

Major Lessons from the Minor Prophets

Malachi: The Final Word of the Old Covenant

Message 3: Grace and Judgment

Chapter 2 of Malachi ends with these words: "**Where is the God of justice?**" God's definitive answer comes in chapter 3:

Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

¹ "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.

Who is this "messenger"? The New Testament answers the question three times:

Matthew 11:7-10 (ESV)

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

Mark 1:2 (ESV)

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way ...

Luke 7:27 (ESV)

²⁷ This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

The messenger is **John the Baptist**, the appointed forerunner of Jesus Christ. The answer then to chapter 2:17 ("Where is the God of justice?") is: HE IS COMING in the person of Jesus Christ! True justice would come at the coming of the Messiah, but not as people would be expecting.

Notice that the passage says of the Lord who is coming, "**whom you seek and in whom you delight**". Despite their sin, the people wanted deliverance from their conditions. Amos, a prophet just before Malachi, had people in his day who also "desired" the Day of the Lord. His warning came in chapter 5:

Amos 5:18-20 (ESV)

¹⁸ Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, ¹⁹ as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. ²⁰ Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

The coming Messiah would bring judgment (justification for some and condemnation for others). That is why Malachi asked this question in the next verse:

Malachi 3:2 (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**.

Lesson 1: People want _____ ... on their own terms.

Lesson 2: People want _____ ... for *other* people's sins.

Lesson 3: God's "absence" is not a sign of _____, but of _____.

Malachi 3:3-6 (ESV)

³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah 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. ⁶ "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

Fast forward **400** years ...

Luke 4:16-21 (ESV)

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Just as remarkable as what He read is what He *didn't* read:

Isaiah 61:1-2 (ESV)

¹ *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*

Why did Jesus stop reading there?

Lesson 4: _____ is coming, but _____ comes first!

Next week:
The Way Home