Series: The Blessed Life

October 20, 2019

Message 2:

**What Test?**

Malachi 3:6-12

**Intro:** Did you ever walk into a classroom when you were in school … and the teacher comes in and says, “Are you ready?”

“Ready for what?”

The test! “What Test?”

Often followers of Jesus don’t know that God gives us a test every few weeks – Some say, “More often than that!!”

Some people get paid weekly. Some get paid every other week or twice a month. Some get paid monthly.

Every time we get paid, we take a test. Here’s the test:

Whom are we going to thank for our income?

Last week: It’s All About the Heart – We need to deal with our selfish grieving hearts and develop generous, grateful hearts –

Guest: This series of teachings does deal with money - we are not out to get your money - you notice we don’t even take an offering – But, we all deal with money every day – so we should see what the Bible says about it. Just listen to the teaching, see what you can learn from it - apply it to your personal life – we’ll be on another subject after this good series!

**Big Idea: Whom do we thank for our income?**

Who are we going to worship and honor for what we receive?

A lot of people thank VISA or MasterCard for their provision and income – it’s the first person they thank by sending money to once they get paid.

So, God gives us a test – but here’s the amazing thing about this test: It’s the only place in the Bible that says you can actually test God in this area.

Malachi 3:6 - I the LORD do not change.

He can’t change because He’s perfect. If He could change then that would mean He could get better. And He can’t get better because He’s already the best! So, God can’t change.

What He’s about to say, He doesn’t change – He can’t change –

Malachi 3:6 - I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

The fact that God does not change is also the reason why Israel wasn’t blown off the face of the earth and why we have not been blown off the face of the earth! He was nice and He’s still nice!

Malachi 3:7 - Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them.

KJV – “Ordinance” – from the word ordinary – means “a principle of ordinary behavior” – Ordinance is ordinary – an ordinary principle that people would follow –

God says, “You’ve gone away from my ordinary principles and have not kept them.”

Malachi 3:7 - Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty.

He repeats that last phrase over and over again because He wants us to know that it is the Lord that is saying this …

Malachi 3:7 - …“But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’

They ask – God answers – God gives the answer – not a man – not a preacher –

Malachi 3:8-12 - “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’

“In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.

Not “I’m going to curse you!” – You have chosen to be under a curse, because you have gone away from my ordinary principle of behavior.

This is a test – “Test me!” says God! And see if I will not give you blessings upon blessings!

This is amazing! Malachi is a book about us returning to God and God returning to us.

Ch. 1 is about returning to God in our Faith

Ch. 2 is about returning to God in our Family

Ch. 3 is about returning to God in our Finances

Ch. 4 is God returning to us.

I’m a pastor – I’m wanting to teach this is because I know it will help you! This message from God will change your life! The reason there is such a resistance to this is because the devil doesn’t want you to be blessed! The devil wants you to be cursed! He is going to do everything he can and throw every argument at you that he can.

We try to help people and we get all kinds of arguments against this. Pastor Robert Morris says he asked God, “Why didn’t you just wait a few verses and put this in Matthew? Everyone says, ‘That’s OT – God, you only missed it by 15 verses!”

God put this right where He wanted it – because it is a TEST!!

There is an Old Covenant and a New Covenant – There is an OT & a NT – but there is not an old God and a new God. There is not a reformed God … mean God … nice God …. God can’t change!

> Tithing is a Test

Tithe means tenth – a tenth part – ten percent –

The number 10 represents testing all through the Bible – when you see the number ten there is a test involved –

* How many plagues were there in Egypt?

In other words - How many times did God test Pharoah’s heart?

* How many commandments are there?

This next ones you might not know right off the bat, but there is a pattern developing here, so that might give away the answer:

* How many times did God test Israel in the wilderness?
* How many times were Jacob’s wages changed?
* How many days was Daniel tested?
* How many bridesmaids were tested in Matthew 25?
* How many days of testing are mentioned in Revelation?
* How many disciples were there?

12! I was just testing you!

So God developed tithing to test us! And when it comes to our finances this is a bigger test than anything else He could have developed. But He knew what He was doing. And every few weeks we get to take the test!

