

MALACHI

Cleansing the Community

INTRODUCTION

- ∞ Malachi: “my messenger”
- ∞ Date: mid-late 5th century
- ∞ Setting: post-exile (Ezra-Nehemiah)
governor, intermarriage, pay tithes, social injustice
- ∞ Theme: Cleansing the Community
- ∞ Message: *YHWH calls Israel to return to covenant faithfulness, obeying Him & waiting for His coming*

OUTLINE

∞ Disputations (argue, anticipate, affirm)

(1) Love (1:2-5)

(4) Justice (2:17-3:5)

(2) Sacrifice (1:6-2:9)

(5) Tithes (3:6-12)

(3) Covenant (2:10-16)

(6) Service (3:13-4:3)

∞ Exhortations

Obey Moses & Wait for Elijah (4:4-6)

#1 - GOD'S LOVE

∞ Argue: 'I have loved you' (1:2a)

∞ Anticipate: 'How have you loved us?' (1:2b) Why?

Past exile, present political oppression, prophecy

∞ Affirm: 'loved Jacob, hated Esau' (1:2c-5)

God's election, restoration of Israel is a mark of His love! Edom was totally destroyed for role in Jerusalem's fall

(cf. 'Hate' can indicate total rejection, but it can also mean 'lesser love,' Gen. 29:31, Deut. 2, Lk. 14:25).

#2 - SACRIFICE

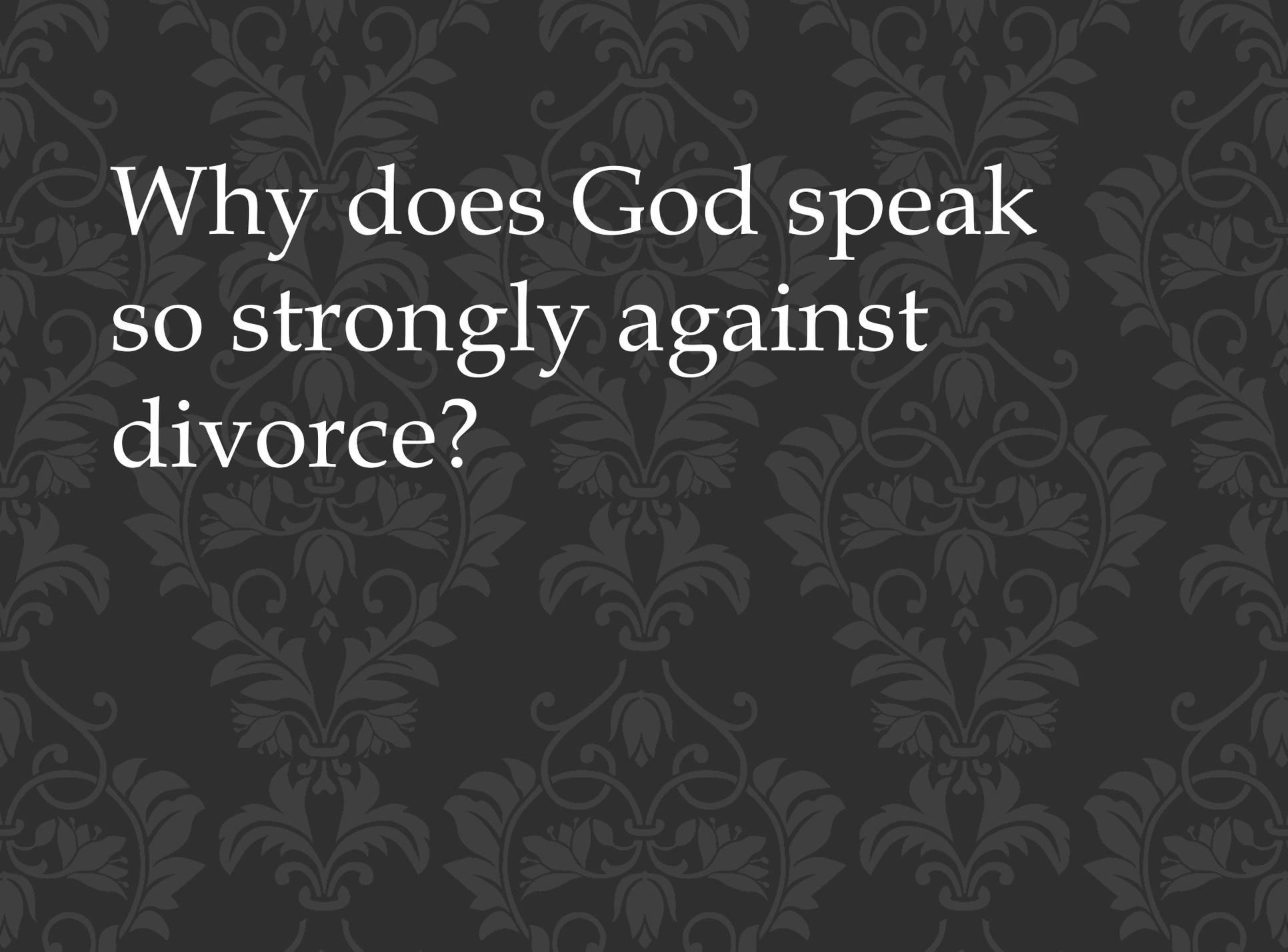
- ∞ Argue: 'Where is My honor, O priests?' (1:6)
'A son honors his father, a servant his master'
- ∞ Anticipate: How have we despised your name? (1:6-7)
- ∞ Affirm: 'Offering blind animals in sacrifice' (1:8-2:6)
God mocks their foolishness in offering blemished sacrifices, seeking His favor. It would be better to close the temple. Jealous for His name, YHWH will judge those who profane it (dung, refuse pile). Unlike Levi, the priests were not instructing the people but leading them astray!

As priests (teachers of the law) and prophets (mouthpiece of God) received a strong rebuke, so we also are judged more strictly as spiritual leaders.
(cf. Luke 12:48, James 3:1)

So, we must be careful that we accurately portray God to the people in word and deed!

#3 - COVENANT

- ∞ Argue: 'Why then are we faithless?' (2:10-13)
As God's covenant family, His people were to be loyal to Him and one another. Yet, the men were intermarrying with pagans (Ez 9-10, Neh. 13) yet worshipping YHWH.
- ∞ Anticipate: 'Why doesn't He regard offering' (2:14)
- ∞ Affirm: 'Because YHWH was a witness' (12, 14-16)
YHWH rejected their worship because they had divorced their wives, dividing what God joined (Gen. 2; Matt. 19). He twice warns 'guard yourselves, don't be faithless.'



Why does God speak
so strongly against
divorce?

God takes marriage so seriously because this human relationship most closely reflects His love for His people! (cf. Eph. 5)

Caution: We must emphasize God's ideal in marriage (cf. Matt. 19, 'It was not so from the beginning'), striving diligently to avoid divorce. YET, we also must not treat a divorced person as second-class, whose life God cannot redeem and use to do His work!

#4 - JUSTICE

- ∞ Argue: You weary YHWH with your words (2:17a)
- ∞ Anticipate: 'How have we wearied Him?' (2:17b)
- ∞ Affirm: 'Where is the God of justice?' (2:17c-3:5)
Questioning divine justice, the people claimed that God approved of the wicked, was disinterested in their affairs. After His messenger, God promised to intervene directly, purifying the priesthood (refiner), destroying evildoers, particularly those oppressing the weak (social justice).

#5 - TITHES

- ∞ Argue: Will man rob God? You're robbing me (3:8a)
Despite Israel's rebellion against His covenant, God was faithful to His promises, not destroying them.
- ∞ Anticipate: 'How have we robbed you?' (3:8b)
- ∞ Affirm: 'In your tithes and contributions' (3:8c-12)
YHWH calls the people to return to full obedience. He promised to bless their faithful giving with abundant agricultural provision, which would be a witness to the surrounding nations.

The people of Israel were commanded to bring God a 'tithe' (*tenth, not including their sacrifices & offerings*).

Now that we are not under law but under grace, how should we view giving of our resources to God?

#6 - SERVICE

- ∞ Argue: Your words are hard against me! (3:13a)
- ∞ Anticipate: How have we spoken against You? (3:13)
- ∞ Affirm: What's profit in keeping His charge? (3:14)
Seeing evildoers prosper, God's people doubted whether He was interested in human affairs, or even unjust. But God takes note of those who fear Him. He promised to distinguish the wicked and righteous, fiery judgment for the former, healing & victory for the latter.

In times of suffering for the sake of Christ, do you ever wonder whether serving God is worth the cost?

Take comfort from these words, that one day God will bring justice!

EXHORTATION

- ∞ Obey: ‘Remember law of my servant Moses’ (4:4)
Having addressed their legal violations with regard to sacrifice (1:7-14), intermarriage (2:10-11), and paying the tithe (3:8-9), this command is quite appropriate!
- ∞ Wait: ‘I will send you Elijah the prophet’ (4:5)
Before the coming judgment, God promised to send His messenger (3:1) to turn the people back to God. Jesus identifies this figure as John the Baptist (cf. Luke 1:16-17; Matt. 11:10f)

SUMMARY

With six disputations, Malachi confronts the post-exilic community with thinking & behavior in need of change. God's covenant confirms His special love for Israel (1:2-5). Thus, He calls His people to be faithful to Him & each other (2:10-16), offering only the best offerings (1:6-2:9, 2:17-3:5). His justice will be vindicated in His return to judge the wicked & reward the righteous. Malachi closes with expectation of this glorious return!