

Malachi:



Talking About Getting All Mixed Up!

Consider It

Comprehend It

Connect It

A 3 C's Contemplative Study
By Dr. Jack M. Jacob

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All quotations throughout this study are taken from the *New American Standard Bible (1995 Revision)* published by the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, CA.

Introduction to Malachi

Author: There is some disagreement as to the author of this book. Some scholars believe that since Malachi simply means “my messenger”, that the name Malachi is not meant to be a formal name, but rather part of a title carried to the front of the work from chapter 3; however, this need not be the case. Consider the evidence for yourself.

First, the Septuagint, or the Greek version of the Old Testament, indicated that this was the work of my messenger whose name is Ezra. This might sound acceptable on the surface as Malachi deals with some of the same issues as Ezra, but it is adding words to the text that were not already there.

Second, the case has been made that there was no pedigree listed for Malachi. His father’s name, grandfather’s name, town of origin, tribe, etc. was not provided, so this could not be a reference to a person. This does not have to be the case as Malachi could have simply been so well known in his day that he did not need to address this with his audience. The more likely reason is that God’s message was Malachi’s priority.

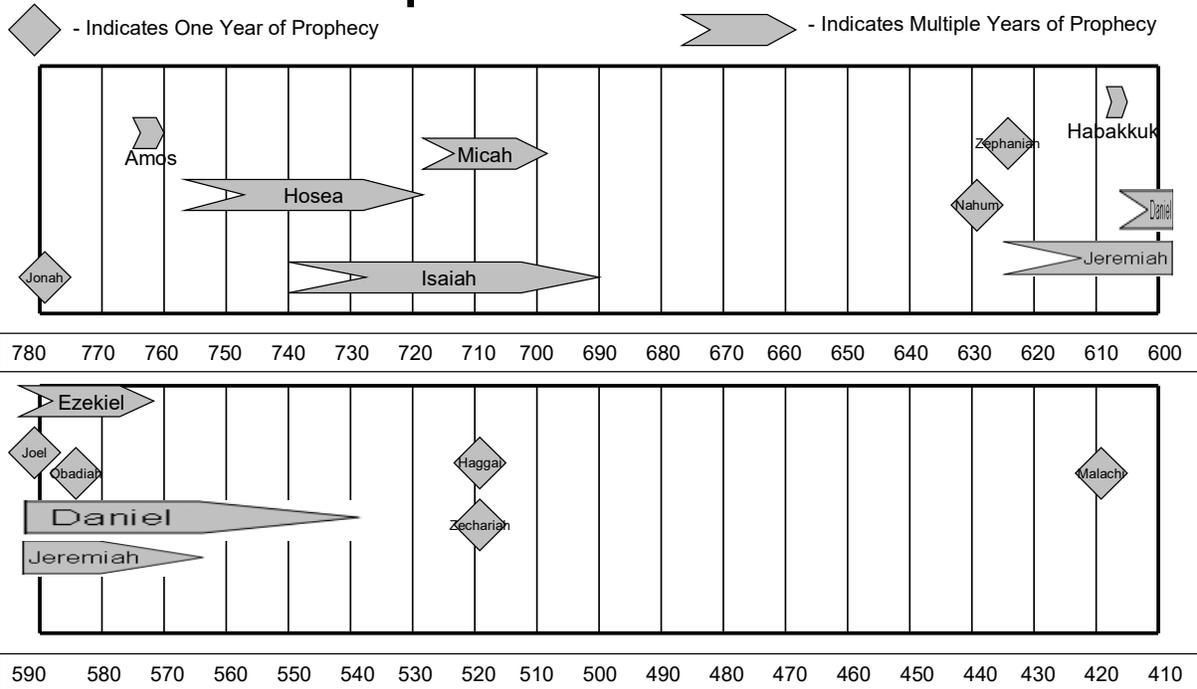
Probably the strongest reason for accepting this book as written by a person named Malachi is that the opening follows the format of all the other prophetic books that list their author by name. While not ironclad, it is still a powerful reason for believing this to be the case.

