

Malachi God's Book of

Secrets

An open book is shown from a slightly elevated perspective, lying flat. A large, hand-drawn question mark is superimposed over the center of the open pages. The question mark is filled with a dense, black, scribbled texture. The book's pages are a light cream color, and the binding is visible in the center. The background behind the book is a bright yellow glow, which fades into a dark blue background with sparkling light effects at the bottom.

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From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church
February – April 2017

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All-Consuming Passion

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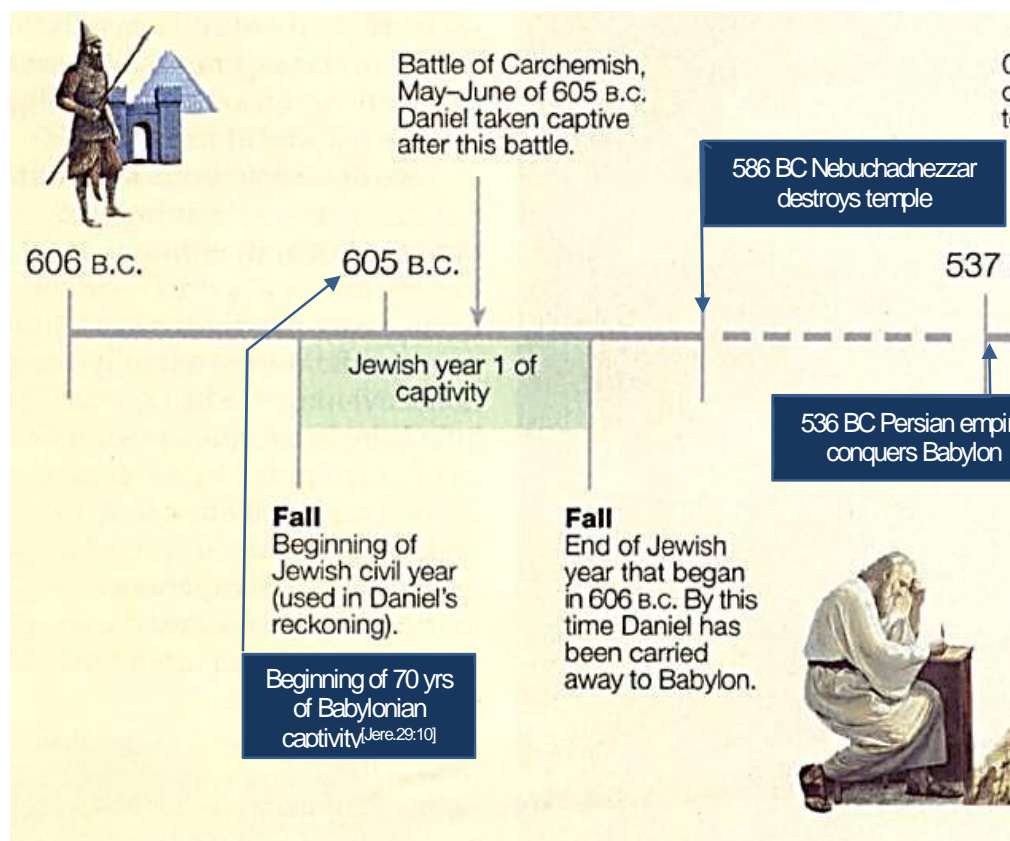
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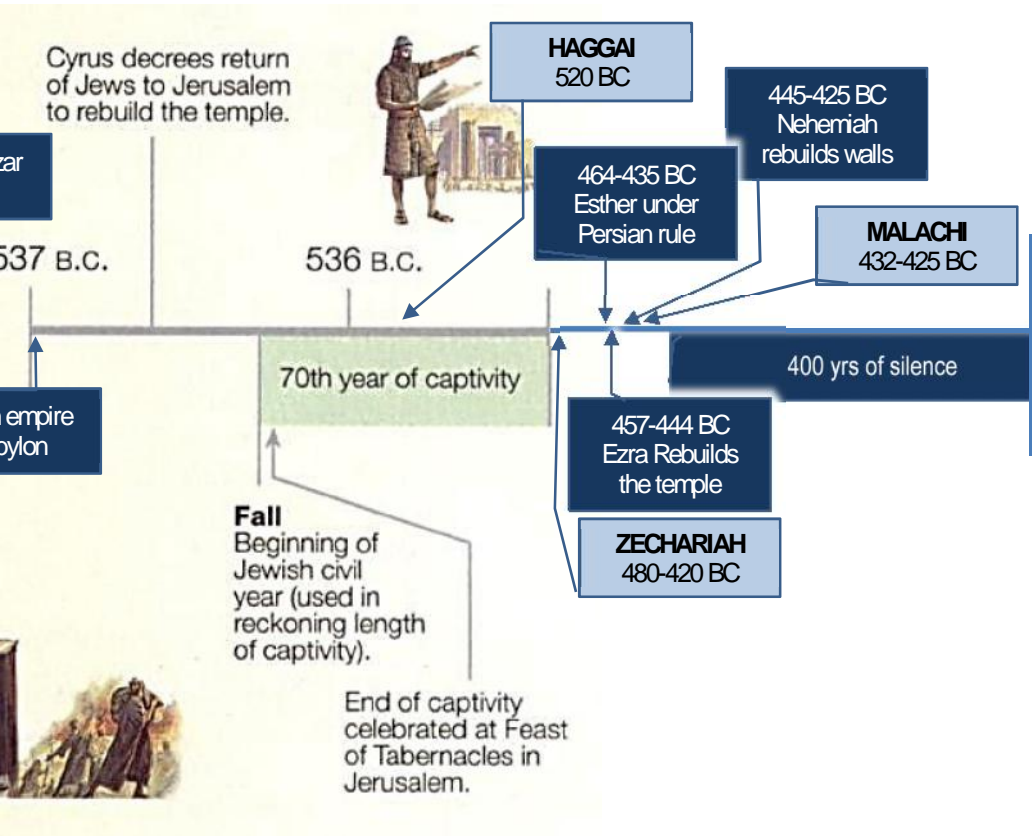
INTRODUCTION



Historical Timeline

722 (BCE) - The Assyrians - The Assyrians, a powerful people from northern Mesopotamia (today northern Iraq), invaded the northern Kingdom of Israel and deported the Jews to other parts of the Assyrian Empire.

586 (BCE) - The Babylonians After the fall of the Assyrian Empire the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, conquered Jerusalem. The most influential Jews of Judea were deported to Babylon (in southern Mesopotamia, today Iraq). The first Jewish temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.



538 (BCE) - The Persians - King Cyrus of Persia (today Iran) conquered the entire Babylonian Empire, allowed the exiled Jews to return from Babylon, and accepted a form of Jewish home rule in Jerusalem. The Jewish temple was rebuilt.

God's Book of Secrets

-Overview - "Ho Hum Love"

Theme: Drawing Nearer

Feb.19, 2017

Text: Malachi 1:1-5

DRAWING NEARER SERIES: "Taking Next Steps toward A Deeper Level of Spiritual Maturity, developing a Higher Quality of Christ-like Character."

"Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say,
"Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!"
- Malachi 1:5 ESV

Love is a many splendored thing
It's the April rose that only grows in the early Spring
Love is nature's way of giving a reason to be living
The golden crown that makes a man a king
-Frank Sinatra

Introduction to Malachi

Imagine there was a book – A very special book, and it is a very special **Book of Secrets**. And in that book of secrets was written everything you ever did, every word you ever spoke and every thought you ever thought. And imagine that book documented your silent opinions, your hidden attitudes and your secret motives.

In the book of Malachi, the circumstances that Israel faces have been centuries in the making. The Biblical Illustrator, shares the context of Malachi this way...

During the time of Haggai and Zechariah, the people of God, though having been conquered by 3 different alien nations over less than 200 years, now enjoyed, a time of peace and renewed prosperity. Even under foreign rule, God's favor was restored to His people, as they repented from their sins and experienced religious freedom once again.

Almost an entire century has passed since Haggai and Zechariah began to preach in Jerusalem to the captives who had returned from Babylon. Now in Malachi's day, A Persian ruler is the sovereign lord to whom the Hebrews in Judea pay allegiance and tribute. Under the prophetic declarations of Haggai and Zechariah, the spiritual leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as God's own chosen pagan rulers, the second Temple has been finished – prosperity has been restored and the sacred walls and courts and pinnacles have been rebuilt with great zeal and enthusiasm. It was not long before the hill of Zion was crowned again with the sanctuary of Jehovah.

There followed a brief season of spiritual life and earnestness and joy. The priests offered sacrifice anew, and made intercession for the citizens within the Holy House. But this pleasant season was short-lived. The generation to which Haggai and Zechariah spoke with such effect, died out and their successors did not manifest their zeal and devotion. God's people were remiss and negligent. The city which their fathers had begun to rebuild – had been left incomplete and half-ruinous. Malachi addressed a people who now, took little delight in the Temple, the city nor the God which their fathers had worshiped. [Biblical Illustrator]

So Israel was a nation of people, to whom God had given yet another opportunity to be restored and experience His blessings again. And once again, they drifted far from God. Their situation as captives was the result of God's punishment for their sin. Their experience under foreign rulers, was at least one of the

circumstances which had caused the people to become disheartened and distanced from the God of their fathers. Now, while their lives evidenced religiosity, they lacked intimacy between God and His people.

Following the ministry of Nehemiah and the prophecies of Malachi, Israel would enter into the “400 years of Divine Silence”, when God communicated no longer with His people. And less than 200 more years would transpire, until yet another empire would conquer their Jewish land, under Alexander the Great.

So this is the background and a bit of the history that has brought God's people to where they were in Malachi's time. And their position is, they have drifted away from God.

Questions raised in Malachi:

- (1) Does God love in times of divine punishment?
- (2) Will God forgive when His name is despised?
- (3) Does God care when Marriage is defiled? Marriage → God and His people and Christ and His church.
- (4) Can God be glorified when evil prevails?
- (5) Does God really need our financial offerings?
- (6) Is Serving God worth it?
- (7) Are we mindful of God's coming Resolution of Righteousness?

Malachi is “*God's Book of Secrets*”. The book is full of questions. The questions presented in this book, and then God's answers, are a process of God revealing the Secrets of the hearts of His people.

And it appears as though, as God reveals these secrets, His people were unaware that He knew what was going on in their hearts and life practices.

WEIGHTY WORDS OF THE LORD

Secret #1: Ho Hum Love | Luke-warmness - Malachi 1:1-5

BACKGROUND: Malachi follows the prophets of Haggai and Zechariah and is a contemporary of both Ezra and Nehemiah.

Mal 1:1-3 ESV (1) The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. (2) "I have loved you," says the LORD. **But you say**, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob

The Weighty Words of Jehovah

Mal 1:1-5 ESV (1) The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

Some versions use the word “burden” while others use the word “Oracle”. But “oracle” refers to a burden; a message of weighty proportion and substantive content. And this message from God through His prophet Malachi is indeed, weighty in content.

Weighty in content

In this “oracle”:

¹God addresses Israel’s Secret sins and separation from God.

²God calls Israel to repentance and to respond appropriately.

³God promises a future Messenger and opportunity for renewed blessings..

⁴God’s “last words” prophetically, before 400 yrs of divine silence. And again, God calls to His people to Draw Near again; to be mindful of their luke-warmness;

Weighty in context

The context is that in their past, they lived under domination of foreign pagan rulers. In their immediate future, they would experience 400 years of divine silence from God. In a sense, these would be the last words God speaks to His people, until His breaking of the silence with the New Testament message of the arrival of Messiah.

God Reveals Secret **#1**:

Mal.1:2 (2) "I have loved you," says the LORD. **But you say**, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob

God declares His present love for Israel. He also reveals the luke-warmness of Israel's own heart by revealing this secret. Israel does not properly love Jehovah God, because the people of Israel are blindly unaware of God's covenant love for them.

Throughout Malachi, God makes 6 statements or affirmations of His Covenant relationship with them, then Reveals One Secret of their Heart, by making this statement: "***But You say...***", thus revealing the secrets of their heart. And Secret #1 that God reveals about Israel is their "Ho Hum Love" for God. After all they had been through with God, they were doubting God's love for them. But Your Say, "How have you loved us?" Now whether they actually verbalized this to God's face is uncertain. But He certainly reveals the thoughts that are in their minds.

God's book of secrets, not only reveals their actions and practices, but their perception of God and the attitudes of their hearts toward Him, as well.

Lk.7:36, Jesus and Simon Pharisee and the sinful woman. Jesus knew his feelings towards this sinful woman, only by knowing their thoughts. This is not the only time this happened.

Dr. Thomas Constable states: "The task of prophet, is not to smooth things over, but to make things right." (Constable, *Malachi*, p5) This is what God does through His prophet Malachi; He reveals their and their secret thoughts.

It is the issue of God's love that is the Key source of all the core problems in this book. The book begins with this summary issue of luke-warmness of Love, and from there, addresses the other underlying issue or manifestations of the love-less-ness.

Esau and Jacob 1:2-4

Mal 1:2-4 (2) "I have loved you," says the LORD. ***But you say,*** "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob (3) but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." (4) If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I

will tear down, and they will be called 'the **wicked country**,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'"

God uses "Esau" to refer to the nation Edom, and "Jacob" to refer to the nation Israel. But why would God bring up this, to address His love for His people? The idea is that God has not expressed His love or favor toward Esau, that is the nation of Edom, as He has to Jacob, that is a reference to the nation of Israel. This is an address to the population of the nation of Israel, not concerning one person, but two nations.

What God brings out, is that Esau's descendants have not been blessed in their land and national blessings, as Jacob or Israel has been blessed. And in the historical context, we remember that over the past 200 yrs, Israel has been dominated by 3 different foreign nations, and ruled by alien, pagan rulers – and if they will take notice – they are still thriving as a nation and they are living evidence that they are still, objects of God's covenant love.

Note: ¹ As a result of the contrast between Edom's devastation and Israel's national blessing, Edom will be called (by the onlooking world) "the wicked country^[v4]", in contrast with Israel who is known as the "Holy City" in Scripture and in world history. (Zech.2:12).

In Genesis, we see a difference between Esau and Jacob that was carried on through their descendants.

1) God has already prophesied the difference between Esau and Jacob or Edom and Israel.

Gen 25:23 ESV And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

This was a prophecy referring to the reverse birth order.

2) Esau has already exercised his free will to reject God and his birthright

Gen 25:31-34 ESV Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." (32) Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" (33) Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. (34) Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus **Esau despised his birthright.**

In Gen 25, it was not God who rejected Esau, but Esau who has rejected God. He despised his birthright which was God's blessings through the firstborn son.