At this point in my life this is no longer a test! I’ve seen the results so many times, I don’t question it anymore!

I am tested! In other areas … in other ways … trust me! But this is no longer a test for me!

The Bible says if I tithe I’m blessed – if I don’t tithe, I’m cursed. Tough decision!

Some say - “I can’t be cursed because I’m a believer – and Jesus bore the curse on the cross so I can never be under a curse!” So – in other words – because Jesus bore our curse on the cross, we can now live any way we want to and not suffer any consequences for it!

Did Jesus bear sin on the cross? – yes -

Have you ever sinned since you became a believer? How can you sin if Jesus bore your sin?

He also bore our sicknesses – Matthew 8:17 – As a believer, have you ever been sick?

As a believer, He bore the curse – does that mean no matter what we do, no matter how we live, no matter how we sin, we will never come under a curse? No – If you fail to tithe you are refusing God’s provision to get you out from under a curse!

Some say - “Tithing was a part of the law – I’m not under the law, I’m under grace, I don’t tithe.”

* Well then, I’m going to tell you some lies about ***volunteer*** – I can do that because I’m a believer – I’m under grace, not under law – not telling a lie is part of the law – I’m not under the law, I’m under grace, so I can lie.

**Volunteer** – give me your wallet – I’m going to keep volunteer’s wallet, because the command not to steal is under the law … As a believer, that doesn’t apply to me … no consequences …

That argument makes no sense – that’s got to be one of the worst arguments anyone has ever come up with! Because something was wrong under the law does that make it right under grace? Murder …

The law revealed the character of God!

Matthew 5:17 - “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them…”

Was Malachi one of the prophets? Did Jesus come to abolish Malachi’s words?

Matthew 5:18 - I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Now – here comes some scary stuff:

Matthew 5:19-20 - Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

I’m teaching this – not with fear, but with joy, hope, faith and love – because if you believe this you will be blessed – delivered from a curse – if you don’t believe and don’t do this … scary … This is just the Bible!

He told His followers that they had to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the LAW in order to get to heaven –

What did the teachers of the LAW teach … and live by?

**The righteousness of grace always exceeds the righteousness of the law.**

Matthew 5:21-22 – You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Jesus is grace – full of grace –

The law says don’t murder – grace says don’t be angry! Grace requires more than the law!

Matthew 5:27-28 - You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Law vs. Grace – The law says don’t do it – grace says don’t think about it!

When someone says, “I don’t tithe because I’m not under law but under grace!” – That’s fantastic – that means apparently they give more than 10%!! Because grace always exceeds the law.

> Tithing is Biblical

Genesis 14:18-20 - Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Melchizedek … bread and wine …

500 years before the law! Tithing pre-dates the Law!

Next week you’ll see tithing 2500 years before the Law!

Genesis 28:22 – and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.” (Jacob)

Notice – “God’s House”

400 years before the Law –

There is No Law that all of the tithe belongs to God, yet these guys are already doing it.

Leviticus 27:30 – A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

This is why God said in Malachi that they were robbing Him, because here He says it belongs to Him!

Deuteronomy 26:1-2 - When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name.

It’s to be taken to the place where the Lord’s name is –

Deuteronomy 26:13-14 - Then say to the LORD your God: “I have removed from my house the sacred portion [holy tithe] and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. I have not eaten any of the sacred portion while I was in mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor have I offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me.

He doesn’t give it to anyone else – He doesn’t keep it when he’s going through a hard time!

How do you do this? Faith. Obedience.

This is a prayer the person prays when he brings his tithe – I have taken the holy tithe out of my house and I’ve brought it your house, God!

Deuteronomy 26:15 – Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people…

I have not used your tithe for any other purpose! It doesn’t belong to me! It belongs to you! I’ve brought it to you and not kept it for myself!

Matthew 23 –

OT or NT? Red-letter Bible? What color?

If Jesus said to you that you ought to tithe, would you do it?

Matthew 23:23 - Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Jesus didn’t change the law – He affirmed it – and made sure that He also told them to not leave the others undone … Just because we practice justice, mercy & faithfulness does that mean we don’t have to obey His other commands?

