

# Malachi

**WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT?** The people of Israel complained that God wasn't blessing them—and Malachi pointed out why: They hadn't kept their part of the covenant with God.

**WHO WROTE IT?** Malachi.

**WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?** In the time of Nehemiah, perhaps around 430 B.C.

**WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT?** At the end of the Exile, after King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Hebrew exiles to return home.

**THE BREAKDOWN**

- Chapters 1–2: God is faithful to his people, but they are unfaithful to him
- Chapter 3: God will purify his people
- Chapter 4: The “day of the Lord” is coming

**KEY CONCEPTS**

- Honor
- Respect
- Covenant

**SCORECARD**

**Malachi:** The prophet who is the main personality in the book  
**“Elijah”:** A code name for an important person yet to come (Jesus later identifies John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this prophecy)

**READING TIME**  
 IN HOURS



**WORTH MEMORIZING**

- 3:6 “I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed.”
- 3:10 “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “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! Put me to the test!”
- 4:5–6 “Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching 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.”

**THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE**

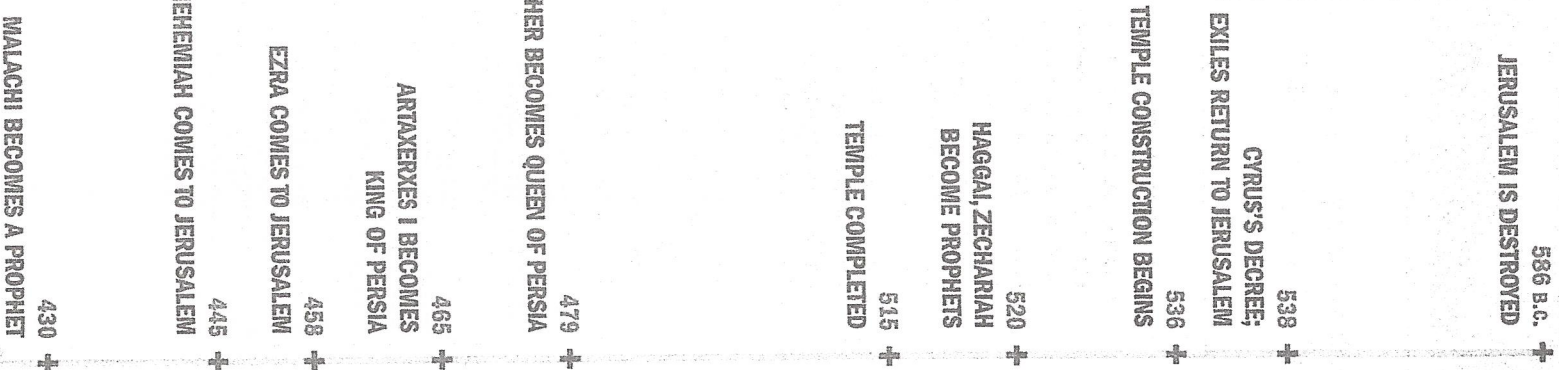
• **TOUGH TOPICS:** This book contains some of the Bible’s most direct language about two topics close to men’s hearts: wives (2:13–16) and money (3:8–12). In both cases, God’s opinion may make us squirm. But we are left with the choice of whether to take him seriously or try to hunt for “exemption clauses.” It’s his word against our personal preferences.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF  
**Malachi?**

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Don't  
**“play games”**  
 with God.

**Timeline**



**1:5** The Judeans had experienced many recent triumphs through God’s power. God had allowed them to return to the Promised Land after years in exile. Then, with God’s help, they overcame great obstacles to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. The people had many reasons to be thankful to God and to recognize his power of restoration. Despite the great triumphs they had experienced, however, the people had quickly returned to doing things their own way. It is easy for us to do the same thing. After experiencing great victories with God’s help, we fall back into old sinful patterns. We need to be reminded on a regular basis of what God has done and can do.

**1:7–14** God did not want mere words of repentance; he wanted the people to back up their words with appropriate action. If they were really sorry for their sins and honored God in their hearts, they would have brought their best offerings to God. They exposed their insincerity by



If of us benefit from good counseling, whether it's marital counseling, financial counseling, legal counseling, or simply getting advice from a friend. But imagine sitting down and having a counseling session with God Himself. That's the format of the book of Malachi. It's a unique approach in Scripture, as Malachi shares the back-and-forth conversations God wanted to have with His children at the end of the Old Testament.

Malachi appeared on the scene almost a century after Haggai and Zechariah. The spiritual life of Israel had declined in the interval, and Malachi spoke about bored priests, blemished sacrifices, and hard-hearted people who were just going through the motions of worship.