3) Isaac, when giving the blessing at the end of his life, speaks this about Esau's future.

Gen 27:39-40 ESV Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. (40) By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."

This does not necessarily refer to God's hatred as we would perceive it nor even a curse, but perhaps initially a refraining from expressing His favor and providing His blessing upon the one who has already despised that blessing and rejected the "Blesser".

The Greatness of God in all the Earth (1:5

And not only will the world look at the contrast between Edom's devastation and Israel's national blessing, Edom will be called "the wicked country", in contrast with Israel, but when Israel finally sits up and takes notice of this contrast, Israel – God's people – will in a sense, come to their senses and proclaim ...(v5)

Mal 1:5 (5) Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say..."Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!" [1Ki.8:41]

"your own eyes will see this" – That is, Israel will one day take note of the devastation of Edom, in contrast to their own nation and blessings they enjoy under His care. Then they will acknowledge God's loving kindness demonstrated over the

centuries to His rebellious people, who deserve the same treatment as Edom, but were spared – not because they were good, but because they were God's chosen.

All this is ultimately in keeping with the purpose of God from Genesis to Revelation; being the display and proclamation of the greatness and glory of God throughout the whole earth.

Lest we be also be deceived and inclined to think there are things in our lives that God is unaware of, we will look at just a few things that emphasize God's knowledge or all things or His "OmniPotence".

SOME THINGS THAT GOD KNOWS

Malachi – evidences that God knows the level and sincerity of what we might refer to as our *worship*. God knows the questions in our own hearts and unspoken complaints we have about Him. God knows the daily activities we involve ourselves in, which, while routine and meaningless to us, may be of significant offense to God and result in significant implications for us. God knows the dryness in our spirit. He knows the shallowness of spirit. He knows the weariness, routineness and monotony felt within us, as we drift away from Him in passion, purpose and personal interest.

SOME THINGS THAT GOD KNOWS.

1) God knows what we need before we even pray about it.

Mat 6:7-8 ESV "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for your **Father knows what you need** before you ask him.

2) God knows and fashions your future.

Jer 29:10-13 ESV "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. (11) **For I know the plans** I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (12) Then you will call

upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (13) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

This prophecy from Jeremiah is actually referring to Israel during the time of Malachi's ministry.

(3) God knows the end from the beginning.

Isa 46:8-10 ESV "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, (9) remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, (10) declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

4) God knows every heart of every human

1Ki 8:37-39 ESV "If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence or blight or mildew or locust or caterpillar, if their enemy besieges them in the land at their gates, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, (38) whatever prayer, whatever plea is made by any man or by all your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart and stretching out his hands toward this house, (39) then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind)

5) God knows all about, all of creation

Heb 4:12-13 ESV For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

6) God knows the life of the Unborn before birth

Psa 139:2-4 ESV You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. (3) You search out my path

and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. (4) Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

Psa 139:7-8 ESV Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? (8) If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

Psa 139:16-17 ESV Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (17) How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

7) God knows our thoughts and dreams as we sleep

Dan 2:27-28 ESV Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, (28) but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these:

8) God knows the secrets of our hearts

Deu 29:29 ESV "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Psa 44:20-21 ESV If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, (21) would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Our God is not only the Keeper of the Book of Secrets, He is the author of the Book of Secrets. He knows all things, mysteries and secrets. He knows the inner most workings of our hearts and there is nothing hidden from Him. There is no pretense with God; we can only deceive ourselves.

These are just some **SOME THINGS THAT GOD KNOWS**. God knows everything, but we don't have time to cover everything He knows. If we did, then we'd really go over our time allotment for

this morning.

ASSIGNMENT:

For Christians, we must not become so accustomed to God that we begin to take Him for granted, living like His presence is of no consequence to us. Neither should we be fearful, that He is not interested enough, thinking Him disconnected to life.

For the child of God, to doubt God's love is an offense to God.

Heb 12:5-8 ESV And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

God loves those whom He disciplines. God did not discipline Edom. Perhaps punished, but not disciplined.

God's love is not demonstrated toward Edom, they are only promised devastation. God's love is demonstrated to His own children, Israel, through discipline and their national preservation.

God knows the secrets of your heart! He knows the love in your life for Him. He knows what caused you to doubt His love for you. He Knows!

So what is preventing us from living a life of loving faith for Him? Only one thing comes to my mind. IT is simply the choice we make, based on our own impression or perception of God.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL and TO THE CHURCH

(1) Look around: look at yourself. Who do you belong to? What good things are part of your life? What good things are you

overlooking or ignoring?

Q: Do these good thing not evidence the loving-kindness and patient-care of God in your life?

(2) Look Up: Look at where you have been? Remember what you have experienced? Consider where you are going? What is in store for you? What rewards are ahead in your eternal home?

Q: Does this not imply the blessed favor of God's demonstrated, Fatherly watch care and goodness over your present life and the life to come?

(3) Allow Gods Love to Draw You Nearer.

Lam 3:20-24a ESV My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. (21) But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: (22) The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; (23) they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (24) "The LORD is my portion,"...

Reflect on the goodness of God in your past. How has he displayed his presence in your life? How has He demonstrated His love for you? Allow His faithfulness in your past, to re-kindle your love for Him Today. Praise Him!

Rom 5:8-9 ESV but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

God's Book of Secrets

"Serving God our Leftovers"

Theme: Drawing Nearer

Feb.26, 2017

Text: Malachi 1:5-14

Secret #2:

"O priests, who despise my name. *But you say,*
'How have we despised your name?' -Malachi 1:6b

Some leftovers are things we'd prefer not to eat,
yet Mom puts back on the table to harass us.

_____ - rp journey

REVIEW

Malachi is "*God's Book of Secrets*". The book is full of questions. The questions presented in this book, and then God's answers, are a process of God revealing the Secrets of the hearts of His people.

Secret #1: God declares His present love for Israel. He also reveals the luke-warmness of Israel's own heart by revealing this secret. Israel does not properly love Jehovah God, because the people of Israel are blindly unaware of God's covenant love for them.

It is the issue of God's love, that is the key source of all the core problems in this book, between Israel and their God. The book begins with this summary issue of love-warmness of Love, and from there, addresses the other underlying issues or manifestations of the love-less-ness.

Secret #2: Israel despises the name of the Lord!

INTRODUCTION

Our offerings of worship are our own personal responsibility. Its not the responsibility of the praise team; not the comfort or discomfort of the pews; Its not the lighting. But what it is more dependent on is the heart and a direct reflection on our attitude and relationship with God.

The Holy Name... of the LORD is despised (1:5-6

In this section, God brings out the fact that His holy name is despised by His people. As God's people did not sense His love for them, neither did they sense the holiness of His Great name(1:5).

Mal 1:5-6 ESV Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!" (6) "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? 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**?'"

“Remember whenever read the phrase, “**But you say**...” in Malchi it is God revealing a secret of their heart which they seem to feel that Gods doesn't already know.

God begins in this section by using a familiar reference to family relations. It is normal for a son to honor his Father. Likewise it is normal for a servant to honor his master. God states, “I am a Father, but where is my honor?” “I am a Master, but where is my reverence?” This is God's indictment against the spiritual leaders of Israel; that they despise the holy name of the LORD.

The name of the Lord represents All He Is.

This is addressed to the Priests or religious leaders of Israel. They were held responsible for the spiritual state of God's people.

1:6 | How have we despised your Name? The priest's worship has grown cold and routine; textbook and prescribed. They profess to be utterly unconscious how they have shown contempt of God. [Pulpit]

Dr. Thomas Constable makes this observation: | The **Name** of God is God himself and all that has to do with him. Almighty Yahweh asked the priests of Israel why they did not honor Him since sons honor their fathers (Exo 20:12; Deu 5:16), and He was their Father (Exo 4:22; Isa 1:2; Isa 63:16; Isa 64:8; Hos 11:1). Since servants respect their masters, why did they not fear Him since He was their Master (Isa 44:1-2)? Even though they were blind to His love, they should at least have given Him honor

Throughout Scripture, the name of God is synonymous with the person of God. His name is representative of His character and dealings with His people.

Jesus taught how to honor the Lord in prayer. "Our Father, who art in heaven, **hallowed be thy name**..." (Mat.6:9)

Mat 6:9-13 ESV Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, **hallowed be your name**. (10) Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread, (12) and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Not only is this presented often as a declaration – "Father, your name is Holy!" It can also be presented as a request – "Father, May your name be hallowed or considered holy." It reflects the appropriate desire of the heart of the one offering the prayer. However it must be the genuine desire of our heart, before it will become a prayer that God will be pleased to answer.

Because the name of the Lord represented all that He is...

The Name of the LORD is to be considered and treated as Holy.

Lord, Father – may you be viewed as Holy. May others experience you as Holy, just as we have.” Holy is your name!

Gen 4:26 ESV To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the **name** of the LORD.

The Name of the Lord is Jehovah or Yahweh – the Holy One of Israel. They called on His name, as referring *to* and representative *of* the character of their covenant Creator God.

“LORD” (all caps) is the word for Jehovah / Yahweh, which is the specific holy name that distinguished the God of Israel from all other gods.

Exo 20:7 ESV "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his **name** in vain.

This refers to misusing God's holy name in any way – flippantly, or irreverently; in a manner that makes His name, no different than any other name.

Psa 20:7 ESV Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the **name** of the LORD our God.

“Name” is not magic, but represents the faithful, merciful, covenant keeping God who has delivered His people throughout Biblical history.

Pro 18:10 ESV The **name** of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

2Ti 2:19 ESV But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who **names** the **name** of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Let all who declare to trust in the Lord, live holy lives, so as to reflect, proclaim and represent the holy One to Whom we belong.

Psa 23:1-6 ESV A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his **name's** sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The name of the LORD is the reputation of the God of Israel and His dealings with His people. How far the people of God have fallen! Once—the name of the LORD was indeed “hallowed”. But now, in Malachi’s day, His name is despised.

As God’s children, If those around us despise the name of the Lord, and abuse the use of His holy name – as I see it, it is up to us to Make His name Holy. It is our responsibility to honor and reverence that holy name, so others will know that "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!" or beyond the borders of our own community. We live so as to declare – “Holy is the Lord our God in [*your community here*], and beyond.”

THEIR WORTHLESS WORSHIP...***WAS DESPICABLE*** (1:6-8)

Secret #2: Israel despises the name of the Lord! And as a result, they offer empty worship; worthless offerings to the LORD.

Mal 1:7-8 ESV ... ¹**But you say**, 'How have we **despised** your name?' (7) By offering polluted food upon my altar. ²**But you say**, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be **despised**. (8) When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are

lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.

v.6) How have we despised your name?". It doesn't take an all-knowing divine being to answer that question.

Worthy worship includes honor in our offerings

v7) It required a right attitude, and right spirit; it necessitates an appropriate motive. What did the name of the LORD originally mean to Israel? The Holy One. Deliverer. Faithful, Merciful, Patient. Forgiving.

They offer God their Leftovers, what they would not want for themselves. They were offering for their worship, broken, diseased and blind leftovers.

Their offerings were Dishonored, Despised, Profaned and Polluted (1:7-8

Israel despised His holy name, and as a result they despised His table. The altar upon which the offerings were placed, is likened to a table upon which our own food is served. Imagine Serving a meal to guests of sour, curdled milk; meat with maggots crawling around on it; garlic bread with ¼ inch of green mold on it; and a little toilet water to wash things down with.

How do you think that would go over? Try giving to your earthly Persian ruler that kind of offering and see what it gets you. Don't expect him to respond favorably to your requests.

1:7 | The "table of the Lord" (Mal 1:12 [Ezk.41:22]) is the altar, on which were laid the sacrifices, regarded as the food of God, and to be eaten by the fire (Eze 41:22; Eze 44:16). They showed that they despised the altar by considering that anything was good enough for [God]; even leftovers; even the blind and the broken. [Pulpit]

(1) this could take place in the church today by giving God our leftovers in our financial offerings – leftover pocket change.

(2) This could take place today in volunteering for the Lord's work; in volunteering only when we have nothing else to do or after we have exhausted ourselves, then we give God what is left

over, if there is anything left over.

(3) This could refer to our Worship when we are too sleepy or groggy and only going through the motions – consistently, not giving God what He is worthy to receive.

(4) Offering to God what we should not dare to offer to an earthly superior (verse 8). As though we would say, "God is not very particular." Yet he requires the very best service we can offer. Such conduct is virtual dishonesty, for the intention to sacrifice to God at all, implies the sacrificing of our best.

(5) Still grosser forms of irreverence are seen in the **Corinthians feasting at the Eucharist**, and thus despising the Church of the living God ([1Co 11:22](#)), and making the table of the Lord contemptible. [Pulpit]

How did they drift this far? By not realizing the Lord's love for His people, they in turn have not loved Him, honored Him, Revered Him, nor worshiped Him or made His name great

If Gods' people despise the LORD with putrid offerings, what is the rest of the world going to think? Under these circumstances and with this kind of attitude toward God, is anyone going to want to hear about the Great and Awesome, Holy name of our God? I don't think so.

HIS BENEVOLENT FAVOR REQUESTED BUT REJECTED (1:8-12)

When we offer God worthless worship, it is evil.

This is about Giving and Taking (v9)

They don't give God much of anything that is good, but they sure storm the gates of heaven with their requests for good things and blessings from Him.

Mal 1:8-9 ESV (8) When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or

show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. (9) And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts.

Imagine praying for blessings from God, while giving God our leftovers. Unacceptable! I have to tell you – this week I was concerned about my own worship. I asked God, “Lord am I in this group?” Do I do that? Am I like that? How do you view my offerings and worship? Do I treat God flippantly and irreverently and then pray to Him for blessings?

They offer better gifts to their earthly leaders. But to their Holy, Heavenly, Leader, they offer the worst of the worst – things they don’t even want for themselves, they give to God – leftovers. Spoiled, rancid, nasty, stinking, unacceptable leftovers. And it is worthless.

If my worship is worthless, then I think I can only expect that my prayers for His blessings will also be in vain and equally worthless. This was not a one-time slip up, but that which consistently characterized their offerings of worship to God.

Shut the doors....To the house of worship (v10

This seems to be God’s preference, as these priests actually oppose God.

Mal 1:10-12 ESV (10) Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. (11) For from the rising of the sun to its setting **my NAME will be great among the nations**, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. **For my NAME will be great among the nations**, says the LORD of hosts. (12) But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised.

How can we guard from allowing this to characterize our own offerings of worship to the LORD?

We might take time regularly – even Sunday mornings...

