Malachi – Reconnect with God's Holy Justice

We are quick to demand justice today. Actors are condemned for actions and comments that they made decades ago. Scholars are disinvited to a public lecture because some tenuous evidences have been unearthed about the scholar's supposedly support for bigoted causes. Christian churches are criticised for allegedly not making the effort to end all forms of social injustices in our world or they are being criticised for perpetuating the cycle of these injustices.

Where is God in all of this? Isn't the God of the Bible a God of justice? Why does he allow these injustices to go unpunished? The people of God during Malachi's days asked YHWH the same things. They compare their own circumstances with those around them who do not worship and follow YHWH. Their nation is in tatters while the other nations are seemingly thriving. Where is YHWH? Let's turn to Malachi and see how YHWH answers.

Launch

1) Imagine if you are put on trial for everything you have done wrong in your life. How would you feel? Why do you think you will feel like that?

YHWH's Incoming Justice

Read Malachi 2:17 – 3:5

2) How have the Israelites weary YHWH? (2v17)

    a. What does it imply about the Israelites by YHWH using the word "wearied"?

    b. Compare you own mindset in your everyday life and the Israelites in those days. In what ways are they similar or different?

3) What does YHWH say that he will do? (3v1)

4) What does the coming of the messenger of YHWH signify? (v2)

5) What else does YHWH say he will do? (v3-5)

6) What does that imply about the current spiritual state of the Israelites? (v4)

    a. How did you feel when you read this passage about YHWH's coming judgement?

Read Mark 1:1-4

7) According to Mark, who is the messenger in Mal 3:1? Who is "the Lord that [the Israelites] are seeking in Mal 3:1 according to Mark?

8) How did the messenger prepare the way for the Lord? (v4)

9) Read Mal 3:2-5 again. What is the significance of the coming of Jesus?

10) What are we called do to with the coming of Jesus and the kingdom of God? (cf. Mark 1:14-15)

11) How does YHWH respond to cries of injustice by his people in the person of Jesus?

12) Given what Jesus has done for us, how should we feel or think about God's coming judgement?

How does God think about justice? Not in the same way as us human beings. We are prone to quick condemnations and judgement towards others who have seemingly hurt or harmed us. On the other hand, we are also quick to forgive those whom we "like", without weighing carefully about the gravity of the situation or sins committed. YHWH does not fall into either trap, and that has brought about derision from his own people (Mal 2:17), claiming that those who do evil are seemingly prosperous, and those who are faithful followers of YHWH are in dire straits.

YHWH responds by promising to send a messenger that will prepare the way of his coming, which will bring judgement. In Mark 1:1-4, we read that this messenger is John the Baptist, and YHWH himself comes in the person of Jesus Christ. We read in the rest of the Bible that YHWH's judgement fell upon Christ, so that those who trust in Christ have been forgiven. However, there is a future judgement to come for those who do not trust in Christ (cf 1 Cor 15). Justice then will come, but in an unexpected way – first upon Jesus Christ, and then upon the world when he comes again.