

## BIBLE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI

### PART 1 - Malachi - My Messenger (1:1-2:16)

#### INTRODUCTION

1. With the aid of the prophetic ministries of Haggai and Zechariah...
  - a. The temple was rebuilt - [Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14-16](#)
  - b. What had begun in 536 B.C. was finally finished in 516 B.C.
2. In 458 B.C., another group of exiles returned to Jerusalem, led by Ezra...
  - a. A priest
  - b. His work was to teach the people the word of God - [Ezra 7:10](#)
3. About 444 B.C., a third group of exiles returned led by Nehemiah...
  - a. Who became governor
  - b. Under his leadership, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt ([Neh 1-6](#))
  - c. Together with Ezra, he led the people to a great revival ([Neh 7-13](#))
4. Contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah was another prophet, **Malachi**...
  - a. His name means "**My Messenger**"
    1. Certainly, Malachi was a messenger of God
    2. But he also spoke of God's messengers to come - [Mal 3:1](#)
  - b. Like Ezra the priest...
    1. Malachi attacked the spiritual and moral decay that was prevalent
    2. Among both priests and people
  - c. In so doing, he resorted to a new style of teaching
    1. Known as the **didactic-dialectic** method of speaking
    2. I.e., making a charge, raising potential objections, and then refuting them
    3. Which later became common in Jewish schools and synagogues

*[In this study, we shall consider several examples of this style of teaching as we survey the first two chapters. In these chapters we find Malachi addressing several problems...]*

#### I. THEY WERE DOUBTING GOD'S LOVE

**A. EVIDENTLY THEY WERE QUESTIONING GOD'S LOVE FOR THEM...**

1. After years of captivity, one might understand why they felt this way
2. Their return from Babylonian captivity was not without difficulty

**B. GOD REASSERTS HIS LOVE FOR ISRAEL...**

1. Note the didactic-dialectic style - [Mal 1:2](#)
  - a. "I have loved you"
  - b. "In what way have You loved us?"
  - c. "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated"
2. God is speaking of Jacob and Esau as the representative of their descendant nations; God did not hate Esau personally, but did hate what Edom as a nation had become
3. He goes on to illustrate what He means
  - a. Edom (the descendants of Esau) had become desolate; despite their claims to the country, it would remain desolate - [Mal 1:3-4](#)
  - b. But Israel would one day see the Lord magnified beyond its border - [Mal 1:5](#)

[If the people only observed how Israel was being restored while Edom remained desolate, they would know God still loved them as a nation.

But perhaps their doubting of God's love had led to another problem that was prevalent at that time...]

**II. THEY WERE DISHONORING GOD'S NAME**

**A. BY OFFERING BLEMISHED SACRIFICES - [Mal 1:6-11](#)**

1. Sons honor their fathers, and servants their masters; but they were despising God
2. When asked in what way, they are told of their defiled sacrifices
3. They were offering to God what they would be embarrassed to offer men

4. The Lord would even wish that someone shut the doors so they could not sacrifice
5. Despite their dishonor, one day God's name would be great even among the Gentiles

**B. BY OFFERING HALF-HEARTED WORSHIP - [Mal 1:12-14](#)**

1. They also were profaning God's name by saying His service is contemptible and a weariness
2. Those who continued to bring blemished sacrifices would fall under God's curse, for He is "a great King"

**C. SUCH CORRUPTION WOULD NOT GO UNANSWERED - [Mal 2:1-9](#)**

1. Addressing the priests directly, the nature of God's curse is graphically depicted
2. Because they had failed to live up to what was expected of God's [As Malachi continues, we also learn...]

