

Introduction to Malachi

Malachi Study #1

Have you ever had a moment in your life that made you need to take “inventory” of it?
What about spiritual inventory?

Read Malachi 1:1

Author:

Malachi meaning “My Messenger”. Was a contemporary of Nehemiah because he dealt with similar issues once Israel returned to the promised land.

Audience:

Israel roughly around 538BC. Malachi addressed the book to “Israel” which is important as God is declaring this is the continued community of God’s chosen people.

The temple was back up to fully functioning under the Mosaic Law.

Moral degradation was atrocious as infidelity, intermarriage, fraud, divorce, and sorcery were rampant. Much of these issues were stemming from the spiritual leaders, the priests, themselves.

The prophecies in this book bear special weight because this is the last writing before a 400 year silence from God until the Messiah comes.

The prophecies of Malachi look forward to the hope of the coming Messiah and the forerunner to the Messiah.

Structure and Style:

Malachi is short but deep giving us opportunities to discover and explore the majesty of God and His love.

Much of Malachi’s style is due to Persian and Greek influences. Malachi uses Persian terms and a Greek style of question asking to invoke introspective thinking. His method is not just to teach or dictate, but to challenge with questions looking for inconsistencies in Israel’s thinking and living.

Basis Structure:

Declarative Statement, Israel’s objection, followed by an Answer

This method displays God’s Father like care and correction for His People.

Read: Hebrews 12:5-5,11

*What hesitations do you have when it comes to allowing God to assume a Fatherly, disciplinarian roles in your life?

“God loves you so much that He is willing to bear the difficult burden of exposing your sin. He loves you so much that He doesn’t allow you to wallow in it. Malachi will demonstrate just how God goes about doing that.”

Malachi Study #2

God's Definitive Love: Malachi 1:1-5

Kick-Off:

Have you ever experienced someone confirming their love with a tangible act? What did they do and how did it make you feel?

What things do you try to do in relationship to show that you care and love them? (What is your love language)?

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

Big Idea: In the midst of a hard life that left Israel questioning God's care, Israel can look to God's choosing them in history as evidence of His love.

What question does Israel ask? What does this show about their heart towards God?

What do we know about Jacob and Esau? What does it mean that God loved Jacob, but hated Esau? (How is Romans 9:10-12 helpful?)

What is Israel's response when they finally see the demonstration of God's love?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

What does Israel's doubt about God's love reveal to us about human nature? About the tendency of those who are God's kids?

What kind of God is Israel in relationship with?

God's election of Israel ought to cause Israel to feel what? How can this be a benefit in their relationship with Him? ("Election is a biblical expression of God's love for us in Christ. Election is meant to humble us, remove boasting, remove entitlement, remove pride, and eradicate self-reliance"- Christ-Centered Exposition)

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore...

When we doubt God's love how can we take comfort in the Cross of Christ? What does the Cross of Christ answer for us?

How do you feel that you have been chosen by God? What causes us to struggle that we have been chosen? How can it be a comfort?

What does the Cross display about the greatness of our Lord?

Malachi Study #3

Dishonoring God: Malachi 1:6-14

When is the last time you would say the words “excellent”, “devoted” and “committed” described your walks with Jesus? Do any of these words describe your walk today?

How do you keep things fresh with God?

BIG Idea: Israel has become apathetic and bored in their worship of the Lord who is over every nation and the one who loves them.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

What title does God take on most often in this passage? Why might He refer to himself this way?

What has Israel’s Priests worship becoming? What adjectives come to your mind to describe their worship?

Israel despises God in their commitment and contribution. How so?

What is God’s attitude towards Israel’s worship?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

Under the law, what was the sacrificial system supposed to do for Israel? How was it a blessing? (Offerings were to be simple, straightforward, and motivated people towards God’s presence).

What is the connection between Israel’s view of God and their offerings? Why is this not what God intended?

God says he would rather they “shut the doors” to the temple. What picture does this paint of God’s expectations of worship and life with Him? Do these expectations seem lifegiving or burdensome to you?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

What is our offering today? Romans 12:1-2. Does the new covenant expect more or less from us in our worship?

Read Hebrews 13. These are the offerings of the new covenant. Which one strikes you? As you look at Hebrews 13 do you find yourself offering your “BEST” or your “REST”? How so?

What about the Cross and the life by the Holy Spirit that can be of help to us in changing us internally so that our external worship is excellent, devoted, and committed?

Malachi Study #4

Poor Spiritual Leadership: Malachi 2:1-9

Ministry is both a terrifying and thrilling endeavor. How have you experienced both?

How can you struggle with people pleasing as you shepherd others?

Big Idea: God places spiritual leaders with a responsibility to teach His word; but when spiritual leaders are unfaithful not only do others suffer but they are held accountable by God.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

Context Note:

The Priesthood was up and running at this time and the Priests, from the Levitical Covenant, were the spiritual leaders for Israel. The Priests had become complacent in their ordinance of the sacrifice and they were not holding Israel accountable to the covenant relationship with God. Because the people of Israel were not experiencing prosperity it was tempting for the priests to expect less from Israel.