Date: Unlike many other books, we are not told that this book was written during the reign of any particular king, so getting to the issue of its writing has to come in other ways. I will present a list of clues found throughout the text and what they indicate in the following table.

Clue (Verse)	Interpretation
Malachi uses the term “governor” for the leader of the people. (1:8)	This indicates that the prophecy would have had to come after Cyrus established a governor in the area.
Malachi says sacrifices are being offered and that their offering had grown lax due to time. (1:7)	This would seem to indicate the prophecy would have had to come after the restoration of the temple in 516 BC.
Ezra and Nehemiah both dealt with marriages to foreign wives, lack of tithing, corruption of the priesthood, and oppression of the poor. But Malachi seems to indicate the people had heard these instructions and had responded with divorcing every wife. (2:14-15)	This would make the prophecy dated some time after Ezra and Nehemiah. Nehemiah’s last visit was in 424 BC, so it is logical to place the writing somewhere around 420 BC.

Contemporary Prophets: From the chart below, it should be noted that Malachi was the only prophet of his day. Also the last word from God before John the Baptist would come in the New Testament.

Prophetic Timeline



Permission Granted to Duplicate

Historical Situation: See Date section above. In addition to this data, consider the following: First, the people had been back from exile long enough to become lax in their worship. Second, the people did not have a memory of all God had done for them to facilitate their return from slavery and exile. Third, the people were no longer affected by the experiences of their parents or grandparents in worship, or lack of morals. Fourth, there was no major disruption to worship. Worship was going on as an empty, rote practice, and continued without resistance. Lastly, the people were more concerned with taking care of themselves due to their agricultural famine. The famine was the judgment for their sin and they sinned more by trying to fix the famine themselves through the worship of other gods.

Main Focus of the Book: The main focus of the book of Malachi seems fairly straight forward. When we lose our focus on God, it begins to affect all of our life. It throws off our priorities in worship, relationships, justice, treatment of others, service to God, and even our understanding of what life is all about. God constantly calls us back into right relationship with Him to clear up this confusion, but we must hear and respond.

Outline of the Book of Malachi

- I. Failing to See God's Love Means Failing to See God (1:1-5)
- II. Failing to See God's Love Means Losing Our Focus in Worship (1:6-2:9)
- III. Failing to See God's Love Destroys Our Families (2:10-16)
- IV. Failing to See God's Love Means Failing to Understand God's Justice (2:17-3:6)
- V. Failing to See God's Love Means Failing to Trust God to Provide (3:7-4:3)
- VI. Remembering God Means Receiving Hope for the Future (4:4-6)

Personal Word: As you study this last prophetic book within the minor prophets, you may be tempted to go through the lessons quickly and give only shallow answers. I would encourage you to do otherwise. I would encourage you to take time, search your heart and deal honestly and earnestly with God about what you find. Finally, I would also encourage you to attempt to explain what you learn to someone else, so that they might benefit from your study as well.

If you are studying this in a group, please be prepared each time you meet so that your insights might help the entire group to grow closer to God.

May God richly bless you as you study His Word.

Dr. Jack M. Jacob

Reading Record for Malachi

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Record Observations Below:



Lesson One

Empty Worship Results in Empty Lives Malachi 1:1 through 2:9

Have you ever been bored? I mean REALLY BORED?! Of course, you have. Chances are good that you have been bored many times. What does it mean to be bored anyway? It means to have lost interest in something yet still being around or involved in that something, but no longer inspired by that thing or your involvement with it. People are bored in many settings. They can be bored in school, church, play, sports, games, reading, bible study...you name it. Most of the time, boredom can be cured by moving on to something more exciting. Sometimes you just must apply yourself to what you are doing, and the boredom disappears.

For some people, the most boring place is church. They are bored because they do not understand the Bible, the songs make no sense, and praying seems like a waste of time. This is true of many people who sit in our churches week after week. For some of them, it is because they do not know Christ personally, so they spend all their time in worship hearing things about Him, but it is of no interest because they do not have a relationship with Him. But what about those of us who claim to be believers? Can we get bored? Can we lose our focus in the Christian life? You bet we can! What do we do about that? This first lesson in Malachi may provide some help for just that kind of situation in your life.

