



**HIGHER EXPECTATIONS**  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

**MEETING**  
**MALACHI**

# Introduction to Malachi

## Author and Date

The prophet Malachi (whose name means “my messenger”) probably lived at the same time as Ezra and Nehemiah, around 460 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

## Theme

Malachi’s fellow Israelites were guilty of corrupt worship and unethical behavior. He called the people to renewed covenant obedience.

## Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Malachi’s ministry took place nearly a hundred years after the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C., which ended the Babylonian captivity and allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:23). This was some 80 years after Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding of the temple. Those two earlier prophets had said that the rebuilding of the temple would result in peace, prosperity, the conversion of people from other nations, and the return of God’s glorious presence (see Haggai 2; Zech. 1:16–17; 2:1–13; 8:1–9:17). To the discouraged people of Malachi’s day, these predictions must have seemed a cruel mockery. In contrast to the glowing promises, they faced economic difficulties due to drought and crop failure (Mal. 3:11). They remained an insignificant territory, no longer an independent nation and no longer ruled by a Davidic king. Worst of all, despite the promise of God’s presence, they experienced only spiritual decline.

## The Setting of Malachi

c. 460 B.C.

Malachi likely prophesied several decades after the first Jewish exiles had returned from Babylon to Judea and had rebuilt the temple. Edomites had migrated northwest from their traditional homeland just south of Moab into the area immediately south of Judea, which was now called Idumea. The territory that once belonged to the northern kingdom of Israel had been divided into several minor provinces, including Samaria.

