

PERSONAL APPLICATION  
MALACHI

*Ask the Holy Spirit to give you guidance as you read the four chapters of Malachi.*

1. As you read your notes on Micah, what did you see as some of his strengths? What did you discover that you could apply to your life?

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Prophet Malachi

2. The prophet Malachi likely lived at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets and his work is dated between 450 and 400 BC. While all the other prophets began with a condemnation, write the first words of Malachi from verse 2.

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3. The prophet also feels the need to speak of sin. Who receives his first rebuke? (1:6)

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4. Why would this be the natural place for Malachi to begin?

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5. What is it that he implores them to do in 1:9? (See also 2:7)

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6. What glorious truth does Malachi reveal to the Old Testament people of God in 1:11?

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7. Observe how beautifully Malachi describes the pastoral ministry in 2:7. What do you see as the function of a pastor according to this verse?

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8. What impressive fact does Malachi use to show what our relationship should be toward one another? (2:10)

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Malachi 3

9. As you read 3:1, of whom do you immediately think? How does Malachi describe the Lord?

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10. Why will the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord? (3:4; Isaiah 53)

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11. Why do the words of 3:6 bring comfort to your heart? (Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:8–10)

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12. With what question does Malachi introduce his instruction on Christian stewardship in 3:8–10?
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13. From Genesis 28:22 and Deuteronomy 14:22, what was a tithe and what command was given concerning it?
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14. In your own words, explain what Malachi teaches us about our stewardship responsibility to the Lord.
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15. Can you share a particular blessing you feel the Lord has given you in response to the stewardship of your time, gifts or talents?
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16. In your life, when would 3:16–17 have special meaning?
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17. You will rejoice in 4:2, perhaps you have heard that verse quoted.
- How is the word “fear” used here? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who is the “Sun of righteousness (KJV)?” \_\_\_\_\_
- Why is He given that name? \_\_\_\_\_
- In what way does He have healing in His wings? \_\_\_\_\_
18. In 4:5, Malachi speaks of the “prophet Elijah.” What New Testament references are made to this prophecy? What do you learn from this verse?
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*Malachi's ministry to the Jews was to assure them that the Messiah would indeed come, but, if they continued in the present spirit, it would be a time of judgment.*



#### MALACHI – GOD'S LAST MESSENGER UNTIL...

The name Malachi means "My Messenger." One could say he was the last messenger in Old Testament times until the coming of the Messiah. He pointed people to another who would be "My [God's!] Messenger" proclaiming the arrival of that Messiah.

The exact time of Malachi's work is not known. It is generally accepted that he was associated with Ezra and Nehemiah in their work after Israel returned from the Babylonian Captivity. Ezra was involved in the rebuilding of the temple, while Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. This work was completed shortly before 400 BC. At the time of Malachi, the Jews had been "back home" from exile for almost 100 years. They seemed to be cured of their idolatry, but they were prone to neglect the House of God. The priests had become lax and degenerate. Sacrifices were inferior, tithes were neglected, divorce was common and their spiritual life was at a low level.

The Jews, favored by God above all nations of their time, were discouraged by their weakness, wedded to their sins, and settled in a lethargic state of mind to wait for the coming of the Promised Messiah. Malachi's ministry to the Jews was to assure them that the Messiah would indeed come, but, if they continued in the present spirit, it would be a time of judgment. This, as we know, is exactly what happened to those who cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). Old Simeon in the temple expressed it correctly when he said, "This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34).

### MALACHI'S MESSAGE

We might summarize the first words of the book of Malachi as saying, "It's about time that someone shuts the doors of the church and puts an end to this pretense which you people call religion. Your worship is nothing but a mockery!" Malachi stood outside the doors of the temple and railed at the people with fury in his words, for he was greatly disturbed by what he saw, knowing what an offense it was to their gracious God.

"Look at the gifts you are bringing to God's Temple!" he shouted at them. The people must have glanced sheepishly at the sacrifices that they brought – perhaps moldy bread they would not eat, a sickly lamb that they probably would otherwise have destroyed, some corn filled with weevils. These people knew that God expected a tenth of all, the first fruits, but they had forgotten that this tenth belonged to their Maker. Malachi called out, "Will a man rob God?" But that was exactly what they were doing.

Malachi's words cause us to pause and take thought as to what we have done in bringing our gifts to the Lord. God has blessed us with the material things of life far more than He blessed these people. Above all, we have that long-promised Messiah and we know exactly what He did for us. He is our Lord Jesus, and in Him, we have found forgiveness for our sins and the certain hope of heaven.

While we live in this forgiving grace and this certain hope, we are blessed with so many physically good things in life. Yet, how do we show our gratitude? What about our tithes? No doubt, the Lord gets too many leftovers, which really do not express the appreciation He deserves.