(1) To read a short passage focused on God's love

(2) Take a bit of time to think about that passage – meditate on it; fill your mind and focus your thoughts on God's love, His faithfulness and all He has done to demonstrate His love and display His faithfulness.

(3) Consider how you can demonstrate your love for God. Think about ways you can improve your obedience to His known will. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John.14:15).

THEIR WEARINESS IN SERVING GOD IS A BURDEN

(1:13-14

When Serving God is a wearisome burden. It sounds blasphemous just to read this. In reference to the whole offering and worship experience, God speaks through Malichi, this indictment.

Mal 1:13-14 (13) ³***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.***

"but you say..." reveals a secret of their heart they didn't think God was aware of.

Secret #2: Israel despises the name of the Lord! They offer worthless worship and their prayers are not received by God. But also they view serving the Living God, as wearisome – burdensome – it is all in vain. Secret #2 is multifaceted and in every way, grievous to God.

Their offerings were...

Stolen, lame and sick worship (v.13)

They “worship” the Lord at someone else’s expense. When it comes to costly worship, King David made this comment.

2Sa 24:24 "...I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing."

It seems that offering “worship” should cost us something. Perhaps the more it costs us, or the more inconvenient it is, the more meaningful it becomes. If our level of worship was determined by the amount it costs us, how valuable would it be to God?

ASSIGNMENT:

Things to consider this week:

1) Examine your heart regularly.

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

This is a willful invitation for God to search our hearts, and reveal the secrets of our lives to us and to deal with as His Holy Spirit impresses us. Worship is what we make it. Routine? Boring? Duty? Or meaningful? Intimate Communion with God? Worship can be relating with our loving Heavenly Father, the Holy One of Israel and of my life. Worship will be what you make it. And we will only get out of it, what we contribute to it!

2) Self Preparation

Take time to prepare your own heart and focus your own thoughts on the Lord before attending a worship service, where we gather together to give God what He alone is worthy to receive. Think about God, first. Pray personally, first.

Your worship will affect the worship of others. Your personal attitude, your spirit, your motive for being here at a corporate worship experience, can affect the worship of others and the spirit

of the overall service. I feel its is up to each of us to be a positive influence on the worship of others, as much as possible.

3) Evaluate your love for God regularly.

Mat 22:37-40 ESV And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

How do we evaluate our own love for God? Duty? Scheduled? Or Joy? Anticipation? Heightened spiritual sensitivity? Desire or Duty? Privilege or Wearisome?

4) Willful Obedience reflects our love for God.

Joh 14:15 ESV "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

How we treat others will affect this. How we obey God's word, and His known will falls into this category. This is how we demonstrate our love for God. Obedience. God's love for us should move us to love Him more; changing our attitudes and motives *toward* Him, so as to change the things we do *for* Him.

5) Estimate the value of your own offering to the Lord? What is your motive for worship?

1Co 10:31 ESV So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

What is your motive for worship today? What is your attitude in worship? What is the result of your worship experience? Filled with the life and presence of God? Taking His fullness with you, to affect the spiritual of lives of others?

What contribution did you make tot the worship service and how did you stir up worship in the hearts of others?

PRAYER: “Our Father Who art in Heaven – Holy is Your Name. May your name be made holy in our lives. May the people in our communities come to see, that “Great is the Name of the LORD.” Great is Jesus Christ, Your only Son and our Only Savior in our lives.

Lord Help us to take your Holy name out of this meeting and into our mission field to make your name Great, beyond the boundaries of this church.

Closing Song: #116 -- Take the Name of Jesus With You. Remember – the “Name” represents the person. The “Name” represents the character, the love, the hope, the mercy, the holiness and faithfulness of God our Father and Jesus Christ our Savior.



God's Book of Secrets

"Worthless Worship"

Theme: Drawing Nearer

March 5, 2017

Text: Malachi 2:1ff

Secret #2: *cont'd*

"But you have turned aside from the way." - Mal 2:8A

Too often people give to God
what they would never settle for themselves.

Mal 2:1-9 ESV (1) "And now, O priests, this **command** is for you. (2) If you will not listen, if you will **not take it to heart** to give honor to my **name**, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do **not lay it to heart**. (3) Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. (4) So shall you know that I have sent this **command** to you, that my **covenant** with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. (5) My **covenant** with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a **covenant** of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my **name**. (6) True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. (7) For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD

of hosts. (8) But you have turned aside **from the way**. You have caused many to stumble by *your instruction*. You have corrupted the **covenant** of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, (9) and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you **do not keep my ways** but show partiality in *your instruction*."

The book of Malachi is a message of rebuke and correction. In this message God reveals 6 secrets of which the people seemed to think God was unaware. We will try to focus – not so much on the rebuke itself, but on the positive, underlying principle extrapolated from the passage.

INTRODUCTION

¹“Instruction” = Law = Torah (v.6,7,8²) (4x)

²“Covenant” – v.4,5²,8, (4x) [then in v10,14]

³“command” or walking in God’s “way” obedience= (7x)

Covenant is God’s promise of blessing which was conditional upon their obedience to the command “to give honor to the name of the LORD” (v2) and “to keep His ways” (v9)

This is a continuation of the multi-faceted **Secret #2**: they were guilty of Serving God their leftovers, which resulted in wearisome worship. This is sort of a part 2 of Secret #2 and will entitle this, “Worthless Worship.”

LISTEN OR BE CURSED (2:1-3

Principle: True Worship is the responsibility of (1) each individual heart and motive. But (2) also there is a portion of the worship that is the responsibility of the Spiritual Leaders of the church. Whether the Elders, the worship leaders, praise team, the pianist, or soloist -those who help lead in worship are responsible for the environment which is intended to foster of nurture a heart and spirit of worship.

But no matter how conducive the environment or the “mood” is, the responsibility of true worship falls on the heart of the individual worshipper.

Mal 2:1-3 ESV (1) "And now, O priests, this command is for you. (2) If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my *name*, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. (3) Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it.

v.1) Malachi addresses the Spiritual leaders, because the nation of Israel as a whole, was suffering because of them. A type of false worship was allowed to be practiced without being addressed. And they were not only failing to set an example in worship, they were setting bad examples for others.

Future Curse (v1-2)

The focus on Israel is in terms of blessing & cursing upon the nation, by how they obeyed God, worshipped Him appropriately and kept His command to honor His holy name. But the focus of the responsibility is clearly laid upon the shoulders of the spiritual leaders, (v1).

Principle: Worship is Serious business to God.

(1) "And now, O priests, this command is for you. (2) If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings..." Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.

(1) They would “not listen, nor take to heart” the command to honor His Holy name(v2). Yet this was the reality of their shortcomings. Though obedience was mentioned some 7 times in this short passage, they were not living in obedience to God’s know law, in honor of his name.

(2) They were expected “to give honor to the name of the name of the LORD” – to Revere His holy name; to Honor His holy word and person; His holiness / worthiness; ascribe honor and glory and value and worth and awe. In light of their disobedience and God’s worthiness, their worship was “worthlessness” to God.

v.2) they “will not listen..”, then God will refrain from pouring out His favor and goodness / life & peace.

For us today, we learn of the importance of honoring the Lord with our life and obeying the Lord in all areas of life.

Principle: True worship is focused on honoring the name and person of the LORD..

Present curse (v.2

They weren’t even aware they were under the curse of God.

(2) If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my **name**, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings... **Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.**

A curse is not necessarily something God zaps them with. We might view a “curse” as the opposite of a “blessing”. If a blessing is the undeserving favor bestowed to us from God. Then the opposite of that, a curse would be God’s undeserving favor being withheld.

Barrenness, Shame, (v3

Principle: Failure to draw near to God in True Worship may adversely affect our family for generations.

(3) Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it.

v.3) “Dung” refers to disgrace – the curse of God or the lack of Gods’ best and blessing. God would “spread dung...” or he would disgrace and humiliate the people; curse the people and display quite graphically how detestable their worship was in His sight.

Principle: Failure to give God the worship and honor He deserves may result in not receiving from Him the favor and blessing we so deeply desire and for which we so fervently pray.

THE COVENANT OF GOD

(2:4-7

The promise of God's blessings to Israel, if they meet God's expectations and keep His command.

Mal 2:4-7 ESV (4) So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. (5) My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my **name**. (6) True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. (7) For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

Covenant with Levi (v4-5)

Promise of Life and peace

(4) So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. (5) My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my **name**.

Principle: God's blessings for His people may not be the blessing we would choose for ourselves. For some, peace with God is just not on their bucket list. "So, we are promised peace with God? ... *Is that it? Is that all we're going to get?*" But for the Jew, life and peace was enough.

Num 25:12-13 ESV Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of **peace**, (13) and it shall be to him and to his **descendants** after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.'

Peace = Shalom. This was God's peace and rest; God's happiness and prosperity. It implied God's health and all around wholeness and well-being. Again, it was not for one or two people, but intended for the nation of Israel as a whole – "to his descendants". God has enough for all His children.

The honor and worship to God, would affect His family deeply for years, and for generations to come. And God's promised blessing to Levy was to be based on the level or of "awe" and reverence Levy had for Jehovah God.

Psa 22:23 ESV You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

New Testament "awe": The blessing is intended to be the experience of the reverence and power, of the presence of God, in the worship and ministry of His people. The "peace of God" may not seem very important to many, but the "shalom" (peace) was everything to the Jewish believer / worshipper.

Act 2:43 ESV And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

Heb 12:28 ESV Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Holy living with Diving blessing (v6)

If they practiced holy living, the promise was that they would experience divine blessing.

the Example of Levi...

Mal.2:6 ¹True instruction was in his mouth, and ²no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity

The peace was reference to the abiding blessing of the LORD upon his life. v.6) "instruction" = Torah = the Holy Law of God.

(1) His teaching was true, pure and pleasing to God. That would be the area of doctrine. And (2) His lifestyle was one of holiness and blessing toward the LORD. This would be the area of obedience or practice of the faith.

Priestly Expectations (v7) *the Expectations of present priests...*

(7) For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

v.7) “instruction” = Torah = the Holy Law of God. They should have been guardians of God’s Truth. How we study and how we teach, matters! How we live and how others are drawn to God as they seek a message from the LORD; that would be wisdom, instruction or direction.

LIFE AND CONSEQUENCES (2:8-9) *the Perversions of the present priests ...*

Mal 2:8-9 ESV (8) But you have ¹turned aside from the way. You have ²caused many to stumble by **your** instruction. You have ³corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, (9) and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in **your** instruction.”.

v.6, 7) “instruction” = Torah = the Holy Law of God (law = 4x)

Law = Torah was God’s written inspired Law He gave to His people through Moses. But the contrast God makes here is not a reference to Gods’ Holy Word, or the Law of Moses; But in v.8) Malachi refers to “**Your**” instruction” or “**your** law” – – the law (torah) of the priests – referring to the priest’s **erring teaching** which is supported by their **perverted living** which resulted in a **powerful example** that profoundly led the people astray from the Truth of God’s Holy Word and the Holy Path of His command for them. While missing His command, they miss His promised

blessings. God will curse their blessings, so that His blessings will be withheld.

The lifestyle of the Priests, jeopardized the blessings of God's people

Principle: The absence of Holy Living, jeopardized their Divine Blessing and will adversely affect their descendants for generations.

The way of blessing to the path of cursing (v8)

(9) and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do **not keep my ways**^[v8a] but show partiality in **your instruction**."

"The way" (v9) being God's path – His commands – His path of righteousness of loving, trusting, following and honoring the LORD. Way of Truth, Obedience, blessing and honoring of the name of the LORD.

Principle: When God's ways are replaced with man's ideas, it is the pathway toward and recipe for both personal and national, spiritual devastation.

They Did Not Keep "MY WAYS".

"MY WAYS" were: **The Way** of God's Holy Truth and Righteousness Commands. **The Way** of God's Holy Covenant, entrusted to the prophets and priests. **The Way** of God's Promised Blessing and peace and Life and reverence. **The Way** of God's Priests, living examples of lives lived in "Holiness unto the Lord".

ASSIGNMENT:

If I had to make an evaluation of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, our culture today – I'd probably have to say, there seems to be an awareness of God's holiness that may be missing; Perhaps a prevailing attitude of Awe and Reverence – in Awe of God – that seems just a bit weak, in contrast to what God reveals is His desire in the Old Testament.

Walking with God in peace and turning many from their iniquity-- It seems we may be living at peace with God, but “many turning from their sins”(v6)? Certainly not to the degree that is expected in this passage.

Their Sabbath day was to be **holy unto the Lord**. (Ex.31:15)

Their offerings were to be **holy unto the Lord**. (Lev.27:30)

The people themselves were to consider themselves as being **holy unto the Lord**. (Deut.14:2)

Rev 1:5-6 ESV “... Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood (6) and made us a **kingdom, of priests** to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1Pet. 2:9 ESV But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Our message – our Speech – our Lifestyle --- What message are we proclaiming to others; to those who are Christians and to those who are still outside God’s family?

Our Teaching Must be God’s Holy Word, not our own ideas.

Our Example Must be “**Holy Unto the Lord**”, not a lifestyle that causes people to reject Christ or despise the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. What message are we presenting to others; to other Christians and to unbelievers, still outside God’s family?

Let each of us strive to live by the principles that – in every context of our society – will bring honor to the name of our LORD Jesus Christ.



God's Book of Secrets

"Marital Unfaithfulness and God"

SECRET # 3: Marriage, Divorce and Worship

Theme: Drawing Nearer

March 12, 2017

Text: Malachi 2:1-16

"I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel"
--Malachi 2:16 (NASB)

Wife: "If you were my husband, I'd poison your coffee."

Man: "If I were your husband, I'd drink it!"

Review: initially addresses Secret #1: that the people are unaware of God's love for them, and as a result, they are failing to love God properly. This is the core issue and key problem out of which, all the other issues addressed by God in this book, flow out from that initial problem.

Review of Israel's Historical timeline

722 (BCE) - The Assyrians

The Assyrians, a powerful people from northern Mesopotamia (today northern Iraq), invaded the northern Kingdom of Israel and deported the Jews to other parts of the Assyrian Empire.

586 (BCE) - The Babylonians

After the fall of the Assyrian Empire the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, conquered Jerusalem. The most influential Jews of Judea were deported to Babylon (in southern Mesopotamia, today Iraq). The first Jewish temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.

538 (BCE) - The Persians

King Cyrus of Persia (today Iran) conquered the entire Babylonian Empire, allowed the exiled Jews to return from Babylon, and accepted a form of Jewish home rule in Jerusalem. The Jewish temple was rebuilt.