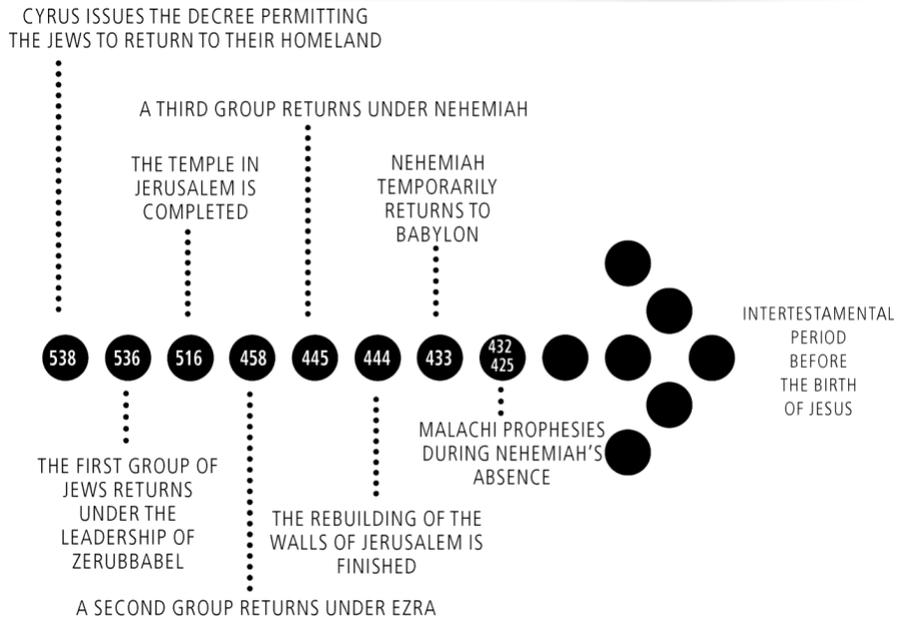
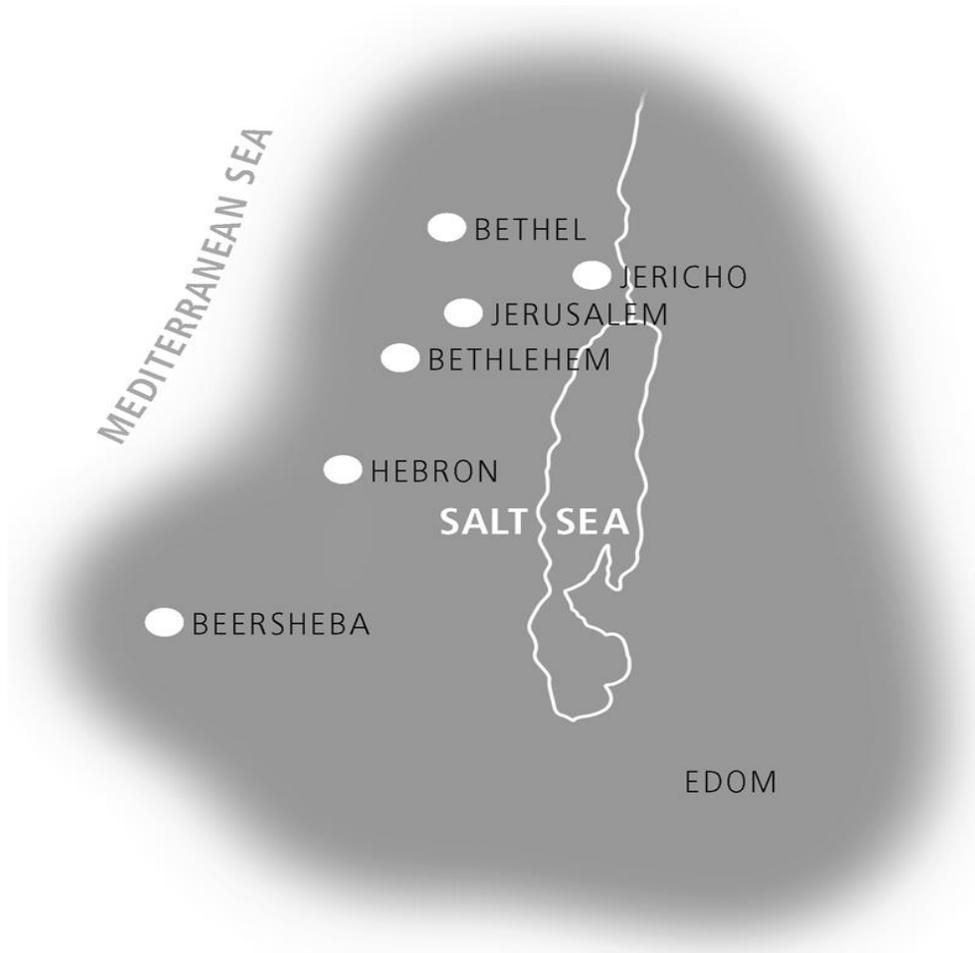
## Key Themes and Outline:

### Malachi’s Sixfold Wake-up Call to Renewed Covenant Obedience

The book of **Malachi** describes six disputations between God and Israel. There is a common pattern in each dispute: (1) God charges his people with bad behavior; (2) he then envisages the people’s response to the charge (“But you say”; 1:2, 6, 7, 13; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13); (3) God then replies to their presumed response and expands the charge. The chart below shows the subject of each dispute and God’s response to it.

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<sup>1</sup> ESV Malachi Introduction



<sup>2</sup> Opening Up Malachi, Ellsworth, Rogers (2007)



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## Malachi 1:1-5

### **Text:**

1 An oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. 2 "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you ask: "How have You loved us?" "Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother?" [This is] the Lord's declaration. "Even so, I loved Jacob, 3 but I hated Esau. I turned his mountains into a wasteland, and [gave] his inheritance to the desert jackals." 4 Though Edom says: "We have been devastated, but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of Hosts says this: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called a wicked country and the people the Lord has cursed forever. 5 Your own eyes will see this, and you will say: The Lord is great, [even] beyond the borders of Israel.

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means "My Messenger" or "Messenger". The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post-exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshipping God

### **Big Idea:**

God in these first few passages of the book was calling the people to see His unfailing love for them despite their failure and flawed worship, yet like all hard-hearted people (us included) they question God's love for them. This questioning of God sets up a dialogue with God that exposes their waywardness and unwillingness to repent and turn to God.