**III. THEY WERE PROFANING GOD'S COVENANT**

**A. BY MARRYING HEATHEN WOMEN - [Mal 2:10-12](#)**

1. They were dealing treacherously and profaning the covenant made with their fathers by marrying pagan women ("the daughter of a foreign God")
2. The nature of this problem is described in **Ezra 9-10**; [Neh 13:23-24](#)
3. Malachi prays that the Lord will cut off from Jacob those who do this - [Mal 2:12](#); cf. [Ezr 10:7-8](#); [Neh 13:23-28](#)

**B. BY DIVORCING THEIR JEWISH WIVES - [Mal 2:13-16](#)**

1. Despite their weeping, God was no longer regarding their sacrifices - cf. [1Pe 3:7](#)
2. For they had dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth (i.e., Jewish wives) by divorcing them
  - a. Even though they had entered into a covenant (e.g., "Till death do us part")
  - b. Even though God had made them one (cf. [Gen 2:24](#))
3. Therefore, God hates divorce - [Mal 2:16](#)

- a. For it covers one's garment with violence (e.g., against the wife and children)
- b. It is treacherous to deal with one's spouse in that way!

### **CONCLUSION (Chapter 1:1 -2:16)**

1. Israel was showing signs of spiritual and moral decay...
  - a. Failing to appreciate God's love for them
  - b. Dishonoring God by offering second-best and half-hearted worship
  - c. Profaning God's covenant by disregarding it and their wives
2. It is easy for Christians to make application with such verses...
  - a. As spiritual priests we are to offer spiritual sacrifices ([1 Pe 2:9](#); [Ro 12:1-2](#))
  - b. Is our service honoring God? Or do we:
    1. Dishonor God by offering less than our best and with half-hearted service?
    2. Profane God's covenant by disregarding the covenant we made with Him and our wives when we married them?
    3. Hinder our worship to God by our treatment of our wives?
  - c. Are we any better than the priests of Malachi's day?

***NOTE:** Let the book of Malachi be a guide as to when one's religion is showing signs of spiritual and moral decay! Certainly God is worthy of our best, and we should do what we can to make sure these words prove true:*

**For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,  
My name shall be great among the Gentiles;  
In every place incense shall be offered to My name,  
And a pure offering;  
For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.  
([Malachi 1:11](#))**

### **PART II**

#### **Malachi - My Messenger (2:17-4:6)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. In our previous lesson we introduced the last of **"The Minor Prophets"**...
  - a. **Malachi**, whose name means **"My Messenger"**

- b. A prophet of God during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (ca. 444 B.C.)
  - c. A prophet who like Ezra the priest...
    - 1. Attacked the spiritual and moral decay at that time
    - 2. Especially among the priests
  - d. A prophet who used the didactic-dialectic style of teaching
    - 1. Making a charge, raising potential objections, and then refuting them
    - 2. Which later became common in Jewish schools and synagogues
2. We have already seen how Malachi addressed three problems affecting Israel at that time...
- a. They were doubting God's love - [Mal 1:1-5](#)
  - b. They were dishonoring God's name - [Mal 1:6-2:9](#)
    - 1. By offering blemished sacrifices
    - 2. By offering half-hearted worship
  - c. They were profaning God's covenant - [Mal 2:10-16](#)
    - 1. By marrying heathen women
    - 2. By divorcing their Jewish wives
3. In the last section of the book of Malachi, we find...
- a. More indications of their spiritual and moral decay
  - b. Promises concerning the coming Messiah!

[We begin with the last verse of the second chapter, noting how...]

## I. THEY WERE TRYING GOD'S PATIENCE

### A. BY QUESTIONING THE JUSTICE OF GOD - [Mal 2:17](#)

- 1. They had wearied God with their words
- 2. Especially regarding His justice:
  - a. For they said that those who do evil is good in God's sight, that He even delights in them

- b. For they asked, "Where is the God of justice?"
- B. THE LORD'S RESPONSE WILL BE TO SEND HIS MESSENGER - [Mal 3:1-5](#)**
- 1. First, the "messenger" who will prepare His way for Him - [Mal 3:1a](#)
    - a. A clear reference to John the Baptist
    - b. Compare [Isa 40:3](#); [Mt 3:1-3](#); [11:7-10](#)
  - 2. Then will appear the "Messenger of the covenant" - [Mal 3:1b](#)
    - a. Here the reference is to Christ, the Messiah for which they had longed
    - b. Who certainly came to His temple - [Mt 21:12ff](#)
    - c. And was a messenger of a new covenant - [Mt 26:26-28](#)
  - 3. His coming will be one to purge His people - [Mal 3:2-5](#)
    - a. Like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap
    - b. The sons of Levi (i.e., priests) especially, that their offerings may be acceptable
    - c. He will come near to judge those who do not fear the Lord - cf. [Mt 3:11-12](#)

[With the coming of the "Messenger of the covenant", they would have their answer to the question "Where is the God of justice?"

