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Biblica Study Notes

Malachi 1:1–5

Malachi shared most of his messages through questions and answers. God spoke and asked questions of his people (God's people) living in the land of Judah. The people replied to God's questions. They also asked him questions.

These were the people who had been left alive after God brought judgement. The judgement was when the Babylonian government took control of the southern kingdom. This group of people included those whose families hadn't been forced to leave the southern kingdom. The group also included Jews who had returned to Judah from Babylon.

The Persian government had allowed them to return and to rebuild the temple. The first set of questions and replies was about God's love. God chose to show his love for Abraham. He showed it by making a covenant with Abraham and his family line. God chose to continue his covenant with Abraham through Jacob's family line. That is one way he showed his love to the people of Israel.

The people's question about God's love showed something. It showed what they felt about God's choice and his covenants. They didn't feel that these things mattered. They didn't feel that these things helped their lives. Questions they asked later in Malachi's messages showed this as well.

Malachi 1:6–3:15

God accused his people of many things in his questions and replies. He accused them of not honouring him or respecting him. They showed this by not living according to the ways God had taught them. God had explained his ways for living in the Law of Moses. The people had promised to follow God's ways. They made this promise in the Mount Sinai covenant.

Many of the laws in that covenant were about how to worship God. They were also about how to treat others. But the people offered sacrifices they shouldn't have offered. They didn't give back to God a tenth of everything they had. Many men were married to women who worshipped false gods. Many men divorced their wives. The people treated needy people badly. The priests didn't teach the people God's ways for living.

Stories recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah showed the people doing these things. These things went against what God wanted his people to do. The people's questions and replies showed that they didn't understand who God is or what he desires. God explained that he was their Father, their Master and their Creator. The people belonged to him. They were to be faithful to one another like he was faithful to them.

God does what is right and fair and brings judgement against those who do evil. God is the Lord who rules over all. He can provide everything that people need. God longed to bless his people with so much that they couldn't store it all. God would do this if his people lived faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant. This doesn't mean that God's people had control over blessings from God. It doesn't mean that they would be blessed for giving money to God or the temple. That way of thinking is called the prosperity gospel and it isn't true.

What was true was that God's people needed to be faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant. This would allow the covenant blessings to come to God's people. But God's people didn't believe these things about God. They didn't trust him to provide the food and drink they needed. They didn't trust that he punished people who did evil. They asked questions about God being fair. These were like the questions asked in Psalm 73 and like the questions asked by Job. The people didn't believe that God desired to bless them. They didn't believe that obeying God faithfully was better than doing what they wanted.

It seemed to them that obeying God was hard work. It was hard and didn't result in anything good for them. For hundreds of years God's people had refused to believe in him and trust him. Jews in Malachi's time had lived through the time of God's judgement. But most were no more faithful to God than their people of long ago had been. God felt worn out by this.

Malachi 3:16–4:3

The prophet Malachi shared God's message about the day of the Lord. It was a message of judgement against sinful people. These are people who allow the power of sin to control them. They choose to do evil things and refuse to stop sinning.

God's anger was compared to a burning furnace. It would burn up these proud and sinful people. That was how God described the action he was going to take. He would take action to completely stop evil and everyone who did evil things.

This was a message of hope for those who respected God. These people would be full of joy when God brought judgement against evil. This is because it would allow them to be healed by God. They needed to be healed from all the harm that sin and evil cause. Then they could fully enjoy life with God.

God is the Judge. Only he knows who respects and honours him with all their heart. Those who respect and honour God were called his special treasure. This showed how much joy God has when people love him.

Malachi 4:4–6

God longed for his people to believe in him and obey him. He longed for human beings to live in peace with him.

That is why God reminded his people about the teachings of Moses. This was a way to talk about all the stories and laws of God's people. These stories and laws were part of Scripture. Scripture is God's word and is studied by God's people.

These stories and laws were recorded in the Old Testament. The Law of Moses showed God's people how to love, respect and honour God. It showed them how to treat others well. It showed them how to live in peace. This included peace with God, with their families and as a nation.

God promised to send the prophet Elijah before the day of the Lord came. This was a way of talking about all the messages that God had spoken through prophets. He had spoken the messages to his people over hundreds of years. These messages were also part of the Scripture studied by God's people. The writings of the prophets taught God's people the same things that the Law of Moses taught.

Talking about the prophet Elijah was also a way to talk about a certain messenger. God had talked about this messenger in Malachi 3:1. This messenger would prepare the way for God. The messenger would do this before God came to judge his people.

Many years later these messages from Malachi helped Jesus' followers. The messages helped them

understand Jesus' life and work. Jesus explained Malachi's prophecy about Elijah. He explained that it was a prophecy about John the Baptist. This helped Jesus' followers understand something about Jesus. He is the Lord that the messenger prepared people for. Jesus is the Lord that they had been longing for.