### **IBQ:**

Have you ever questioned someone's love, commitment, or faithfulness to you? How did you respond to that person and why?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does being loved by God impact how you love others?
2. Are there times when your love for God wanes and sizzles out as you pursue other things?
3. Everybody deserves hell, but God gives grace instead, do you agree or disagree with this statement and why?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Question modified from SVCC study of Malachi

4. Have you experienced long periods of God silence in your life?
5. God states in verse 2 “I have loved you” why is that statement from God important?
6. The people challenged God by asking “How have you loved us”, have you ever doubted the love of God in your own life? Why or why not?

Is not Esau Jacob’s brother? Declares the Lord. Yet I have loved Jacob but  
Esau, I have hated. V1:2-3

7. Since God is love how do we understand the statement “Esau I have hated”?
8. Read Romans 9:9-10 have these verses help you to understand Malachi 1:2-3.
9. Considering all you have learned and discussed how does this help you to better understand God’s unfailing love in the context of grace?
10. Reading verses 4 & 5 who is the author referring to when he states “Though Edom says?”
11. What reason is given for God destroying what is being built?
12. Why is God great beyond Israel, and why is that important to us Gentiles?

God expects us to change our attitude towards Him,  
even if our circumstances remain the same!<sup>4</sup>

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.

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<sup>4</sup> Pastor Eric Smith quote



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## Malachi 1:6-14

### **Text:**

**6** "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. But if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is your fear of me? says the LORD of Armies to you priests, who despise my name." Yet you ask, "How have we despised your name?" **7** "By presenting defiled food on my altar." "How have we defiled you?" you ask. When you say, "The LORD's table is contemptible."

**8** "When you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is it not wrong? And when you present a lame or sick animal, is it not wrong? Bring it to your governor! Would he be pleased with you or show you favor?" asks the LORD of Armies. **9** "And now plead for God's favor. Will he be gracious to us? Since this has come from your hands, will he show any of you favor?" asks the LORD of Armies. **10** "I wish one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would no longer kindle a useless fire on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of Armies, "and I will accept no offering from your hands."

**11** "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising of the sun to its setting. Incense and pure offerings will be presented in my name in every place because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of Armies. **12** "But you are profaning it when you say, 'The Lord's table is defiled, and its product, its food, is contemptible.' **13** You also say, 'Look, what a nuisance!' And you scorn it," says the LORD of Armies. "You bring stolen, lame, or sick animals. You bring this as an offering! Am I to accept that from your hands?" asks the LORD.

**14** "The deceiver is cursed who has an acceptable male in his flock and makes a vow but sacrifices a defective animal to the Lord. For I am a great King," says the LORD of Armies, "and my name will be feared among the nations."

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means "My Messenger" or "Messenger". The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post-exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshipping God

**Big Idea:**

Since the people of God had doubts about the love of God, this affected everything about their worship of God. God is holy and that holiness is to fear (reverenced), Israel had lost its fervor for God, resulting in halfhearted worship and sick offerings. Twenty-First Century believers make the same error, by checking the box of church attendance, while their hearts are far away from God. God will not be second or disrespected, He demand's our full allegiance to Him.

God now poses the second question and one of great importance, "Where is my honor"? God doesn't expect honor, God demands honor. What we hold near and dear to us, we give our full attention, we give our best, yet the people of God were offering God leftovers, second and third best offerings, wounded sacrifices and the priest were silent without correction.

**IBQ:**

Have you ever returned or sent food back to a restaurant? Why and what were your expectations?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. When you hear the word honor what comes to mind?
2. The bible is full of verses exhorting believers to honor others, name a few verses and their application to our lives.
3. Verse 6 &7 has some strong wording, despised, defiled, and contemptible what message is God pressing into with the Children of Israel? In what ways in the church do we witness such actions today?
4. What does our worship of God with what we offer God say about what we believe about God?  
Read verse 8
5. Looking at verses 9 & 10 and comparing what was offered then and what we offer as acceptable to God, what are the things and reasons God might reject our offerings?
6. We read in verse 10 that God's name is to be Great, in your own words explain how we participate in God's name being great among the nations?
7. Verse 14 speaks of an acceptable offering or sacrifice, what would that have been during the days of Malachi?
8. What is an acceptable offering in our current day?

