

Message From Malachi

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 October 2019

Preacher: Rev Kenneth M Ferguson

[0 : 00] Well, as the Lord helps us, let us turn to consider words we have in this portion of scripture we've read together. In the prophecy of Malachi in chapter 3, and then reading again from verse 16.

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another.

The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

One or two thoughts on these words. The word Malachi in the original language means my messenger.

[1 : 21] And the Lord saw of it to send this man with a particular message to his people. The time would have been around 400 BC, and that was around 100 years after they had returned from the captivity of Babylon.

You remember that the Lord had sent these people for their sins to suffer the captivity of Babylon for 70 long and arduous years.

But they came back according to God's promise. If we read in Jeremiah 31 verse 8, for example, there is a promise given there in the days of Jeremiah to these people that they would be brought back.

Jeremiah 31 verse 8 says, Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest part of the earth. Among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labour together, a great company, they shall return here.

Also in verse 12, it gives us an insight into the way they were as they were to come back. Jeremiah 31 verse 12, What an amazing picture the Lord has sent to these people, who were in captivity.

[3 : 23] Nevertheless, the promise was that they would come and sing in the height of Zion and that they would be fully equipped and given the blessing of God.

But now a hundred years has passed since they came back from the Babylonian captivity. And we see that the people to whom Malachi is writing, well, they are not at all committed to the service of the Lord as one would expect.

For example, in Malachi 1 verses 6 to 8, A son honours his father and a servant his master. If I then am a father, where is my honour?

And if I am a master, where is my fear, says the Lord of hosts, to you, O priests, who despise my name? But you say, how have we despised your name?

And the answer, by offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, how have we polluted you? By saying that the Lord's table may be despised.

[4 : 37] When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those who are lame or sick, is that not evil? Will you present that to your governor?

Will he accept you or show you favour, says the Lord of hosts. We see that commitment to the Lord had declined, that they were not living as those who had been brought back so favourably and with so much blessing a hundred years before.

As time went on, their favour cooled off, their commitment to the Lord wasn't the same. We see in chapter 3, verses 8, and I don't want to be referring too often.

We see here, will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, how have we robbed you? In your tithes and contributions.

You are cursed with a curse, but you are robbing me, the whole nation, of you. It's as if they had stopped their commitment to the Lord and lived a life that was not just non-comital, but they were introducing into their communities various world views that were not at all according to God's word.

[6 : 07] They had started marrying heathens and when the heathens came in they brought their own world view in with them. And there was a bit of a downside to these people a hundred years after having been brought back from the captivity of Babylon.

So we have a picture of a non-comital, lukewarm people inhabiting Jerusalem who are giving the Lord sacrifices from their broken animals, giving the Lord less than the Lord requires of them because they are not tithing the way the Lord requires of them.

But in the middle of all of that we see verse 16 and the word then points to the time at which the Lord is referring to.

Then, that is, in the middle of all of that cold-hearted, lukewarm commitment to the Lord, there are those who fear the Lord and they speak with one another and the Lord pays attention and he hears them and a book of remembrance is written before him of those who feared the Lord and so on.

Just like to highlight for a few moments these particular people of whom verses 16 and 17 speak they are different to the general population of Jerusalem in that they have a particular character that is highlighted by the fear of the Lord.

[8 : 01] Secondly, they have a particular lifestyle that is characterized by them speaking with one another by remembering the Lord by esteeming the Lord and fearing the Lord.

and they are a people who are wonderfully privileged in that the Lord hears them and he says of them that they shall be his in the day that he makes up his treasured possession.

These three points, these people who are different, their character, their lifestyle, and their wonderful privilege, they shall be mine says the Lord.

Firstly, those who fear the Lord. It's as if the Lord is setting them apart from the mass of people in Jerusalem who are as a nation the Lord's people who profess to be his but nevertheless who don't bear the marks that these people bear.

These people who are special people, they are those who fear the Lord. Now, the Bible speaks of the fear of the Lord often.

[9 : 31] The fear of the Lord, it says in Psalm 111 which we sang, is the beginning of wisdom. What does it mean really to fear the Lord, to be someone who fears the Lord?

Well, basic to the meaning of the word fear in this respect is that they revere the Lord. They have an affection for God.

they love him. They have an affection for the word of God and the cause of God. They have affection for the people of God.

They submit themselves to the Lord and they love God's word as a rule of faith and rule of life.

These are the people who fear the Lord in a gospel sense, in a biblical sense.