UNFORTUNATELY, Following the ministry of Nehemiah and the prophecies in this book of Malachi; Israel would enter into the “400 years of Divine Silence”, when God communicated no longer with His people. And less than 200 more years after Malachi’s time, yet another empire would conquer their Jewish land, under Alexander the Great.

Three times within 200 years, God’s people were conquered by three different foreign powers. So this is the background and a bit of the history that has brought God’s people to where they were in Malachi’s time. And their position is, they have drifted away from God.

They have considered their daily life practices, separate from their religious practices. Today it would be like calling yourself a Christian and going to church on Sundays, then living Monday through Saturday as you pleased – as though God did not exist.

The Israelites were living sinful lives, seemingly unaware that God knew what was going on with the inconsistencies between their faith and life.

The message of Malachi, is really a love letter and a record of God revealing the secrets that were causing His people to drift away from Him. Revealing these secrets was God’s way of lovingly calling His people back to a right relationship with their holy God.

Secret #3 Addresses Israel's unfaithfulness toward God. (v11)

UNEQUALLY YOKED MARRIAGES (2:10-12

Interfaith Marriages --This is referring to the Jewish people marrying non-Jewish people.

A common family (2:10

Mal 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

This covenant refers to the agreement between God and His people that they were not to marry unbelievers. The Jewish people are ultimately all the same family and they all had Jehovah God, as their Heavenly Father. The New Testament addresses this in Ephesians.

Eph 3:14-15 ESV For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

Eph 4:4-6 ESV There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and **Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

The very foundation of Biblical faith is that Jehovah God is the One, True and Living God and they were to have no other God's beside Him. Also, they were not to marry outside those faith parameters, so they would not be led to worship other gods and compromise their relationship with the God of creation.

A common problem (2:11-12

Not only did they have a common family they also had a common problem. The problem was they had married unbelieving spouses. This was what we might refer to as "the golden rule" of marriage.

Mal 2:11-12 ESV (11) Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves,

and has married the daughter of a foreign god. (12) May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!

They were unfaithful toward God because they were marrying outside their faith. They were breaking God's Golden Rule of marriage, which is what Scripture refers to as being “*unequally yoked*”. They were marrying unbelievers and then worshipping in the sanctuary on their religious day, as though God didn't care about how they were living the other 6 days.

2Cor. 6:14 ESV Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

“*Yoked*”, refers to two farm animals “yoked” together as they plowed a field. A camel was not unequally yoked with a goat, nor an ox with a pack mule. Likewise a true believer in Jesus Christ was not to marry an unbelieving person; not because they were less valuable humans, but because there was the danger that their faith would be compromised. First and foremost, it was not to be negotiated, because it was God's clear law.

Marrying outside your faith, jeopardizes the integrity of your Christian's faith and is in opposition to God's will and plan. How very prevalent that is among Christians today.

In the OT, Jewish marriage was a representation of God's relationship with the nation of Israel. He was the “Husband” of Israel. (Mal 2:8; Jere.3:14). In the NT, Christian marriage was to represent the relationship between Jesus and the Church. (Eph.5:31-32).

BROKEN MARRIAGES AND BROKEN WORSHIPPERS (2:13-16)

Not only were they marrying unbelievers, but they were being unfaithful to one another in that inter-faith marriage.

Broken Worshippers (2:13)

Again, the first thing was they were marrying unbelievers. God was not occupying their worship. They were expecting religious activity on the day or worship to balance out their sinful living on the other 6 days.

Mal 2:13 And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

What an example of sincerity? Tears and pleading and weeping and groanings in their worship. They want to experience God. They want God to be pleased with their religious day and worship. They want to receive Gods' blessings but there was known, on-going, and unaddressed sin. Sin is always an obstacle or hindrance in our relationship with God.

This was not accidental sin that they stumbled into. This was sin that they knew about, they practiced and was unrepentant and unaddressed. This involves their vertical relationship with God and their horizontal relationships with others, specifically the spouse.

Broken Marriage Covenants (2:14)

Mal 2:14 (14) ***But you say,*** "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Out of God's love flow all other loves. Love God, love neighbor. There is no closer neighbor than your spouse. Treat others, the way you would want others to treat you. So, treat your spouse in the manner which you would want them to treat you.

There may have been sexual Unfaithfulness toward the spouse

Pro 4:23-27 ESV (23) Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (24) Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. (25) Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. (26) Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. (27)

Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

Apply this proverb to the marriage relationship and marital faithfulness. Take note of what you are looking at and longing for. Take note of the direction your feet are taking you. Take note for the relationship you are drifting from or building with someone else.

Pro 6:32-33 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does this destroys his own soul. (33) He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

DIVORCE IS SERIOUS BUSINESS WITH GOD. (2:15-17)
Lest we are unclear on the concept, God's ideal for marriage is:

"ONE HUSBAND, ONE WIFE; ONE MARRIAGE FOR LIFE."

Mal 2:15 (15) Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth

Broken Families (2:15)

Broken marriages foster broken families. Malachi refers to Godly "offspring". Broken marriages are detrimental to present and future generations are negatively affected when these kinds of marital offenses and covenant breeches toward God occur and go unaddressed.

Then, Israel was a mess. Today, America is a mess because our families are often times a mess. Broken marriages foster broken families. These kinds of messes occur **(1)** when Christians marry unbelieving spouse. **(2)** When the marriage covenant is brokend through unfaithfulness, infidelity and sexual relations outside the marriage relationships. **(3)** These kinds of messes occur by breaking the marriage covenant and vow through divorce. This brings curses or they cause God to *withhold His blessing* from

families to generations to come. The Israelites were unfaithful to their spouses through divorce. *"Till Death do Us Part!"*

These problems are being passed onto the children and their children's children. These are generational sins and generational curses. Godless activity going on, children being taught by instruction, as well as by example, that the marriage covenant between two people before Almighty God was something to be minimized. How true that is in our nation today.

Divorce and Violence (2:16

v.15) "Faithless" refers to breaking the marriage covenant through divorce or unfaithfulness. Those marriage vows were meant to be kept.

ONE HUSBAND, ONE WIFE; ONE MARRIAGE FOR LIFE."

There was definitely marital unfaithfulness toward the spouse in regard to their covenant before God.

The marital vows were between you, and your spouse *AND* God. Perhaps you do not view it like that, but God does.

Mal 2:16 (16) "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

God hates divorce. Sin is serious business with God. Worship is serious business with God. "Marriage and Divorce" is serious business with God. And when something is serious business with God, it would be in our own best interest to take that to heart and to deal with those things in our lives, in a manner that is pleasing to God, honorable to His name and in accordance with His Word.

Sin dishonors the holy name of the Lord. Worthless Worship dishonors the holy name of the Lord. Divorce dishonors the holy name of the Lord. "Oh, this has nothing to do with God, we just don't love each other anymore. We just can't get along any more. We just have to get away from each other. She's no longer the lovely pleasant person I married. He's no longer the kind and

caring man I once knew. We getting a divorce. Its consensual. God says, "Oh no it isn't!" You may take marriage and divorce lightly, but God doesn't. This is serious business with God and it is rampant – absolutely epidemic in America and it seems almost as bad Christians, as among unbelievers.

Divorcing the wife was like putting on a coat of violence and injustice against the spouse. IT was referred to as cruelty, injustice and treachery.

The only sin I know of that God gives as the reason for sending the flood was the sin of "violence".

Gen 6:13 ESV And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with *violence* through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

God destroyed the world due to violence. People are divorcing their spouse for no reason and God, through His prophet Malachi refers to it as violence; injustice; cruelty or treachery. IT does violence to the marriage covenant between two people and God.

We tend to view so much of our life and experience and desires through our own lenses of "how does it affect me", "what are my felt needs" and we very often omit the most important aspect of our Christian faith and actions; that being "How does God feel about this?" What does God want? What does He expect from me in this situation?"

God's Plan from the Beginning (Mat.19:3-10

"ONE HUSBAND, ONE WIFE; ONE MARRIAGE FOR LIFE."

Mal 2:16 (16) "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. ***So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.***"

v.16b) "...guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless"
Twice repeated.(cp.v15b)

"guard" –take heed; action steps to protect; hedge up; watch over"

“spirit” – your very life breath and core of your being.

“Do not be faithless” or do not deal treacherously or deceitfully with God or with your spouse. This is violence in terms of God’s plans and violence in regard to families and generations. This was one of several reasons that led to the downfall, though not the destruction of the nation of Israel.

This has the idea of taking action steps to fight for your spouse, for your relational purity together, for the preservation of your marriage covenant before God. They were not doing what it took to protect and preserve their marriages, thus benefitting their descendants to come. But on the contrary, they seemed to be doing all they could to destroy themselves, from the inside out.

Gen 2:23-24 (23) Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (24) Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**** HUFFINGTON POST--- “WHERE MARRIAGES GO TO DIE”**, 11/04/2013 | By Ashley Reich, Based on research from Brown University, between 2000 and 2010, reflect that divorce rates declined over the 10 yr period, along with the marriage rate. As a result, the divorce rate for existing marriages during that time, remained at approximately 50%.

TIME ---- DIVORCE RATE IN U.S. DROPS TO NEARLY 40-YEAR LOW, Abigail Abrams | Nov 17, 2016

The U.S. divorce rate dropped for the third year in a row, reaching its lowest point in nearly 40 years, according to [data](#) released. Marriage rates, on the other hand, [increased](#) last year. In 2015, there were 32.2 marriages for every 1,000 unmarried women age 15 or older, according to the [National Center for Family and Marriage Research](#) at Bowling Green State University. This represents a jump from 31.9 in 2014 and is the highest number of marriages since 2009, which suggests that marriage rates may be stabilizing after decades of decline.

On the divorce side, the 2015 rate was 16.9 divorces per 1,000 married women age 15 or older, which is down from 17.6 in 2014. and a peak of almost 23 divorces in 1980.

So between 2014 and 2015 Divorce rates declined, though still just under the 50% mark.

Christianity Today: MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND THE CHURCH:” What do the stats say, and can marriage be happy?” *Are Christian divorce rates the same, or even higher, than the rest of the population? Is a happy marriage possible? /*

Feb.14, 2014 | **Ed Stetzer**

Interviewed: Dr. Bradford Wilcox, Director of the National Marriage Project, Dr. Wilcox finds that "**ACTIVE conservative protestants**" who attend church regularly are actually 35% less likely to divorce than those who have no religious preferences.

In all cases, notice the active element of the faith commitment. "*Nominal*" Christians, however, those who simply call themselves Christians but so not actively engage with the faith, are actually 20% *more* likely than the general population to get divorced—perhaps there is a link between putting on a show in the religious and relational context.”(CT)

Mat 19:3-10 ESV And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (4) He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, (5) and said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? (6) So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (7) They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" (8) He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (9) And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another,

commits adultery." (10) The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

This is not intended to condemn anyone. But we must know what God expects and what He wants us to fight for. We must be aware of the danger and tendency of American marriages and we must have a standard to strive toward.

ASSIGNMENT: Is there a possibility of forgiveness for the sin of divorce? Of course, just as there is the possibility of forgiveness for any sin.

1) Confession of that sin. Rather than pretending it doesn't matter, confess it as sin before God. Ask Him for forgiveness and possibly and possibly go to the spouse you divorced and ask forgiveness for him/her, if you were the one who initiated the divorce.

2) Regret and Repentance from that and further sin. Take steps to resolve to do what you can to keep that from ever being repeated.

FIGHT FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

The fight for your marriage is the fight to honor God.

1) Unless you are listening from heaven right now, you are an imperfect person. Therefore, acknowledge your marriage is imperfect; acknowledge that you are an imperfect spouse.

2) Fight to treat your spouse as you would desire to be treated.

Mat 7:12 ESV "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

If necessary, try to view you marriage as any other relationship, in order to implement this principle.

3) Fight to keep from treating your spouse the way you perceive he/she has treated you. There is no place for revenge or retaliation in a marriage centered on the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

4) Fight against pride. Admit your mistakes. Offer apologies when appropriate. Gary Chapman, states: "You will not have an ongoing, meaningful relationship without *apology*." Minimizing your own wrongdoing – ignoring your offenses to your spouse, will only

cause barriers to be built and callousness to develop over time. Apology is critical, when appropriate.

5) Fight in prayer against your enemy the Devil. He is the destroyer. It is Satan's purpose to destroy marriages, families, from generation to generation. This is not romance love, but a commitment.

1Cor. 13:4-8 ESV Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends...

From Gary Chapman's "The Language of Apology" How to apologize appropriately.

1) Express Regret - *"I am Sorry"*

2) Accept Responsibility - *"I was wrong"*

3) Make Restitution - *"What Can I do to make this up to you?"*

4) Genuinely Repent - *Express Desire to change - "I don't want this to happen again"*

5) Request Forgiveness - *"Will you please forgive me?"* -

Fighting for your marriage is fighting for what God wants.

"ONE HUSBAND, ONE WIFE; ONE MARRIAGE FOR LIFE."



God's Book of Secrets

"God's Justice - When Evil Prevails"

SECRET #4 -----

Theme: Drawing Nearer

March 19, 26, 2017

Text: Malachi 2:17-3:5

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." --1Peter 3:18

"Justice is often in the eye of the beholder"

-sage

REVIEW

As God address his people through the prophet Malachi, He does so by revealing several Secrets of their hearts which they thought God was unaware of.

Secret #1: Was their Ho Hum Lukewarm love toward God and their belief that God had not loved them properly. It was this issue of God's love that was the key issue, from which all their other core problems flowed.

Secret #2: Was their detest toward the holy name of the Lord, and their worthless worship, as they were only Giving God their Leftovers; literally their broken, diseased and even stolen offerings.

Secret #3: Was their marrying of pagan wives and the breaking of their marriage covenant, all the while wondering why God was not responding to their worship and tears with His outpoured blessings.

With every secret that God reveals, He is identifying a problem in the faith of the Israelites, which is actually responsible for their spiritual and national problems.

Today is **Secret #4:** Israel questioned God's justice, believing Him to be unjust and that He considered the evil around them as something good.

INTRODUCTION:

Remember – over the previous 300 years, God has allowed 3 foreign pagan empires to conquer and rule over His people. These experiences were God's way of chastising his people for their sin, idolatry, and multiple other specific areas of disobedience.

As foreign powers overtook the Israelites, they began to view God as unloving toward them, and as a result, their love for Him grew lukewarm. Their obedience had waned, their worship had dissipated and their religious life was “going through the motions”.

As we work through Malachi, God's Book of Secrets, Let's look for the positive elements wrapped up in the problems. “When evil seems to prevail, remember; God is still on the Throne!”

Malachi addresses the fact that the people are...