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.



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## Malachi 2:1-9

### **Text:**

**1** “Therefore, this decree is for you priests: **2** If you don’t listen, and if you don’t take it to heart to honor my name,” says the LORD of Armies, “I will send a curse among you, and I will curse your blessings. In fact, I have already begun to curse them because you are not taking it to heart.

**3** “Look, I am going to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread animal waste over your faces, the waste from your festival sacrifices, and you will be taken away with it. **4** Then you will know that I sent you this decree, so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD of Armies.

**5** “My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave these to him; it called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. **6** True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity and turned many from iniquity. **7** For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should desire instruction from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the LORD of Armies.

**8** “You, on the other hand, have turned from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have violated the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of Armies. **9** “So I in turn have made you despised and humiliated before all the people because you are not keeping my ways but are showing partiality in your instruction.”

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means “My Messenger” or “Messenger”. The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post-exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshipping God

### **Big Idea:**

The prophet now turns his attention to the waywardness of the priest, they had failed on every level to call the people back to God. The priests were responsible for how every sacrifice was to be offered and how worship was to be executed, yet they refused to challenge the people and thereby they dishonored God.

God now challenges their worship noting that it is dishonoring and reckless in every way. Here we learn that when leaders are faithful to fulfill their roles it causes the people to walk upright before God.

**IBQ:**

What are your expectations of spiritual leaders in our day? Does the failure of our leaders exempt our responsibility?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever disobeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit or clear scripture commands? What happened as a result in your own life?
2. Read the following verses Acts 7:51, Ephesians 4:18, and compare them to our text what stands out to you?
3. Why are our hearts so hardened to God's truth?
4. Reading Malachi 2:3-4 why has God placed his focus on the priest of Israel?
5. Reading verses 5-7 what can we learn about the duty of priesthood and their implications for teaching and living truth? Review, Numbers 25:11-13, Deuteronomy 33:8-11
6. How does this knowledge apply to you and me today. See 1 Peter 2:5-9 and Hebrews 13:15,16
7. What are the implications of unaddressed sin in the corporate church body?
8. Read Malachi 2:5-7 again and discuss how we can be like Levi to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.



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## Malachi 2:10-16

### **Text:**

**10** Don't all of us have one Father? Didn't one God create us? Why then do we act treacherously against one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? **11** Judah has acted treacherously, and a detestable act has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the LORD's sanctuary, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. **12** May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, whoever he may be, even if he presents an offering to the LORD of Armies.

**13** This is another thing you do. You are covering the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands.

**14** And you ask, "Why?" Because even though the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, you have acted treacherously against her. She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant. **15** Didn't God make them one and give them a portion of spirit? What is the one seeking? Godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, so that no one acts treacherously against the wife of his youth.

**16** "If he hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD God of Israel, "he covers his garment with injustice," says the LORD of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means "My Messenger" or "Messenger". The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post-exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshipping God

### **Big Idea:**

God now focuses his displeasure on the people of God. It is not surprising that Israel has moved so far away for following God with honor and respect. The people falsely believed that their sins and rejecting of the law would be excused because the priest had failed to provide ample leadership.

The dialogue in the passage before us is about loss—terrible loss. It gives us the sad account of the people coming to the altar of the Lord with tears streaming down their cheeks only to have the Lord turn away from them in displeasure<sup>5</sup>

**IBQ:**

Have you ever heard the statement fake it until you make it? How have we all been guilty of living our lives in this way?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Read the entire context and discuss why was God upset with the people of Israel?
2. What does it mean to act treacherously towards the Lord?
3. What was the issue with marriage among the people of God?
4. Comparing Israel to our culture what similarities do you see?
5. What was wrong with who they married since everyone is created in God's image?  
See (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)
6. Read verse 13, Why is God rejecting their worship and offerings?
7. Could we possibly be offering God gifts he rejects and why?
8. What do verses 14 and 15 teach us about marriage?
9. When, if ever, is divorce permissible before God?
10. What is the prophet communicating in verse 16?