And among these people in Jerusalem there were those who feared the Lord. Can we give examples from the scripture of people who feared the Lord?

[10 : 42] Well, I went through the concordance for a few minutes in the afternoon and one of the first references to people who feared the Lord are the midwives in Egypt.

It says in Exodus 1.17, The midwives feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they saved the men children alive.

Do you remember that the king of Egypt required that the male children born to the Hebrews should be put to death? But the midwives feared God. They loved the word of God more than the word of the king, the commandment of God more than the commandment of the king.

They revered God and felt duty bound to submit themselves to him rather than the king of Egypt. They feared the Lord.

We also see in 1 Kings 18, in the days of King Ahab, that he called Obadiah, who was governor of his house. And it says then in brackets in that verse in 1 Kings 18, Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly.

[11 : 58] And remember it explains to us that Obadiah, because of his love for the Lord and his cause, he hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets by fifty in caves and he fed them with bread and water.

All this why Ahab and Jezebel ruled the country in such a godless way. This man feared the Lord and he acted in obedience and love to the Lord and to his cause.

One more example in the book of Job chapter 1 verse 1 That man, that is Job, he was perfect and upright and one who feared God and turned away from evil.

And when you read about the lifestyle of Job, his sons and daughters were feasting in each other's houses almost on a constant rota. And you know what Job was doing?

He was offering sacrifices, just in case any of them may have taken the Lord's name in vain during these days of revelry. He was a godly man.

[13:12] He was protecting his family with his prayers, with his lifestyle. He showed his care for them and his honour of God. And we see here there are those who feared the Lord.

In Revelation chapter 3 and verse 4, he speaks there of some who had not defiled their garments among others.

Revelation 4, you still have a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments. They have kept themselves by the grace of God from being contaminated by worldly outlooks and worldly and sinful activities, just like these people here.

All that godlessness was going on around them, but they feared the Lord. And what kind of lifestyle did they have as they feared the Lord?

That brings us to the second point. Firstly, it says of them that they spoke with one another. They spoke with one another.

[14:37] In the original, this word could mean that they kept speaking with one another. In the authorized version translation of these words, it says they spoke often to one another.

It's as if they were in regular fellowship. In regular fellowship. Well, that would be something very protective, wouldn't it, in such a climate as prevailed during their day in Jerusalem, when so much godlessness was around them.

It's as if they gravitated together and to each other, those who feared the Lord. And they had so much in common, and they had regular fellowship with each other.

We've just had our communion service at back last Sunday, and having been to all of the services, this was the overall impression left with myself personally.

How precious it is to have the fellowship of God's people, and how important it is for God's people to make it their biblical duty to gravitate together, to gravitate towards one another, to come together in fellowship.

[16:11] That's the way these people were, those who feared the Lord, they spoke with one another. What do you think they were talking about? I don't know exactly.

Maybe they spoke about politics. Maybe they spoke about this, that, and the other thing. But I think the primary subject of discussion would have been the Lord himself, the preciousness of the Lord himself.

They called upon his name. They loved his name. They knew him as their own God, and they were in fellowship with him.

This is something I believe that we as a Christian community in our day, when we heard from the prayers, and we all know it, the way Christianity is under attack, and the devil is doing his utmost to try and make inroads into the minds of his people and into his own cause, here, there, and everywhere.

And I believe, to be strong, we must often speak with one another. I heard someone speaking about a plague of locusts once, and he was talking about one locust won't bother you, certainly it won't denude your garden or your craft, but a plague of locusts can destroy a nation.

[17:52] And this man was putting it the other way, and he said, think of one Christian on his own, yes he may be effective, but a lot of Christians in fellowship together, by the grace of God, can be very, very strong, their voice can be strong, their lifestyle can speak loudly and volubly in their community, even down through the years.

So this is what these people were like. They were often speaking with one another. And what does it say? Well, that the Lord paid attention and heard them.

The Lord paid attention. I'm sure Satan heard them too. But the Lord paid attention. And the way the word is put in the original, it's as if the Lord picked up his ears and he tuned into what they were saying.

The picture is evidently somebody who's wanting to listen to something as if his life is depending on him hearing it clearly. He is craning his neck and putting his ear as closely as he can to what's being said.

That's the picture we have here. when the Lord is paying attention, he's listening in and he's hearing what we're saying. I wonder if he's hearing from me the way I would like him to hear how much I

love him and how ready I am to serve him and how ready I am to be used by him and how much I appreciate all that he has done for me.

