



# The Book Of Malachi

His Words Reminded The Jews  
Of Their Disobedience

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# Malachi

## OVERVIEW:

God loves perfectly and completely. And his love is a love of action—giving, guiding, and guarding. He is altogether faithful, true to his promises to his chosen people. But consistently they spurn their loving God, breaking the covenant, following other gods, and living for themselves. So the relationship is shattered.

But the breach is not irreparable; all hope is not lost. God can heal and mend and reweave the fabric. Forgiveness is available. And that is grace.

This is the message of Malachi, God's prophet in Jerusalem. His words reminded the Jews, God's chosen nation, of their willful disobedience, beginning with the priests (Malachi 1:1-2:9) and then including every person (Malachi 2:10-3:15). They had shown contempt for God's name (Malachi 1:6), offered false worship (Malachi 1:7-14), led others into sin (Malachi 2:7-9), broken God's laws (Malachi 2:11-16), called evil "good" (Malachi 2:17), kept God's tithes and offerings for themselves (Malachi 3:8-12), and become arrogant (Malachi 3:13-15).

The relationship was broken, and judgment and punishment would be theirs. In the midst of this wickedness, however, there were a faithful few—the remnant—who loved and honored God. God would shower his blessings upon these men and women (Malachi 3:16-18).

Malachi paints a stunning picture of Israel's unfaithfulness that clearly shows them to be worthy of punishment, but woven throughout this message is hope—the possibility of forgiveness. This is beautifully expressed in Malachi 4:2—"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall."

Malachi concludes with a promise of the coming of "the prophet Elijah," who will offer God's forgiveness to all people through repentance and faith (Malachi 4:5-6).

The book of Malachi forms a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

As you read Malachi, see yourself as the recipient of this word of God to his people. Evaluate the depth of your commitment, the sincerity of your worship, and the direction of your life. Then allow God to restore your relationship with him through his love and forgiveness.

## **THE BLUEPRINT**

Malachi rebuked the people and the priests for neglecting the worship of God and failing to live according to God's will. If the priests were unfaithful, how could they lead the people? They had become stumbling blocks instead of spiritual leaders. If the people were divorcing their wives and marrying pagan women, how could they lead their children? Their relationship to God had become inconsequential. When our relationship with God becomes less important than it should be, we can strengthen it by setting aside our sinful habits, thinking often of our Lord, and giving God our best each day.

### **1. The sinful priests (Malachi 1:1-2:9)**

This is the message that the Lord gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

[2] "I have loved you deeply," says the Lord.

But you retort, "Really? How have you loved us?"

And the Lord replies, "I showed my love for you by loving your ancestor Jacob. Yet Esau was Jacob's brother, [3] and I rejected Esau and devastated his hill country. I turned Esau's inheritance into a desert for jackals."

[4] And Esau's descendants in Edom may say, "We have been shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins."

But this is what the Lord Almighty says: "They may try to rebuild, but I will demolish them again! Their country will be known as 'The Land of Wickedness,' and their people will be called 'The People with Whom the Lord Is Forever Angry.'" [5] When you see the destruction for yourselves, you will say, "Truly, the Lord's great power reaches far beyond our borders!" "

[6] The Lord Almighty says to the priests: "A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. I am your father and master, but where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have despised my name!

"But you ask, 'How have we ever despised your name?'"

[7] "You have despised my name by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar. "Then you ask, 'How have we defiled the sacrifices?'"

"You defile them by saying the altar of the Lord deserves no respect. [8] When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!" says the Lord Almighty.

[9] "Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?" asks the Lord Almighty.

[10] "I wish that someone among you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not at all pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will not accept your offerings. [11] But my name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of my name. For my name is great among the nations," says the Lord Almighty.

[12] "But you dishonor my name with your actions. By bringing contemptible food, you are saying it's all right to defile the Lord's table. [13] You say, 'It's too hard to serve the Lord,' and you turn up your noses at his commands," says the Lord Almighty. "Think of it! Animals that are stolen and mutilated, crippled and sick—presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?" asks the Lord. [14] "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is feared among the nations!"

[2:1] "Listen, you priests; this command is for you! [2] Listen to me and take it to heart. Honor my name," says the Lord Almighty, "or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning seriously. [3] I will rebuke your descendants and splatter your faces with the dung of your festival sacrifices, and I will add you to the dung heap. [4] Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites may continue," says the Lord Almighty.

