

SERIES: "LAST...BUT NOT LEAST":

An In-Depth Study of MALACHI - the Final Prophet of the Old Testament Era-
PART XVII - Malachi Chapter 3:7-12

"ROBBING A RIGHTEOUS GOD"

WEDNESDAY, May 13th, 2009

- I. Robbery is the most prevalent and costly crime in America. Shoplifting and Employee theft together are tied for the distinction of the number one "Robbery" category! They account for 70 % of the loss suffered by businesses and cost over \$24 BILLION dollars annually!
- II. Many Christians are active in calling for the court systems to clamp down on this crime wave. Yet, these SAME people would truly be shocked to know exactly how God views THEIR lives when it comes to the subject of "Robbery"!
- III. The fact is that the AVERAGE Protestant is Robbing God! He/she STATISTICALLY gives an average of 3 % to the local church and 1/10th of 1 % to MISSIONS ANNUALLY (an equivalent to a whopping \$ 3.00 annually per person.)
- IV. Sadly, each year MORE money is spent on the care and feeding of PETS than is given to churches and charities in the United States!
- V. Malachi levels one of Scripture's most SCATHING reprimands to the nation of Judah - claiming that she was CHEATING God in the area of GIVING and so he called the nation - and US, through the preservation of God's Word - to return to the BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE of TITHING.
- VI. In the first verse of our text tonight, we observe God's outstretched "Hand of love" for the nation of Judah to "Return" to Him, though this was an area of sin that they had apparently struggled with for many years. ("Even for the days of your fathers...")
- VII. All Judah needed to do was to Return and Repent, and God would have graciously stayed His hand of Judgment and would have completely RESTORED the nation to FULL BLESSING!
- VIII. But sin had BLINDED both the priests AND the people to their true spiritual condition - questioning God's very assertion! Sadly, this is exactly the condition many "Believers" are in today!
- IX. When God answered Judah's question WITH a question, He utilized the word translated into the English, "Rob". But the more SPECIFIC meaning of this word is "to defraud". (cf. Prov. 22: 22)
(ie "to take forcibly")

They had a calloused lack of conscience.

X. But HOW could finite MORTALS like us "rob" a God Who sustains, sovereignly owns, and controls ALL THINGS?!?! God answered that with four simple and clear words; "IN tithes AND offerings".

XI. Historically speaking, Israel had been required by Levitical LAW to give tithes and offerings to God. Among other tithing responsibilities, they were to bring one 10th of ALL produce and livestock to the TEMPLE - OR it's financial equivalent.

XII. Failure to tithe PROPERLY was defined as:

1. Not paying the tithe AT ALL ;
2. Withholding PART of the tithe back; OR
3. Not giving it at it's proper TIME .

XIII. The result of breaking ANY of these conditions resulted in a "CURSE"

XIV. Some ask, "Why does God bless some with abundance and not others?" And although the ULTIMATE answer is known ONLY to God, it IS clear that God DOES promise to bless liberal givers. So it is that those who rob God are actually robbing themselves!

XV. The key to the Blessing was complete obedience. ("Bring ALL the tithes into the storehouse...")

XVI. TWO NOTES concerning the word "storehouse":

1. The word in the Malachi context does NOT mean the local Church ; (for the church as such was not even in existence at that time.)
2. The scripture does NOT forbid giving to para church ministries. (they did not exist at the time of Malachi)

XVII. Whether or not you believe that tithing ought to be practiced by New Testament Believers, we cannot ignore the clear principles of giving found there (I Corinthians 16 :2; II Corinthians 8 :2, 7-9, 12, 19-20; 9 :5-12)

XVIII. Scripturally correct giving must come:

1. From a willing heart;
2. From a right mental attitude ;
3. On the basis of GRACE - NOT LAW !

XIX. Tithing is just the STARTING point (the "training - wheels") for proper giving! BOTH TESTAMENTS teach that giving is NOT to be limited to this amount.

XX. According to our text, OBEDIENCE to God in this area is the portal to many BLESSINGS including:

1. Prosperity ; (Deut. 28:12)
2. Pestilence Removed ;
3. Renewed Productivity ; and restored Prominence .
(see also Luke 6 :38 and Mt. 6: 19,20)

The 8th in this Bible
1. offering correct
2. Hypocritical
3. Secular
4. (and this was)