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Malachi

1 A message from God. This message is from the Lord to Israel. God used Malachi to give this message.

God Loves Israel

²The Lord said, “I love you people.”

But you said, “What shows you love us?”

The Lord said, “Esau was Jacob’s brother. Right? But I chose* Jacob. ³And I did not accept* Esau. I destroyed Esau’s hill-country.* Esau’s country was destroyed, and now only wild dogs* live there.”

⁴Maybe the people of Edom will say, “We were destroyed. But we will go back and build our cities again.”

But the Lord All-Powerful says, “If they build those cities again, then I will destroy them again!” That is why people say Edom is an evil country—a nation the Lord hates forever.

⁵You people saw these things and you said, “The Lord is great, even outside of Israel!”

The People Don’t Respect God

⁶The Lord All-Powerful said, “Children honor their father. Servants honor their masters. I am your Father, so why don’t you honor me? I am your Master, so why don’t you respect me? You priests don’t respect my name.”

But you say, “What have we done that shows we don’t respect your name?”

⁷⌋The Lord said,⌋ “You bring unclean* bread to my altar!”

But you say, “What makes that bread unclean?”

⌋The Lord said,⌋ “You don’t show respect for my table (*altar*). ⁸You bring blind animals as sacrifices.* And that is wrong! You bring sick and crippled animals for sacrifices. And that is wrong! Try giving those sick animals as a gift to your governor. Would he accept those sick animals? No! He would not accept those gifts!” The Lord All-Powerful said these things!

⁹“Priests, you should ask the Lord to be good to us. But he does not listen to you. And it is all your fault.” The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

¹⁰“Surely, some of you priests could close the temple doors and light the fires correctly. I am not pleased with you. I will not accept your gifts.” The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

¹¹“People all around the world respect my name. All around the world people bring good gifts to me. They burn good incense* as a gift to me. Why? Because my name is important to all those people.” The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

¹²“But you people show that you don’t respect my name. You say that the Lord’s table (*altar*) is unclean.* ¹³And you don’t like the food from that table. You smell the food and refuse to eat it. You say it is bad. ⌋But that is not true.⌋ Then you bring sick, crippled, and hurt animals to me. You try to give sick animals to me as sacrifices. But I will not accept those sick animals from you. ¹⁴Some

chose Or, “loved.”

did not accept Or, “hated.”

Esau’s hill-country This means the country Edom. Edom was another name for Esau.

wild dogs Literally, “jackals.”

unclean Not pure or not acceptable to God for worship.

sacrifice(s) A gift to God. Usually, it was a special animal that was killed and burned on an altar.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a gift to God..

people have good, male animals that they could give as sacrifices. ¹But they don't give those good animals to me. ²Some people bring good animals to me. They promise to give those healthy animals to me. But then they secretly exchange those good animals and they give me sick animals. Bad things will happen to those people! I am the Great King. ³You should respect me! ⁴People all around the world respect me!" The Lord All-Powerful said those things!

Rules for Priests

2 "Priests, this rule is for you! Listen to me! Pay attention to the things I say! Show honor to my name! ²If you don't respect my name, then bad things will happen to you. You will say blessings,* but they will become curses.* I will make bad things happen because you don't show respect for my name!" The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

³"Look, I will punish your descendants. During the holidays, you priests offer sacrifices to me. You take the dung and inside parts from the dead animals, and throw those parts away. But I will smear that dung on your faces, and you will be thrown away with it! ⁴Then you will learn why I am giving you this command. I am telling you these things so my Agreement* with Levi* will continue." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

⁵[The Lord said,] "I made that Agreement with Levi. I promised to give him life and peace—and I gave those things to him! Levi respected me! He showed honor to my name! ⁶Levi taught the true teachings. Levi didn't teach lies! Levi was honest and he loved peace. Levi followed me and saved many people from being punished for the bad things they did. ⁷A priest should know God's teachings. People should be able to go to a

priest and learn God's teachings. A priest should be God's messenger to the people."

⁸[The Lord said,] "But you priests stopped following me! You used the teachings to make people do wrong. You ruined the Agreement with Levi!" The Lord All-Powerful said these things! ⁹"You don't live the way I told you! You have not accepted my teachings! So I will make you become not important—people will not respect you!"

Judah Was Not True to God

¹⁰We all have the same father (*God*). The same God made every one of us! So why do people cheat their brothers? Those people show that they don't respect the Agreement. They don't respect the Agreement that our ancestors made with God. ¹¹The people of Judah cheated other people. People in Jerusalem and Israel did terrible things! God loves the temple.* But the people in Judah didn't respect the Lord's holy temple. The people of Judah began to worship that foreign goddess! ¹²The Lord will remove those people from Judah's family. Those people might bring gifts to the Lord—but it will not help. ¹³You can cry and cover the Lord's altar with tears, but the Lord will not accept your gifts. The Lord will not be pleased with the things you bring to him.