Malachi's prophecy is written in the form of a dialogue between God and the people of Israel, centered on six issues. These six arguments and their subject matter provide a general outline for the book, as Malachi deals with (one) God's love for Israel; (two) the people's careless approach to worship; (three) the nation's careless view of marriage; (four) the injustice that filled the land; (five) the sin of withholding tithes; and (six) God's intention to judge sinners and reward the faithful.

These areas are as relevant to us as to the people of Malachi's day; and as we read his book, we need to put ourselves in the counseling chair and hear the Lord say to us and to our land as He said in Malachi 3:7: "Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts."



KEY THOUGHT:

Spiritual apathy is a dangerous condition, one we must guard against with all our hearts.



KEY VERSE:

"Try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you *such* blessing that *there will not be room enough to receive it.*"  
Malachi 3:10



KEY ACTION:

We must return with fervor to the Lord, to genuine worship, to high moral values, to marital commitment, and to the practices of tithing and godly fellowship.



KEY PRAYER:

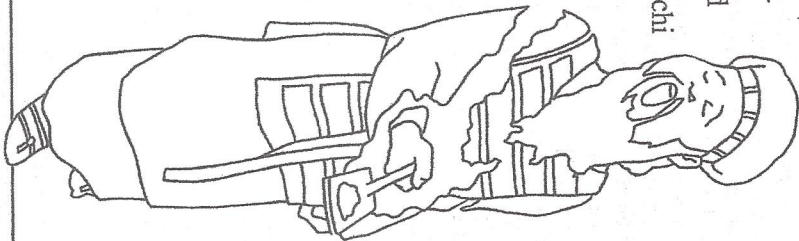
Lord, may you find me worthy to receive abundant blessings from Your hand.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO

## MALACHI

This book contains a list of questions asked by Malachi, followed by God's answers. The book of Malachi shows that God's people had once again drifted away from God. They needed to return to God and remain committed to him. Great rewards were in store for those who did.

IS WORSHIP BORING?  
SEE MALACHI 1:13.

In It  
For Me?

GOD WILL...  
THOSE WHO  
HONOR HIM.  
THOSE WHO  
GIVE TO HIM.  
FAVOR TO THOSE  
WHO SERVE HIM.  
FAITHFULNESS  
IN MARRIAGE.  
PARENTS  
AND CHILDREN  
TOGETHER.

## Headlines

**CAN YOU TRUST TEACHERS?**  
Malachi 2:1-9, page 1311

**A WIFE IS FOR LIFE**  
Malachi 2:10-17, page 1312

**NEW ATTITUDES FOR  
PARENTS AND KIDS**  
Malachi 4, page 1314

## BASIC SURVEY

## MALACHI

**AUTHOR:** Malachi (1:1), meaning "my messenger." No other details are given.

**DATE:** Approximately 433 BC, likely after Nehemiah returned to Persia (Nehemiah 13:6).

## IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

The Jews have become careless in their attitude toward God.

## DETAILS, PLEASE

Prophesying a century after the return from exile, Malachi chastises the Jews for offering "lame and sick" sacrifices (1:8 KJV); for divorcing their wives to marry pagan women; and for failing to pay tithes for the temple. The Lord was angry with the attitude, "It is vain to serve God" (3:14 KJV), but promised to bless the obedient: "To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (4:2 NKJV).

## QUOTABLE

> "Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty" (3:7 NIV).

## UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, contains the final word from God for some four hundred years, until the appearance of John the Baptist and Jesus, the Messiah, as prophesied in Malachi 3:1 (KJV): "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."

## SO WHAT?

God doesn't want empty religious rituals—He wants people to worship Him in spirit and in truth. (See John 4:24.)

## READ MALACHI 1 AND PSALMS 61-65.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 176. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 176. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 174. →

## CLOSER LOOK

## WHAT ARE WE DOING WRONG?

Malachi was the last prophet before John the Baptist. After Malachi, God simply stopped speaking to His people for 430 years. When you read the following verses, you'll understand why.

"I have loved you," says the LORD. Yet you say, "In what way have You loved us?" (Malachi 1:2 NKJV). "Where is My reverence? says the LORD of hosts to you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'" (Malachi 1:6 NKJV). "You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, 'In what way have we defiled You?'" (Malachi 1:7 NKJV). "You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, 'In what way have we wearied Him?'" (Malachi 2:17 NKJV).

"You have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. But you said, "In what way shall we return?" (Malachi 3:7 NKJV). "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?'" (Malachi 3:8 NKJV). "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the LORD, yet you say, "What have we spoken against You?" (Malachi 3:13 NKJV).

