

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**4-10-19**

**Overview Book of Malachi**

A vase shatters, brushed by a careless elbow; a toy breaks, handled roughly by young fingers; fabric rips, pulled by strong and angry hands. Spills and rips take time to clean up, effort to repair, and money to replace, but far more costly are shattered relationships. Unfaithfulness, untruths, hateful words, and forsaken vows tear delicate personal bonds and inflict wounds not easily healed. Most tragic, however, is a broken relationship with God. God loves perfectly and completely. And his love is a love of action—giving, guiding, and guarding. He is altogether faithful, true to his promises to his chosen people. But consistently they spurn their loving God, breaking the covenant, following other gods, and living for themselves. So their relationship with him is shattered. But the breach is not irreparable; all hope is not lost. God can heal and mend and reweave the fabric. Forgiveness is available. And that is grace.

This is the message of Malachi, God's prophet in Jerusalem. His words reminded the Jews, God's chosen nation, of their willful disobedience, beginning with the priests (1:1-2:9) and then including every person (2:10-3:15). They had shown contempt for God's name (1:6), offered defiled sacrifices (1:7-14), led others into sin (2:7-9), broken God's laws (2:11-16), called evil "good" (2:17), kept God's tithes and offerings for themselves (3:8-9), and become arrogant (3:13-15). The relationship was broken, and judgment and punishment would be theirs. In the midst of this wickedness, however, a faithful few—the remnant—still loved and honored God. God would shower his blessings upon these men and women (3:16-18).

Malachi paints a stunning picture of Israel's unfaithfulness that clearly shows the people to be worthy of punishment, but woven throughout this message is hope—the possibility of forgiveness. This is beautifully expressed in 4:2—"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves."

Malachi concludes with a promise of the coming of "the prophet Elijah," who will offer God's forgiveness to all people through repentance and faith (4:5-6). The book of Malachi forms a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. As you read Malachi, see yourself as the recipient of this word of God to his people. Evaluate the depth of your commitment, the sincerity of your worship, and the direction of your life. Then allow God to restore your relationship with him through his love and forgiveness.

**VITAL STATISTICS**

**PURPOSE:** To confront the people with their sins and to restore their relationship with God

**AUTHOR:** Malachi

**ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:** The people in Jerusalem

**DATE WRITTEN:** Approximately 430 B.C.

**SETTING:** Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah were postexilic prophets to Judah (the southern kingdom). Haggai and Zechariah rebuked the people for their failure to rebuild the temple. Malachi confronted them with their neglect of the temple and their false and profane worship.

**KEY VERSES:** "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. . . . But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves" (4:1-2).

**KEY PEOPLE:** Malachi, the priests

**KEY PLACES:** Jerusalem, the temple

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Malachi's literary style employs a dramatic use of questions asked by God and his people (for example, see 3:7-8).

## THE BLUEPRINT

1. The sinful priests (1:1—2:9)
2. The sinful people (2:10—3:15)
3. The faithful few (3:16—4:6)

Malachi rebuked the people and the priests for neglecting the worship of God and failing to live according to his will. The priests were corrupt; how could they lead the people? They had become stumbling blocks instead of spiritual leaders. The men were divorcing their wives and marrying pagan women; how could they have godly children? Their relationship to God had become inconsequential. If our relationship with God is unimportant, we need to take stock of ourselves by setting aside our sinful habits, putting the Lord first, and giving God our best each day.

## MEGATHEMES

### God's Love

**EXPLANATION:** God loves his people even when they ignore or disobey him. He has great blessings to bestow on those who are faithful to him. His love never ends.

**IMPORTANCE:** Because God loves us so much, he hates hypocrisy and careless living. This kind of living denies him the relationship he wants to have with us. What we give and how we live reflects the sincerity of our love for God.

## **The Sin of the Priests**

**EXPLANATION:** Malachi singled out the priests for condemnation. They knew what God required, yet their sacrifices were unworthy and their service was insincere; they were lazy, arrogant, and insensitive. They had a casual attitude toward the worship of God and observance of God's standards.

**IMPORTANCE:** If religious leaders go wrong, how will the people be led? We are all leaders in some capacity. Don't neglect your responsibilities or be ruled by what is convenient. Neglect and insensitivity are acts of disobedience. God wants leaders who are faithful and sincere.

## **The Sin of the People**

**EXPLANATION:** The people had not learned the lesson of the Exile, nor had they listened to the prophets. Men were callously divorcing their faithful wives to marry younger pagan women. This was against God's law because it disobeyed his commands about marriage and threatened the religious training of the children. But pride had hardened the hearts of the people.

**IMPORTANCE:** God deserves our very best honor, respect, and faithfulness. But sin hardens our heart to our true condition. Pride is unwarranted self-esteem; it is setting your own judgment above God's and looking down on others. Don't let pride keep you from giving God your devotion, money, marriage, and family.

## **The Lord's Coming**

**EXPLANATION:** God's love for his faithful people is demonstrated by the Messiah's coming. The Messiah will lead the people to the realization of all their fondest hopes. The day of the Lord's coming will be a day of comfort and healing for a faithful few, and a day of judgment for those who reject him.

**IMPORTANCE:** At Christ's first coming, he refined and purified all those who believed in him. Upon his return, he will expose and condemn those who are proud, insensitive, or unprepared. Yet God is able to heal and forgive. Forgiveness is available to all who come to him.