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week

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<sup>5</sup> Ellsworth, R. (2007). [\*Opening up Malachi\*](#) (p. 52). Leominster: Day One Publications.



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## Malachi 2:17 - 3:5

### **Text:**

**17** You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you ask, "How have we wearied him?" When you say, "Everyone who does what is evil is good in the LORD's sight, and he is delighted with them, or else where is the God of justice?"

### **Chapter 3**

**1** "See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the LORD of Armies. **2** But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be able to stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire and like launderer's bleach. **3** He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. **4** And the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will please the LORD as in days of old and years gone by.

**5** "I will come to you in judgment, and I will be ready to witness against sorcerers and adulterers; against those who swear falsely; against those who oppress the hired worker, the widow, and the fatherless; and against those who deny justice to the resident alien. They do not fear me," says the LORD of Armies

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means "My Messenger" or "Messenger". The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshiping God

### **Big Idea:**

The people of God falsely believe God is silent on issues of justice, so much so that in this text God's messenger uses a bit of irony to make his point. They knew that God takes no delight in the work of evildoers. There can be no doubt that God is coming and with His arrival to the temple, there will be judgment of both the priest and people.

**IBQ:**

Have you ever given up on getting something after waiting a long time? What was it and why did you stop looking for it to be a reality?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you believe evil was so prevalent in Israel's day; and why and how does the church experience it today?
2. Read verse 2, who is the messenger God is referring to in Malachi is giving the message? See Matt. 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27
3. Read again verse 2 along with verse 3, who will God judge first and what is the purpose of this judgement.
4. Verse 4 states their offerings would please the Lord as in the days of old? Why is this important in the larger storyline and how should we apply the principle of this text to our generation?
5. Verse 5 makes clear that God is going to deal with those that allow the oppressed to be victimized. What does this teach us about the character of God?
6. Read verse 5, what does it mean to deny justice to the resident alien?
7. How are workers and widows often oppressed? How should the church respond today to such oppression if at all?
8. Read Malachi 2:17, then read Malachi 3:5 discuss what is taking place?

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.



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## Malachi 3:6-12

### **Text:**

<sup>6</sup> “Because I, the LORD, have not changed, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed.

<sup>7</sup> “Since the days of your ancestors, you have turned from my statutes; you have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of Armies.

Yet you ask, “How can we return?”

<sup>8</sup> “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me!”

“How do we rob you?” you ask.

“By not making the payments of the tenth and the contributions. <sup>9</sup> You are suffering under a curse, yet you—the whole nation—are still robbing me. <sup>10</sup> Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the LORD of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. <sup>11</sup> I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit,” says the LORD of Armies. <sup>12</sup> “Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land,” says the LORD of Armies.

### **Background:**

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### **Big Idea:**

God now drills down on the Children of Israel about their giving, God asked the question “Will a man rob God?” The reality is that God cares about what we are giving back to Him that he has given to us to advance the mission of God.

**IBQ:**

Have you ever taken something that seem insignificant that didn't belong to you? Did it feel like you were stealing?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean that the Lord does not change? (See Verse 1)
2. What are the statutes that the people have turned away from? (See Verse 2)
3. What does it mean to return to God as believers?
4. Read verse 8 and discuss how are the people robbing God? Read Psalm 24:1, 1 Chronicles 29:2, Psalm 50:7-15. Who is the owner of all you have?
5. What does giving to God tithes and offerings, say about what Israel believes about God? What is God really after as it relates to His people? Who is hurt when the tithes and offerings are held back?
6. Read Genesis 14:18-20, Leviticus 27:30-34, Numbers 18:21,24, Deuteronomy 14:22-27, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, What do these verses teach us about giving and its purpose in the Old Testament?
7. If everything belongs to God and He (God) has no needs, How should we give in light of all of scripture as New Testament believers? Read Proverbs 3:9, Matthew 23:23, Luke 12:34, Acts 4:32-36, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7
8. What does our giving say about us as the people of God on a mission with God?