In answer to their last impudent question, the Lord reminded them that they'd been saying, "It is vain to serve God" (Malachi 3:14 KJV). They had become discouraged with serving God, so although they were still going through the motions, their hearts were no longer in it.

READ MALACHI 2 AND PROVERBS 26.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 176.



After Malachi, God did not speak to His people through prophets until the arrival of John the Baptist. God was waiting for His people to return to Him. The act of returning to God is pictured in *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787).

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## GIVING GOD THE LEFTOVERS

The Jews in Malachi's day were cheating God at every turn. God had said that His people were to give Him a tenth of all their increase and profit. This went to support the Levites (Deuteronomy 14:22–29). Yet they were negligent in their tithing (Malachi 3:8–11). The Law also stated that if an animal "has any defect such as lameness or blindness, or any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 15:21 NASB). Yet the Jews gave God their rejects. Through Malachi, the Lord demanded, "When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you?" (Malachi 1:8 NIV).

READ MALACHI 3 AND DEUTERONOMY 14.

## HIDDEN TREASURE

## THE COMING OF ELIJAH



This stained glass is a picture of Elijah. Christ himself and the people of His day noted similarities between Elijah and John the Baptist.

In the last prophecy in the Old Testament, God promised, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5 NASB). The angel Gabriel declared that this would be fulfilled in John the Baptist, saying, "He will also go before Him [the Messiah] in the spirit and power of Elijah. . . to make ready a people prepared for the LORD" (Luke 1:17 NKJV). And Jesus twice stated that John was Elijah who had been prophesied to come (Matthew 11:13–14; 17:10–13). Yet John himself denied that he was Elijah (John 1:19–21). He didn't merely doubt what God had said about *him*; he eventually doubted what God had said about Jesus (John 1:29–34; Matthew 11:2–3).

READ MALACHI 4 AND MATTHEW 11.

# MALACHI

## THE BIG PICTURE

When spiritual growth brings only external changes without internal change, there is the constant threat of slipping back into sinful habits. This seemed to be the case with the people in Jerusalem. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people had rebuilt the walls of the city. They had begun to follow God's plan and rebuilt their lives. But when Nehemiah returned to Persia, all the positive changes and attitudes that he had encouraged in them disappeared.

Malachi preached to a nation of backsliders—a people who had slipped back into their old ways. Even the spiritual leaders had fallen into old sinful patterns. As a result, the people suffered from economic problems, poor crops and the attacks of foreign marauders. Family life was in shambles; divorce was rampant. Religious life was cold and filled with empty formalism.

Malachi brought a message of hope to a nation that knew repeated failure. After being restored to their homeland, the Jews had forgotten the one who had delivered them. We often make the same kind of mistake. As soon as we overcome our pressing problems, we forget the one who delivered us from them—God. Without a continued relationship with God, we have no hope of sustaining our spiritual growth. We need to keep our eyes on God, for he alone is the source and means for our continued spiritual growth.

Although Malachi presented a long list of the people's failures, woven throughout his words of judgment rings a clear message of hope and forgiveness. As the final book of the Old Testament, Malachi forms a bridge with the New Testament. Malachi concludes with a promise of Elijah's coming (see Malachi 4:5–6). Jesus said this promise was fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Messiah—Jesus Christ himself (see Matthew 11:7–14). With God, there is always hope!

## SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

### GOD ALWAYS LOVES US

God's love for the people of Jerusalem and for us cannot be explained. God knows the depth of our sin; he knows how weak we are; yet he still loves us. There is nothing that we can do to lose this love that we never deserved in the first place (see Romans 8:38–39). God's love has the power to heal all the broken places in our lives. Our failures, setbacks and defenses cannot stop God from wanting to heal us. This fact should give us hope, no matter how terrible our sins and failures.

#### A. DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK (1:1)

##### B. DIALOGUES ABOUT FAILURE

(1:2–14)

1. A Dialogue about Love (1:2–5)
2. A Dialogue about Faithlessness (1:6–10)
3. A Dialogue about Holiness (1:11–14)

##### C. SERMONS ABOUT FAILURE (2:1–17)

1. The Failure of the Priests (2:1–9)
2. The Failure of the People (2:10–17)

##### D. A MESSAGE OF HOPE: GOD'S PROMISED MESSIAH (3:1–5)

##### E. ANOTHER MESSAGE TO THOSE SEEKING SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

(3:6–18)

1. Failure in Fiscal Responsibility (3:6–15)
2. Success of the Remnant (3:16–18)

##### F. A MESSAGE OF JUDGMENT: GOD'S PROMISED INTERVENTION

(4:1–6)

### Essential Facts

#### PURPOSE:

To confront the people about getting back on track after they had slipped back into old patterns of sin.

