

MALACHI

GOALS OF THE LESSON:

1. Understand the time frame that Malachi prophesied.
2. Understand who Malachi is prophesying of and when he will come.

Introduction: Malachi prophesied in the period 445-432 B.C. The remnant had returned from Babylon in 536 B.C. Haggai and Zechariah had succeeded in getting them to rebuild the temple in 520-516 B.C. In 457 Ezra had lent his assistance to the Jewish national restoration. Fifteen years later in 444 B.C., Nehemiah had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. This is the time that Malachi prophesies. In all, about a century had passed since the return from captivity. There was no resurgence of the idolatry which had driven their fathers into such punishment, but indifference and lack of real commitment were the order of the day. The laxity of the priests in teaching and enforcing the law was evidenced in the people's lack of support of the temple services. Unacceptable sacrifice of the worst rather than the first of their flocks were brought to God. Tithes went unpaid and the practice of intermarrying with Gentile women again reared its ugly head. (cp. Ezra 9)

--Bible Study Textbook Series

The literary form of Malachi is very interesting to notice. As you go through this book, notice the debate that is happening between God and His people. God, through Malachi, asks rhetorical questions to the people. Malachi 1:2 is a good example of the debate between God and the people and is typical of Malachi's style. First there is God's statement: "I have loved you." Then follows the popular objection that questions the truth of God's statement, "How have you loved us?" Finally there is justification for God's statement. In each case this is usually expanded and these expansions become the bulk of the prophet's message.

The Survey Chart:

Take your Bible and skim through the book of Malachi, looking at the subheadings of each paragraph in each chapter. Record a few main events from each chapter on the diagonal lines of the survey chart.

1. As you fill out your survey chart, what themes do you see in the book?

1:1-14 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

2. In what sense did the Lord hate Esau? Compare this to how this verse is used in Romans 9:8-13.

3. Notice the debates found in chapter 1. List the various arguments that God makes and the response of the people.

Life Application:

4. What lessons can we learn from the words of Malachi in chapter 1?

2:1-9 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

Special Note: Note that the NRSV and KJV rightly translate verse 3 as “dung” instead of the NKJV rendering “refuse.”

5. Comment on the phrase in 2:2, “lay it to heart.”

6. What sins is Malachi condemning the priests for?

Life Application:

7. What lessons can we learn from Malachi’s charges to the priests in 2:1-9?

2:10-17 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

8. Explain the phrase in 2:13, "you cover the Lord's altar with tears."

9. How do you reconcile God's hatred for divorce in this passage and the statement of Deuteronomy 24:1-4?

10. What is meant by the phrase in 2:17, "where is the God of justice?"

11. Notice the debates found in chapter 2. List the various arguments that God makes and the response of the people.

3:1-18 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

12. How does 2:17 relate with 3:1-6?

13. Compare 3:1-6 with Matthew 3:7-12. Make comments and applications.

Life Application:

14. What lessons can we learn from 3:8-15?

15. Notice the debates found in chapter 3. List the various arguments that God makes and the response of the people.

4:1-6 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.

16. What day is being spoken of in 4:1?

17. Who is the prophet Elijah referring to in 4:5? Be able to support your answer and show New Testament fulfillment.

MAIN POINTS TO REMEMBER FROM THIS LESSON:

1. "Lo, I am will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (4:5)
2. "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." (3:1)