As you study this lesson, ask yourself the following questions:

- (1) Do I know Jesus as my Savior?

- (2) Am I bored with church?

- (3) If I am bored with church, why might this be?

- (4) What needs to change?

Consider It

1. For whom was this message intended? (1:1-5)
2. What statement did God use as a charge against the people? (1:1-5)
3. How did the people respond to God's charge? (1:1-5)
4. How did God defend His statement that He had loved them? (1:1-5)
5. What promise did God make concerning Edom's future? (1:1-5)
6. What promise did God make concerning Israel's future? (1:1-5)
7. What charge did God bring next? (1:6-14)
8. Who did God say was despising His name? (1:6-14)
9. How did God say they were despising His name? (1:6-14)
10. How did they respond to God's accusation? (1:6-14)

11. What kind of sacrifice were the people offering? (1:6-14)
12. What question did God ask the priests concerning their sacrifices? (1:6-14)
13. How did God insinuate He was responding to these sacrifices? (1:6-14)
14. What surprising thing did God say He desired? (1:6-14)
15. How did God say the nations would one day treat His name? (1:6-14)
16. How were the Israelites responding to God's name? (1:6-14)
17. How were some of the people getting their sacrifices? (1:6-14)
18. What warning did God give the people concerning their practice? (1:6-14)
19. What warning did God give the priests? (2:1-9)
20. What reason did God give for the difficulties Israel was experiencing? (2:1-9)

21. How did God say it would get worse? (2:1-9)
22. For what purpose did God say He would do this? (2:1-9)
23. How had the priests responded to God's covenant in the past? (2:1-9)
24. For what purpose had God made them priests? (2:1-9)
25. What function were the priests to serve? (2:1-9)
26. How had the priests failed to serve? (2:1-9)
27. What were the consequences of their failure? (2:1-9)

Comprehend It

1. Who was Edom?
2. According the Genesis 25:19-26, how did God love Jacob and hate Esau?
3. What did the response of Israel to God's claim of loving them indicate about how far they had actually gone in their sin?

4. According to Obadiah verses 10-16, what was God communicating to Israel concerning His activity towards Edom?
5. Why did God use a statement about Israel's enemies to show He had loved Israel?
6. In what other prophetic books was God trying to get people to acknowledge He was to be exalted beyond the borders of Israel?
7. What group of people did God begin to address in 1:6 through 2:9?
8. What is a priest? What was their job?
9. From God's accusation of the priests, what do we know about what was going on at the time religiously? Governmentally? Morally?
10. According to Deuteronomy 15:19-23, list all the wrong practices concerning their priestly sacrifices.
11. What would have led them to do this?
12. Why did God ask them if they would treat their governor that way?
13. How was God responding to their worship? Why?

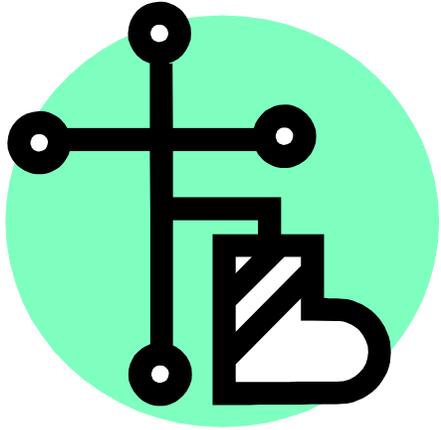
14. If you were Jewish, how would you respond to a prophet who said God wishes you would just shut down the temple and lock the doors?
15. What was God's point?
16. Why was God not going to accept this kind of worship?
17. Why could the priests not see the correlation between the way they were sacrificing and their difficulties?
18. From God's statement in Malachi 2:4, how did the people respond?
19. Contrast God's covenant with the priests to their lack of priestly behavior.
20. How did the people respond to the priests?

Connect It

1. Have you ever had a difficult time that caused you to question God's love for you or your family? If so, describe it.
2. What caused that difficulty?

