggestion: “Jesus also criticized the rabbis who said that divorce was compulsory in the event of adultery. He said that Moses did not \textit{command} divorce in this situation but \textit{allowed} it, and he allowed it only in cases of stubborn hard-heartedness.”\textsuperscript{69} It seems as though the church has lost some of its reverence for the sacred covenant of marriage.

\textbf{God Will be Worshipped with Excellence}

Some Christians believe, much like the priests Malachi rebuked, believe that mediocrity is acceptable in the eyes of God. This is far from the truth. God does not \textit{need} our worship and service. God is not like a restaurant manager, so desperate for staff that He is willing to indulge bad attitudes and laziness. However, many of us stumble into our positions of service in church with the attitude of, \textit{at least I showed up}. We do not prepare properly for our church-related activities or responsibilities. Somehow just being present and accounted for seems to be a big enough sacrifice. How regrettable that some

\begin{footnotes}
\item 69. Instone-Brewer, David. \textit{Divorce and Remarriage in the Church: Biblical Solutions for Pastoral Realities}. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 310.
\end{footnotes}
give to God out of convenience rather than out of true sacrifice. Wolf describes the tendency toward mediocrity,

In New Testament terms, God is seeking living sacrifices that will be holy and acceptable to Him. All too often, Christians feel that anything is good enough for God. As long as a person or an activity is even half-heartedly dedicated to God, we assume God will be delighted with us. So the Church limps along with unanswered prayers and lack of power because we do not take God’s standards seriously. Whatever we do should be done for the glory of God, who deserves the very best we can offer.\(^{70}\)

This is God, the Creator of the universe. He does not need us to serve Him, but He did create us to serve Him.\(^{71}\) It should always be a joy and a thrill to serve God passionately and unreservedly.

**Conclusion**

There is so much wisdom and instruction to be gleaned from the book of Malachi. Israel was suffering from spiritual sickness, which was permeating every aspect of their lives. Their marriages were suffering, their lives were filled with selfishness, their hearts were filled with disappointment in a God who—they believed—was not showing up, and their worship of that God was half-hearted at best. The enduring lessons to be learned from the Book of Malachi bring to mind the words of the wise teacher in Ecclesiastes, “There is nothing new under the sun.”\(^{72}\) The strained relationship that Israel had with God can be that of any believer’s, if one is not careful to avoid these dangerous pitfalls. Malachi makes it clear that our God is mighty and powerful and will be honored and

---

glorified; “[M]y name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”73 He deserves the best, not what we have in reserve, or what we have left over like so many blind sheep. God takes his promises very seriously, and expects the church to reflect that in our marriage relationships. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”74 God expects us to trust Him with our lives, knowing that what we have is not ours to keep, but for His greater purpose. God is mighty, deserving of our joyful praise and adoration. To Him be the glory forever and ever, amen.

Bibliography


Appendix

The Malachi Song

The Malachi Song is truly my response to the lessons I learned from studying the book of Malachi. I was leading worship in a church, and the pastor informed me that we as a church would be going through the book of Malachi for the next several weeks. I decided to read the book of Malachi in preparation for the service. I was amazed at how relevant the message of Malachi was for us today. I began to think about what songs I could chose for corporate worship that would reflect the message of these scriptures, but I was having a difficult time finding one that fit exactly what I wanted. So I wrote The Malachi Song and taught it to the congregation and we continued to sing it throughout the series.

The song is based mainly on the verse Malachi 1:13-14:

But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. 14 Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations. 75

I found—to my shock—that I was able to identify with these wicked priests. They found themselves complaining about the weariness of their job. How many Sundays had I done just the same? They vowed to give God the best that they had, yet they brought him the sick and lame. How many times had I promised to give God my best and failed him? He is a great King and worthy of far greater praise than I had given Him.

The song was recorded using Logic Pro X. Logic is a dynamic recording and editing program made by Apple. Most of the instruments in The Malachi Song are

---

programmed, which means they are not live instruments but sound “samples” found in the diverse sound library of Logic Pro X. They are called samples because the sounds in the Logic Pro X Sample Library were recorded (sampled) directly from actual instruments. This gives them a life-like quality. The guitar and vocal tracks were recorded live.

The chart was created in Finale, which is a music notation program. It is in a “rhythm-plus chart” format, which generally means that there is a vocal line and a rhythm section line. I have also added a Flute/Lead line to make the music more comprehensive to reproduce for future worship purposes.
The Malachi Song

Words and Lyrics by Lynaya Doozy

I bring an offering to the Lord, but once more, I find it unworthy.

© 2016, Lynaya Doozy. All Rights Reserved
The Malachi Song

I bring an offering to the Lord, but once more, I

D    Em    C

find it's not all I could bring To you the most holy of Kings

D    C    D

Pre-Chorus

— oh oh — How can I bow before you now

C    D    Sym. Crash / Heavy Toms
          add Bass
          G    C
The Malachi Song

and give you half my heart? How can I stand before the great Am

Chorus

and not give all that I am? You are mighty You are holy You're

worthy, my Lord ever-more Ancient of days Worthy of praise Yes
The Malachi Song

Bridge

worthy, my Lord ever more

Do we bring

less than our best to the one who gave no less than the death of His son to save us?

Do we bring less than our best to the one who gave no less than the gift
TIMES OF MALACHI

The Malachi Song

of eternal save. Do we bring less than our best to the one

who gave no less than the death of His son to save us? Do we bring

less than our best to the one who gave no less than the gift of eternal save.

add Bass Crash Continue Slow Build

add Drums, Pad, Acoustic Half Time C

D

Em

D

Em

D

Big Fill

Em

Build to Cut
The Malachi Song

Chorus

You are mighty You are holy You're

Drum Cut Pad Cut

Full Groove Crash

D G C Dram Fill

worthy, my Lord ever-more
Ancient of days

Em Dram Fill D G

Worthy of praise Yes worthy, my Lord ever-more My Lord ever-more

C Em D G