#### AUTHOR:

The prophet Malachi.

#### AUDIENCE:

The people in Judah shortly after Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's walls.

#### DATE WRITTEN:

Some time between 432 and 420 BC.

#### SETTING:

After the temple and Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt, the people began to fall back into destructive behavior patterns. Malachi confronted God's people with their sins, urging them to restore their relationship with God.

#### KEY VERSE:

"I, the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (3:6).

#### KEY PEOPLE:

Malachi and the priests.

#### KEY PLACES:

Jerusalem and the temple.

### FORGIVENESS BRINGS RENEWAL

The way of forgiveness redirects us back to a relationship with God. God wants us not only to receive his forgiveness but also to forgive others, passing on what he has so freely given to us (see Matthew 10:8; Colossians 3:13). If we can receive God's forgiveness and grant forgiveness to others, we have learned a key to spiritual growth that will serve us well.

### GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US

God wants us to turn to him for healing and forgiveness. He was patient with the people of Israel for hundreds of years in spite of their sin. In his grace, God is patient with us now as well (see 2 Peter 3:9). When he spoke through the prophets, God wove a message of hope into his warnings of judgment. In Malachi 4:5, God continued this theme of hope by promising the "prophet Elijah" would come and bring forgiveness and freedom to all people. God is with us even now to help us. We can receive his help by repenting of our sins, trusting him and seeking to obey his will for our lives.

### The Faithful Remnant

<sup>18</sup>Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.

# Malachi

The most intriguing aspect of the book of Malachi is the utter silence that follows.

One day, the Israelites are getting detailed, prophet-to-person messages, and the next the lines to the living God are shut down. After the words of Malachi were spoken to the people of Israel, no prophecies were uttered for four centuries. Worse, the people didn't seem bothered by the lack of communication.

How could this happen? And worse, how could they so quickly forget the many examples of God's mercy and love for them?

You can find a partial explanation in 2:17: the Lord says people "weared" Him with their words. They called good evil and evil good. In the midst of such topsy-turvy thinking, the people turned away from their Creator. They tested the Lord like spoiled children goading a patient father. They demanded to know "where is the God of justice?" (2:17).

Truth is, they didn't really care about justice. They didn't care about anything except having their own needs met. "It is useless to serve God," they claimed (3:14). In doing so they robbed God and didn't think God would notice. Sounds like Adam sneaking around the garden wearing only shrubbery. This was a game of hide-and-seek that people were destined to lose.

How could they have sunk so low as to mock God to His face? Because they saw things they didn't like—things that didn't seem fair. Those who did wrong seemed to have it all or were rewarded for evil. That's why the Israelites stopped seeking God's will and started looking for the "good life." They shoved God and His regulations aside and pursued happiness without concern for the promises they'd made—and were now breaking—to their Master.

Any of this ring true to you? Do you shake your head or express anger as those who cheat at school, engage in immoral acts, and disrespect everyone but are not punished? Not fair, is it? Makes you

wish you were in charge of the world for a few minutes, doesn't it? But none of us has the right to take on God's role and start judging those around us.

While some strike back through gossip, others decide the whole God-thing is a scam. They turn away from their faith roots. Thinking they can hide from God, they shut their Bibles and stop praying. And then they wonder why they don't hear a thing from the Lord.

When you seek Him, you will find Him. It's as simple and true as that.

**Author:** Malachi

**Date:** After the fall of Edom (around 420 B.C.)

**What in the world is going on?**

441 B.C.

Euripides writes tragic plays

432 B.C.

Exterior work on the Parthenon (Athens) is finally complete

431–404 B.C.

Second Peloponnesian War (Athens versus Sparta) later results in a temporary peace treaty—the Peace of Nicias (421 B.C.); but the fighting begins six years later

ca. 428 B.C.

Greek philosopher Plato is born

423 B.C.

Darius II takes the Persian throne from a relative and rules until 404 B.C.

420 B.C.

Malachi prophesies

404 B.C.

Athens surrenders to the Spartans to end the Peloponnesian War

400 B.C.

Jōmon, the earliest major culture in ancient Japan, ends

399 B.C.

Socrates is executed

395–387 B.C.

Corinthian War

334–333 B.C.