What does the “If... Then...” tell us about the tone of this passage?

What were the responsibilities of the priesthood (Teaching, Character, fearing God)? What is the cost of priesthood (commitment, Go-between, Deut. 21:5)?

How is vs. 5 a link between the original covenant recipients and these leaders who dispense it now? What is THE difference between these groups of people?

Israel’s priests leadership was poor. What ways did the priests fail to lead? (vs. 8-9 they disobeyed, distracted the people, disregarded the promise of God, demonstrated partiality). Why can it be so easy to fall into these same traps and temptations?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

What picture do the following words paint for us about the condition of the spiritual leadership in Israel? (Curse, Will not listen, take to heart, I have already, behold, rebuke, spread dung, So shall you know)

The consequences are vividly painted: the discipline will be humiliating. What does this display for us about the character of God? Is this mean or justified?

How can the failure of the priests lead us to appreciate and enjoy Jesus' perfect priesthood?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

Jerry Bridges outlines two types of fear "Servile" and "Filial."

Servile fear is the type of fear a servant or slaves would have of his master, like the fear invoked in the parable of the talents. But filial fear is the fear a son would have for his father. This type of fear is characterized by reverence, joy, pleasure, and awe.

Do you have fear of God? In what ways do you find yourself fearing God as a servant and not a son? When you have a filial fear of God what benefits and blessings have you experienced?

Do you understand the privilege and reasonability of spiritual leadership? How can it be easy for us as Cru staff to disregard God's promises, show partiality, under teach the Scriptures, disobey God?

How do you need Jesus in the midst of your own personal failures in action and attitude when it comes to your leadership? How do you find yourself appreciating Him?

Time of prayer for our leaders (Brookside, Cru national and regional staff).

Malachi Study #5

Breaking Covenant Marriages: Malachi 2:10-12

What marriages have you experienced that have given you a picture of God's true design for marriage?

Looking at your parents marriage, our cultures messages, and your own brokenness where do you struggle in finding God's true design for Marriage?

BIG Idea: Israel habitually struggled with faithfulness to a covenant with God and covenant renewal with Him starts with a renewal in their covenant marriages.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

Before we get to the problems of marriage, what was the first charge God brought up to Israel? How do the questions Malachi asks in vs. 10 connect our orthodoxy with our orthopraxy?

In what two ways did Israel break covenant marriages? What might Israel have been chasing when they were securing for themselves brides who followed false gods? (Remember their current needs and where they just came from).

What was the Israelite upset about? What does this text communicate to us about the reality of how willful sin affects our relationship with God?

What truths does this text communicate about divorce? Do you believe and agree?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

We might not marry men/women who worship little stone idols, but how can we compromise in marrying men and women (or dating) in the same way? What do we hope to get out of these relationships?

In a culture that makes room for divorce, how do we live out and teach a standard of marriage that is misunderstood and unknown among our peers, students, and society?

Whether single or married how do we “guard ourselves” so that we can be faithful to our marriage partners?

How does learning to love in marriage enable our ability to love others in the body of Christ?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

“The liberty of divorce does not contribute to happiness and virtue. The facility of separation would destroy all mutual confidence, and inflame every trifling dispute.”
-Edward Gibbons

Gibbons, speaking of rampant divorce in the Roman empire, communicates the destruction divorce has on society. How do we experience divorce eroding mutual confidence and validating our disagreements with one another in marriage?

“Marriage has the power to set the course of your life as a whole. If your marriage is strong, even if all the circumstances in your life around you are filled with trouble and weakness, it won’t matter. You will be able to move out into the world in strength.” - Tim Keller

For us married couples how have we experienced this to be true? For singles what picture of marriage does this paint for you? For all of us, how is this quote truer about our marriage to Jesus Christ?

Malachi Study #6

The Promised Messenger: Malachi 2:17-3:5

What is the need for preparation to succeed in all areas of life (to compete, perform, learn, work)? What are some ways that you need preparation in order to perform well at work?

BIG Idea: Israel accuses God of divine injustice, but God defends himself through the promised messenger who will purify Israel to please Him.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

What is the accusation made here? Where else in the Bible do we see the same accusations?

How is John 2:13-22 the fulfillment of Mal. 3:1? What did it mean that the messenger would come “suddenly” (remember this is 400 years before Jesus came)?

What does it mean to “prepare”? How did Jesus “prepare” us for the new covenant?

What promise is given in Mal. 3:2-3? What will the Messiah do (explain refiners fire, purifying metal)? How can we know which coming this passage is referring too? (Redeem vs Refine, Are we purified now?).

What does Mal. 3:4-5 tell us about the reality of the 2nd coming? What is the promise?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

Why is it so easy to blame God when those who are evil prosper? How does it cause us to move away from living a life of trust in Him?

How does Mal. 3:4-5 make you feel? How can fear of the Day of Judgement be a benefit for us? (Helps us not forget, validates all our actions, leads us to examination, show us how to live in light of God’s grace and mercy)

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

When you see evil prosper, how do you find yourself desiring to pursue that life? What is tempting about believing God does not uphold his promise?

