

Malachi

MIKE ACKERMAN • 6 SESSIONS

**NEXT
LEVEL**  **ONLINE**

OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Malachi Session 1
Malachi 1.1-5

Overview of Malachi

The word Malachi means “my messenger,” which leads some scholars to wonder if Malachi is the name of a specific individual or a sort of nickname for someone, perhaps even Ezra, who is giving this specific message from God.

We think this book would have been written very late in the Old Testament period after the people of Israel had returned to the land from their captivity in Babylon.

Once the people had settled back in the land, rebuilt the temple, and gotten on with “normal” life again, unfortunately they very quickly strayed from some key elements of God’s instructions for them. This book is God’s message of correction and promise to call them back to faithfulness.

The format of the material largely takes the form of a back-and-forth discussion with God and his people (dialectic).

Malachi 1.1-5

The first passage of the book sets the stage for the specific God will make in correcting his people. It is grounded in the love God has for them. While he will say some strong things against them, he first reminds them of the faithfulness he has demonstrated to them. It is a message of “tough love” that he has for them, but love nonetheless.

While it is striking at first to hear God say, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated,” it is a way of illustrating that God’s relationship with his people has always been based on his grace, not their goodness. He will continue to have that as the foundation of his relationship with them/us.

It is in grateful response to God’s mercy and love that we live obedient lives.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. How does it change how you hear a strong word of correction from someone if you know they love you?
2. What are ways God has shown his love and faithfulness to his people through the Bible?
3. What are ways God has shown his love in your life?
4. How does pondering the love prompt you to respond in your current situation in life?

Malachi Session 2
Malachi 1.6-14

God as Father and Master

God's specific corrections of his people begin in this section.

To frame up what he will say against them, he uses the concept of a father and master to refer to himself and a son and servant to refer to his people.

There are certain ways that a good son and servant respond to their father and master. But God says that his people are not acting the way a good son or servant would when considering the worthiness and kindness of God.

The Specific Issue

The concrete issue at hand is that the people are not giving appropriate sacrifices in the temple. Rather than giving him healthy, valuable animals, they are giving him diseased and wounded animals.

In giving these poor-quality sacrifices, the people are going against the commands of God. But the core principle is that they are not giving God their best as a sincere expression of devotion to him.

This can help us consider how we may not be giving God the best of our devotion and prompt us to consider how we might do so.

Hebrews 13:15-16 gives us a helpful framework to consider:

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

God has given us his best in Christ. Let us give him our best in grateful response.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. List off as many things as you can that God has given you.
2. What would it look like for you to give him your highest quality "sacrifice of praise"?
3. What would it look like to "sacrifice" through doing good and sharing with others?

Malachi Session 3

Malachi 2.1-9

Failed Leadership

This section addresses a specific group of leaders among the people of Israel: the priests.

Rather than leading the way in proper devotion to God, they have caused others to stumble and disregard the Word of God. Rather than being stewards of justice, they had shown partiality in how they led.

This reminds us that when leaders fail, people get hurt.

Each of us has someone who looks to us for guidance. Perhaps it is the workplace, in the home, in the community, or in the church. Let our leadership be a source of good, not harm.

New Priesthood

Eventually, the specific priesthood mentioned in Malachi 2.1-9 would run its course. Jesus, the ultimate high priest, would fulfill the sacrificial system and atone for sin once and for all. In fact, some of the most influential priests would be instrumental in getting Jesus killed.

So now Jesus, our perfect high priest, has enabled us to be a new priesthood, serving him in the world.

1 Peter 2:9 - But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Let our service as priests help, not hurt, the cause of Christ in the world.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. Who is in your life for whom you bear some responsibility to guide and teach?
2. How does it shape your self-understanding to think of yourself as a "royal priest"?
3. What are ways that God might be calling you to greater faithfulness as his representative in the world?

Malachi Session 4
Malachi 2.10-16

Love for People as an Expression of Love for God

As a Father to his people, God considers how we treat people as a way of showing our attitude toward him. Throughout Scripture, harm to a person is considered a sin against the God who made and loves them.

In this section, the most intimate of human relationships, marriage, is used to illustrate this. After coming back from Babylon, some of the men left their wives to marry new women back in their homeland. But these women didn't even believe in God. So the men were neglecting their commitment to their wives AND letting their own hearts be at risk of being led away from belief in God.

Whether we are single, married, widowed, or have been divorced, let our relationships be a realm where our devotion to God is concretely expressed.

Also, let us consider how our relationships are helping or hurting our own devotion to God.

Jesus the Faithful Son

In this passage, God says that he desires godly offspring. Jesus is the perfect Son of God that shows us what God has in mind.

Jesus is God's concrete expression of love for us, the perfect model for how we should love each other. In John 13:34, Jesus said, *"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. How does it make you feel when someone treats someone you love poorly?
2. List key relationships in your life. What does faithfulness in each of them look like?
3. What are specific ways you can love as Jesus has loved more fully?

Malachi Session 5
Malachi 2.17-3.15

God on Trial

In this section, the people of God are said to be considering whether obedience to God is worth it or not. Admittedly there are times when following God's commands takes more effort than giving in to our own desires.

In the time of Malachi, the people of God were questioning whether all this effort makes any difference, but really they were scrutinizing the fairness of God. In their actions, they were showing they considered him unfair. This took on the form of withholding their tithes.

The temptation for the people of Israel to not tithe is the same as any time we choose to go with our own idea of what is good or bad instead of trusting God's Word. They could assume that giving away 10% of all their wealth would result in less security for themselves. But God says that obedience to him will always go better for us in the end.

Jesus' use of the vine concept in John 15 is a way of illustrating how belief in him is ultimately more fruitful than unbelief.

Ultimately belief in God takes tangible form in obedience to God.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. What are some ways that obedience is more difficult than disobedience to God's Word?
2. Have you ever wondered if obedience was worth all the hassle?
3. Have you ever struggled with the idea of whether God is fair or not?
4. What are some ways you could demonstrate greater trust through obedience in this season of life?

Malachi Session 6
Malachi 3.16-4.6

Eventually it will be clear that a life of trust in God and obedience to him has been worth the effort.

Consistently in Scripture, and very directly in this passage, fearing God is talked about as a positive thing. It is the kind of appropriate reverence a child has for their father. And the Father will remember those who are his children when he judges in the end.

In this section, a future age is described as the dawn of a new day. We now understand that this new era has begun. The “Elijah” that would come is John the Baptist. And after him came Jesus to usher in the new covenant.

While there is much that is new about the new covenant, in certain ways it calls us back to the original intentions of God for his people written long ago. To those who remember God’s law and turn back to the wisdom of their fathers, God will remember them.

We can patiently wait for the finalization of God’s plan when Jesus comes back. This is not passivity, but patient, hope-filled obedience. The return of Jesus is not something for us to dread, but something for us to be excited about.

The accent in this section, and every section of the Bible that alludes to the end of time, is on God’s people doing God’s work until he brings about his redemptive plan. We are not called to predict when that will happen or trouble ourselves with signs of its arrival. Rather, we are called to lovingly serve him and carry our mission as his representatives in the world.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

1. What are some ways that the new covenant in Christ differs from the old covenant?
2. What are some ways that the new covenant in Christ is the same as the old covenant?
3. What sort of feelings do you have when you consider the return of Christ?
4. How can you more fully express hope-filled obedience in light of the return of Christ?

This video was made possible with support from:

