

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Minor Prophets, Major Messages | Malachi: Remember the Law of Moses**

The so-called “Minor Prophets” are a collection of twelve prophetic books in the Tanakh—that is, the Old Testament. Even though they are called the “Minor Prophets,” these books contain “major messages” that remain relevant to believers today. In this series, we will unpack the major messages of each Minor Prophet. We will discuss their practical applications for believers today and how they connect to the Messiah’s work and teachings in the New Testament.

In this teaching, we are looking at the Book of Malachi. Let’s dive in.

### **Malachi: An Overview**

Malachi’s name means “my messenger,” and he served as God’s messenger to the Jewish community that had returned from Babylon. He prophesied after the temple had been restored and the people were settled in the land (Malachi 1:10; 3:1, 10). However, despite their return from exile and the temple’s restoration, the people were questioning God’s justice:

#### **Malachi 2:17**

You have wearied the LORD [YHWH] with your words. But you say, “How have we wearied him?” By saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD [YHWH], and he delights in them.” Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

#### **Malachi 3:13-15**

“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD [YHWH]. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD [YHWH] of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’”

Additionally, the people were abandoning God’s commandments. They were unrighteously divorcing their wives (Malachi 2:16). They were practicing sorcery, committing adultery, swearing falsely, and oppressing widows, orphans, sojourners, and hired workers (Malachi 3:5). They were also offering

defective animals as sacrifices (Malachi 1:8, 13) and not giving their commanded tithes (Malachi 3:6-15). It seems that a significant factor contributing to the people's disregard for God's commandments was the failure of their spiritual leaders, the Levitical Priests. The priests had neglected to teach the people God's ways:

#### **Malachi 2:7-9**

For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD [YHWH] of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD [YHWH] of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."

As we see, YHWH had gathered the people back to the land and restored the temple, but many of them were still unfaithful. Because of this, Malachi declared that a day was coming when the unrighteous will face destruction and those who fear YHWH will be spared (Malachi 3:2; 4:1). Malachi urged the people to remember the Law of Moses as they await Elijah's arrival before this Day of YHWH:

#### **Malachi 4:4-6**

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD [YHWH] comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

That is how the book of Malachi ends—with this admonition to remember the Torah, the law of Moses. Many scholars believe that these three verses are intended to serve as a conclusion not only to Malachi but also to the entire Law and Prophets. Malachi marks the end of the *Nevi'im*, the "Prophets" in the Jewish canon (S. D. Snyman, "Suffering in Post-Exilic Times—Investigating Mal 3:13-24 and Psalm 1," *Old Testament Studies* 20(3): 786-797). So, this is the conclusion of the entire prophetic canon: believers must remember the law of Moses as we await the coming day of YHWH.

### **Malachi's Major Message**

Malachi's original readers are commanded to remember the law because they had apparently forgotten it—everyone from the leadership down to the laypeople. They were sinning against God and against each other. And because of that, Malachi warns them of coming judgment. But Malachi also assures them that those who fear YHWH's name will not be destroyed (Malachi 4:1-3). That means there is still time to repent. There is still time to start remembering the Torah and obeying it.

It should be noted that remembering the law of Moses is largely a community project. That is, if God's people are going to remember the law of Moses, then they need faithful parents and leaders. Parents are to teach their children (Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19) and spiritual leaders are to teach the broader community (Deuteronomy 31:9-13). The leadership of Israel played a significant role in the Torah being remembered and observed by the people, which is why much of God's anger in Malachi is directed toward the priests—because they had failed to teach the Torah to the people. Thus, the leaders, as well as the broader community, are admonished to repent and stop neglecting their responsibilities.

Malachi's admonition to remember the law of Moses is just as relevant today as it was in the time of Malachi. Just as Israel's leaders in Malachi's time failed to teach the people God's ways, many modern

Christian leaders have also failed to do this. Worse, many modern Christian leaders actively *discourage* obeying God's ways. Christians are told they must "unhitch" from the Old Testament entirely. Those who obey the Torah are called "legalistic" and "Judaizers."

Despite this, a growing movement of believers are returning to the Torah. More and more parents are teaching their children to walk in the ways of YHWH, and a new generation of leaders are rising up and upholding the Torah as God's righteous standard of behavior. A remnant of God's people is heeding Malachi's call to remember the law of Moses as the Day of YHWH draws near.

## Interesting Connections

In Malachi chapter 3, there is an interesting prophecy about a messenger who will prepare the way of YHWH:

### Malachi 3:1

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 [YHWH] of hosts.

Later, Malachi identifies this messenger as the prophet Elijah, whose ministry involves turning the hearts of fathers toward their children and vice versa.