3. Did you have anyone come alongside to help? If so, how did you respond?
4. List at least 10 things God has done to show His love for you?
5. How about ten more?
6. Why is it important for us to acknowledge these things?
7. What can happen to our worship if we forget these things?
8. From question 8 in the previous section, what is the job of a priest?
9. Who is to do this job today?
10. What was the basic sin of the priests?
11. How did they commit this sin?
12. Have you ever tried to give the leftovers of your life to God? If so, what happened?

13. Why is God so concerned about His Name?
14. Name one thing you did today to make His Name be glorified.
15. Name one thing you did this week that did not lift up His Name.
16. What tends to distract you from worship?
17. How does God get your attention to make you listen to Him more carefully?
18. What is God saying to you right now about your walk with Him?



Lesson Two

What We Believe About God Affects Our Relationships

Malachi 2:10 through 3:6

Have you ever noticed how much some things affect other things? For instance, if you hit your thumb with a hammer, it is not just your thumb that hurts. Your brain has to register the pain. Your arm jerks back involuntarily. Your eyes immediately look to see what you have done. So much is affected by just a simple action.

I heard a story about this once... There was a man in a village in Eastern Europe and the people there were very poor. One day, the man had no food left, but was hungry, so he went to the town well and drew a large bucket of water. He gathered some firewood and built a fire over which he placed a large pot and filled it with the water from the bucket. He had nothing to put in the pot, so he placed a stone in the water.

Before long, the people of the town, knowing the man had nothing, came by to see what he was cooking. He told them he was making stone soup. He promised to share it with them if they would simply provide one ingredient. The first family brought a carrot, which was cut up and put in the pot. The second family brought an onion, which was cut up and put in the pot. This went on and on until the pot could not contain the soup any longer. The soup was split into many pots. At the end of the day, the entire village had enough soup to last a month and that was long enough for their hard times to end.

What is the moral of the story? One person can make a difference by affecting other people. This was done in a positive way, but it can also happen when one thing affects another negatively. In this lesson, the people of Israel have begun to question God's goodness, justice, love, and even existence and this lack of belief in God began to affect other areas of their lives. The most serious was the life of their family.

Have you ever had a time when your faith began to waver? If so, describe it.

What else did that affect?

Consider It

1. Who was the one father Malachi was talking about? (2:10-16)
2. How were the people of Israel treating their brothers? (2:10-16)
3. How did this influence what the world thought regarding the relationship of Israel to God? (2:10-16)
4. How had Judah profaned God's sanctuary? (2:10-16)
5. How was God going to treat those who had profaned His sanctuary? (2:10-16)
6. What other offense had Israel committed? (2:10-16)
7. How did God respond to the worship of those who were guilty? (2:10-16)
8. How did the guilty attempt to change God's mind? (2:10-16)
9. How did God describe those who tried to change His mind? (2:10-16)
10. What purpose did God have for the men of Israel marrying the women of Israel? (2:10-16)

11. What two things did God say He hated? (2:10-16)
12. What final exhortation did God offer? (2:10-16)
13. What accusation did God make against Israel next? (2:17 through 3:6)
14. How had Israel wearied God? (2:17 through 3:6)
15. How did God respond to Israel's accusation God was not being just? (2:17 through 3:6)
16. How did God say the people of Israel would respond to that day? (2:17 through 3:6)
17. To what did God compare Himself on that day? (2:17 through 3:6)
18. To what end was God going to purify the people? (2:17 through 3:6)
19. What was God's answer to their crying about sacrifices? (2:17 through 3:6)
20. What specific sins did God say He would judge? (2:17 through 3:6)

21. How did God finally respond to the charge of His not being just? (2:17 through 3:6)

Comprehend It

1. Why did God have to remind the people that they were brothers and sisters and all created by Him?

2. How did mistreating their brothers profane God's covenant?

3. Look at the following verses and list what is considered an abomination:
 - a. Leviticus 18:22

 - b. Leviticus 20:13

 - c. Deuteronomy 7:25-26

 - d. Deuteronomy 12:31

 - e. Deuteronomy 13:12-15

 - f. Deuteronomy 17:1

 - g. Deuteronomy 18:9-12

- h. Deuteronomy 22:5

 - i. Deuteronomy 23:17-18

 - j. Deuteronomy 25:13-16

 - k. Proverbs 3:32

 - l. Proverbs 6:16-19

 - m. Proverbs 12:22
-
- 4. From this context, how would you describe the seriousness of Israel's marrying of foreign wives?

