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Malachi

(Read verse 1) Malachi delivers this last book of prophecy about 100 years after the Israelites return from exile. The temple, which was the focus of Haggai & Zechariah, has been rebuilt.

After the temple was rebuilt, the people were expecting the Messiah to come, for God's glory to radiate throughout Judah & for the Israelites to be triumphant. Instead, they have been disappointed to find Judah much as it was before the exile — the people are turning away from God & corruption runs throughout Jerusalem.

The book of Malachi is made up of 6 disputes & a conclusion.

(Read verses 2-5) First Dispute

Why do you think God begins by telling the Israelites He has loved them?

Because their expectations were not met, they likely feel separated from, or even abandoned by, God. So here, God sets the record straight.

God says He will not allow the Edomites to rebuild their destroyed cities. How does this differ from the Israelites?

In the last 2 prophets, God not only told the Israelites to rebuild, but also protected them while they did so.

(Read verses 6-8) Second Dispute

Why have the people been offering such poor sacrifices?

The priests were not holding the people accountable. Rather than making God a priority & offering their bests, they brought only what they did not want anyway. This means it was not even a sacrifice, but just a show to look "respectable" among men.

(Read verses 9-13) Why does God say one of the priests should

shut the temple doors?

God wants one of the priests to take responsibility for the defiling worship taking place & bring it to an end.

Here, God looks to the future, beyond the insulting sacrifices of the Israelites to a time when all nations will recognize Him as their God & give Him the proper honor.

In verse 13, God again complains about the quality of sacrifice the people are bringing Him. The animals are so bad that they were not even fit for the people to eat outside of religious ceremonies.

(Read verse 14) This verse tells us it is not only the priests God is upset with, but also the worshippers who offer less than what they should & have promised.

Chp. 2 (Read verses 1-2) Why is God cursing the priests?
(Ref Deut 28:20) They have forsaken God.

(Read verses 3-4) What is the first curse of the priests & why is it significant?

God says He will cut off their lineage. Only Levites could be priests. If God cuts off the descendants of the Levites, there will not be any more priests.

What is the second curse of the priests & what does it mean?

The priests will have animal waste thrown on their faces. This serves to humiliate & dishonor them.

God then goes on to explain the proper duties of the priests & how they have neglected them, thus earning their punishment.

(Read verses 10-12) Third Dispute

What point is made by asking, "Did not one God create us?"
The God of Israel is the one true God & the only one deserving of worship.

Why will a man who marries a pagan woman be cut off from His people?

Leviticus 20 is filled with examples of how the Israelites could turn from God in defilement & each time, God said the punishment would be God cutting them off from the Israelites.

(Read verses 13-16) It appears the people have stopped coming to God with earnestness & have instead adopted the pagan belief & practice that loud displays of emotion is what causes God to respond.

* Verses 15+16 are very difficult to translate & have been interpreted many different ways.

What is the reason for God no longer looking on their offerings with pleasure?

It is due to them divorcing their covenant wives. This was not to allow them to marry other (foreign) women, since they could have multiple wives. It may have been that their pagan wives influenced them to divorce their Jewish wives.

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(Read verses 17-5) Fourth Dispute

What is the problem discussed in verse 17?

The priesthood is not pure & obedient to God's covenant.

What is God's resolution to this problem?

He will send the Messiah to correct, purify & reform.

(Read verses 6-12) Fifth Dispute

Why is it important to note that God does not change?

Because we are the ones who sin & pull away from God. If there is distance in our relationship with God, it is our fault.

What is God's promise in this response?

If we are faithful in what He has called us to do, He will pour out blessings on our lives.

(Read verses 13-15) Sixth Dispute

What is the situation being described here?

The people are no longer trusting in God, corruption is everywhere & there seems to be no response from God. This has led them to believe there is no benefit to serving God.

(Read verses 16-17) What is God's answer to their complaint?

Those who feared God gathered in His name & God is now acting. He says He will spare those who are faithful to Him, indicating He will destroy those who have turned away from Him.

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(Read verses 1-3) God concludes His answer to the people's complaint. What is He achieving here?

God's divine judgement, coming as fire, serves to punish the wicked for their deeds as well as to purify the faithful remnant.

(Read verses 4-6) We are given one last call to obedience in verse 4. Then God says He will send Elijah. Who is this referring to?

(Reference Mat 11:13-14) John the Baptist

Then God gives us a warning in order to escape judgement & destruction.