BLIND AND IGNORANT (Malachi 2:17-3:5)

Israel was blind to God's justice and guilty of ignoring their situation as the consequences of drifting away from God. As we look at today's lesson, we notice the people harbor an attitude of –

“Don't we deserve better than this?” Have you ever felt like that? Or have you ever prayed like that? “Lord, Why me?”

“What have I done to deserve this?” “Don't I deserve better than this?” “Is this what it means to be a Christ follower?” God is unfair. Perhaps that is how you may be feeling today; that God is unfair. This was the secret the Israelites harbored in their hearts.

Filtered through the lenses of their own unpleasant experiences, they believed God to be unjust and unfair. This was their perception and through these negative perceptions, they evaluated God's character and His purposes mistakenly. I hope today, that we will clearly see: God is NOT unfaithful or unjust, but always and ever faithful. And He is fully and forever just. We would do well to realize that as humans we are increasingly prone to drift away from God, and forever viewing Him, through the blurred lenses of our own broken lives and experiences.

“When you look at life through broken lenses, everything in life will be viewed as broken, no matter how good, or pleasant or valuable it truly is.” When we view life, or God through the unpleasantness of our life experiences, the reality of the character of God becomes more and more diminished, and ever changing with our circumstances. We will view the goodness of God in light of the pleasantness of our circumstances.

Wearisome Words (2:17a)

God's people had wearied the Lord with many words. Because their view of God was marred, their understanding of His purpose was marred. Malachi records God's sentiment below.

Mal 2:17 ESV You have wearied the LORD with your words.... But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

“*Your words*” - Their words were words without understanding, spoken out of ignorance and disappointment. Their words had actions and those actions were sinful actions. Their words were lacking in love, so as to render their worship worthless. Their prayers were rout, so as to make their prayers, words, words, words, - vain babblings.

(1) These were Routine words in prayer, worship and ministry and “communion” with God.

True worship is not about the words we speak or the tune of our songs, nor the key of our voices. True worship is about the motives and content of the heart toward the Object of our worship.

These were mindless worthless words. These words reflect ignorance and rejection of the historical relationship and covenant, God had with his people. Their Worship was characterized by worthless words(2:13), because there was no true love for God in their hearts. They wept, they cried out, they groaned over their worship, but God didn't hear them. Their words were just wearisome words and nothing more.

In the New Testament, when Jesus was instructing His disciples about praying with proper motives, He makes this clarification.

Mat 6:6-7 ESV (6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (7) "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Words are not the most important part of worship, but the content and motives of the heart are the key issues.

(2) These were Offensive words in misunderstanding and doubting God's character. These reflect our perceptions of God through our experiences, rather than the awareness of His presence in our Heavenly Relationship with Him. "Holiness" is living the life that – not merely leads us to Him – but lives, in increasing measure as He Lives. This is the "***Sanctified Life***" we have been saved to live. Watchman Nee refers to this as the life of the "inner man".

(3) This revealed they were Unclear on the concept. Their situation involved either God's discipline or Satan's attacks. Sometimes it may seem like the discipline of God is more like the attacks of Satan. When in reality, they may be one in the same. Martin Luther often spoke of the Devil being God's devil. Meaning that God was not the author of evil, but God certainly controls the evil one, and can use him for His own purposes.

Sometimes His purpose is to use the devil to chastise His own people, as He did toward the Israelites.

The Apostle Paul experienced this.

2Cor 12:7-9 ESV So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, **a messenger of Satan** to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. (9) But he said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you**, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

So while it may seem like Satan is attacking, we are confident God has *control over* it and has a definite purpose *in* it.

Their perception was also that...

God is unjust (2:17b)

This perception is arrived at by viewing God, as they perceive Him defined by their unpleasant circumstances.

Mal 2:17 ESV You have wearied the LORD with your words.... **But you say**, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

"but you say", is an accusation toward God and reveals Secret #4. They were unaware that God was fully aware that His own people viewed Him as Unjust.

"Disillusionment had followed the rebuilding of the Temple, with Ezra, because decade after decade, no supernatural event marked the good [pleasure of God in the displayed of their worship or in their deliverance from foreign domination]". –Dr. Thomas Constable

They evaluated God by their experiences. Life was unpleasant, therefore they viewed God as unloving, unjust and unfair. Remember, for 300 years, God has chastised his people through the domination of foreign pagan rulers. Now God's own people

had disregarded God's chastisement by viewing God as evil and unjust. This is what happens when we allow our view of God to be evaluated by our own skewed perceptions of our personal circumstances.

So God's people were blind to God's justice and ignorant that their circumstances were God's chastisement upon their own sin. As God's people were accusing God of being unloving and unjust; as they viewed God through their troubled circumstances, God responds by informing them of His coming justice and demonstration of His love for them when He would send His Messenger, our Messiah / Savior to address sin and injustice.

So, this is how Malachi addresses God's justice. He points them to the coming day of judgment through God's coming Messiah and His Great Hope, not just for His people the Jews, but for all the world. In Malachi chapter 3, we are given two different responses to one message, pertaining to Christ's glorious advent.

THE MESSENGER OF JUSTICE (3:1

In Malachi's prophecies of future things, God's people will be cleansed from their sins and their worship would be purified.

Mal 3:1 ESV **"Behold, I send my ¹messenger, and he will prepare the way before ME^[Is.40:3]**. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the ²messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Malachi refers to 2 messengers from God. Then he addresses 2 apparent "appearings" of Jesus Christ. The first appearing is here in Chapter 3, and the other is in chapter 4, which we will be deal with in a future message.

So in Malachi chapter 3, he identifies 2 messengers of God.

Messenger #1 – (3:1a

With all the problems and complaints from God's people, He has promised and prepared a day when His Messenger, that being

Jesus Christ Himself, and will come to purify His people and right all wrong And this coming time is fulfilled in our day *today*.

"Behold, I send my ¹messenger, and he will prepare the way before ME^[Is.40:3]" Malachi makes reference to 2 messengers. This messenger #1 is a prophetic reference to John the Baptist. Remember, after the messages of Malachi, God goes silent for approximately 400 years; no more messages for his people.

"Behold, I send my ¹messenger, and *he will prepare the way before ME.* "ME" refers to the LORD Jehovah, Himself. God's final words before He goes silent for 400 yrs, is that He will send His messenger #1 (John the Baptist) to prepare the way for Messenger #2, the LORD's divine Emissary, that being God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

And after the 400 years of silence following Malachi's last prophecy, God chooses to break His silence, and He does so in the New Testament, first, with his prophet John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:1-3 ESV In those days John the Baptist [Malachi's Messenger #1] came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, (2) "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (3) For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" [Is.40:3]

Malachi's prophecy of the 1st Messenger John the Baptist, was looking back in Biblical history nearly 260 years, referencing the prophecy of Isaiah, who was looking forward about 650 years, even beyond Malachi's time to the coming of Jesus Christ and His messenger, John the Baptist.

John was the prophetic messenger of God, who would come to prepare the way of the LORD, Jehovah and to prepare people to be receptive to the person and Message of Jesus Christ. So Messenger #1(Mal..3:1) refers to John the Baptist.

In the Old Testament writers they often made reference to...

The Lord is in His Holy Temple (3:1b)

The Temple was the dwelling place of the presence of God on earth.

Mal 3:1 ESV "Behold, I send my ¹messenger, and he will prepare the way before ME. **And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple;** and the ²messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Old Testament Scripture often references God as residing in His holy temple.

Hab 2:20 ESV But the *LORD is in his holy temple*; let all the earth keep silence before him."

Psa 11:4 (4) The *LORD is in his holy temple*; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see...

1Ki 8:30 ESV And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. *And listen in heaven your dwelling place*, and when you hear, forgive.

We know that God is enthroned in heaven, ruling and reigning in heaven. After Jesus' Resurrection, He ascended into heaven and He has "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3).

During Holy Week, Jesus' triumphal entry foreshadowed His second coming when He will return to earth. At His triumphal Entry, he entered the temple and cleansed it. Malachi reveals that when the Son of God returns, He will enter His temple – I take that to be the earthly temple and there He will for a time, rule on earth in righteousness.

Mat 21:9-13 ESV And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "**Hosanna** to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (10) And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" (11) And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." (12) And Jesus **entered the temple** and drove out all who sold and

bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

The first coming of Christ was to bring the provision for people to be saved, forgiven and purified. The Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a foreshadowing of the eventual return of Christ to rule in righteousness; we believe for 1,000 literal years on the earth.

Many believe the Temple in Mal. 3:1 refers to God's people, in the future. This was the understanding in the early church.

1Cor. 6:18-20 ESV Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that ***your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you***, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Not only did the triumphal entry to Jerusalem foreshadow the 2nd coming of Christ as King, but also foreshadowed the cleansing of the temple of His people as His dwelling. As Jesus addressed His disciples prior to His crucifixion, He stated:

Joh 14:16-17 ESV And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (17) even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, *for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

This is in reference to our day. We are living in the days of Malachi's fulfilled prophecy of God's Holy Spirit within each true believer Christian.

The Messenger #2 of the New covenant (3:1c
 Messenger #2 is Jesus Christ Himself.

Mal 3:1 (ESV (1) "Behold, I send my ¹messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and **the ²messenger of the covenant**

in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

The messenger of the Covenant is Jesus Himself.

Jer 31:31-33 ESV "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put **my law within them**, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant.^[Heb.12:24] So when Jesus is at the Last Passover with His disciples and presents what we consider the New Testament communion, we can understand the references back to Jeremiah and to Malachi.

Luk 22:19-20 ESV And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." (20) And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is **the new covenant** in my blood.

Malachi is pointing us toward the time of Jesus Christ when the covenant of God's law, will be fulfilled by the New Covenant of Christ's purifying sacrifice and indwelling Holy Spirit in the temple of each believer's heart.

THE MESSENGER OF THE NEW COVENANT (3:2-5

Why a "New" Covenant? And what makes it "New"?

Jesus is referred to as Messenger #2, the messenger of the New Covenant; A covenant or testament not written *on* stone tablets but *in* each believers' heart.

Mal 3:2-3 (ESV) (2) But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. (3) He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi^[2:4] and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring *offerings in righteousness* to the LORD.

3:3 - “righteous offering”. This prophecy states that God will cleanse the temple of His people^[Mal.3:1] and purify the nation of Israel^[3:2-3]. All the dross and the impurities, the nastiness and the filth of the religion practices of His own people will be cleanse. That is what Jesus will do when He returns.

Jesus Christ is Messenger #2: the Messenger of the New Covenant.

He will come to cleanse and purify (3:2-3)

The prophecy points to Jesus, the “Messenger of the Covenant”, will come to cleanse and wash and purify the people of God – not by the law on the outside, but by the Holy Spirit from the inside. This will not be unlike what he was already doing with Israel in the time of Malachi. IN Malachi God is disciplining His people to purify them.

And yet with all the Old Testament laws and sacrifice offerings - those sacrifices are not presented as having the power to change a person's life or attitude. But the coming “messenger” – that is Malachi's Messenger #2, Jesus Christ – God's only Son and the world's only Purifying Savior - through His death blood sacrifice and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit - would purify their lives, make the offerings acceptable^[Mal.3:3], and their worship genuine.

It is interesting in the context of Malachi's messages, the coming of Messiah and judgment on sin, is to bring purification to Gods' people, and restoration of appropriate worship, thereby providing full and satisfying reconciliation to God for those who are far from Him.

What will be the outcome of all this?

The New and the Old (3:4-5)

The New Covenant would accomplish what the Old Covenant was powerless to accomplish. The Old Covenant was intended to point out our need, and to point to the coming Savior, Messiah, and “Messenger of the New Covenant”.

The Old Testament sacrifices served only to cover the sin, and could not change the worshipper. But the New Testament sinless perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not only forgave and removed sin, but cleansed the sinner and changed him/her into His new creation.^[2Cor.5:17]

Mal. 3:4:5 (4) Then the offering of Judah^[2:11] and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (5) "Then I will “draw near” to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

“God states that He will judge the sin of His people, thus His answer to the accusations that He was unjust.(2:17)” -Constable, p.34

Delay of justice is not *in*justice. Delay of Justice is the preservation or patience of God against judging the sin of His own people. As God's people viewed Him as unjust – yet when He does come with justice, it will be his own people whom He addresses to make their worship right.

v.5) **PAGAN PRACTICES OF** -sorcery, adulterers, liars, **Sorcery**: witchcraft, enchantments, magic, superstitions; any power that is not directly derived or directed or sought from Almighty God; Fortune cookies, Astrology, Good Luck Charms or other superstitious practices.

Adulterers: spiritual apostasy; a variety of inappropriate relations with another person outside the marriage covenant; even refers to spiritual idolatry against God.

Liars: 9th Commandment- **Exo 20:16** ESV "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor; untrue; deceitful so as to disguise the truth; fraud or betrayal;

UNJUST DEALINGS - which is their own accusations against the Lord (2:17) unfair cheaters, those who take advantage of workers, and the widows, including swindlers, cheaters and shysters.

Abusive Oppressors : to violate; cheat; contract breakers; toward cheating honest workers; press in on or take advantage of widows; to crush and abuse orphans (v.5) They opposed and rejected strangers, rather than showing kindness, help and hospitality.

They were **MERCILESS AND LACKING IN CONCERN TOWARD OTHERS**, so God's people viewed God as unjust.

Take Note: Merciful justice is not *in*justice. Delay of severe Justice is the preservation or patience of God against judging the sin of His own people.

2Pet. 3:7-9 ESV (7) But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (8) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not **slow** to fulfill his promise as some count **slowness**, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

The fact is, their present situation was the result of God's judgment or punishment for the sins of His own people. Furthermore, the Messenger of the Covenant – the Messiah, Jesus – would bring judgment upon sin and justice for the people.

ASSIGNMENT:

Under the New Covenant the believers are transformed from the

inside out. The New Covenant sacrifice of Christ, has done what the old sacrifice after sacrifice could never accomplish. The New Covenant brings the Holy Spirit to take up residence within the temple of our own bodies, to cleanse, not once upon entry, but daily convicting and daily cleansing. The New Covenant does not leave us the same, but transforms us into New Creations in Christ.
[2Cor.5:17] “

The Holy Spirit in us, begins to exchange our desires with God's desires. His desires begin to move in and displace our own fallen sinful desires. And “Our Greatest desires will always override our lesser desires”. The New Covenant introduces Gods desires into our inner mix. That is the knowledge of God enters into our heart – that is the conscience; And the desire of God for us, is for the indwelling Spirit of God would begin to take over every True believer.

