



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Malachi: Faith in a Season of Waiting (Part 1) **SPEAKER** Ps Darren Kuek

THEME Faith Challenges

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

Introduction

This is the first of a 2-part series on Malachi. Through the disputes of the Jews in Malachi and the responses of God, we learn about having faith in our season of waiting. This week, we learn about knowing God's love, giving honour and remaining faithful while waiting.

Background/Context to Malachi

Ps Kuek shared some background to give some context to Malachi.

587 BC [*The Fall of Jerusalem*] Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Babylon and the Jews were deported to Babylon as prisoners of war where they were in exile for 70 years. → 538 BC [*The Exiles Return*] After 70 years, the Persians came and conquered Babylon. The Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Back in Jerusalem, they began to rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed.

→ 516 BC [*Completion of the Temple*] The Temple was completed and there was much joy and rejoicing. [*Ezra 6*] → 458 BC [*Ezra's Call for Repentance*] The Jews discovered that they had sinned against the Lord, and they bitterly wept before the Lord in great repentance. [*Ezra 10*] → 433 BC - The book of Malachi was written some 30 years after that.

Faith in a Season of Waiting

In their season of waiting, the people of Judah misunderstood God and focused on their time of waiting – they became disconnected from the love of God.

1. "How Have You Loved Us?" – Know His Love

Returning after years of exile, the Jews had almost completed building the Temple. God promised that the latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former and that He will shake all nations such that the wealth of the world will flow into Jerusalem [*Zechariah 2, Haggai 2*]. The Jews were in high spirits with anticipation of the new Kingdom of God to be established, to be the symbol of God's supreme reign and presence amongst his people.

However, many years passed and there was no fulfilment of God's magnificent promises.

The Jews questioned God – "How have you loved us?". God reminded them of how He had chosen Jacob and how much He loved Jacob in comparison to Esau even though Esau was the first born. God taught his disciples that our love for God must be so high that our love for others look like hate in contrast to our love for God. And this is how much God loved Jacob in comparison to Esau. [*Mal*

1:1-4]

How do we react in our season of waiting? Do we echo the words of the Jews and ask God how He has loved us? We need to take our eyes away from our time of waiting and present circumstances, and instead remember how much God loves us and that we are chosen by Him. God hears us and we know that in whatever we ask, we have what we asked of Him [1 John 5:15].

2. “How Have We Despised Your Name?” – Give Honour

The Jews despised God’s name, yet they did not see that they had dishonoured God. They presented blemished sacrifices (blind, lame and sick animals) to God. They did not worship God properly – although the form was there, their hearts were not right and they worshipped God without fear and reverence and honour [Mal 1:6-8, 12].

The priests, instead of following the requirements of God, set the example and tone by their careless and dishonouring behaviour – they had a duty to instruct the people but they did not [Mal 2:1-2,7].

To God, these token sacrifices are evil. The sub-standard and flippant worship of the Jews is evil. It reflects the attitude and the heart because God becomes nothing more than a chore and duty.

Are we like the Jews who worship or serve God only in form? We must take heed to have to the right posture when we approach God. Whatever we do, whether we are worshiping God in church, serving God in ministry, doing our quiet time or hearing the Word, we need to approach God with the right heart and posture, offering to God the very best (as the parable of the woman with the 2 copper coins who gave all that she had) and with reverence and honour.

3. “Why Does He Not?” (Accept Our Offering) – Remain Faithful

In their disconnect with God, the Jews did not remain faithful to God. They married people of other faith in order to build alliances to secure their future [Mal 2:10-11]. For those who married people of the same faith, they were unfaithful to their spouses [Mal 2:10-14].

Because of their faithlessness, God was very displeased and cut off the descendants of those who married outside their faith [2 Mal 2:12] and He did not receive and accept their offerings [2 Mal 2:13].

The Bible is clear that we should not marry a non-believer [1 Cor 7:39]. 2 Cor 6:14 says that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and although it does not specifically mention marriage, what deeper union than marriage is there? As a believer, if God is the most important part of our lives and every decision we make is based on God and our spouse cannot share that with us, how can we be “one flesh” with our spouse?

As for those who are married, it is important to be faithful to our spouses – otherwise God will not hear us.

Conclusion

How do we respond in our seasons of waiting? The furnace that purifies gold also hardens clay. We could choose to focus on our time of waiting and doubt God’s love for us. Or we can offer the sacrifice of praise – praising God in the midst of our problems and knowing that we can rest secure in God’s love because He knows best. So let us respond as how King David did, offering the sacrifice of praise in his distress [Ps 22:1-3] and echoing the voice of Habbukuk [Hab 3:17-18] that God be enthroned in our reality and praise Him no matter what the circumstances may be.

QUESTIONS

1. How did the Jews respond in their season of waiting? Can you share of a time where you responded similarly like the Jews?

2. Are you currently in a season of waiting or have an unanswered prayer? How have you been responding and how has this impacted your relationship with or faith in God?

3. There are different ways we can respond in our season(s) of waiting. What will your response be today? How can we encourage others who are also going through such season(s)?