

Bethel Gospel Chapel
Bible Study Guide
Introduction to Malachi

MALACHI calling! --- the last call of the Old Testament before the voice of prophecy dies into a silence of four hundred years. One great phase of Divine revelation is now to close. The last spokesman utters his soul, and retires behind the misty curtains of the past. A peculiar solemnity clings about him. What does this last speaker say? What is the final message? What is the parting word?

Our first step toward appreciating the message of Malachi is to see him amid his own times. He does not date his prophecy, but there are pointers to the approximate time of it. All agree that it is post - exilic, and later than the other two post - exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. The likelihood is that it was written a little later than the days of Nehemiah. It is well to fix in mind the main dates and events relating to the Jewish Remnant, from the time of the return, down to the ministry of Malachi.

And now, what is the special purpose, the central message, the key thought, of the book? We need not make any close analysis to find this. If we mentally place ourselves in the ring of Malachi's first audience, and read through the book at speaking pace, letting it speak to us as though it were the living voice of the prophet himself ringing in our ears, we simply cannot miss seeing that from beginning to end this little book is AN APPEAL – a powerful, passionate, pleading appeal -- an appeal to repent of sin and to return to God -- an appeal accompanied by rich promise if the people respond, and by stern warning if they refuse. Read the little book through again, and get into the eager, urgent flow of the prophet's thoughts and words, and see if this is not so.

Excerpt from the book "Explore The Book" by J.Sidlow Baxter.

ANALYSIS: 1.The Heading (1:)
2.A privileged People (1:2-5)
3.A privileged Priesthood (1:6-2:9)
4.The importance of Family Life (2:10-16)
5.The Lord is Coming with Justice (2:17-3:5)
6.The Lord Longs to Bless (3:6-12)
7.God's Judgment will Be Final (3:13-4:3) (Hebrew 3:13-21)
8.Concluding Exhortation (4:4-6) (Hebrew 3:22 - 24)

STUDIES IN MALACHI - Study 1

READ: Chapter 1:1-14

Part A - 1 - 5: Introduction

1. Who is the speaker in this section of Malachi?

2. What reason does the prophet have for adopting this format?

3. How is the opening statement "I have loved you" relevant as an introduction to the message of the prophet?

4. What attitude prompts the initial question of Israel?

5. Explain God's answer (v.2 - 5) in your own words.

6. What can we learn about God's love as we compare our circumstances with others who are outside God's covenant?

NOTE: Genesis 25:19-23; Verse 23 contains God's original prophecy concerning the future of Jacob and Esau. It is important to realize that it is only after their lives are over that God states, "Jacob have I loved," "Esau have I hated." "The verb 'hate' is to be understood in the light of God's elected love. The very fact that Jacob was chosen, 'loved', meant that Esau was rejected 'hated', rejection being implicit in the exercise of choice. Personal animosity towards Esau is not implied. Esau and his descendants, however, by nursing resentment and showing hostility towards Jacob, did bring God's judgement on themselves." (Malachi) Tyndale Commentaries.

Part B Ch. 1:6-14

7. According to v.6, how does God view his relationship with Israel?

8. What attitude toward God is implied in the questions of Israel, V6 & V7 (compare V12)

9. Read Leviticus 22:17 - 25. List the acceptable and unacceptable ingredients in a proper sacrifice - compare your discovery with v.7,8 and v.13.

10. Do people treat men with more respect than they respect God? Why or why not?

11. Explain v.10 in your own words.

12. How does the statement in v.11 fit the context of this section?

13. What is the name of one who vows but does not pay his vow? Why?

14. Could a similar situation occur today? Illustrate.

STUDIES IN MALACHI - Study 2

READ: Chapter 2:1-9

1. To whom is this section addressed?
2. What two things are required of the priest?
3. Why are they important?
4. What do you think the statement "I will curse your blessings" mean?
5. Since all believers are priests of God today, what will be the results if we fail in a similar way?
6. Why is God admonishing the priests?
7. Read Exodus 32:25 -29, Numbers 25:10 -12, What was God's covenant with Levi?
8. List the results of the covenant found in vs. 5 - 6.
9. How important are these things in our present day relationship with God? Suggest equivalent requirements in the New Testament.
10. Compare the true work of a priest outlined in v.7 with the practice of the priests of Malachi's day, v.8. What caused the difference?
11. What was the result of their behaviour?
12. Suggest ways in which God's threat was carried out?

STUDIES IN MALACHI - Study 3

READ: Chapter 2:10 - 17

1. Who is the speaker in this section?
2. V.10 contains three questions, try to give an answer to them?
3. List the three sins charged against Israel in this section.
4. How is God's sanctuary desegrated by Judah s marriage practices?
5. According to v.13 -15, what is the true basis of marriage?
6. Why does God hate divorce?

NOTE: The force of Malachi's argument about the purpose of marriage is tied to the meaning of v.15. Several interpretations have been suggested. The one which seems to best fit the context is found in Feinberg's commentary on Malachi.

It is most natural to see, since the prophet is speaking of divorce, a reference here to the original institution of marriage by God Himself. Compare Genesis 2:24: "one flesh" with "one" here. In the marriage relationship God made two into one. One wife was provided for one man. But why did God make just one woman for the man? He was seeking a godly seed; He wanted to carry on a godly remnant. Polygamy and divorce are not conducive to nurturing children in the fear of God. And ultimately these practices were not helpful to obtain the godly seed in the stock of the promised Messiah. The purpose of God in a godly seed was being counteracted and set aside by their intermarriage and divorce. In view of all this, Malachi warns them to take heed diligently to themselves that they refrain from such godless deeds.

READ: Chapter 3:1-5

1. Who is the speaker in the remainder of the book?
2. Identify the individual described as "my messenger" in v.1.
Note: Luke 1:17 and 1:76; John 1:6 26
3. Who is the second messenger spoken of in v.1?

4. What is being predicted in this section?
5. When will the things predicted be fulfilled?
6. What lessons can be learned by us from this section?

STUDIES IN MALACHI - Study 4

READ: Chapter 3:6-18

1. Explain v.6 - 7 in your own words.
2. Suggest a present day application for vs. 6 -7.
3. List what you learn about tithes in vs. 8 -12.
4. How is God tested in the giving of tithes?
5. What was to be the result of tithing? Are there corresponding results now? Explain your answer.
6. Explain what is said in vs.13 -15 in your own words.
7. Are the sentiments of vs.14 -15 ever heard today? Explain.
8. What special group are singled out for blessing v.16 -18?
9. Suggest the possible subject of conversation when such people "talked with each other.
10. Explain in your own words what the promise of blessing involves? v.16-17

11. How does the action of God in v.16 17, lead to the result promised in v.18?

READ: Chapter 4:1 - 6

1. What day is being referred to in v.1?

2. List the results for the righteous and the wicked?

3. Read Matt.17:1 - 13; Who is Elijah?

4. What is to be achieved by the coming of Elijah?

5. What curse is being promised at the end of Malachi?

6. In one sentence express the theme of Malachi. How is this message relevant to the church today?