Only Then, does the greatest desire become God's desire, and that Greater desire then can override all lesser desires. But if Christ does not dwell in our hearts, and if the Holy Spirit does not make His residence in us, bringing God's desires to be our own Greatest Desires, then our greatest desires will continue to be our broken, fallen human desires for sin and God's desires will not become part of our inner mix. Without the Holy Spirit taking up His residence in the temple of our hearts and lives, our conscience will remain the same, unchanged, and our greatest desires will not become God's desires.

We are living in the days of Malachi's prophecies of Gods' Messenger being fulfilled in John the Baptist and in Jesus His Messiah and Messenger of His Covenant.(3:1), which is Jeremiah's New Covenant.(31:31), of which Jesus refers to in Lk.22:20, as “the New Covenant in my blood.”

That New Covenant is fulfilled in the pure offerings of Jesus Christ as the sinless sacrifice for the sins of humanity. This sacrifice not only saves, but also purifies and cleanses the temple of His people.

The old Sacrifices did not change or purify anyone, nor could it. It was only rules. The old covenant covered the believer and

protected from God's wrath and judgment, but could not purify the heart or change the desires.

The New Covenant through Christ our Mediator of the New Covenant, not only forgives, but also changes the one in whom the law of God now dwells in their hearts – that's the conscience. And it governs and affects and overrules our lesser desires as the Holy Spirit dwells in us, developing God's desires into our greatest desire.

The Law of God in their minds and upon their hearts refer to the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit Who would at that future time, guide and purify His people from the inside out.

So, we are living in the days of Malachi's fulfilled prophecies. Interestingly, it strikes me that the ultimate goal for God's "Messenger of the New Covenant" and the cleansing of His people, was not stated as being focused on the people getting to go to heaven, but in order that their worship would be purified and made effective; for their worship of God to become "offerings of Righteousness(Mal.3:3), acceptable to God.(Rom.12:1).

Rom 12:1 ESV I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Sinclair Ferguson, a Scottish Preacher has put it this way: If God has blessings for His people, then by all means, let us walk the path of holiness that leads us to them."

While we are living the days of Malachi's prophetic fulfillment, there is still a future element to the prophecies. We will consider those in a later message. Today – in our day – in our relationship with God... Remember- "When Evil Seems to prevail; God is still on His throne!"

1) LET US...Refrain from viewing God through the broken lenses of our broken experiences. Allow Holy Scripture to inform us as to the character and justice of God.

2) LET US... When Evil seems to prevail, search our own heart for Gods disciplining work. How can this purify me? How can this work toward my faith development? How can God be glorified in the circumstances? What is God trying to teach me? How does God want to change me?

3) LET US... live holy lives, and worship God acceptably, that our lives and words and praises and ministries may bring honor to God and make His holy name great beyond the borders of our Church and communities.

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST we can offer pleasing offerings to God; ¹our worship, ²our holy lives and ³our acts of obedience and service to Him.

1Pet. 2:5 ESV you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual *sacrifices acceptable* to God through Jesus Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ, is a pure sacrifice for our sins which has the power to change us, if we desire Him to change us. Our greatest desires will rule all lesser desires.

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, God's justice has been displayed as the judgment of God was poured out upon Christ at the cross, for the sins of all mankind.

1Pet. 3:18 ESV For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

Jesus Christ, Malachi's Messenger \$#2, was the just and righteous work of God, to bring life and hope to the unjust and unrighteous who would put the faith in Him. Only through our faith in Christ are our lives redeemed, and our worship made worthy to the true and living God.



God's Book of Secrets

"STOP THIEF -- Robbing God"

Theme: Drawing Nearer

April 2, 2017

Text: Malachi 3:6-12

Secret #5: "STOP THIEF:
Robbing God" – Giving and withholding that which God deserves.

*"Return to me, and I will return to you,
says the LORD of hosts." --Mal.3:7c*

"It seems like our culture appreciates the 8th commandment,
only if it is in protection of their own goods."

INTRODUCTION

As of Jan.1, 2017, We have been monitoring your giving. As a result, prayers on your behalf and blessings bestowed will be determined by your giving, based on the percentage of your contributions from your Gross income. – *April Fools!*

This church is self-governing, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and accountable to EFCA, yet autonomous. This church is also self-supporting. Giving tithes (10%) and offerings is each individuals' way of supporting God's kingdom work through the ministries of this church. I have no idea who gives what. That is purposeful.

Today regarding Giving: I want us to understand that:

- (1) Giving is a way to demonstrate our devotion to Christ
- (2) Giving also demonstrates our Love and compassion for others.

Malachi reveals To the nation of Israel.

A GENERATIONAL FAITHLESSNESS TOWARD GOD

(3:6-9)

God calls His People to Return to Him (v6-7)

* Repentance!

Mal 3:6-7 ESV (6) "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. (7) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. **Return to me**, and **I will return** to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

v.6) "For I do not change." God's message prior to this was God addressing His justice and coming judgment on the sins of His people (v.1-5) That message included the promised advent of the Savior / Messiah.

"I change not", does not refer to God's decisions or courses of action, but His character and specifically, in relation to His commitment to His covenant with Israel. Sin is always sin, to God. Obedience, will always be rewarded by God.

"You Can Do it!" God Will Help! Return to God and He will return to you. Draw Near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8) Repentance means change.

(1) Identify areas of weakness and needed change. (2) Take steps to make things right with God.

How shall we return? (3:7)

Deu 30:16-20 ESV (16) *If you obey* the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, **BY LOVING THE LORD YOUR GOD**, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (17) **But if your heart turns away**, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, (18) I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that

you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. (19) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you **life and death**, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, (20) **LOVING THE LORD** your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for **he is your life and length of days**, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

(2) Direct your heart's desire to God. Incline your will and purpose to God, to walk in His ways in obedience to His word.

Secret #5 (v8-9)

Mal 3:8-9 ESV (8) Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. (9) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

INDICTMENT: - "You are robbing Me" - - possibly referring back to 3:5 of the prior lists of sins. God is interested in the needy and the poor; the plight of the broken and oppressed.

When they oppressed and cheated others, it was as though God took it personally.

God's people withheld their offerings and God withheld his blessings. Or would be cursed. (removal of God's blessings)

v.7) they are spiritually broke

v.8) they are morally broke

Give to God – (1) evidences faith in Him. (2) displays love for God and devotion to His kingdom work.

Typically we view robbery as breaking into someone's house and taking something that doesn't belong to us. But here robbery was failing to give to God that which He deserved, not only in their worship, but also in their monetary giving. It was a heart problem and it was a heart motive problem.

INVITATION: Return to me. Repent from your sinful lifestyle and change your behavior, or STOP sinning.

2Cor. 8:1-5 ESV We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, (2) for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. (3) For **they gave according to their means**, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their **own accord**, (4) begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- (5) and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

This New Testament offering was Christians in one area taking a collection for the help of the saints in another area.

2Cor. 8:7-8 ESV (7) But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all **earnestness, and in our love** for you-- see that you excel in this act of grace also. (8) I say this **not as a command**, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine.

In the Old Testament under the old covenant, tithing, giving and offerings were mandated by the Old Testament Jewish law. But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ – Messenger #2(Mal.3:1) – was the Messenger and Mediator of the new covenant(Heb.12:24). In the Old Covenant, the law was written on stone tablets. Under the New Covenant the law is written in the heart(Mal.3:1; Jere.31:31; Lk.22:20).

In the New Testament, Giving is presented, not as a command but as a demonstration of sincerity and love for God.(2Cor.8:8). Loving God and Loving others, such as your neighbor as yourself, has always been closely associated with one another.

Jesus in the NT (Mat.25:34-46). When talking about loving God and helping others, He tells his disciples when the Son of Man comes in His glory, He will put sheep (genuine believers) on his right and goats (Christ rejecters) on his left. He will speak to His righteous ones and commend them for visiting him when he was

sick and in prison; clothing him when he was naked; feeding him when he was hungry and giving him a drink when he was thirsty. Then goes on to give the reaction of his faithful servants.

Mat 25:44-45 ESV Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' (45) Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, **you did not do it to me.**'

As we demonstrate our love for others, we are actually demonstrating our love for God.

To the Nation of Israel, there are...

THE MONUMENTAL PROMISES FOR BLESSING (v10-11)

The Promised blessing of Giving (v10)

* Divine Provisions: God promised to be their Source and Supplier of all their needs.

Malachi 3:10 (10) Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

“food in my house”, referred to the various offerings. Failing to give to God brought failure in experiencing God’s blessings.

v10) “Open Heaven’s windows” referring to God pouring His own blessings out his window of heaven (as it were) into the lives and upon the nation of Israel.

(2) Pour out a blessing, until there is no need. As God as their Source and Supplier and True Object of their affection, they would find that with Him, there is no need. As they focused on God as their greatest Desire, they would experience Him as their Greatest Source and Supplier.

What exactly does God do with the offerings and money and giving? Tithes and offerings were collected for the Priests and their families for their full time attention to the sanctuary, temple and sacrificial system; for the Tabernacle (prior to the building of the temple), some offerings were for the poor, some for other special projects, like the *building* of the temple. Some offerings were monetary, but some were also in produce and livestock. But it was the Jewish law, whether they wanted to or felt like it or not. They were obligated.

We are stewards of that which God has entrusted to us. All we have, is all that He has given us to use, distribute and to be stewards of His own resources.

1Cor. 4:2 ESV Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

To fail to use God's finances and resources for what God intends is to rob from God.

The Promised blessing of God's defense (v11)

Divine Protection: God promised to defend His nation from blight, famine, drought, famine, etc. I believe if we waste God's resources He has given us, on ourselves, and if we fail to give Him what He deserves, He may well take it away from us.

Malachi 3:11 (11) I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts.

v.11) "Rebuke the devourer" – that which destroys or steals life and depletes their resources or blessings. In Mat.25:14, We are told the parable of the Talents. Before going on a long journey, a master gives three servants, 5 talents, 2 talents and 1 talent respectively. When He returns, he calls them to give account for what they did with his talents, or money. The one who was given 5 talents now had 5 more. The one who had 2 talents, now had 2 more. Both had invested wisely and were good stewards of what the master had entrusted to them. But the servant who was given 1

talent, did nothing with his and gave back the 1 talent to his master.

Upon doing so, the master declared the last servant to be lazy, unfaithful and wicked, due to the manner in which he failed to exercise good stewardship of his master's money. What we have, and fail to honor God with, may be taken away, for "it is required of a steward to be found faithful".

ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE (3:12)

Malachi 3:12 (12) Then *all nations will call you blessed*, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

We have to be careful not to take this specific promise to Israel to any one individual person, or church, etc. While it presents specific promises and God's character and coming treatment, it was given specifically to the nation of Israel.

QUESTION: Will God do this for any nation? Would He do this for America? God has made a covenant with Israel which he has not made with America.

ANSWER: We could only know for sure, if America were a nation of people and government and purpose to submit themselves fully to God, Acknowledge Him, believe in, and worship Him alone. Only then would we know if these promised blessings would be extended to America. We won't know, if we don't try.

God's plans benefits everyone who loves Him

Malachi 3:12 (12) Then *all nations will call you blessed*, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 1:5 ESV Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "*Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!*"

And in blessing His people, God makes His name and reputation great. (Mal.1:5)

Giving to the Mission

Giving to God is Giving to the Mission of bringing all nations to rejoice in God's workings among His people. Giving to God is Giving to the mission of the name of the Lord becoming Great, beyond the borders of Israel – far beyond the walls of our church, the borders of our Community, - far beyond our state lines and our national boundaries.

kThat is the heart and motive for Giving To God. That the Great name of the Lord will be honored, and revered far beyond our borders.

ASSIGNMENT:

So What are our guidelines for Giving to God? OT Tithing was mandated by the Law. NT giving is intended to be mandated by the heart.

Some people in the NT gave all they had. The Widow

Mar 12:41-44 ESV And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. (42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. (43) And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. (44) For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

1) The widow gave out of her poverty. She gave, even though the argument might be made that she couldn't afford it.

2) Others gave out of their abundance or wealth(Mark.12:44) They could afford it, and probably could have afforded much more. Neither of these seem to be presented as examples of what we must do. But these are all examples of individuals and their specific, personal practice.

3) Giving is what we make it. While the widow and the wealthy were contrasted, who gave more was not the issue. The issue is the

heart and motive of their giving. The wealthy were dropping their offerings in the coffers and making very sure they were seen by others.

Mar 12:38-40 ESV And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces (39) and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, (40) who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

Those who were abusing others, were giving more and praying louder. Those who were being abused, gave less, but it meant "**more**" from Gods' perspective. The issue is not how much is given, but what is the heart's motive in giving.

Fasting is what we make it. – *motive*. Worship is what we make it – *heart and motive*. Offerings are what we make it -*Motive*.

Tithe may be a good Biblical standard or example to follow, though not law. In other words, giving should be between you and God.

Some New Testament guidelines for giving---

1) Giving Generously to God is an act of faith and partnership in the work of God' kingdom

2Cor. 9:6 ESV The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

That which we expend for spiritual purposes – expend little and we may get little results. Expend more and we may get more of a return.

2) Giving to God should be between God and the giver.

2 Cor.9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, *not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*

Our tithes and offerings should be something we come to as God's leading, and a decision we come to as an agreement with God. And we must strive to keep that commitment.

3) Giving to God should be a willing, and Cheerful endeavor.

2 Cor.9:7 *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*

Willingness and joyfulness in giving, indicated proper motive in partnership with God in His kingdom work. Heart motive is important.

4) Giving Generously displayed a devoted partnership in the ministries of the church for the Kingdom of heaven.

2Co 9:6 ESV The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

5) Giving Indicated genuine love and compassion for the physical and spiritual state of others.

For the Record, I don't know who gives how much. I don't want to know. If I gave 10% and discovered someone else was only giving 5%, I might be tempted to criticize them and look down on them. And be proud of myself. If I gave 10% and discovered someone else giving 15%, I might think, "well, I guess I should give more so I will measure up to her giving." Or if I discovered you gave 20% I might be inclined to view you differently and treat you with favoritism. "Well he give 20%, his word should have more clout in the business mtgs than others." Right or Wrong, I don't know who gives what and I don't want to know. While I believe giving is evidence of our heart and motive, yet I leave that between you and God. **"Don't ask, don't tell."**

Is giving 10% **required** by God? I don't think so. Is it a good guideline to follow? Absolutely. I will say this – What is your motive for giving or not giving? If you are an attender of this church and you don't give financially to the Lord in the ministries of this church, I would ask "why not?"

I have known people who say they can't afford to give to the church. But they sure can give to the candy store, to the movie theatre, to the ball games, to the concerts, and to their favorite restaurants.

