

BOOK OF MALACHI

'Return to me, and I'll return to you.'

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Turn in your Bibles to the book of Malachi. If you are not sure where that is, turn to Matthew 1 and then go left a page. It's the last book of the Old Testament or Old Covenant.

This short book was written about 500 years before Christ during the time of Nehemiah and Ezra. The exiles have come back from Babylon to Jerusalem- about 100 years before. They have set up the temple again and began worship. But there are problems. God confronts them about their unfaithfulness, through the words of a prophet called Malachi. We don't have any history of Malachi, so many believe that it's actually someone else, maybe Ezra writing with this title 'Malachi' which means *messenger*.

God confronts the people about their **unfaithfulness** to him.

The goal of the book is to urge the people to turn back and BE FAITHFUL TO GOD and his word

The most important sentences in the book is [Chapter 3 verses 6-7](#).

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 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.”

They have changed. The LORD doesn't change. The problem is with them, not God.

In the book, there is a list of **6 debates** God has with them. There's a pattern to these discussions that God, through the prophet is having with the people. It is:

- God says something
- They respond
- God gives an answer.

- GOD starts the **1st conversation** in [verse 2](#).

GOD says: “I have loved you.” ([1:1-5](#))

The PEOPLE respond: “**How have you loved us?**”

The people don't really feel that God has loved them. He disciplined the previous generation for their idolatry and their rejection of his law by sending the Babylonian army to take over and take them into slavery. They have come back and they're not as wealthy. The land is not producing a lot of food. They don't feel God's love. But a Father that loves his children will not let them go their own way...down a path of destruction. A Father will discipline the child he loves. They say, “How have you loved us?”

GOD'S ANSWER: **"I chose you."** I chose Jacob, not Esau. I *could've* chosen Esau, but I didn't. I made my covenant with you, Israel. I revealed myself to you, Israel. God has loved them by choosing them and making them his own. He begins by reaffirming his love for them even though they have not loved him.

- **In the 2nd conversation** God show them that they've been **FAITHLESS IN THEIR WORSHIP.**

GOD says: "You've despised my name." (1:6-10)

The PEOPLE respond: **"How have we despised your name?"**

GOD'S ANSWER: **"By offering polluted food on my altar."** They are giving God their leftovers and not their best. God's law tell them what they should give. They've ignored it. They're bringing rotten grain, rotten produce. The priests are also offering blind sheep, sick sheep, bulls with broken legs. They even offered stolen animals. (verse 13). The priests have neglected and ignored the Law of God. They've despised God. God says that it would be better for the doors of the temple to be closed, than to offer what they're offering. (verse10) In vain they worship God.

There's something else they do to show they despise God. The priests have not only done wrong but are teaching people the wrong things. [Read 2:7-8.](#)

In the first discussion God affirms his love for them. What we see **in the second discussion** is: they have been **FAITHLESS IN THEIR WORSHIP.**

- **In the 3rd conversation** God show them that they have been **FAITHLESS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.**

GOD says: “**I no longer accept your offerings.**”

The PEOPLE respond: “**Why don’t you?**”

GOD’S ANSWER: **2 things.**

1. “**You’ve married women who worship idols.**” You have covenanted yourselves to foreign gods and broken covenant with me.
2. “**You’ve divorced your wives.**” You have broken the covenant with your wife and left her just like you have left God.

So we know from [Nehemiah 13](#) as well that many men intermarried with women who worshipped idols and it seems that divorce was rampant.

Broke their covenant with their wives.

Broke their covenant with their God.

Faithless in their worship. Faithless in their relationships.

- **In the 4th conversation** God shows them that they’ve been **FAITHLESS IN THEIR THEOLOGY.**
(2:17)

GOD says: “**You have wearied me with your words.**”

The PEOPLE respond: “**How have we wearied you?**”

GOD’S ANSWER: “**By saying, ‘Where is the God of justice.’**” “God seems to love the wicked.” “Not fair to us.”

Question: Is God fair?

Question: What do they deserve?

They were so faithless in their THEOLOGY that they thought they deserved something from God.

God says, “You want justice? You want the God of justice to come?” (3:1) You want me to make things right? I will make things right by coming myself to the temple. I will send a messenger of this covenant between us and he will purify the priesthood and offer something pleasing to me.

They (and us) deserve nothing from God but judgment but he will be faithful and make things right.

- **In the 5th conversation** God says they’ve been **FAITHLESS IN THEIR GIVING.**

GOD says: “**You’re robbing me!**”

The PEOPLE respond: “**How are we robbing you?**”

GOD’S ANSWER: “**In your tithes and contributions.**”

They had stopped contributing 10% to the temple.

Maybe they’ve done what we do. They’ve said, “I can’t afford to give 10%. There’ll be nothing left for me.”

But in his rebuke there is still love.....

God says they should test him! (Read verses 10-12).

Question: How much of what they had was really theirs?

Question: How much of what you have is yours?

God says 10% off the top is his. The firstfruits of your labor.

I used to rob God. I used to give God what was leftover, if there was any. God called me to repentance through this passage some years ago.

They were faithless in their worship. They were faithless in their marital relationship. They were faithless in their theology. They were faithless in their giving.

- Lastly, **in the 6th conversation** God says they're **FAITHLESS IN THEIR SERVICE.**

Look in your Bibles at chapter **3 verse 13-15**

GOD says: **“You’ve spoken against me.”**

The PEOPLE respond: **“How have we spoken against you?”**

GOD’S ANSWER: **“You said it’s a waste of time to serve me.”**

-Well, is it a waste of time to worship the Lord rightly and follow his commands?

-Is it a waste of time to think carefully how we instruct people in the word? I mean can't we just do *something*.

-Is it a waste of time to keep ourselves from idols....to keep ourselves from anything that would steal our hearts away from God?

-Is it a waste of time to stay faithfully married?

-Is it a waste of time to make sure our theology is right?

-Is it a waste of time to give God 10% of my income? I'm not really robbing God. We can't afford to give 10%. Our kids school is expensive and living in HK is hard.

-What's the point of serving God? Doesn't really seem to be making my life better!

I mean, do we have to be so serious?

Let's finish with looking at the rest of the book and some verses we skipped on purpose.

Malachi 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.

Malachi 1:14 For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

{In the end of chapter 3 and in chapter 4, God says "it is worth it to serve me because my purposes will stand. I WILL make a distinction between those who are mine and those who aren't. There will be judgment. It will be really good for those who fear me and really bad for those who don't.}

You remember I said that the key verse is 3:6-7

““For I the LORD do not change; Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.”

How are they to return.....????

Well, it's quite simple.

He tells them in 4:4.

4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

They had been:

FAITHLESS IN THEIR WORSHIP

FAITHLESS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

FAITHLESS IN THEIR THEOLOGY

FAITHLESS IN THEIR GIVING

FAITHLESS IN THEIR SERVING

Why?

Because they didn't take God's word seriously.

They've relaxed.

So, I have just one question for you today.....

How serious are you about God's word?

No matter whether you don't know the Lord at all or you've drifted away or you're being unfaithful in one of these things like the people in Malachi. The Lord doesn't change. He says 'Return to me and I'll return to you.'