As we continue, we see yet another complaint God had against the Israelites in Malachi's day...]

## II. THEY WERE FORSAKING GOD'S ORDINANCES

### A. GOD CHARGES THEM WITH INCONSISTENCY - [Mal 3:6-7](#)

- 1. Unlike God Himself, whose unchanging nature has kept Him from totally consuming Israel! - [Mal 3:6](#)
- 2. Yet their history showed a practice of apostasy - [Mal 3:7a](#)

3. Even when called to return, they ask "In what way shall we return?" - [Mal 3:7b](#)
4. No answer is given directly
  - a. Perhaps because the answer is so obvious it does not deserve a response
  - b. Or the answer is given by the example which follows...

**B. THEIR TITHES AS A CASE IN POINT - [Mal 3:8-12](#)**

1. They had robbed God by their failure to offer their tithes - [Mal 3:8](#)
2. For this reason, the whole nation had been accursed - [Mal 3:9](#)
3. They are challenged to bring the tithes, and to see the blessings that would follow - [Mal 3:10-12](#)

[The sixth and final complaint that God had against them is now presented...]

**III. THEY WERE DESPISING GOD'S SERVICE**

**A. BY SAYING IT WAS VAIN TO SERVE GOD - [Mal 3:13-15](#)**

1. Their words were harsh against God - [Mal 3:13](#)
2. Questioning what profit there was in keeping His ordinances - [Mal 3:14](#)
3. Calling the proud blessed, saying the wicked are raised up, and those who tempt God go free - [Mal 3:15](#)

**B. YET SOME BEGAN TO HEED MALACHI'S MESSAGE - [Mal 3:16-4:6](#)**

1. Those who feared the Lord, as they spoke to one another - [Mal 3:16a](#)
2. Whom the Lord noticed, and a "book of remembrance" was written - [Mal 3:16b](#)
3. Whom the Lord promised to make His "jewels" and spare them - [Mal 3:17](#)
  - a. It will be easy to discern the righteous - [Mal 3:18](#)

- b. For the day was coming when the wicked will be burned like stubble - [Mal 4:1](#)
  - c. But those who fear His name will be blessed by "the Sun of Righteousness" (i.e., Jesus) - [Mal 4:2-3](#)
4. Until then...
- a. The faithful are exhorted to heed the Law of Moses - [Mal 4:4](#)
  - b. And await the coming of "Elijah the prophet" (i.e., John the Baptist) who will come to prepare people for the coming of the Lord - [Mal 4:5-6](#); cf. [Lk 1:16-17](#)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. As with most prophets, Malachi had a message for both the present and the future...
  - a. Exhorting the people to look at themselves, how they were guilty of:
    1. Doubting God's love
    2. Dishonoring God's name
    3. Profaning God's covenant
    4. Trying God's patience
    5. Forsaking God's ordinances
    6. Despising God's service

-- **NOTE:** These points were adapted from Wiersbe's "Be Amazed" commentary

- b. Encouraging the people to look forward to the coming of:
  1. God's Messenger (John), who would come in the spirit of Elijah and prepare people for the coming of the Lord
  2. The Messenger of the covenant (Jesus), who come to refine and purify those willing to repent, and bring judgment on those who do not fear the Lord

2. It is encouraging to note that some evidently took Malachi's message to heart - [Mal 3:16-18](#)
  - a. Whom the Lord would claim as His
  - b. Whom the Lord would make His "jewels"
  - c. Whom the Lord would spare as a man spares His own son who serves him

As we come to the close of this survey of "**The Minor Prophets**", perhaps it is appropriate to ask: Are we willing to take the prophets' messages to heart?

\* **They were written for our learning and admonition** - cf. [Ro 15:4](#); [1Co 10:11](#)

\* **They help make us wise for the salvation which by faith in Christ** - cf. [2Ti 3:14-15](#)

\* **They are certainly profitable for instruction in righteousness** - cf. [2Ti 3:16-17](#)