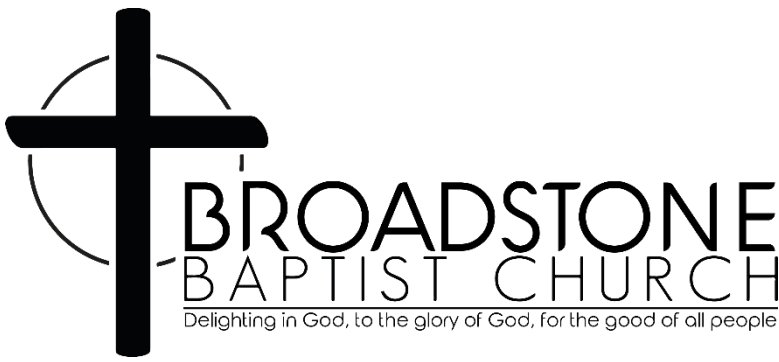




NEWS BULLETIN

RELEASE DATE: **9th September 2025**

Malachi Chapter 1 verses 1-14

To start with let me set the scene. The people who made the trip back to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon in about 538 BC initially desired to restore the nation and rebuild the Temple as we see in the first six chapters of the book of Ezra. Before very many years had elapsed, they again began to dishonour God's name and forsake His laws. Therefore, God sent Ezra in 458 BC to bring the people back into a covenant relationship with Him, as in Ezra Chapters 9 & 10. A few years later (445 BC) Nehemiah came to help rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and Ezra again challenged the people to revive their fear of God and separate themselves from foreign influences.

Somewhere around the time of Nehemiah, or shortly afterwards, some of God's people divorced their Hebrew wives and intermarried with foreigners. The priests failed to teach the people to reverence God. Many did not honour God with proper sacrifices or tithes. Some questioned God's love, and others began to wonder if it really paid to fear God and serve Him.

In the light of these circumstances the Jews could choose between several possible alternatives:

- 1). They could continue to disrespect God with improper sacrifices, to refuse to tithe, to divorce their wives and intermarry with unbelievers, and to blame God for not loving and blessing them.
- 2). They could turn from their evil ways and become strict observers of the law of Moses, hoping God would be impressed by their zealous good works.
- 3). They could form an alternative community to prepare the way for the messenger of the Lord to come to His Temple, to judge the wicked, and to bring in the kingdom of God.
- 4). They could confess their sins and revitalise their stewardship of life before God.

In this situation Malachi ministered the word of the Lord using a unique question and answer style of interaction with his listeners

And so, to our reading this morning. God's grace, wisdom and understanding be the portion of each one of us as we look into this section of his word.

The Lord's Love for Israel

² "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." ⁴ If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country', and 'the people with whom the Lord is angry for ever.'"⁵ Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!"

The Priests' Polluted Offerings

⁶ "A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' ⁷ By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. ⁸ When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favour? says the Lord of hosts. ⁹ And now entreat the favour of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favour to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. ¹⁰ Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. ¹¹ For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be ^[b] great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. ¹³ But you say, 'What a weariness this is', and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord. ¹⁴ Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

Mystery surrounds the election of God. One is chosen, and the other is not chosen. God's graciousness, mercy, and compassion are far above and beyond human understanding. Through election He works freely to achieve His just and loving purposes. Those purposes are not limited to one people but extend to all nations as we see from Romans chapter 11 versus 32 to 36.

³² For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. ³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?"³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

The ultimate definition of God's people is the people God in His sovereignty chooses to love. The example of Jacob and Esau, the brothers whose descendants became Israel and Edom illustrates this.

The surrounding nations saw Yahweh, the God of Israel, as a local god with authority inside the territory of Israel over His own people. God exercised His sovereign power to show He was in charge of all nations, across all geographical and political borders. God as Father calls forth an image of love, concern, and helpfulness in our minds. It must also call us to respect, honour and serve Him.

Ministers can lead religious worship and be spiritually blind. Going through the proper ritual does not make worship acceptable to God. Having the proper attitude to God does. Ministers can look upon their ministry simply as a profession by which they earn a living. They can fulfil a job description while holding God and His house in contempt. A wrong attitude toward ministry leads to self-centred spiritual blindness.

Ministry is to bring honour to God not food and fame to the Minister. God would rather shut the doors of his house than have a spiritually blind minister lead his people. A minister is to lead people to obey God and turn from sin. A spiritually blind minister leads them into sin.

Giving reflects our character and the genuineness of our devotion to God. If we truly revere God, we will never offer cast off or leftover gifts, such as a sick animal or property gained by unethical means. God deserves only the best we have. Anything less shows serving and pleasing Him is not our top priority. God's ordained ministers are responsible to lead God's people to give their best to God. The failure of ministerial leadership brings failure of the people.

Worship leaders focus on pleasing God and honouring Him before the worshippers. Malachi saw priests serving their own financial and ego needs. They offered sacrifices which did not meet minimum standards. In Genesis chapter 22 we read of God testing Abraham as to his faithfulness to God whom he feared by being prepared to sacrifice his only son on an altar. Not that God allowed it to go through, unlike the sentence that was handed to His own Son. And that to pay for our sins and not His. Jesus was the only perfect, sinless substitute who could pay our price and God was prepared to pay that high a price for us, because of His oh so deep love for us.

Consequently, it is understandable why God demands our best, when presented to Him as a sign of our love and gratitude for all He has done for us.

The Lord rebuked the priests for offering blemish sacrifices which He would not accept. Going through the motions of worship is not a basis for prayer. Rather, false worship blocks our channel of communication with our Saviour.

God condemns His people, even His ministers, when they do not obediently contribute to the fulfilment of His purposes to let all nations know He is the only God. What Malachi thought was happening or would soon happen outside Jerusalem is not clear from this passage.

In the biblical view as a whole, we know God does not demand specific rituals limited to one specific place. He wants all people everywhere to worship Him. He wants universal recognition as the only God. Let's face it, all nations need the Lord. God's entire history with His people has one goal; to bring all nations to worship Him.

Our God is King not just of Broadstone Baptist Church, not just of even the United Kingdom, or of this Whole World but of the entire universe and wants to be treated accordingly. He will not accept gifts given to Him with impure motives or unwilling hearts. Gifts do not buy off God or fulfil our obligation to Him. They express our gratitude to Him and our deep desire to share with Him because he is the great Ruler who deserves our worship.

What is offered to the Lord in worship must be pure and from a sense of deep love and thanks, and as a sign of our commitment to Him and the work He has given us to do on His behalf while we remain on this his world.

How does all this affect our view of, and relationship with, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

It should drive us to our knees on several counts:

- 1) That He has continued to love us despite all our failures and weaknesses.
- 2) That He is always ready to listen when we in true repentance, ask for forgiveness for our wrongdoing.
- 3) That He is willing to allow us to be a partaker in the on-going work of His Kingdom, to spread His net even wider in the hope of catching even more potential saints for His Service.
- 4) As we are in the "last days", we need to ask for a fresh and enlarged portion of Jesus' love and enthusiasm for the task He has entrusted us with. Time is running out not just for us, but for mankind as a whole, so gird up your loins dear brothers and sisters, let us redouble our efforts on our Saviour's behalf.

Transcript of the presentation given by Deacon Rodney Burge and discussed at the church-based, morning home group on Tuesday 9th September 2025. All scripture is from the ESV Translation.