### Malachi 4:5-6

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD [YHWH] comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

What is the meaning of this prophecy? What does it mean that Elijah will turn the hearts of fathers toward their children and the hearts of children toward their fathers? Earlier, Malachi pronounced a curse upon the priests' children because the priests did not faithfully honor YHWH (Malachi 2:3, 12). Similarly, the people of Judah generally were unfaithful to their "Father" in heaven and were profaning "the covenant of our fathers" (Malachi 2:10). So, according to Malachi's prophecy, it seems that Elijah will turn the hearts of fathers to their children by causing the sinful priests to consider the harm they are doing to their children through their sins. Elijah will also turn the hearts of children to their fathers, which is another way of saying that he will turn the hearts of God's children toward God and his covenant with their fathers. Elijah will proclaim God's law, establishing it in the hearts of God's people—leader and layman alike—so that the people turn back to God.

The New Testament connects the prophecy about the coming of Elijah to the ministry of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Messiah (Matthew 11:10-14). Luke states that John the Baptist would go "[in the spirit and power of Elijah](#)" and "[turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God](#)" and "[make ready for the Lord a people prepared](#)" (Luke 1:16-17). John the Baptist preached repentance during a time when Israel's leaders had failed the people once again. John's ministry prepared the way for Yeshua, the true leader of Israel, who taught the people to obey the law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-20).

John fulfilled the role of Elijah by preparing the way for Yeshua's first coming. But Elijah is expected to appear again to prepare the way for the Messiah's second coming. Before the Day of YHWH, the hearts of God's children will turn toward their father. Spiritual leaders will consider the harm they've done

through their neglect and unfaithfulness to YHWH. People will start remembering the law of Moses. Are we living in those days today? Is the way being prepared?

## How Malachi Points to the Messiah

We already discussed how the New Testament connects Malachi's prophecy about the coming of Elijah to the ministry of John the Baptist. There is another prophecy that may point toward the Messiah. Malachi speaks of the sun of righteousness, which will rise with "healing in its wings."

### Malachi 4:2

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

What's interesting about this metaphor is that the Hebrew term for "wings" is the same term used for the "corners" of the garment to which *tzitzit* are tied (Numbers 15:38). *Tzitzit* are fringes that hang from one's garment. God commanded his people to wear *tzitzit* as a reminder to keep his commandments (Numbers 15:39-40). In other words, they are designed to help us remember the law of Moses. Now consider this:

### Matthew 9:20-22

And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." Jesus [Yeshua] turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

So, the woman with the issue of blood touched Yeshua's "fringe," his *tzitzit*. Yeshua's *tzitzit* would have been tied to the corners—the wings, if you will—of his garment. And just as the prophecy foretold, healing was indeed found in the "wings" of the sun of righteousness. When the woman touched Yeshua's *tzitzit*, she was healed. The fact that Yeshua wore *tzitzit* also means that he heeds Malachi's major message: he remembers the law of Moses (Malachi 4:4).

In addition to fulfilling Malachi's prophecies and living out Malachi's message, Yeshua echoes Malachi's admonition to remember the law of Moses. In Matthew 5:17, Yeshua said that he came not to abolish the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them—that is, "bring [them] to full expression" (BDAG 4<sup>th</sup> ed., "πληρόω," 736). In Matthew 5:18, Yeshua further stated that not even the smallest part of the Torah would pass away "until heaven and earth pass away" and "until all is accomplished"—that is, until the end of the age and the arrival of the new heavens and new earth, when the present created universe passes away (cf. 2 Pet. 3:7, 13; Rev. 21:1). Furthermore, in Matthew 5:19, Yeshua admonished his followers to do and teach even the least of the Torah's commandments. Like Malachi, Yeshua expected that the Torah would remain relevant until the end of the age and that followers of the God of Israel would keep it.

Finally, in Matthew 5:20, Yeshua urged his followers to surpass the scribes and Pharisees in righteousness. At the time of Yeshua's earthly ministry, just like in Malachi's time, the leaders of Israel had failed the people. Not only were they hypocrites (Matthew 23:3, 28), but also their teachings and traditions made void the word of God (Matthew 15:6). So, like Malachi, Yeshua rebukes Israel's unrighteous leaders and calls the people back to God's ways, giving the definitive teaching and model of righteous behavior.

And that is Malachi's major message. Followers of the God of Israel are called to remember the law of Moses. God's people should reflect upon the areas where they have forgotten the law of Moses and devote themselves to "remembering" it. As Moses declared, God's people are to place his words on their hearts, teach them to their children, and recall them every time they lie down and rise up (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Remembering and doing God's law is how we prepare for the coming day of YHWH.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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