 - 5. Why would marrying foreign wives be so serious?

 - 6. Why did God say to cut off everyone who marries a foreign wife and continues to offer sacrifices?

 - 7. Why did God not respond to the tears of the people on their couches?

8. What does this tell you about their sorrow? About God's character?

9. In Ezra and Nehemiah, just prior to Malachi, God had told the people to put away their foreign wives. In this passage, He says He hates divorce. Is this a contradiction? Why or why not?

10. Why does God hate divorce?

11. To what did God compare divorce?

12. Why were the people struggling with seeing and accepting God's justice?

13. Who was the messenger God said was coming to clear the way before Him?

14. How did John the Baptist fulfill the characteristics of the messenger that was to come according to 3:1-6?

15. Using a Bible dictionary, explain what is meant by fuller's soap.

16. Using a Bible dictionary, describe the process of refining silver.

17. How did the two apply to the work of John the Baptist?

18. Match the following verses with the sins they prohibit from 3:5:
- 19.

- a. Sorcerers
- b. Adulterers
- c. Those who swear falsely
- d. Those who oppress the wage earner
- e. Those who oppress the widow
- f. Those who oppress the orphan
- g. Those who turn aside the alien
- h. Those who do not fear the Lord

- 1. Leviticus 19:14
- 2. Leviticus 19:13
- 3. Exodus 22:22a
- 4. Exodus 20:14
- 5. Exodus 22:21
- 6. Exodus 22:22b
- 7. Deuteronomy 18:11
- 8. Exodus 20:16

20. Summarize God's response to the people saying He was not just.
21. What did God mean when He said He does not change?
22. How does this fit together with scriptures like Genesis 6:6?
23. What does this tell us about God's Word? About God?

Connect It

1. God told Israel that mistreating their brothers would cause people to think His covenant had no value. Does this hold true today? Why or why not?
2. How does our treatment of our Christian brothers and sisters affect how the world sees Christianity?
3. Is there any Christian brother or sister with whom you need to reconcile? If so, write down their names.
4. What must you do to make this right?
5. Stop right now and pray and ask God to give you the courage to carry out those actions.

6. Marrying foreign wives led the Israelite men towards idolatry. Do you have any friends or relationships that tempt you towards sin? If so, who are they?
7. How does this passage apply to that situation?
8. How did living in known sin affect the acceptability of the worship of Israel?
9. How does this apply to your life today?
10. This passage refers to marriage as a covenant. What does this mean?
11. What was God's purpose for pointing out the sin of divorce in Israel?
12. How does this apply to divorce today? Or does it?
13. How can a person repent of divorce?
14. Have you ever questioned God's fairness or justice? If so, why?
15. What did you think would have been fair and just of God in that circumstance?

16. What is fair for God to do according to Romans 3:23 and 6:23?
17. Do we wish for God's justice in that situation? Why or why not?
18. What needs to be adjusted in your attitude towards God?
19. What needs to change in your walk with Christ?



Lesson Three

What Is Life About Anyway!?

Malachi 3:7 through 4:6

Chances are good, if you watch television or movies, read the newspaper, read magazines, or talk much with people from work or school, you have encountered many answers to the question contained in the title of this lesson. How do we know the answer? What happens when our answer is in conflict with someone else's answer? How can we know one way is better than another?

These are all good questions if we are figuring out life on our own, and without any guidance. Fortunately, we are not left this way. The Bible contains the answers we need for this all-important question. But what happens when we begin to ignore the Bible and are deaf to God's calling us back to Himself?

Life can sometimes be confusing when we do not stop to understand and listen to God's call. It is kind of like little Billy. Billy was in Sunday School one day and his teacher asked him if he loved Jesus. Billy responded that he did not like Jesus at all. His teacher, quite taken aback by Billy's response, asked why he did not love Jesus. Billy responded that he did not like Jesus because he did not like girls. This confused his teacher even more. She asked what the two had to do with one another. Billy responded, "The Bible says in John 10:10, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that you might have wife and wife more abundant!"