Alexander the Great and the Macedonians conquer Asia Minor (Anatolia)

**2:14-16** Some of the Judeans had divorced their wives for no reason other than personal gratification. They pushed their wives into a world where they had no means of supporting themselves. This practice was not only unethical; it was also terribly cruel. God hates divorce. He intended family commitments to be binding. Some of us may have experienced firsthand the pain of a broken marriage. A broken family is a serious hindrance to spiritual growth. We need strong relationships to hold us accountable and keep us on the right track.

# What God Thinks of Divorce

Malachi 2:13-16

**THERE ARE TWO WAYS** to give a command. You can take the positive approach ("Follow God"), or you can spell out things to avoid ("Flee the devil").

In this powerful passage in the final book of the Old Testament, God uses both approaches to communicate the sacredness of marriage. First, God's prophet Malachi says positively, "What does [God] want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:15).

Next, Malachi delivers the other side: "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel" (2:16). God knows that real contentment comes from the deep union of two souls, the kind found only within the security of an exclusive and lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. "Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife?" asks Malachi (2:15).

Unfortunately, most of us have seen marriages with little evidence of such oneness. Today, divorce is increasingly common among both unchurched and churched people.

But just because it's common doesn't mean it doesn't matter. Divorce saddens God.

Yes, he can forgive it. If he could repeatedly absolve the nation of Israel for its many sins over many centuries, he can forgive a husband and wife who have wrecked their marriage.

But he would much rather see commitments kept, loyalty honored, and the spiritual oneness of man and woman kept sacred.

## SCRIPTURE

*For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.* —Malachi 3:6

In determining relationships we must begin somewhere. There must be somewhere a fixed center against which everything else is measured, where the law of relativity does not enter and we can't say "is" and make no allowances. Such a center is God. When God would make His name known to mankind He could find no better word than "I AM." When He speaks in the first person He says, "I AM", when we speak of Him we say, "He is"; when we speak to Him we say, "Thou art." Everyone and everything else measures from that fixed point. "I AM THAT I AM," (Exodus 3:14) says God, "I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

As the sailor locates his position on the sea by "shooting" the sun, so we may get our moral bearings by looking at God. We must begin with God. We are right when, and only when, we stand in a right position relative to God, and we are wrong so far and so long as we stand in any other position.

—The Pursuit of God

## How to Not Rob God

Read: Malachi 3:8-9 | Habit: Stewardship

Through the prophet Malachi God told the Israelites how they were breaking the covenant: they were robbing him.

"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'"

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. (Mal 3:8-9)

Malachi's address here focuses on what C. J. H. Wright calls "the economic angle." That is, Israel's attitude toward and use of their possessions was one indication of the health of their relationship with God. Here are two ways we can avoid robbing God like the Israelites did:

- ▶ *Recognize that everything belongs to God*—We rob God when we take for ourselves what belongs to him. As the theologian and former Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper once claimed, "No single piece of our mental world is to be sealed off from the rest and there is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" We rob God when we try to carve out a space—whether in our thoughts, our time or our finances—and try to say, "This belongs to me."
- Israel's attitude toward and use of their possessions was one indication of the health of their relationship with God

- ▶ This is the wrong attitude to have, for we are merely stewards of things that belong eternally to God. Like the Israelites, we must not rob God by holding back financial resources that belong to him. "When we give to the Lord's work," says Donald Whitney, "we should give with the belief that all we have belongs to God and with the commitment that we will use all of it as He wants."<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ *Recognize that God deserves all the credit*—A second way we rob God is to steal the credit for what we have. As Moses wrote, "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today" (Dt 8:17-18).

**PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY:** We rob God when we take what belongs to him and forget that we are merely stewards of his creation.

## A Key to Sexual Success

Richard's Christian parents had deeply impressed on him the sacredness of sex within marriage. With deep personal conviction and God's grace, he had resisted all sexual temptation and saved himself for marriage. His fiancée, Sherry, had a different experience. Raised in an unbelieving family, she had become a Christian after several sexual liaisons. When she and Richard fell in love, she tearfully confessed her past to him, and he knew her genuine conversion and repentance had put an end to the possibility of sex outside of marriage for her.

Yet, as the wedding approached, Richard couldn't help but wonder, *What will Sherry think of my inexperience? Will she be disappointed? Will she compare me to others she has known?*

When he talked about his fears to Sherry, she took his hand and said, "Richard, knowing you has blotted from my mind all thoughts of my past. You are so different from the others. I could see from the first that you were interested in me for who I am, not for what you could get from me. You treated me with respect; you wanted to know my interests, my goals, my heart. And when you learned of my past, you forgave me. Even though I knew you desired me, you made it clear you prized me too highly to defile my honor by taking what God would have us wait to enjoy. You make me feel cherished. So you see, Richard, your 'inexperience' is your badge of honor. It is part of who you are—your values, your commitment, and your love for me. It's how much you love, not what you know about love, that makes me anticipate our wedding night so much."

