

Malachi

Compact Bible

Studies

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Written by: Malachi (Hebrew 'my messenger'.) Author is introduced by name in v1:1. Suggestion that Malachi's ministry was meant to foreshadow that of John the Baptist.

Written for: The Jews in Jerusalem at the time. This book also acts as a gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament and so is a pointer towards Jesus and relevant for us to hear today.

Date: Mid-5th Century BC Malachi is likely to have been a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah – this is because he makes references to the temple (1:10) which therefore had to have been reconstructed.

Big Themes:

There is a significant **parallel** in Malachi between the **sins committed by Israel** and **reproved by Ezra and Nehemiah**;

- Corruption of the Priesthood (Neh 13:4-9, Mal 1:6-2:9)
- Marriage to Idolaters (Neh 10:30, 13:1-3, Mal 2:10-12)
- Abuse of the disadvantaged (Neh 5:1-13, Mal 3:5)
- Failure to Tithe (Neh 10:32-39, Mal 3:8-10)

A big theme of Malachi is **a call to wake up to lukewarm faith and repent**, like John the Baptist. There is a tension between what Israel want the new Jerusalem to be like (and what God promised a restored Jerusalem would look like) and the sin of the Israelites which is causing corruption and injustice in the 'new' Jerusalem.

Another big theme of Malachi is **God's love**. God still loves his disobedient people which is why their sin is so bad. He still loves them and wants a relationship with them – he has not rejected them, but they, through their actions, thoughts and words are denying the relationship God wants to have with them and that they can have with God.

Even in the midst of their sin, **God promises through Malachi a 'new Elijah' 4:5-6 and the 'Sun of righteousness' 4:2** who will come and restore the broken relationship between God and man, who will 'refine' the faithful few, and who will judge the unrepentant. This is both a warning and a joy for us – a joy for those of us who are struggling to not sin, but have faith in Jesus, and a warning to those whose actions show their true attitude towards God and have unrepentant hearts.

Background to Malachi:

Malachi was written in a time of spiritual disillusionment. The temple had been rebuilt, but it didn't seem like all the promises related to this had come true. Where were the crowds flocking to it had been promised? (Zech 8:20-23). Why was it less good than it was before? Why were God's people so depleted and not returning to the temple (Zech 8:7-8)? Instead of wealth, blessing and renown, God's people were feeling tired, depleted and still under Persian domination.

The people felt that God had not kept his promises, and he had abandoned them. They were questioning the justice of God and his ability to keep his promises. But, instead of considering their own disobedience or sin, they abandoned him in response, trying to get wealth and blessing by themselves through corruption and exploitation. Malachi was sent to expose their sin, to call them to repent, and to remind them of God's justice, and the salvation and judgment to come.

Malachi theme sentence: Our actions show what we truly believe in.

Big Applications from Malachi:

- 1) What do our lives show about our faith? Do our actions, the intentions behind our actions and the way we live our lives show faith, lukewarm faith or no faith at all?
- 2) What do our lives show about our God? Do our actions tell other people we have a God worth trusting in, following in and believing in, or do they show a weak, feeble and irrelevant God?
- 3) In who/what are we trusting in for our salvation? Are we trusting in the Sun of Righteousness, who comes to refine the faithful through – save by grace and transform through the power of the Spirit, or are we trusting in the actions we do, which come from a place of trying to save ourselves not a faith and love for God.

Malachi Studies

Malachi 1:1-5

Are you good in a row?

What do you find offensive?

What do you think God finds offensive?

Do you ever doubt God's love for you?

Does anyone know anything about Malachi?

Malachi means 'my messenger' in Hebrew – some think it's a title and not a name!

Last book in the OT

Around the same time as Ezra Nehemiah

God's people have returned from exile.

The whole of Malachi is basically 6 big rows / arguments / disputes

Into the text:

- Why is V1 a massive statement? *These are the very words of God to his people.*
- Every passage starts with a statement and a question. What are they in v2? ***I have loved you. How have you loved us?***
- Is God's statement right? Can you think of any ways God has shown love for his people in all of salvation history up to now?
- Why is their response shocking? (2) If your girlfriend replied that after you told her you loved her how would you feel?
- How would you respond to them if you were God? *Probably listing all the amazing things he has done for them!*
- How does God respond? (2-3) *He uses the example of Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom), choosing by sovereign choice to love Jacob (his people Israel) and not Esau (who became the people of Edom).*
- What happens if Edom rebuild? (4)
- So what is God saying about how he has loved them? *He has chosen to.*

Application

- Why is it so wonderful that God has chosen to love us? Because we don't deserve it!
- How does the cross change who gets to be part of God's people? All who call upon the name of the lord will be saved!
- Read Ephesians 1.3-10 – why is this so good for us?
- How does this help us when we doubt whether God loves us or not?

