

Answers to Sermon Notes

“Turning Hearts, Part V”

“Responding to the Love of God...With Proper Priorities”

Malachi 3:6-15

3/19/23

⁵ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ⁶ 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.”

- 1) I have a **challenging** question for you today, but it will have to **wait** just a bit.
- 2) For the last few weeks we have been considering these verses and their **application** to our own lives and the **days** in which we live.
 - a) With a great concern for the growing **evil** of our time and the **salvation** of our children...
 - b) Hearing this **voice** of Elijah, our hearts turn more **fervently** toward the Lord for our, and our children’s sake.
- 3) Thus far, we have seen:
 - a) That our turning can only be **empowered** by a profound understanding of God’s **love** to us.
 - b) That the overall response to this love will be lives of **worship**.
 - c) That central to this act of turning is a **passionate** concern for true **instruction**.
 - d) That hearts which are truly turning back toward the LORD must be hearts of **persevering covenant** faithfulness.
- 4) Today we see that hearts that are turned **toward** the Lord are hearts focused on **proper** priorities.
 - a) There was a **problem** among the people:
 - i) They were robbing God of the **full tithe**.
 - (1) 1/10 of their **grain**, fruit, and **flocks**. (as much as **20%**?)
 - b) But, this presents us with a bit of a **problem** as well.
 - i) Tithing laws were part of the civil/**ceremonial** law and are **not** part of the New Covenant.
 - (1) We have gone from law to **love**, from calculation to **celebration**.
 - (2) Making it **impossible** now to know whether the **full** tithe has been brought in.
 - ii) This passage (and its emphasis on the **reward**) can easily foster wrong **motives**.
 - (1) Making it more about what we will **get** rather than what we will **give**.
 - (a) When we already know that God is **seeking** their **love**.
 - (b) We already see some of this in their **attitudes**. (vs. 14-15)
 - (c) And we don’t want to **foster** this in ourselves.
 - i. Especially when we know that this promised reward is not for all **times** and **places**.
 1. We do have the promise of **provision** as we seek first the kingdom. (Mt. 6:31-33)
 2. But, this provision may not come through **prosperity**. (II Cor. 8:14)
 - (2) Their **giving** is supposed to be an expression of their love, not the **price** for his blessings.
 - (a) This promise of God must be understood within its **biblical** and **historical** context.
 - (b) It is then that we see that God’s concern here goes **deeper** than the **tithe**.

- c) The first part of that deeper look into the context is to recognize that the tithe was for the **care** of his **house** and its attendants. (vs. 10, Num. 18:21-22)
 - i) God's concern for the **tithe** is primarily a concern for his **house**.
 - (1) And secondarily a concern for the **concern of** his people for his house.
 - (2) God's house was his **tangible** place among them.
 - (a) As they attended to **it**, they attended to **him**.
 - (3) We see a similar concern for these people a few years earlier through **Haggai**. (Hag. 1:1-11)
 - (a) The rebuilding of his house could not be **second** to theirs.
 - ii) Their ongoing issue, then, was a lack of concern for the **house of God**.
 - d) The second part of that deeper look into the context is to recall that the **house** of the LORD was always to be at the **center** of their community.
 - i) **Spatially** at first. (Num. 2)
 - ii) **Culturally** always. (**Deut. 12:1-14**)
 - iii) The house of God was to be at the center of their **culture** because their **love** for God and one another was to be at the center of their lives.
 - iv) The **problem** God is identifying here is that it **isn't**.
- 5) But, is this really any different **today**?
 - a) The church is the **temple** of God, the place where his **Spirit** resides. (**I Cor. 3:16**)
 - b)** The church is the **body** of Christ, where we **each** play an important role. (**Rom. 12:3-13**)
 - c)** The church is the **family** of God, where joy and fellowship and **love** abound. (**Acts 2:42-47**)
 - d) The church is the mechanism through which the manifold **wisdom** of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the **heavenly** places. (**Eph. 3:8-12**)
- 6) Stated simply, if you **love** God you are **devoted** to the church.
 - a) While this involves our **giving**, it is much more than that.
 - i) It includes our **time**, our attention, our **prayers**, our labors.
 - b) The church, the place where he has placed his name, is to be at the **center** of our lives and culture.
- 7) Here is the Challenging Question: **Is it?**