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.



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## Malachi 3:13-18

### **Text:**

**13** "Your words against me are harsh," says the LORD.

Yet you ask, "What have we spoken against you?"

**14** You have said, "It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his requirements and walking mournfully before the LORD of Armies? **15** So now we consider the arrogant to be fortunate. Not only do those who commit wickedness prosper, they even test God and escape."

**16** At that time those who feared the LORD spoke to one another. The LORD took notice and listened. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who feared the LORD and had high regard for his name.

**17** "They will be mine," says the LORD of Armies, "my own possession on the day I am preparing. I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him. **18** So you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

### **Background:**

Malachi is the last of the OT prophets, his name means "My Messenger" or "Messenger". The main message of Malachi is a call to repent and return to God with expectations of His return. Malachi is a post exilic book written after 70 years of captivity. Many scholars pin the writings after the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah sometime after the completion of the Temple. Malachi is not only calling a hardened people to return to God, but he is also rebuking the priest for their lackluster affection to worshipping God

### **Big Idea:**

God now addresses the arrogance of the people and the injustice of the land in contrast to his commands, statutes, and promises.

### **IBQ:**

Have you ever or more recently said something hurtful to someone you didn't mean? What did you do once you realize the error of your word?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are common complaints about God and the church today? How should we respond to those complaints?
2. Read verses 13, 14 and discuss possible reasons the people feel that serving God has become a burden to them.
3. Read verse 15 and compare these words to our present-day reality. What is the difference between social justice and biblical justice?
4. In verse 16 it states those who feared God came together and God took notice. How do we today live in such a way that people know we are living for God?
5. Of the 55 verses in Malachi what stands out about verse 16 in this portion of scripture?
6. Reading verses 16-18 gives us a glimpse into what is to come for all who trust in God. What are the clear implications of this text?

**Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

**Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.



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## Malachi 4:1-6

### **Text:**

**1** “For look, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness will become stubble. The coming day will consume them,” says the LORD of Armies, “not leaving them root or branches. **2** But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. **3** You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing,” says the LORD of Armies.

**4** “Remember the instruction of Moses my servant, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. **5** Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. **6** And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

### **Background:**

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### **Big Idea:**

The closing chapter of Malachi ends with the Righteous Judge rewarding the faithful and punishing the unfaithful. Malachi reminds us that our Redeemer and Savior is coming to push the darkness of our heart back that the light of salvation might reign in our mortal bodies.

### **IBQ:**

What are you looking forward to in the season of your life?

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does Malachi 4:1 contradict the message of cultural Christianity in our day?
2. How do verses 2,3 provide Israel hope; and how should we twenty-first-century believers reflect and respond to this truth?
3. Who is the Sun of Righteousness that Malachi is referring to, in verse 2?
4. Israel is encouraged to remember and apply the laws, commandments, and statutes of Moses, since we are not under the law (Galatians 5:1-4, Romans 6:15) as New Testament believers how should we apply such a text, in view (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Galatians 3:24-26, Romans 8:1-4)?
5. We wrap up Malachi with both promises and warnings in verses 5-6, how should we live in light of both of these truths? Note: Reconciliation and Rejection. <sup>6</sup>
6. Lastly read the last sentence of Malachi 4:6 then read Revelations 22:3, on the pendulum of hopelessness and hopeful where are you?

### **Wrap Up:**

Who can you share this lesson with this week?

### **Close in Prayer:**

List those you will be praying for this week.

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<sup>6</sup> The Warren Wiersbe Otl Testament Commentary pg 1531