[19 : 49] When the Lord Jesus came into the world, he came according to the promise of the Old Testament scriptures and one of the promises says, his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace.

Do I think about him and do we discuss him under these names? How wonderful he is. I heard somebody recently say that maybe we should be hesitant to use the word wonderful for anything because the Lord says of himself that he is wonderful Counselor.

He is wonderful. How wonderful is he in my estimation? How wonderful is he as a Savior in my estimation?

Well, let us sharpen, as it were, each other's souls when we come together in fellowship. And that we might talk about the Lord and know something of his fellowship as we meet and continue to meet together.

But then it says that the Lord paying attention and hearing them, that a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.

[21 : 22] A book of remembrance. remembrance. Well, if you look at the book of Esther in the Old Testament, you find one reference to that kind of book being used.

Remember that the king there, one particular night, couldn't sleep and he asked for somebody to read the daily journal to him. And in God's providence, a page was read regarding somebody who had tried to kill the king and somebody who had prevented that from happening.

And the king asked, what's been done for this man who saved my life? Oh, nothing as far as we know. well, that man, he reaped the benefit of what he had done.

The lord honoured him. The king honoured him. And the same kind of thing, in a heavenly way, is done here.

A book of remembrance is written before him. I wonder what the lord is writing in his book for myself.

[22 : 31] over the past week or two. Has he read down that I love him? Has he written down that I have a deep longing to serve him?

Has he taken note that I have wept over my sin? Has he gathered my tears in his bottle as it says in the psalm?

Has he taken note of my prayer life? Have I been as fervent in prayer as I ought to have been? these are searching questions I have to ask myself every day.

The book of remembrance is written. But what does the Lord say? Well, in verse 17, he says, they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts.

They shall be mine in the day that I make up my treasured possession. When the people of God realize their shortcomings, they truly repent.

[23 : 58] When they assess their own lifestyle and see how far short they come, they come in repentance. And if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The Lord doesn't remember the sins of his people. I was preaching somewhere fairly recently and I was for lunch in a particular house and the man of the house, he said, well, I was reading something recently, it's very interesting.

I don't think he told what particular book he was reading this from, maybe somebody here knows what it is, but I'm going to relate the story as he told it. This man went to visit somebody at a house and when he went to the door of the house, he heard voices that he thought were voices.

He said, well, I better not go in. But then he said, I think I will go in. It's a woman living on her own and he thought somebody was in with her, but when he went in there was nobody there but the lady herself.

And they got into discussion. And whatever the discussion was, it ended up by the man saying this, well, the next time you're speaking to the Lord, ask him, what's my biggest sin?

[25 : 30] She said, yes, the next time I'm speaking to the Lord, I'll ask him what your biggest sin is. So some days later he went back and he said, have you asked the Lord what my biggest sin is?

She said, yes. And what did he say? You know what he said? I don't remember. God's sin is because the Lord puts the sins of his people as far away from them as the east is from the west.

He casts them behind his back. These people who feared the Lord, who spoke with one another, who were aware of their shortcomings, things.

The Lord says, they shall be mine in the day I make up my treasured possession. There is a day coming when the Lord is going to make up his treasured possession.

Behold me, it says, and the children whom God has given me, and they shall be exhibited to the whole universe.

[26 : 49] These are trophies of grace. These are the ones into whose hearts I sent my Holy Spirit to bring them spiritually alive. They feared me.

They served me. And they themselves feel that their service is very imperfect. Nevertheless, the Lord has cleansed their sins, and the Lord at the last will sit on the judgment seat, and he says, come, you blessed of my father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

What an amazing saviour we have. Isn't he worthy that we who fear him speak often one with another in our various homes, in our fellowships, friendships, that we may be able to pay more attention to the glory of who he is, and that we may be strengthened in our faith, and in our witness, as we go on in life.

They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them, as a man spare his son, who serves him.

What an amazing God we have. The God who shows grace. The God who continues to care for his people.

[28 : 27] Satan will try everything in his power to pluck us out of his hand. Isn't that an amazing verse? Jesus says, my sheep hear my voice.

I know them, and they follow me, and none shall pluck them out of my hand. I and the Father are one. The devil will try and pluck us out of his hand.

The gates of hell will try and manufacture all kinds of strategies to bring us down, to make us slip, to make us shipwreck.

But nevertheless, despite our feelings, as his people, he will present us at last faultless, in the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, or to be one of the Lord's people who fear him and who follow him all the days of our life.

May God bless these thoughts to us. Godfiction, God justice,