[5] "The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and this is what I gave them. This called for reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name. [6] They passed on to the people all the truth they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin. [7] The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the Lord Almighty. [8] But not you! You have left God's paths. Your 'guidance' has caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites," says the Lord Almighty. [9] "So I have made you despised and humiliated in the eyes of all the people. For you have not obeyed me but have shown partiality in your interpretation of the law."

## 2. The sinful people (Malachi 2:10-3:15)

Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why are we faithless to each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors? [11] In Judah, in Israel, and in Jerusalem there is treachery, for the men of Judah have defiled the Lord's beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols. [12] May the Lord cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.

[13] Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings, and he doesn't accept them with pleasure. [14] You cry out, "Why has the Lord abandoned us?" I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. [15] Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. [16] "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the Lord Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife."

[17] You have wearied the Lord with your words.

"Wearied him?" you ask. "How have we wearied him?"

You have wearied him by suggesting that the Lord favors evildoers since he does not punish them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

[3:1] "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the Lord Almighty. [2] "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes. [3] He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver, watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

[4] Then once more the Lord will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in former times. [5] At that time I will put you on trial. I will be a ready witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

[6] "I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed. [7] Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my laws and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How can we return when we have never gone away?'

[8] "Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!

"But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?'

"You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. [9] You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. [10] Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord Almighty, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you! [11] Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not shrivel before they are ripe," says the Lord Almighty. [12] "Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight," says the Lord Almighty.

[13] "You have said terrible things about me," says the Lord.

"But you say, 'What do you mean? How have we spoken against you?'

[14] "You have said, 'What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord Almighty that we are sorry for our sins? [15] From now on we will say, 'Blessed are the arrogant.' For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them go free of harm.' "

### 3. The faithful few (Malachi 3:16-4:6)

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and loved to think about him. [17] "They will be my people," says the Lord Almighty. "On the day when I act, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient and dutiful child. [18] Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

[4:1] The Lord Almighty says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day. They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all.

[2] "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. [3] On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet," says the Lord Almighty.

[4] "Remember to obey the instructions of my servant Moses, all the laws and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel.

[5] "Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. [6] His preaching will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."

## **MEGATHEMES**

### **THEME: God's love**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

God loves his people even when they ignore or disobey him. He has great blessings to bestow on those who are faithful to him. His love never ends.

#### **IMPORTANCE:**

Because God loves us so much, he hates hypocrisy and careless living. This kind of living denies him the relationship he wants to have with us. What we give and how we live reflects the sincerity of our love for God.

### **THEME: The sin of the priests**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Malachi singled out the priests for condemnation. They knew what God required, yet their sacrifices were unworthy and their service was insincere; they were lazy, arrogant, and insensitive. They had a casual attitude toward the worship of God and observance of God's standards.

#### **IMPORTANCE:**

If religious leaders go wrong, how will the people be led? We are all leaders in some capacity. Don't neglect your responsibilities or be ruled by what is convenient. Neglect and insensitivity are acts of disobedience. God wants leaders who are faithful and sincere.

## **THEME: The sin of the people**

### **EXPLANATION:**

The people had not learned the lesson of the exile, nor had they listened to the prophets. Men were callously divorcing their faithful wives to marry younger pagan women. This was against God's law because it disobeyed his commands about marriage and threatened the religious training of the children. But pride had hardened the hearts of the people.

### **IMPORTANCE:**

God deserves our very best honor, respect, and faithfulness. But sin hardens our hearts to our true condition. Pride is unwarranted self-esteem; it is setting your own judgment above God's and looking down on others. Don't let pride keep you from giving God your devotion, money, marriage, and family.

## **THEME: The Lord's coming**

### **EXPLANATION:**

God's love for his faithful people is demonstrated by the Messiah's coming. The Messiah will lead the people to the realization of all their fondest hopes. The day of the Lord's coming will be a day of comfort and healing for a faithful few, and a day of judgment for those who reject him.

### **IMPORTANCE:**

Christ's first coming refined and purified all those who believe in him. His return will expose and condemn those who are proud, insensitive, or unprepared. Yet God can heal and mend. Forgiveness is available to all who come to him.

## TIMELINE

First exiles return to Jerusalem 538  
Temple reconstruction begins 536  
Haggai, Zechariah become prophets 520  
Temple completed 516  
Ezra comes to Jerusalem 458  
Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem 445  
Malachi becomes a prophet 430

**An invitation is given to open your heart's door.**

**Rev. 3:20**

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

