

Malachi 1:1

Let's Talk

Hey good morning church. It is so good to be with you today as we come together to worship King Jesus. This morning we are starting a new series that will take us into November – a walk through the book of Malachi verse by verse.

Last week I gave away the intro to the entire book – it's as if God, through Malachi, is sitting down his people for a talk. He says to them in 1:1

A pronouncement: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi – he is saying to them in essence: “Let's Talk”

And what I shared last week, our pastor in Johannesburg put it this way – it's like you're in a relationship, and your phone rings or you get a text or a snap – that simply says “we need to talk.” Usually, that's not a good thing. You've upset the person you care for to the point where they need to speak with you about it.

Or at work, boss walks in and says “Paul, we need to talk”. Usually the news that follows isn't very good. You missed a promotion, you're getting relocated, or maybe downsized.

Or kids you get a message from a parent or sibling that says “hey we need to talk when you get home.”

For me, whenever I get one of those messages I assume there’s bad news coming. I had a guy text me once at like 8AM on a Friday, and the brother knew full well that Friday was my day off, and his text said “We need to talk. Call me AFTER 2PM.” And I’m like thanks bro, you just wrecked my entire day – this dude never came to me with good news – so I stewed all morning and into the afternoon about calling this guy.

You get the point though – Most of us assume there’s bad news following the “Let’s talk” message. Well, see a picture of a God who hates sin, hates hypocrisy, hates injustice, hates false worship → but we also see a picture of a God who is covenantally faithful to His people – and a God whose patience with His people is intended to lead them to repentance and restoration. When God tells them it’s time to talk, it’s because he desires to restore and redeem His people.

Where are we, & how’d we get here

As we overview the book of Malachi, we have to see where we are, and how we got here. Malachi is the last book in your Old Testament, maybe it was the last book written, or maybe it was just one of the last books written – but it paints this picture of a people that were just going through the motions.

Their teachers & leaders were just going through the motions. Obedience to God's law was almost an afterthought. Their offerings were a joke. Their marriages were failing and their personal relationships were failing.

How did this happen? Well, OT history in 3 minutes or less...

God's Promise

God made a promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation. All throughout Abraham's life we see ups and downs – if you look at his story, Abe was a liar, an adulterer, and a coward. But God was faithful to His promise, and miraculously gives Abraham and Sarah a child – Isaac.

Well Isaac has Jacob & Esau. And well, if you know the story, Jacob tricked Esau out of his Father's blessing for a bowl of stew. Jacob was another liar by the way.

Jacob has 12 sons – God renames Jacob to Israel. Jacob, has a favorite son – Joseph. Joe gets sold as a slave, winds up in Egypt, rises to the most powerful man in the world, and would end up saving his entire family from dying in a famine and the entire family relocates to Egypt.

Joe dies, and a new Pharaoh is in charge in Egypt, and the Israelites (Jacob's descendants) become slaves.

Fast forward, God raises up Moses to deliver his people out of Egyptian slavery. Joshua leads the people of Israel into the Promised Land. This incredible story about the faithfulness of God to His people.

Fast forward a little more and we see the people of God wanting to be like all the other nations. They say they want a king, and God warns them, but they're like "yeah whatever we want a king anyway". Saul – terrible. David – pretty good, but eventually becomes an adulterer and murderer, Solomon, then king after king, most of them leading the people of God away from a proper worship of God.

The 12 tribes of Israel would split into a Northern Kingdom (10) and then a Southern kingdom (2). Assyria would come and wipe out the Northern Kingdom. And then years later Babylon would come and wipe out the Southern Kingdom, and would even destroy the temple, and carry away the people to Babylon. A horrible and wicked country, where the people of God would live as exiles. A time of incredible judgment against the wickedness of God's people.

But the story doesn't end there. If you know it, the rest of the Old Testament story shows a picture of God supernaturally restoring His people as the Persians become the dominant world force, and King Cyrus the Persian king authorizes the return of God's people to the nation of Israel.

Cyrus would even go so far as to finance the rebuilding of the city, they would rebuild the temple, reinstate worship at the temple. And we have the start of what we call the Post-Exilic period – the period of time after the people of God had returned from living in exile.

Well, if you know the story, you know that it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows when they got back. They struggled to rebuild, they struggled to be obedient to the Lord, they struggled, and undoubtedly questioned God's faithfulness to them.

The people of God were led by men like Ezra and Nehemiah, Zerubbabel led them in returning to their land, rebuilding the city and the temple – leading them in worship of God. True story, in Nehemiah 8, we see Ezra reading from the OT scriptures, explaining them to the people, the people were lifting their hands and saying Amen, Amen. Just a side note – there's a biblical warrant for encouraging your preacher as he preaches.

But by the time Malachi's prophecy is made, what Malachi found though, was a people filled with indifference. Rather than seeing the multi-generational faithfulness of God for hundreds of years, and allowing God's faithfulness to propel them in worship and obedience, they cut corners, questioned God, and did whatever they wanted.

The moral failure of God's people was at an all-time high.

- How the priests failed in their God-given role to lead the people of God
- How they had devalued the marriage covenant
- How they treated each other
- How they worshiped

And as a part of God's Restorative plan for his people, He raised up a Word for them through Malachi. Malachi was a prophet – called by God. And let me tell you – like no one in their right mind would want to be a prophet. Often called to live out their messages:

- Isaiah was called to go to a people and God told him that no one would listen to him. He was even directed by God to preach naked for 3 years because God told him to
- Ezekiel was told by God to dramatize the sinfulness of Israel by laying on his side for 390 days, then the sin of Judah by laying on his other side for 40 days.
- Hosea married a prostitute that ended up leaving him and he went to go get her

You get the point. The office of prophet as the Bible uses it, wasn't something to go looking for. But for those called by God – they had to do it. And Malachi, while we don't know much about him, Malachi brings a prophecy to God's people. A warning, a call to repent, and a promise of restoration.

And he uses a series of Q&A's to form God's case against His people. Almost like an attorney making a case, Malachi walks through over 20 questions in this 4 chapter book – to point out the failure of God's people, and call them to return to the God of Israel. Over the next few weeks we will see like 6 different ways the people of God were failing to honor Him – and how God continues to pursue them and to seek to restore them.

God's charges against them starts with a reminder of His great love

- I have loved you
- Yet you have despised me
- My name will be great but you are profaning it
- I have provided everything for you, yet you are robbing me
- My covenant with you was one of life and peace, yet you are not keeping my ways

Now, we need to see that this prophecy was written to the people as a whole. There was a corporate element here. And I wonder, if the Lord were to sit RCM down and say "Let's Talk," I wonder what He's say to us?

CLOSING

Hear me though – the beauty of the book of Malachi, the beauty of the entire Bible, the beauty of the Gospel is that when God tells us “let’s talk” – it’s because he wants to restore us and offer us redemption through Christ. God’s message is good news to us if we will see it, and His patience with sinful people is designed to lead us to repentance.

He loves us too much to leave us in a stage of spiritual indifference or apathy. And it’s no coincidence that God starts his “TALK” with them by reminding His people of His love for them. Not because they were worthy of His love, but because He has chosen to love people.