Any way you want to dissect this Scripture, Jesus is saying do it all!

If there were no other verse in the Bible, this would be enough! The One who died on the cross for me, saved me from my sins, delivered me from my sins, He said I ought to do it! This is not the teaching of man – this is the Word of the One who loves you more than any other!

Hebrews 7:1-3 – This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Who is this person? Jesus! He showed up many times in the OT!

“Like the Son of God” means in the image of the Son of God –

What did He bring? Bread and wine – served Abraham –

If it’s not Jesus – it’s a pattern of Jesus who is to come – at the very least.

Hebrews 7:4-8 - Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.

This is awesome! I put my tithe in the box – or give it online … men may take it out … But He receives it – of Whom it is said, “He is living!”

Jesus receives my tithes! That’s exciting!

Tithing is clearly Biblical.

> Tithing is a Benefit

2nd Chronicles 31:4 - He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

Hezekiah was king – He realized the nation was under a curse – realized the people were not giving support to the house of God so that the priests could not devote themselves to the word of God. So Hezekiah puts out the command for them to do that. “If you tithe, the priests are going to be able to devote themselves to the Word of God.”

Remember Malachi – “…that there may be food in my house…”

Do you receive any benefit from New Life Church? Do you receive any blessings from this place? The worship? The small groups? The messages?

Someone is paying for it! Someone is contributing the tithe so that the priests can devote themselves to the word of God. I wonder when people say, “I’m just not getting fed.” Are those people tithing? Without the tithe there is going to be a lack of spiritual food!

We have a lot of people who tithe – they are providing spiritual food –

How many of you would go to a restaurant, eat a good meal and leave without paying?

There are those who do that when they come to church. They come, they eat a good meal, then skip out on the check. Others are tithing, so there is still food in the house, but people who fail to obey choose to be under a curse!

Testimonies are clear – Tithers always say, “I am so blessed! God has blessed my family!”

Non-tithers testify this way, “I can’t afford to tithe.”

Tithers – “Blessed” – non-tithers – “I can’t afford it.” Is there a connection here?

There are people who downsize in order to stop robbing God – and then God blesses them and they end up up-sizing more than they had before! Some need to downsize and examine your budget so you can be blessed – come out from under the curse –

We have people who can help – but if you say you can’t afford to tithe, you never will be able to – Marriage, kids … it’s a matter of faith … You can’t afford not to!

Once you obey, God will take care of the blessing –

2nd Chronicles 31:5-10 - As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps. They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the LORD and blessed his people Israel.

Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps;
and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, “Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over.”

Hezekiah has seen all the people have given and wonders, “Are they OK? Look at all they have given, are they OK?”

Priests respond: “As soon as they started tithing, God so blessed them, this is only 10% of what they have given! The people are doing great since they started doing this!”

(ILL) Get three guys to stand in a line … I’m going to go away for a while. While I’m gone I’m going to send you some money and want you to channel some of the money to my wife. I’m going to send you each $10,000 (just an illustration) – give my wife $1000 per month. You keep 90% - I just need 10%.

After a few months I talk to Sharon –

1 – sending $1000 every month (keeping $9000)

2 – is sending $2000 every month (keeping $8000)

3 – 1st month $700 – then $400 – so far this month, nothing.

This is my wife – I’m giving the money! He can keep 90%! I’m just giving him 10!

Do you think I’m going to provide for him anymore? I can’t trust him! He’s stealing from me!

I’m going to take his $10,000 and giving it to no. 2.

These three guys are telling me how much they love me, how trustworthy they are and how much they love my wife!

Jesus said, “I’m going away for a while. While I’m gone, I want you to take care of my wife … the Church, the Bride …”

This is very personal to Jesus – it is very personal when you don’t love His wife. He takes this personally. This is about supporting His wife. Every time you get paid you are telling Jesus what you think of Him – how much you love Him – how much you love His wife.

This is a test! The great things – if you pass the test – you are blessed! If you fail it, you AND YOUR FAMILY are under a curse –

The Good News – God doesn’t want any of us under the curse so He has shown us the way out!

**Invitation -** first, you need to give your life - without that, none of this works - the money is meaningless …

**Blessing -**