"And your priests," Malachi goes on, "don't teach you God's ways at all. When you listen to them, they make you feel as though it is a weary thing

to serve the Lord, and they sniff at God with the idea that they have to give an appearance of being godly, but in their own hearts they feel that they are beyond all this." The spirit of these priests has not disappeared in our day. Isn't this the attitude that is taken by any number of religious leaders who have exalted themselves above the Lord? Although they try to appear deeply religious, they do not honor the Lord but exalt themselves.

Malachi did not spare the people. They had committed many and varied sins and he was there to confront them. For example, in Malachi 2, he basically says,

*"Look what you have done with marriage. You know that God intended for this to be a special blessing for you and yet, in so many instances, it has actually become a curse because you have persisted in intermarrying with the heathen. You choose as spouses people who are morally and spiritually weak. Consequently, there is a great deal of divorce among you, and your sexual appetites lead you into many different forms of violence." Malachi said this to his people 2,500 years ago. If he stood before us today, he could say the same things, couldn't he?*

Malachi then asks,

*"What's become of your faith? You don't seem to trust God at all anymore. Why should we go God's way, you say, when those who do so much evil seem to be getting ahead in life, while we are not? You won't believe the promises God makes you unless you actually see the judgment of God being meted out upon those you dislike. Is that all you expect of God? Is He there just to punish your enemies...on your timetable?"*

As Malachi spoke, his words burned into the

consciences of his people. They needed that, but so do we. We must see our sins and repent of them or there is no hope of salvation for us. There is nothing we can do ourselves to escape from the terrible situation into which we have gotten ourselves because of our sins. Our only hope lies with God. He is merciful to us in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, who has earned forgiveness for us.

But, praise the Lord, while Malachi used the sharp edge of the law to awaken a deep consciousness of sin, he nevertheless was also there to bring to the people the wonderful message of God's grace. He said in effect,

*"Are you not aware of the fact that God loves you, for He has chosen you to be His people? The time will come when you will indeed know whether it pays or not to have faith in this wonderful God."*

*"When His day of judgment comes, God will deal justly with those who commit adultery, those who falsify His words, those who have crushed others for their own selfish purposes, those who have in every way dishonored Him."*

God wants all to understand who they are, and what He has done and will do for them. The wonderful thing is that today we have the clear Word of God to use in our dealings with each other so that there is a solid foundation of truth.

See how Malachi proceeded in his mission to the people of his day, using a question-and-answer format. In Chapter 1:6–7 God says, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? Says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the

LORD's Table may be despised." Malachi states the problem and gives God's answer, and you can hardly argue with that.

The matter of sacrifices and tithes were important to the prophet, but he was far more concerned about the inward spiritual condition being demonstrated by the abuses of the people of his day. It was evident that the Israelites had forgotten about the holiness and majesty of God. When a person has lost his moorings so that he no longer knows God, that person flounders around, having neither God nor man to turn to for help.

Malachi was sent by God to these people and God still uses his words to rouse us from our spiritual lethargy and thus be ready to meet our Savior when He comes. For the Jews, it meant His coming to earth when He was born in Bethlehem; for us it means His coming at the end of time when He will serve as the Judge of the living and the dead. It was for this reason that the Lord put into the mouth of Malachi these memorable words: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me" (3:1).

It is evident to us that he speaks here about John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way for the Savior. But then he says pointedly, "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple." That Lord is Jesus Himself.

He continues in Chapter 3,

*"Then I will draw near to you for judgment (3:5) ... From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you (3:7) ... Bring the full tithe into the storehouse... And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need" (3:10).*

*Thus ends the book of the last messenger of the Old Testament.  
The windows of heaven are ready to open. My prayer is that you  
have been as richly blessed as I have by this journey through the  
Old Testament. God bless you as you continue your studies.*



God, through His prophet, continues by promising that those who live in His way will see the results of their faith. In 3:16, we read in effect, “And I will prepare a book of remembrance of all those who love my name. They shall be mine on that day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not. You will also know that it is truly worthwhile to serve the Lord in an honorable way.”

Continuing in Chapter 4, Malachi says, “The day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble...It will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” [Sun of Righteousness-KJV]. Thus, in foretelling the coming of Christ, Malachi ended the message that God had given him for the people. (See also Malachi 4:5).

## CONCLUSION

Probably at this point, you are overwhelmed by the things that the prophet Malachi covered in his book. You will need to read this book a few times before you get the full impact of it. What Malachi says is essential to our life today, for our world is so much like the world of his day. His was an age of spiritual indifference, when the hearts of people were turned more and more away from God to their own selfish gratification. Let us hold firm to our faith and to our conviction that the Lord has worked in us.

*“Return to me and I will  
return to you...”*

*[See] if I will not open the  
windows of heaven...and  
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until there is no more need.”*

Thus ends the book of the last messenger of the Old Testament. The windows of heaven are ready to open. My prayer is that you have been as richly blessed as I have by this journey through the Old Testament. God bless you as you continue your studies.

*Note: In the studies of Amos, Micah, and Malachi, I have been indebted to a book “Men Who Dared” by Barbara Jurgensen, the wife of a Lutheran student pastor. I used many of her paraphrases for the words the prophets spoke.*