In our marriages we seek true intimacy. Without that intimacy, sex is never completely satisfying. The key to sexual joy is not in know-how or technique, which mates must learn and develop together, but in deep love, respect, and care for the other.

**Today's Thought**  
based on Malachi 2:14-16

*"No one should ever have to worry about being 'good enough.' That is a sex killer."*

**Henry Cloud and John Townsend,**  
*Rescue Your Love Life*

### Read Together:

**He Reads:** Proverbs 5:18-20  
**She Reads:** 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

### Pray Together:

Father, we pray that the joy we find in our marriage bed will spring from deep love and not from mere technique.

For more on this topic, turn to page 1269. For the next reading, turn to page 1043.

## ON SCRIPTURE

*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. —Malachi 4:2*

The definition of sin is fallen selfhood. God made us to be like planets—around and around they go, held by the magnetic attraction of the sun. In the same way, God is the great "Sun of righteousness." And around Him, warmed and healed and blessed and lighted by His Holy Person, all His creatures move—all the seraphim, cherubim, angels, archangels, children of God, and watchers in the skies. And best of all was man, made in His own image. We revolved around God as a planet around its sun.

Then one day the little planet said, "I'll be my own sun. Away with this God." And man fell. That's what we call the fall of man. That's where sin came in—sin reached up and took God's self and said, "I'll be self myself." And God was ruled out. As the holy apostle said, they did not like to have God in their minds, therefore God gave them over to vile affections (Romans 1:26). All the evil that the police, educators, doctors, and psychiatrists are worried about now—deviancy, sodomy, exhibitionism, and all the rest—all came as a result of man not wanting to have this God in his mind or in his heart, not recognizing Him as being God. He went out on his own to be his own little god.

Isn't that the way the average sinner acts? He's his own little god. He's the sun. He puts himself in capital letters and forgets that there's anybody up there that'll judge him.

—*The Attributes of God II*



## God's People and God's Weather

You should never worry about how much you have to give to your faith, your church—only about how faithful you are in giving. If you develop the habits of faithful stewardship, you will be ready to adapt to any changes in your life.

Joy and Hank lived in a small town, worked hard, raised their family, and then looked at each other and said, "Okay, now what?" Their empty nest seemed to open new doors of freedom and opportunity for them. So they tried to decide what new direction they wanted to go. In the beginning, all they knew was that they wanted to serve God by helping children somehow.

Because they were not wealthy, Joy and Hank felt limited in what they could do. They had carefully saved and invested through the years, but they were far from well off. More importantly, they had invested in their spiritual lives by contributing generously to the church, to hurting people, and to Christian causes. Even in tough times, they were faithful not to leave God out of their budget. Their motto when life's storms came was, "God's people and God's weather go together." So they faithfully continued their Christian walk.

One day the phone rang, and Hank answered. When the conversation ended, he looked at Joy and said, "I think we have our answer. The mission committee at the church would like to send us to Colombia to direct the orphanage there. We will manage the buildings, grounds, personnel, children, and the large budget on which the orphanage runs. And the church will pay all our expenses."

Joy sank down onto the sofa. "Wow . . ."

Then Hank asked, "So, what do you think?"

"What kind of question is that?" laughed Joy, jumping up.

"Let's get packed!"

As Matthew 25:21 says, "You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."

**Today's Thought**  
based on Malachi 3:10

*"As we faithfully give to Him, God frequently*

*entrusts more to our care. May we continue to be generous and wise with . . . [the] money the God of sovereign grace calls upon us to manage."*

**Randy Alcorn,**  
*Managing God's Money*

### Read Together:

**He Reads:** 1 Corinthians 16:2  
**She Reads:** Proverbs 3:5

### Pray Together:

Help us, Father, to always give you your part of our income first. We know that everything we have comes from you, and you will supply everything we need.

For more on this topic, turn to page 1255. For the next reading, turn to page 1049.

## Why Do Catholics Have More Books in Their Bible?

**C**atholic Bibles contain about a dozen books in the OT that are not found in Protestant Bibles—books that are often placed between the OT and NT. How did these arise and why are they included in Catholic Bibles?