¹⁴You ask, "Why are our gifts not accepted by the Lord?" Why? Because the Lord saw the bad things you did—he is a witness* against you. He saw you cheat on your wife. You have been married to that woman since you were young. She was your girlfriend. Then you made your vows* to each other—and she became your wife. [But you cheated on her.] ¹⁵God wants husbands and wives to become one body and one spirit. Why? So they would have holy children. So protect that spiritual unity. Don't cheat on your wife. She has been your wife from the time you were young.

¹⁶The Lord God of Israel says, "I hate divorce. And I hate the cruel things that men

blessings Words asking for good things to happen to a person that tries to obey God's law.

curses Warnings about bad things that will happen to a person that does not obey God.

Agreement Literally, "Proof." The flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them were proof of the Agreement between God and Israel.

Levi The family group of Israel that did the work of priests.

temple The special building in Jerusalem for Jewish worship.

witness A person that tells what he has seen or heard.

vow(s) A special promise. Here it means the promise a man and woman make to each other when they are married.

do. So protect your spiritual unity. Don't cheat on your wife."

The Special Time of Judgment

¹⁷You have taught wrong things. And those wrong teachings made the Lord very sad. You taught that God likes people that do bad things. You said God thinks those people are good. And you taught that God does not punish people for doing bad things.

3 The Lord All-Powerful says, "I am sending my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then suddenly, the Master you are looking for will come to his temple.* Yes, the messenger of the [New] Agreement that you want really is coming!

²"No person can prepare for that time. No person can stand against him when he comes. He will be like a burning fire. He will be like the strong soap people use to make things clean. ³He will make the Levites* clean.* He will make them pure, like silver is made pure—with fire! He will make them pure like gold and silver. Then they will bring gifts to the Lord—and they will do those things the right way. ⁴Then the Lord will accept the gifts from Judah and Jerusalem. It will be like in the past. It will be like the time long ago. ⁵Then I will come to you—and I will do the right thing. I will be like a person that is ready to tell the judge about the bad things people did. Some people do evil magic. Some people do the sin of adultery.* Some people make false promises. Some people cheat their workers—they don't pay them the money they promised. People don't help widows and orphans.* People don't help strangers. People don't respect me!" The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

temple Or, "palace."

Levite(s) A person from the family group of Levi. The Levites helped the priests in the temple and also worked for the civil government.

clean Pure or acceptable to God for worship.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by sexual sin.

widows and orphans Widows are women whose husbands have died, and orphans are children whose parents have died. Often these people have no one to care for them.

Stealing from God

⁶"I am the Lord, and I don't change. You are Jacob's children, and you have not been completely destroyed. ⁷But you never obeyed my laws. Even your ancestors stopped following me. Come back to me, and I will come back to you." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

"You say, 'How can we come back?'

⁸"[Stop stealing things from God!] People should not steal things from God, but you stole things from me!

"You say, 'What did we steal from you?'

"You should have given me one-tenth of your things. You should have given me special gifts. [But you did not give those things to me.] ⁹In this way, your whole nation has stolen things from me. So bad things are happening to you." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

¹⁰The Lord All-Powerful says, "Try this test. Bring one-tenth of your things to me. Put those things in the treasury. Bring food to my house. Test me! If you do those things, then I will truly bless you. Good things will come to you like rain falling from the sky. You will have more than enough of everything. ¹¹I will not let pests destroy your crops. Your grapevines will all produce grapes." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

¹²"People from other nations will be good to you. You will truly have a wonderful country." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

The Special Time of Judgment

¹³The Lord says, "You said mean things to me."

But you ask, "What did we say about you?"

¹⁴You said, "It is useless to worship the Lord. We did the things the Lord told us—but we didn't gain anything. We were sad [for our sins] like people crying at a funeral. But it didn't help. ¹⁵We think proud people are happy. Evil people succeed. They do bad things to test God's patience—and God does not punish them."

¹⁶God's followers spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to them. There is a book in front of him. In that book are the names of

God's followers. Those are the people that honor the Lord's name.

¹⁷The Lord said, "Those people belong to me. I will be kind to them. A man is very kind to his children that obey him. In the same way, I will be kind to my followers. ¹⁸You people will come back to me. And you will learn the difference between good and evil. You will learn the difference between a person that follows God and a person that does not.

4 "That time of judgment is coming. It will be like a hot furnace. All those proud people will be punished. All those evil people will burn like straw. At that time, they will be like a bush burning in the fire—and there will not be a branch or root left." The Lord All-Powerful said these things.

²"But, for my followers, goodness will shine on you like the rising sun. And it will

bring healing power like the sun's rays. You will be free and happy, like calves freed from their stalls.* ³Then you will walk on those evil people—they will be like ashes under your feet. I will make those things happen at that time of judgment." The Lord All-Powerful said these things!

⁴"Remember and obey the law of Moses. Moses was my servant. I gave those laws and rules to him at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*). Those laws are for all the people of Israel."

⁵[The Lord said,] "Look, I will send Elijah the prophet to you. He will come before that great and terrible time of judgment from the Lord. ⁶Elijah will help the parents become close to their children. And he will help the children become close to their parents. This must happen, or I (*God*) will come and completely destroy your country!"

stalls Small rooms or areas surrounded by a fence where people keep their animals.