Billy was confused about God because he did not listen carefully to God's word. He also did not take the time to get help in understanding God. This is what the Israelites were facing in Malachi's day. In this final lesson, we will look at their response to God and His attempts to reach out to them. As you study this lesson, I hope that you will consider your own walk with Christ and listen for His voice to direct you in dealing with life's questions.

Have you ever misunderstood something about God or His Word? If so, list it below.

What changed your mind?

Consider It

1. What did God say was the reason that He seemed far away to the people? (3:7-12)

2. What question did the people ask God in response to His statement? (3:7-12)

3. Of what crime did God accuse the people? (3:7-12)

4. How did God say they were committing this crime? (3:7-12)

5. Who did God say was guilty of this offense? (3:7-12)

6. How did God tell the people to make this right? (3:7-12)

7. How did God promise to respond to their efforts to make it right? (3:7-12)

8. How would the rest of the world react to God's actions regarding Israel? (3:7-12)

9. What else had Israel done against God? (3:13 through 4:3)

10. How did the people treat service to God? (3:13 through 4:3)

11. How did this attitude influence other parts of their value system? (3:13 through 4:3)
12. How did those who feared the Lord react to these statements? (3:13 through 4:3)
13. How did God ensure they (and we) would remember His activity? (3:13 through 4:3)
14. What promise did God make to those who repented of their ways and followed Him again? (3:13 through 4:3)
15. What promise did God make to those who would not repent of their ways and follow Him again? (3:13 through 4:3)
16. What did God promise to do before the day of judgment? (4:4-6)
17. What would this accomplish? (4:4-6)

Comprehend It

1. God told the people they had turned away from His laws and statutes from the beginning. Give examples of this from other parts of the Old Testament.
2. What does this reflect about their thought towards God?

3. What is a tithe?
4. Where did tithing first appear in the Bible?
5. How would you respond to someone that said tithing is a part of the law and Jesus has fulfilled the law, so tithing is not necessary today?
6. What is an offering?
7. How are tithes and offerings alike? How are they different?
8. Why did God call a lack of tithing robbery?
9. How had God been reacting to such robbery?
10. What was the solution?
11. What is the storehouse to which Malachi refers?
12. What did God mean by “opening up the floodgates of heaven”?

13. How were the other nations referring to Israel? How would they eventually?
14. What word best describes the attitude of the people in relationship to serving God? Why did you choose this word?
15. How did this attitude warp their perception of other spiritual matters?
16. Did all Israel feel this way? How do we know?
17. What did God say would come along with a changed life and changed attitude?
18. What is the future of those who fear and esteem the Lord?
19. What is the future for those who do not fear and esteem the Lord?
20. Does this still apply today? Why or why not?
21. Would you say the book of Revelation agrees with this book? Why or why not?
22. With what hope did God close this prophecy?

Connect It

1. Does God still see a lack of tithing and offerings as robbery? Why or why not?
2. Do you tithe as the word reflects? Why or why not?
3. What might be some reasons that people would give for not tithing?
4. Are any of these reasons valid? Why or why not?
5. Can you give an offering without tithing? Why or why not?
6. How do we understand this passage in light of 2 Corinthians 9:6-7?
7. Does 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 do away with tithing? Why or why not?
8. Does living in the age of grace nullify tithing? Why or why not?
9. God promised to meet the needs of those who tithe. Does this still apply today?
10. If you tithe, list an example that shows God has met your needs in a special way.

11. How is tithing and your general attitude towards serving God related or are they?
12. How did the selfish attitude of the people affect how they interpreted other events of their day?
13. How did that attitude affect their view of God?
14. Do you ever struggle with either of these? Why or why not?
15. What does 3:16-18 indicate about those times when we question whether we are alone in our walk with Christ?
16. What did God say was a requirement to distinguish between good and evil?
17. How does Chapter 4 encourage you in your walk with Christ?
18. Are there any attitudes or actions that need to change in your life? If so, what?
19. What do you plan to do about it?
20. How do God's promises apply to your situation?

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