Malachi 1:6 – 2:9

Do you ever do a job on behalf of someone else?

Are there any tasks you wouldn't do on someone else's behalf?

What's the role of a priest?

How much of our lives should we give to God?

Have you ever thrown poo at anyone?

Into the text- Ready for the next row?

- What is the statement and question? **Priests show contempt. How have we shown contempt for your name?**
- What is God saying in the first part of v6? *Where is my honour and respect?*
- Who is God's beef with v6? *Priests*
- What are the priests doing wrong v7? *Offer rubbish sacrifices*
- What are their offerings like v8? *Blind, Lame, Diseased* - Why is this a big deal? *Its not a sacrifice if its worthless!*
- How angry is God v9-13? *(10 helps)*
- What does God do in v14? *Curses the people, makes big claim*

- What's God's message for the priests in 2.1-2? *Curse* - How seriously is God taking this stuff? *VERY.*
- What does God say in v3? *Smear poo from their pathetic sacrifices in their faces!*
- And yet how is he faithful in v4? *Their warning is in line with God's covenant*

- What was Levi like v5-7? And what are they like in contrast v8-9?

Levi v5-6	Priests v8-9
Show reverence/awe of God v5	Priests show contempt 1v6
True instruction from mouth v.6 (Messenger of the Lord Almighty v7)	False teaching v8
Walked with the Lord (obedience) v6	Turned from the way v8, corrupt v9 (how were they corrupt v9?)
Turn many from sin (v6)	Caused many to stumble v8

- Who is Levi pointing us to? *Jesus.*
- What sort of Priests do God's people need? *Someone like Levi.*

Application

- What does all of this mean for us? Who is our high priest? Read Hebrews 1.3 and Hebrews 10.12 – so *our first application is thankfulness to Jesus! He is our perfect high priest who brings us before God and purifies us from our sin*
- Secondly though read Romans 12.1-2 –what should our sacrifice look like? *Wholehearted worship and obedience to God's Word.*

Malachi 2:10 - 16

What does it mean to be faithful?

How important is faithfulness in marriage?

How important do you think faithfulness is to God?

Are we always faithful to God?

Into the text:

- Can anyone spot the word faithful/unfaithful in the passage?
How many times? v10,11,14,15,16
- What do they have in common in v10? *One Father, One Creator*
- Who are they being unfaithful to in v10? *Each other*
- Who are they being unfaithful to in v11? *God - How? Worship a foreign God.*
- How serious is this foreign God stuff in v12? *Remove him. Very.*
- Why is it such a big deal? Check out Ezra 9.1-2 and Nehemiah 13.23-27. *To be Holy means to be set apart. Solomon's example says: "Marrying foreign women leads to foreign worship".*
- Why are they crying v13? *God no longer looks on them with favour or accepts their offerings.*
- Why is God turning them away v14? *Husbands have been divorcing their Jewish wives to marry foreign women and as marriage is a covenant with God, he is witness and is not okay with it!*
- What's the big thing God wants in v15? *Godly offspring*
- What does it mean to be godly? *Honouring to God's Word*
- What are they told to do twice in v15-16? *Be on your guard, Do not be unfaithful.*

Application

- So if God's people aren't to marry foreign women, practically who should we marry as Christians? *Christians!*
 - And even then do we still need to be on our guard? Are we still called to be faithful? Yes. Why? *God is our witness.*
 - What about foreign Gods- how are we guilty of worshipping them not Jesus? What does that look like when we do that?
 - How can we be faithful and on guard? *Know God's Word, and live it out in both our public and private lives.*
- How is Jesus the perfect example of all this? *He ultimately is the one who is faithful... even when we blow it in these areas. He loves and is committed to his people, so much so his Son gives himself up for his bride (the Church).*

Malachi 2:17 – 3:5

Are you patient? Is it easy to be patient with God?
Does it ever feel like its easier to not be a Christian?
Can it ever feel like evil people prosper in our world?
How can we trust God when it feels like that?