The OT was written over about eleven hundred years by many authors. It was inscribed primarily in Hebrew; a few sections were in Aramaic. The last bits of the Hebrew Bible were finished before Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) conquered the region. Wherever Alexander set up rule, the Greek culture and language gained prominence. Jewish people living under Greek rule faced pressure to conform to Hellenistic (Greek) language and customs. Some stayed true to their Jewish faith while others blended Jewish and Greek ways. Still others fully adopted Greek culture. Jewish spiritual leaders realized that they might disappear as a distinct people if they forgot their spiritual roots. Around 200 B.C., 70 elders translated the Scriptures into Greek in order to keep them accessible. The result was the Septuagint (named for the seventy), which is often abbreviated as the LXX (Roman numerals for seventy).

Some interesting things about the LXX, including its role in the Catholic Bible:  
1. The LXX includes translations of the Hebrew Bible books plus 14 non-sacred books, written in Greek, which were written after the Hebrew Bible was finished. These 14 extra books appear in the Catholic Bible and are called the Apocrypha.

2. The Apocrypha includes fairly straightforward history books, wisdom literature, and books that blend history and fiction (e.g., Bel and the Dragon). We might call this last category historical fiction with a moral purpose.

3. The Apocrypha picks up the Hebrew Bible's expectation of a coming Davidic king and heightens expectation that a Messiah would come and deliver His people.

4. The LXX became canonical (authoritative) Scripture for Greek-speaking Jewish communities, but not among Jews in Israel who kept closer to their roots.

5. When the NT quotes the OT, sometimes it quotes directly from the LXX's translation of the Hebrew Bible. At other times NT authors do their own translations directly from the Hebrew text. New Testament authors never quote from the apocryphal portion of the Hebrew text. New Testament authors never regard as Scripture.

6. Because NT quotes both the LXX and the Hebrew Bible, the post-apostolic church of the third and fourth centuries (which eventually became the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches) included the Apocrypha as OT Scripture, though it was given a somewhat lesser status than the Hebrew OT books.

7. The Jewish community, objecting to how Christians mined for messianic passages in the LXX, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture in about A.D. 200.

8. The Roman Catholic Church cited two passages from the Apocrypha to support their doctrines of intercession to the saints and purgatory. Given their reliance on these passages to justify the doctrines, they were unwilling to follow the Jewish lead in rejecting the Apocrypha as non-sacred.

9. During the Protestant Reformation (sixteenth century), Christians followed the ancient Jewish lead and rejected the Apocrypha, accepting only the Hebrew/Aramaic portion of the OT as Scripture.

INTRODUCTION TO  
**MALACHI**

**BACKGROUND**

**M**alachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets; the name is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. According to a Jewish tradition, Malachi was a Levite who was part of the "Great Synagogue," which gathered and protected the Old Testament. The name Malachi means "my messenger."

At the time of Malachi, the people are discouraged by corrupt priests and have a complacent attitude about their relationship with God. Malachi writes to condemn their behavior.

**MESSAGE**

The book starts with a strong statement of God's love for his people. It continues with God asking his priests for the honor due him—in sacrifices and in teaching. God then reproaches his people for their unfaithfulness to one another, particularly in terms of divorce, intermarriage with idolaters, and violence. After

**OUTLINE**

- I. God's Love for His People
- II. Sins of Priests
- III. Sins of the People
- IV. The Coming Messenger
- V. Tithing and Service
- VI. Day of the Lord

an interlude warning of judgment—"a refiner's fire" (3:2), the prophecy turns to questions of the people robbing God by failing to bring "tithes into the storehouse" (3:10). Does one serve God in vain? No. God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous. Malachi ends with a promise of Elijah as a forerunner of the coming Lord.

**TIME**

Malachi's ministry was about a century after the other postexilic prophets (Haggai and Zechariah). The use of the Persian term for governor (*pechan*) in 1:8 shows that Malachi was written when Persia controlled Judah (539–333 B.C.), possibly when Nehemiah was deployed temporarily back to Persia; this term also appears in Nehemiah 5:14 and Haggai. Four hundred years of silence passed between the time of Malachi and the events recorded in the New Testament.

- 1:1–5
- 1:6–2:9
- 2:10–17
- 3:1–6
- 3:7–18
- 4:1–6

THE BOOK OF  
**MALACHI**

**MALACHI, A PROPHET IN THE days of Nehemiah, directs his message of judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security in their privileged relationship with God. Using the question-and-answer method, Malachi probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance. So sinful has the nation become that God's words to the people no longer have any impact. For four hundred years after Malachi's ringing condemnations, God remains silent. Only with the coming of John the Baptist (prophesied in 3:1) does God again communicate to His people through a prophet's voice.**

The meaning of the name *Mal'aki* ("My Messenger") is probably a shortened form of *Mal'akya*, "Messenger of Yahweh," and it is appropriate to the book which speaks of the coming of the "messenger of the covenant" ("messenger" is mentioned three times in 2:7; 3:1). The Septuagint used the title *Malachias* even though it also translated it "by the hand of his messenger." The Latin title is *Malachi*.