Q: DO I GIVE REGULARLY? Why or why not? If you don't give to the church and can afford to, then you may not trust the church in what we do and the ministries we are involved in. Again, I don't know who does or who doesn't; but for those who are not giving and putting the LORD first in your finances, then that may be a possible concern regarding your heart motive.

Q: DO I GIVE CHEERFULLY? Why or why not? Are you truly thankful to be able to give to the Lords work? Are you joyful in no one knowing how much you give? Do you give so you won't feel guilty? What is your heart motive in giving?

Q: DO I GIVE GENEROUSLY? Why or Why not? Maybe you give only your leftovers. If anything is left over, then I might consider giving; if I happen to have it in my pocket when the offering plate comes around.

If you have questions or concerns how this church spends its money, all that is out on the table in our monthly meetings, our written financial reports, and all that is available to everyone. All **EMBers** Meeting Reports are usually on the table in the foyer after the meetings. Our next meeting is Monday April 10, 7pm. Member or not, you are welcome to come, listen and ask any question about ministry or finances.

I want you to be like I am – that your motive for being part of this church family is one of joy and excitement in being in partnership with God; -- that you are excited about being in partnership with this church's ministries through your financial support and personal participation.

Whatever you may think about this church? I believe with all my heart, we are on track with where the Lord wants us. I believe we are being led by God. I believe we are doing the things He wants us to - because I measure that by His commands and expectations in Scripture. And we are trusting in Him, and fully dependent

upon His power, His resources and His working and moving and using us as His tools to do His work.

* Giving should be for the LORD's work.

* Giving should be governed by the motive of the heart.

* Giving should be between you and God; not out of obligation, but by what you have decided in your heart. Be faithful to that resolve.



God's Book of Secrets

"What is 'IT'?"

When Serving God is Vain"

Theme: Drawing Nearer

April 9, 2017

Text: Malachi 3:13-18 | 1Cor.15:58

Palm Sunday

"Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another.
The LORD paid attention and heard them..." -Mal 3:16

True service is placing yourself below another, in a manner in which
you are not applauded or championed for doing so.

INTRODUCTION **Secret #6:**

Serving God, an issue of Heart Motive. We've all probably entertained these kinds of thoughts at one point or another in our spiritual journey, as we served the Lord.

I believe this is a strategy of the Evil one, to plant this seed of discontent in ministry, discouragement with how things worked out, and perhaps even disappointed with God Himself, if we are honest. This is something the devil plants – a fiery dart that he launches, a strategy that he implements, to defeat the servants of the Lord.

It is a common wartime tactic of our enemy to get us to give up in ministry; or even better, to keep on in ministry – going through the

motions, but with a heart motive that says, not only “ministry is not worth it”, but at its core, has come to believe that “God Himself is not worth it”.

This is part of the spiritual battle that we are involve in. We must realize that this is an extremely dangerous frame of mind in which to remain. WE must, therefore fight against this kind of heart motive.

This church functions because of all those willing servants of the Lord, who dedicate themselves to the LORD's work and sacrifice for the cause of making His name Great beyond the boundaries of this church and the borders of this community. This week Sam and I were talking about our church family, taking note that there are so many who do so much and what a blessing that is for all of us. Our church is both unusual and amazing in their devotion to God.

HARSH ACCUSATIONS (3:13-14

God's People Harbor

Harsh Accusations Against Him

Mal 3:13-15ESV (13) "Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. **But you say,** 'How have we spoken against you?' (14) You have said, **'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?'** (15) And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape."

Today we look at the Revelation of the heart motive of God's people.

Secret #6 (v13

* Oh How we must guard the content and motives of our hearts. As we serve the LORD, our focus may become *diverted*. Our attention may be *distracted*. Our spiritual vision may become *blurred*. We may begin to do what we do, for what we get out of it. That is a dangerous slope to begin sliding down.

Their key issue and core problem is that their understanding of God's love for them is marred. As a result, their love for God had become lukewarm.

Their complaints:

1) "IT" IS VAIN TO SERVE GOD. – Vanity, vanity, all is vanity. The indication is that serving the Lord, as we view it – outreach – much outreach to make His name great beyond the walls of our church and beyond the borders of Saegertown – is vain or empty. It is Worthless. A Waste of good time. A meaningless expending of time, money and energy. "I certainly get nothing out of it."

The New Testament gives us a great remedy for just such a problem.

1Cor. 15:58 ESV Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.

Maybe they weren't getting a sense of personal satisfaction out of – whatever it was they were doing. Maybe there wasn't the return on the resource and energy investment to view their service as worthwhile.

Because of that some don't even engage in serving the Lord. But some do, and yet in their hearts, harbor the thoughts that 'this is a colossal waste of my time. Surely my time is worth more than this'. Why doesn't God do more? What isn't he fulfilling His promises?

So serving God is not worth **IT**.

2) THERE IS NO BENEFIT IN KEEPING HIS COMMANDS. "We have obeyed God and found it unfulfilling and a frivolous exercise. Don't we deserve at least something meaningful? I mean, what about my needs?"

Exo 20:5-6 ESV "...I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (6) but showing steadfast

love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

What? Gods' love demonstrated to us is not enough motivation? Enjoying God's blessing from the windows of heaven and protection from enemies, warring armies, drought(Mal.3:1-11) , famine, and pestilence not benefit enough for you to obey God?

Exo 20:12 ESV "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

So - - Long Life – Eternal life, not what you were hoping for?

We have kept His commandments but **IT** really has not been worth **IT**.

3) WE HAVE WALKED AROUND AS IN MOURNING: Mourning here indicates blackness; possibly referring to the outer clothing of mourning apparel. This is describing their outward demonstration of repentance. However, the outward demonstration does not seem to reveal genuine inner repentance. "Haven't we marched around long enough, mourning for our sins?" The idea is they were wearing mourning garb, possibly some sackcloth and flinging dust and ashes into the air as they cry aloud for everyone to hear and follow in their steps?

Have we not properly gone through the motions for you? No! Because the heart has not changed. The heart motive is still inappropriate. The heart focus is still misplaced. Have we not mourned in your name?(Mat.7:22). We have served the Living God; We have obeyed His Holy Word; we have walked around mourning our sins, but vanity of vanities, **IT** has all been in vain. Worthless. Empty. Meaningless.

What is "**IT**"?

Today we are faced with an all -important word. IT. We must define IT. We must consider what IT is. How we define IT, will determine whether or not our hearts are in tune with God's; whether our worship is acceptable to God; whether our ministry is

honoring to God; and whether our love is genuine or not. What is **IT**???

3:14-- 'IT is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?

Serving God is not worth **IT**. Worshipping God has not been worth **IT**. Obedience to God has not been worth **IT**.

Repenting from sin was really not worth **IT**. “IT” is “The way my expectations are not met, is not worth worshiping God.” “My deep sense of unfulfillment is not worth obeying God’s ordinances.” “This extreme exercise in futility is not worth serving God.” “My overall lack of meaning in life is not worth Giving to God cheerfully or generously.” “Disillusionment in my marriage is no longer worth the effort of doing things God’s way.”

“IT” becomes our personal feelings, experiences, personal benefits, anticipated blessings or lack of blessings, level of satisfaction, fulfillment or sense of meaning.

Worship is measured by what I get out of it. Obedience is based on how it affects me. Giving is determined on if I feel like it. Service is how I am benefitted from it. This is a dangerous, dangerous slope we begin sliding down. While it may be normal to entertain these thoughts, we must not harbor these and allow them to become our heart motive.

What happens is we begin to place ourselves as the center of the focus of Scripture, rather than God as the central focus. We become the reason God exists, rather than God being the reason we exist.

Do we see the attitude of concern here. The focus oh church of God, is on **ME**. This is blasphemy. This is idolatry. This is the grave mistake of all mistakes – that is, we get the central focus of all of life, and all of worship and all of ministry- we get the central focus even of all of Scripture - off God and onto ourselves. **IT**

becomes all about ME. What about MY needs? What about MY feelings? What about what I want? Worship becomes – not giving to God all that He deserves to receive, but about how IT makes me feel – am I touched or stirred or ministered to. Ministry becomes how I feel, is IT too much trouble? Does IT require too much of me? Am I too inconvenienced? Am I getting anything out of IT.

I can tell you today - IT - is the wrong focus, the wrong, heart motive, the wrong reason and purpose for doing what we are doing.

Thomas Constable: “I hear this complaint from some believers about their churches. ‘We’re not getting anything out of it’. But a church is like a bank or a home; you don’t get anything out of it unless you put something into it.”

Ultimately IT all boils down to this: The name of God is not revered, nor is His name valuable enough to me to cause or motivate me to live a life of sacrifice for His purposes, of which I’m really not sold on.

Throughout Malachi, the name of the LORD is the key recurring issue.

Mal.1:11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Mal.2:2 If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.

Mal.3:16 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**.

Mal.4:2 But for you who fear my **name**, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

[Note: 1:5-7a, 14; 2:5]

The name of the LORD represents His character, His essence, and his reputation; the name of the LORD Jehovah represents all the many ways they children of Israel had personally and nationally experienced the LORD. They had not valued the name of the Lord. They had not honored His name. They had not considered His name as Great nor holy. They had not esteemed His name, nor revered, revered, feared or stood in Awe of His Great name.

It is in vain. It is not meaningful to us. It is a wearisome burden.

What we do – our worship, our service to God, our prayers, our outreach, our obedience to God – what does HE get out of it?

Col 3:17 ESV And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything ***in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks*** to God the Father through him.

The name of the LORD Jehovah, is worthy of praise, worship, obedience and service.

1Cor 10:31 ESV So, whether you eat or drink, or ***whatever*** you do, do all ***to the glory of God***.

The All-Important ***IT***. Is the honor and glory of God in every nation and in every area of our lives. ***IT*** is the honor of the name of the Holy one of Israel

IT Is the reason and purpose and motivation in our hearts for doing what we do. ***IT*** is what we hope to receive or experience serving the Lord. ***IT*** May be the results of what we have hoped to see from our efforts and hard work and long hours in outreach or service for Christ, that His name be made great, and His reputation

be proclaimed and his message of salvation through Jesus Christ be shared with all who will listen. All may be hoped for results, but are foundationally improper motives for serving the Lord. Ultimately, we do not do for Christ for the purpose of what we hope to see or experience.

**“Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off
from the fold and there be
no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.”**
-Habakkuk 3:17-18

The key reason for serving the LORD is for Him to be glorified and His name to be honored. Everything else is the lesser by product of that greater purpose.

Mal. 1:5 is **IT**

Mal 1:5 ESV Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say,
"**Great is the LORD** beyond the border of Israel!"

A RENEWED RESOLVE (3:15-17)

Some People Initiate Renewed Resolve Toward God

While Malachi indicates the nation as a whole is straying from God(3:9), yet there is always a remnant who care enough to remain true to God and to His holy name.

A Remnant – *always a remnant* (3:16)

Mal. 3:16- (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.

These were those few who were convicted by the LORD's revelation of the secrets of their hearts. They were moved and took action to make things right.

T. Constable gives these observations:

(1) *They initiated personal resolve* (16a)

Those who still feared the LORD were evidently convicted by the LORD's words through Malachi, so as to share with one another. These desired to do what was right before God, even if the rest of the nation and their leaders did not. They were not ashamed to be different and "go against the flow." That should characterize the church of our Lord Jesus Christ around the world. Wherever Christians are, we must stand up and stand out for Christ, refusing to be carried along with the current of the culture, yet willing to go against the flow if need be.

(2) *They implemented corporate accountability* (16c)

Together, they took action and recorded their thoughts and their resolve and the steps of resolve. They documented it for personal and historical purposes, to help guide them in remaining true to the LORD. These were those Israelites who both feared or revered the name of the LORD and esteemed or valued his name.

How crucial this is for the people of God. However, today there is more emphasis on intimacy and transparency between one another than on accountability to one another. We want people to listen to us and hear us and understand our needs, but we often do not want people to meddle, or judge, or address things in our lives. This remnant meant business with God!

(3) *God responded with attention and a promise..* (16b)

The LORD paid attention and heard them – this is a positive reference to God's positive view of their positive actions taken for

their relationship with Jehovah. And God was pleased.

We See The Father's Pleasure (3:17

* v16) "the Lord paid attention and heard them", because their heart motive was different than the rest.

Mal. 3:17 (17) "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 day, as Malachi has already mentioned, the Lord will judge all sin and reward all saints – that is those who genuinely believe and truly belong to Him in Christ.

OUR ULTIMATE REWARD (3:18

Mal. 3:18 (18) Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him

Eternal Evaluation (3:18

There will be a **REWARD** for all who believe and serve the LORD and a **RECOMPENSE** for those who disbelieve and reject.

What about those who claim to be God's people, but are tired of serving the LORD? For those whose hearts have drifted far from Him? What about those who feel "IT" is not worth serving the LORD.

There is a special kind of evaluation in eternity for those who belong to God and yet live lives apart from His pleasure, whose hearts are far from Him.

GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT.

2Cor 5:9-11 ESV So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (11) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But

what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.

Tears in Heaven

1) Tribulation Saints

Rev 7:17 ESV For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

There will be no more suffering, no more hunger, no more persecution and no more tears.

1) Great White Throne Judgment

Rev 21:3-5 ESV And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (5) And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

OUR ASSIGNMENT: Heart motive - this is the battle we all must fight and a heart motive we all must avoid.

T. Constable- Malachi gives 3 tips for developing a lifestyle of faithfulness to the LORD:

(1) A vow or resolve to God, even if those around you are not willing to take the same steps toward the same direction.

(2) Surround yourself with a group of like-minded, and life-faithed individuals for encouragement and personal accountability. They talked together, sharing their deep resolve and faith in Jehovah. They submitted to one another their spiritual lives to help, encourage and refine. How we need individuals in our lives like that.

(3) Remember we have a reward laid up in heaven- this life is NOT our eternal home.

1Pet 1:3-5 ESV Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, (5) who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Amen!

I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS

Author: Anonymous

¹ I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
no turning back, no turning back.

² Though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow;
no turning back, no turning back

³ My cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
my cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
my cross I'll carry, till I see Jesus;
no turning back, no turning back

⁴ The **world** behind me, the **cross** before me;
the world behind me, the cross before me;
the world behind me, the cross before me;
no turning back, no turning back.



God's Book of Secrets

"The Greatest Secret of All"

Theme: Drawing Nearer series

April 23, 2017

Text: Malachi 4:1-6 **Secret #7:**

"But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness
shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out
leaping like calves from the stall."
-Malachi 4:2 ESV

How we view the Lord's return, probably depends on how we
view how we have been living up until that time.