How have you already experienced the purifying process of sanctification? Does it give you hope that one day God will finish the job?

In what ways is it challenging to live with eternal perspective? How do you cultivate this perspective for yourself so that God's history is desirable for you?

Malachi Study #7

Stingy with God: Malachi 3:6-12

What are the benefits of being cheap? Headaches?

Big Idea: Israel's small love of God is most clearly seen in their stinginess with the Lord, but God promises a lavish blessing if they will step out in faith and act upon His promises.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

Why do people rob people? How might this explain Israel's lack of generosity being equal to robbing God?

How does God refer to Israel? What does this communicate to Israel (Who was Jacob, when did Jacob get a name change)?

Israel has wandered, and wandered, and wandered, but God offers an opportunity to change the story. What is that opportunity? (The word "return" is a military word meaning to do an about face).

What was the "full tithe"? How do you imagine the common Israelite experienced giving?

What does the quality of their giving tell us about their distance from God? What is the root of the problem?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

What is Israel missing out on when they choose to keep the little they have? What is the allure of living out of security rather than faith?

How does this text open up your understanding of Matt 6:19-24?

What life, promises and blessings does this text open our eyes too when we live open handedly with God and give Him all He deserves?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

What convictions have you developed with the Lord about what you possess and your responsibilities before Him with those things?

Entitlement is a dangerous infection in our hearts that keep us from living out of faith (esp. with finances). In what ways is entitlement a real struggle for you? How can it lead to a life of faithlessness?

God tells us to take the 1st step (You give, then I will bless). What step of faith might God be leading you to take with your finances (stewardship, giving, letting go, considering His ways)?

Malachi Study #8

Fearing the World vs. Fearing the Lord: Malachi 3:13-18

What are you deathly afraid of? Have you ever encountered that fear and what did it do to you?

What are things you are asked to do that you don't want to do? Are there ways you are asked to serve and you just find yourself dreading it?

Big Idea: Fear is a powerful experience, force, and feeling. It has power to change and direct a lot of our behavior and choices. The problem is not that we have fear, but what is it that we do fear. The fear of God ought to be the motivation we have to our response to His covenant.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

God starts this section off by saying, "Your words have been hard against me." What does this reveal to us about Him?

What is the state of Israel's religion? What is their perspective of serving Him and repentance? (The word useless here means vain and a waist of time).

In one word what is the MAIN difference between the two groups of people in this passage? Why would you choose that word?

The word "fear" in this passage is *yare'* which means "to revere or respect." What are some of the outcomes of having this fear of the Lord?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

What do you imagine it was like for these repentant Israelites when they "spoke to one another"? What was going on as they took up a book of remembrance?

How have you witnessed these two types of Christians before (those who 'serve' begrudgingly and those who serve reverently)? Can you tell us about some one you know who serves reverently; what is their attitude and life like?

How does vs. 17 move your emotions and affections towards Jesus?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore....

“The man who has God as his treasure has all things in one.”
-AW Tozer

AW Tozer affirms Matt. 6:33 (Seek first His kingdom and all these things will be added to you). Why do you find yourself doubting that when you seek God's kingdom first you will have all things? What about this abandonment can be so difficult?

How do you find yourself struggling with the Christian walk of service and repentance? How can these things become rote practices for you?

How can we encourage each other towards this God fearing life?

Spend time asking that God would be our only treasure, that God's glory would be our only gain, that God would strip us off all things that hinder us from having Him as our only treasure.

Malachi Study #9

The End: Malachi 4

Have you ever gotten the silent treatment? Maybe from your parents... what is that like? Why does that drive us crazy?

Big Idea: The Day of Judgement is eminent and it will bring both judgement and restoration for God's people, who are sustained in their faith and obedience of the law and hope of the final victory over sin.

1. Ophthalmologist: What does the text mean...

What are the two realities people will face on the Day of Judgment? What will happen to them? What will they receive?

What promises are given for those who fear the Lord? Why do we need this? Why do we long for this?

What does it mean to "remember" the law?

Who is vs. 5 talking about?

2. The Artist: What kind of world does this text paint...

When was a time that God's eternal Kingdom was REAL and CLOSE to you?

These are the last words of God before Christ comes. For the next 400 years there will be silence from God.

Having the NT, how do these last five verses create in us a heart of anticipation for the birth of Jesus? Having studied this whole book (all the failures of leaders and God's people) how does this make us long for Christ?

What would the church look like if it was healed? If we saw victory over our sin?

3. The Theologian: What issues of life does this text invite to explore...

Consider your life for a moment. When do you find yourself focused on and thinking about eternity? What about having eternity on your heart helps give you motivation for today?

How does meditating on God's word, obedience and eternal perspective produce a spiritually fruitful and enduring faith? Is there rhythm for you in God's word (why or why not)? Has your time been productive/effective?

What truths from this short passage do you need the Father to work deeper into your heart?