**WATCH WORDS**

- defile (pollute or desecrate)—1:7
- try (test)—3:10
- enough (sufficiency; what is required or deserved)—3:10

**GOOD MORNING, GOD**

Malachi 3:17-18

If you win a contest, you are awarded a prize. Winning a race gets you a medal. What rewards do you get if you are a Christian? Malachi describes the rewards we receive when we are faithful to the Lord. He tells us that God treats us like special possessions. People recognize a winner by the medal around his or her neck. When

we receive God's special rewards, others will see we are different. How can you tell others about the rewards for being a Christian?

Dear Lord, thank you for rewarding me for being faithful to you.

## What's in a Name?

The name Malachi means “messenger.”

## ACROSS THE GAP

The book of Malachi is a prelude to the 400 years of prophetic silence broken finally by the words of the next prophet, John the Baptist (3:1).

## BY THE NUMBERS

4 CHAPTERS  
55 VERSES  
1,671 WORDS

# MALACHI

## JACOB OVER ESAU

The word given to Malachi confirmed the message that the nation of Edom, the descendants of Esau, was destroyed and would not be rebuilt.

## In the Word

► Several passages in this last book of the Old Testament predict the coming of one who would arrive in the spirit and power of Elijah to restore Israel. In the New Testament, these references are mentioned with the coming of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Messiah, Jesus.

► “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple, the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty” (3:1).

► “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction” (4:5–6).

## TO THE PEOPLE

The message given to Malachi was to turn the hearts of the people back to God and away from their sins. Specifically condemned were contempt, partiality, idolatry, adultery, divorce, sorcery, greed and stealing.

## MALACHI IN REVIEW

### TIME TRAVELER

- God said he would leave Edom's inheritance to you. Who are you?
  - Prophets of Israel
  - The desert jackals
  - Children of Israel
  - Sons of Pharaoh

### HOT SEAT

- I am what the one true God seeks. What am I?
  - Godly offspring
  - Righteousness
  - Forgiveness
  - Sacrifice

### ANSWERS:

(5:3) D, E (6:2) V, Z (6:1) B, T, JHDTVAW (8:1) C, G, (9:11) UDJUN, 8 (11:6) UJELG, 7 (1:9) ZANUG, 9 (3:8) FQJ, HJHJHJ 5 (6:1–14) SAAH, EJHO, 7 (1:1) OJPI, 3 (8:1) B, 2 (9:7) JHJHJHJHJHJ, 1, H:VH:VH:VEZ

### MINUTIE & MISCELLANY

- God says he will be quick to testify against three things. Which of the following is not one of them?
  - Sorcerers
  - Adulterers
  - Oppressors of the fatherless
  - Those who are stumbling blocks

### 4:2 healing

3:15 wickedness ▶ see Zech. 5:8.  
3:17 Jewel ▶ see Deut. 26:18.  
3:17 spare ▶ see 2 Sam. 21:7.  
4:2 Sun ▶ see Ps. 84:11.

(Heb. *marpe*) (Prov. 6:15; Jer. 14:19) H4832: This noun refers to healing or health or applying a remedy. It can refer to physical restoration in those who are physically ill; but often it has a figurative meaning, signifying the act of, or need for, being made well spiritually, emotionally, relationally. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the morally sick state of his nation (Jer. 14:19). The Old Testament teaches there is a kind of healing that comes through encouragement, kindness, or exposure to truth (Prov. 12:18; 16:24). In His earthly ministry, Jesus performed healing miracles to announce the arrival of the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:23).

### 4:5 day

(Heb. *yom*) (Gen. 7:11; Prov. 25:13; Amos 5:8) H3117: The Hebrew noun *yom* has a variety of uses in the Old Testament. It can refer to the daylight hours in contrast to the night (Amos 5:8), or to a 24-hour day, such as a certain day of the month (Gen. 7:11). It may also refer to a time period, such as the “time” of harvest (Prov. 25:13), or even to a year (2 Sam. 13:23). The word is used in the significant phrase “the day of the LORD” (see Is. 2:12; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:14). For the prophets, the day of the LORD was the future day when God would decisively triumph over all His foes. That day will be a day of great rejoicing and blessing for God's faithful servants (Is. 2:2), whereas for God's enemies it will be a day of darkness (Amos 5:18).

4:2 wing ▶ see Job 39:13.  
4:3 ashes ▶ see Job 2:8.