Into the text:

- What's the statement and question? (17) **Your words weary me, How have we wearied him?**
What have they been moaning about? (17) *They are questioning God's justice – asking why evil people not only prosper but seem to find favour in God's sight.*
- What's God's answer v1? *I will send a messenger*
- Anyone remember what Malachi meant? *Messenger, so this messenger can't be him, must be a different one.*
- What will be this messengers job? *Prepare the way for ME (God)*
- Who will show up next? *GOD.*
- What will the Lord do? Will it be comfortable? (2)
- What will this mean for their offerings v3 and 4? *They will be acceptable.*
- What's God going to do v5? *Judge the people.*
- What do all these people have in common? *They don't fear him.*
- How do you think this makes the people feel after their comment in 2.17? *They're probably terrified wishing they hadn't moaned for God to come because maybe they are the evil ones!*

Application

- Read Hebrews 4.16 – how is it that we can do this? Is it because we are perfect? What makes the difference? *It his grace!*
- So how should we wait for the day of his return? *Excited. Patiently and telling everyone we can about what Jesus has done.*
- How do you find chatting to your friends about the gospel? How might we share what God has taught us in this passage to our friends?
"You look at the world and think where is God in all the wickedness, why doesn't he stop it. People in Malachi's day had exactly the same question. He will one day stop it and judge everyone. That's wonderful news because the wicked ultimately won't get away with it. It's great news, but we're part of the problem, we're left with a question: are you sure which side of the judgement you'll fall on? Jesus has come to take the judgement, so you can receive mercy, and it's only be His grace"

Malachi 3:6 - 12

Does God change? Is that a good thing?

Into the text:

- v6 What's the incredible truth? *God does not change*
 - Is that a good thing for them? *Yes. God has always remained faithful to his promises, even though they have basically never been faithful to him. They have not been destroyed, but are not experiencing the blessings of obedience either.*
 - What's the Statement & question? **You need to return to me, How can we return to you?**
 - What do they need to do? *Return to God*
 - What are they accused of doing in v8? *Robbing God*
 - How are they doing that? *In tithes and offerings*
- So what's God's answer? (10) *God wants them to give properly. They are demonstrating a lack of faith in God to provide for their needs.*

What is this test God speaks of v10-12? *Test God on his covenant faithfulness (by making sure that the correct tithe is given) – and blessings will pour out, and the curses will stop.*

What do you think the connection is with returning to God and tithes? *When your heart is right (i.e. you've returned) then you'll give properly out of the right heart and desire to serve and worship God.*

Application

- What stops us giving God the offerings he deserves?
Building our heavens here;
Not understanding where our money comes from

If the use of our money shows us who/what are heart truly worships, then where our money is used, shows us what we really believe about God and eternity.

- Is the problem with our wealth or with our hearts? *Heart issue (Giving reflects where our heart is (Mt. 6:19-24))*
- Read Ephesians 1:3, how is this our version now of Malachi 3.10? *God, through Malachi is saying to test Him that he will pour out blessing, but in CHRIST we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.*
- How do we get these blessings? *IN CHRIST.* So we need to be faithful and thankful.

Malachi 3:13 – 4:6

Do you ever struggle to keep going as a Christian?

Do you ever wonder if its worth it?

Does it always feel like God listens to us?

Into the text:

- What is the statement & question? **You have spoken against me, How have we spoken against you?**
- What does God accuse them of v13? *Speaking against God.* What were they saying v14? *“What’s the point living for God, when people seem to be having a happy productive life without him. He doesn’t seem to be bothered when they ‘put him to the test’ and do evil, because they just get away with it.”*
- Why is v16 amazingly comforting? *God listens to all who fear him and has all the names of those who honour him.*
- What’s God going to do with those people v17-18? *He will spare them because he treasures them and God will show them the difference between those who serve God and those who do not*
- So what do they/what do we need to do? *WAIT*
- What will happen to those who do not trust in him, however good it seems now 4:1? *They will burn.*
- And to those who are faithful v2 & 3? *We will be free and dance on the ashes of the unfaithful.*

Conclusion: v4-6

- So what should they do now v4? *Remember and obey the Law of Moses*
- How does this apply to us? *Remember and know God's Word, wait patiently, and be faithful to God's Word.*
- Who is coming next? *Elijah, and the Lord (John the Baptist and Jesus).*
- For those who don't turn to Christ after he comes, what will happen next v6? *God will bring total destruction.*
- How is that comforting for us? *If we are in Christ, we are safe.*
- How does this conclusion teach us of the main points of whole book? *Remember the scripture, keep God's commands, be faithful to Him. He's coming again in Judgment (and we have already seen JtB and Jesus) and the days of the wicked will be over and God will have the final justice.*