Malachi 4:1-6 - Conclusion

Mal 3:1 ESV "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, **behold, he is coming**, says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 4:1 ESV "For **behold, the day is coming**, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The **day that is coming** shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

INTRODUCTION

Malachi records the Lord's Last Words, before entering into 400 years of divine silence. His last words are both a Promise and a Warning, regarding the return of Jesus Christ, to judge the world and to bless those who are truly His own. Through God's prophet, He reveals 6 Secrets that Israel thought God was unaware of – Secrets of their sinful hearts.

REVIEW

Secret #1: Doubting God's love, while nurturing personal lukewarmness

Secret #2: Despising God's name, by offering leftovers in Worthless Worship

Secret #3: Disgracing God's covenant, by marrying outside the faith and Divorce.

Secret #4: Doubting God's Justice, believing Him to condone evil.

Secret #5: Dishonesty with God, in Robbing God by failing to give what he is worthy to receive.

Secret #6: Despising God's service, believing that serving the Lord was vain and of no benefit to them personally.

If we were to generalize Israel's relationship with God it would be one of **(1) Disconnect**. Not only were they disconnected with God relationally, but they were also disconnected from God informationally. They seemed unaware that God was fully aware of all the secrets of their hearts. As a result, they were going through the motions, religiously.

Jesus addressed this issue to the religious leaders of His day.

Mat 15:7-9 ESV You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: (8) "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; (9) in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Here the heart-motives are laid bare.

(2) And a second generalization, was that God's people were **discontented**. They were discontented with God's love for them,

discontented with His treatment of them; even discontented that God was even aware of the deepest secrets of their hearts. Discontent plagued Gods people then as it does today. People are discontented with how God works; discontented with how He answers prayer; discontented with his provisions; discontented with the life they have, and the things they possess.

For the people in Malachi's day, they had become discontented with God and life had become centered on what they expected to get out of God, not what He deserved to receive from them, as their God. In general, God's people had not sincerely **feared** (revered) the name of the Lord.

Mal 1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? 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?'

Mal 2:5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of **fear**, and he **feared** me. He stood in **awe** of my name.

Mal 3:16 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.

Mal 4:2 But for you who **fear** my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

FEAR OR REVERENCE is linked 8 times with the name of the LORD. The name of the Lord represents the character, holiness and reputation of God, as well as the experiences of God's people with the Lord over the centuries, as their helper, deliverer, provider and Husband.

Mal 1:11 ESV For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Mal 1:14 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.

Malachi ch.3:1 prophesied the first Advent of Christ, when He came to present Himself, as the purifying sacrifice that did not merely *cover* sin, but *cleansed* from sin and actually changed the lives of those who offered the sacrifices. HE also instituted the New Covenant(Jere31:31) in His blood, which introduced the indwelling Holy Spirit for each believer.

Malachi 3:2-5 & ch.4 he prophesies the 2nd advent of Jesus Christ or the 2nd coming of the Christ, when HE will judge sin and reward saints. In Malachi ch.3, the prophecies speak directly and specifically to how God's people, the Israelites will be affected as a nation.

The malachi 3 prophesies of Christ's first coming have been fulfilled and we are presently living in the days of Malachi's fulfilled prophecies of the 2nd Messenger. Malachi 4 also is addressed to the Nation of Israel, yet with a much broader and far reaching affect – touching the entire world and is still in our future, yet to be fulfilled.

Today we look at Malachi's 7th and final secret – not about the motives of the heart, but about the plan of God in world affairs.

"The Greatest Secret of All", involves the return of Christ and...

THE WARNING OF COMING JUDGMENT (4:1

Like the flood affected the whole world, the judgment in the last days will also affect the whole world – not by water but by fire.

Mal 4:1 (1) "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

In the Old Testament, God destroyed the world by a flood. In the judgment to come, when Christ returns, the world will be

destroyed by fire; every sin will be judged and every true believer in Christ will be rewarded.

The Coming of the Lord (v1a)

As we covered earlier, God judged sin when He sent His Son Jesus to die in our place, to take on our sin and to pay the penalty of sin, by dying on the cross and shedding His blood – the Just for the unjust. But the 2nd coming of Christ will be a time when again, God judges sin on the earth, bringing judgment to all those who have rejected His forgiveness through Jesus Christ. But Christ's coming will also be a time of blessing and Reward for all those who trust in Christ and will be a day of global victory for Christ and all His believers.

The Jewish Bible does not have chapter 4, but the content of our chapter 4, continues as chapter 3 of the Hebrew Bible and there is no distinguishable break between ch.3:17-18 and chapter 4.

Mal 3:17-18 ESV "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession.^[Ex.19:5] and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. (18) Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

Mal 4:1 (1) "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

What Malachi predicts in the Old Testament confirms what Peter predicts in the New Testament.

2Pet. 3:10 ESV But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

The focus on these end time events is the purging and purifying work in the lives of God's people, Israel. (Dan.9:24), of which the rest of the world is aware of, if not participating in. This will be a time of condemning all the sins of the world. But also – it will be a time of condemning all the good works – done with wrong motives. 2 Peter 3 refers to a time when God reveals the motives and Secrets of every human heart.

Good works or deeds done with wrong motives are **(1)** those done in order to receive notoriety. “Boy isn’t she a great person guy”. “Isn’t He’s a jolly good fellow”. But also **(2)** wrong motive include good works done in attempt to cause our good works to outweigh our sin. Good works that are performed in attempts to take the place of Christ sacrifice for us, or to help shore up Christ’s sacrifice. Any and all good works performed with hopes of erasing our sins, only serve to increase the judgment upon those who have rejected the full, final and finished work of Christ on Calvary on their behalf.

The Judgment of the wicked (v1b

The Lord will appear one day, with judgment and punishment for sin, along with Reward and blessing for true believers - all at the same time? How can that be? When Christ returns – as Malachi promises- His purpose will be to reward God’s people and obliterate all those who oppose God and reject His Son, Jesus Christ. He will make distinctions between the Righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not (Mal.3:18).

Interestingly, Revelation presents this distinction between the righteous and the wicked as though we were watching 2 movies at the same time. **Movie #1:** Heaven and “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb”

Rev 19:1-9 ESV After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, (2) for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." (3) Once more they cried out,

"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." (4) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" (5) And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." (6) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. (7) Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; (8) it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"-- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (9) And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the **marriage supper of the Lamb**." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Λ The Sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world. Λ

Movie #2: Earth and "the Great Supper of God"

V The Conquering King for the Kingdom of God. V

Rev.19:11-21 (11) Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. (13) He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (14) And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. (15) From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of ALMIGHTY God. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, ***KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS***. (17) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for **the great supper of God**, (18) to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." (19) And I

saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. (20) And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. (21) And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb and Great supper of God; God will make distinction between true believers in Jesus and those who are not, but have ignored, rejected or postponed trusting in Jesus. As we look at these cataclysmic global events, affecting every single person on the planet, yet remembering it is in the context of God dealing directly and specifically with His people Israel. And in so doing, Malachi's prophecies of Christ which are yet unfulfilled, will come to pass as God promised, and the whole world will be involved, just like the flood.

Mal.1:5 Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "*Great is the LORD beyond the border* of Israel!"

All of Biblical History and Prophecy is focused on the name of the LORD and the glory of God before all people. It is important to understand in these end times events, God is not declaring war on the world, but HE is putting an end to those who have declared war on Him and His people.

Rev.19:19 – "...the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army." **Mal.4:1** – "...when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble".

The Greatest Secret of all, involves...

THE PROMISE FOR GODLY PEOPLE (4:2-3

God makes distinction between the righteous and the wicked (3:18

Mal 4:2-3 (2) But for you who fear my *name*, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. ...

If we remember in Mal.3 that in the midst of those who have been disconnected from God and discontented with Him – there were also those who responded to Gods’ revelation of their heart secrets.

Mal 3:16 ESV 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.

The whole nation had been led astray by the religious leaders, yet there *were a few* of sensitive spirits who responded to God. This reminds us of the response of the culture to Jesus when He was ministering.

Joh 1:11-12 (11) He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (12) *But to those who did receive him*, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

There was a remnant. There is always a remnant. The promise is for all who believe in Jesus as payment for sins.

Sun of Righteousness (4:2

The Lord will appear with judgment and punishment(v1), but for those who are His own – who revere His holy **NAME** – there is that focus again – the Sun of *Righteousness* will arise. The same Jesus who ends the war with the arrogant and judges the sins of the wicked, also brings blessing and reward to all who revere and trust in Him.

Jewish translations state” the Sun of *Mercies*” will arise. “With Healing” indicating deliverance or cure from afflictions.

“Healing in his wings” refers to a covering; protection. (Mat.5:45) As God causes the sun to rise on the Just and unjust – so the “Sun of Righteousness” will shine upon and affect every person in those last days.

For Israel, that would be deliverance from foreign, pagan domination, and with restoration to the nation itself as they walk

with their God and Messiah. If they walk with their God, in obedience to Him and return to Him as their first love with genuine worship? He will give relief from the foreign domination of their nation by pagan rulers. He will remove His chastisement from them and they will enjoy the blessings and promises of God once again, as His people.

he Joy of God's people at the appearing of Their Righteous Ruler (4:3)

This person would be Jesus.

Mal 4:3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.

At some point after the marriage supper of the Lamb, Jesus will arise and once again, step back into earth's realm, as the Conquering King of Kings, defeating all of God's and Israel's enemies. And the imagery here is not merely as all Christian believer's being saved, freed, delivered, etc. as we the Church tend to focus on. And I know this is a bit controversial – but I believe God still has a plan for the literal nation of Israel in future events and this is part of it.

I see this as the people of Israel - God's still, chosen people of Israel – who will be set free as a people or nation and they will be set free with unimaginable victory from their enemies, and will be filled with great rejoicing – like a calf set free from its stall, running and leaping and kicking about in the open field. And the nation will receive Jesus as their Messiah.

What a time for the rejoicing of Israel and for all, who long for His coming.

The Greatest Secret of all, involves...

THE GREAT AND AWESOME DAY OF THE LORD (4:4-6)

The return of Christ itself is not a secret, but the year, day and time are secret. And as in Malachi's day, God will reveal every secret, of every heart, of every person.

Righteousness always Reigns (v4

God gives the command to remember His law.

Mal 4:4 (4) "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

This command and expectation for Obedience, is framed within the promises of coming blessings. AS for Right Now and Until then, God's righteous expectations are to be kept.

The Return of Elijah (4:5 / Lk.1:5-6

The appearing of "Elijah" ushers in the Last days of which Malachi is prophesying. We know that the New Testament introduces the "last days". We tend to think that Christ Himself did, but more accurately the time of God's breaking His 400 years of divine silence, by the new prophecies which began with John the Baptist.

Mal 4:5 (5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

Who is Malachi referring to?

1) Some believe "Elijah" here is the true and literal Elijah who will be resurrected in the last days.

2) Some believe this reference to Elijah refers to John the Baptist who will be resurrected during that time.

In the words of Jesus...

Mat 11:13-14 ESV For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, (14) and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

From the angel Gabriel...

Luk 1:16-17 (16) And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, (17) and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

It will be a time when Jesus returns; perhaps it would make sense with John the Baptist also returned or was resurrected to minister together again.

Mal 4:5 (5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (6) **And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.**"

3) Others believe it will be another "Elijah-like" future prophet to come, only to be revealed in the tribulation of the last days. Whoever this Elijah figure turns out to be, the most important thing is not who He is, but what He does for Gods' kingdom. Perhaps this is just one more of the secrets to be revealed at the Lord's return.

"My name will be great among the nations..." –Malachi 1:11

If God's people repent from their sins, and return to God, then peace will return to the nation and to their families. Part of "the Greatest Secret of All" is God restoring His people Israel, but also bringing in people from the nations in acknowledging and revering the Holy and Awesome name of the Lord; God bringing in many from all nations, peoples, tribes and languages.(Rev.5:9; 11:9; 14:6)

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Jew = God's people. Greek or "Gentile" = everyone else on the planet – all people, all nations, all tribes, all languages.

God's way is the only way for forgiveness and blessing.

v.6) either Elijah will be successful in turning God's people back to Him, or else they will face utter destruction. **The promise is:** they *will* be preserved. The promise of the far reaching effect of

God's righteous justice and blessing and reward for any and all who truly believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and coming King.

ASSIGNMENT: OT examples and warnings

1) We have no secrets before God. To pretend that we can hide anything from God only makes things worse.

2) Sin is serious business to God.

Rom 15:4 ESV For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(3) We must learn from Malachi's message and our examples from the Old Testament? Regarding God's love; Revering God's name; our offerings of worship; honoring our marriage relationships; our perception of God's justice in our day; our giving of tithes, offerings and financial support for the Lord's work; our attitudes in serving Christ; or our focus on the promise of the LORD's return?

1Cor 10:11 ESV Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

(4) God's expectations for those who are His own and what is in store for those who have refused Christ's sacrifice.

(5) Guidelines for obedience, holiness and blessings;

Malachi 3:7 – “**Return** to me and I will **return** to You...” God is the Revealer of Secrets and He will reveal every secret of every human heart. Compare God's message through Malachi with God's message through James. “Draw Near to God and He will draw near to you...” (James 4:8, which is our 2017 Church theme). James, possibly the earliest written book in the NT, would be appropriate to look back to the last written words of Jehovah God in Malachi's final prophecy. Malachi sums up His message to the Jews: “**Return to the LORD**”. James sums up his message to the Jewish believers under persecution, “**Draw Near to God**”.

(6) Prayer and financial support for Elijah-like ministries. I'm thinking of Christian ministries like CJF and Peter Parkas, who are working to reach the Jewish people, in the ministry of Elijah, to turn them to the Messiah in this last days. They need our prayers.

(7) Each of us should be Living in light of prophecy

2Pet. 3:11 ESV Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

Interestingly, what we are instructed to do. We are to expect the troubling times to come as is promised, but not to be defeated by any of it.

2Pet 3:12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

When and AS trial, troubles and tribulations occur, we are not to focus on them, but to look through them.

2Pet 3:13-14 (13) But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

God is the Revealer of Secrets. In the last days, He will reveal every secret, of every heart, of every human. If there is a secret in your life today that you feel God does not know about – if there is some secret struggle that you have kept secret from others – please talk to God about it Now. **A**cknowledge any sin before God.

Believe in Jesus, and receive His forgiveness. **C**onfess Jesus as your Savior and also as the Master of your life.

Prophecy should not only make us excited and curious; it should cause us to be concerned with our own personal spiritual state, and for the of others.



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
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Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

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