



Malachi: Questions and Answers with the Living God

A study guide for individuals, families, and community groups

This booklet accompanies Tyneside Church Central's teaching series on Malachi. Please use it to help you study through Malachi alongside the series. The questions suggested after each passage can be used as the basis for group study in a community group, family worship in the home, or private study and reflection. This booklet is available in both .pdf and .mobi formats. Please feel free to share this booklet with others who will find it useful, but please do not alter its content, charge for it, or use it for any commercial means.

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An Introduction to Malachi

Malachi, whose name means 'my messenger' in Hebrew, was a prophet who wrote this book around the middle of the 5th century B.C. As such, he lived and wrote after the Jewish exiles had returned from Babylon to Judah, and was likely to have overlapped with Ezra and Nehemiah (who also lived and wrote after the return from Babylon)*. Indeed, four key themes overlap between these three books, namely preaching against corrupt and complacent priests; preaching against ungodly marriage; preaching against social injustice; and preaching against neglected tithing.

At the time when Malachi was writing it seems that many of the priests, leaders, and people had become complacent, cynical, and compromised. Although they maintained an outward form of 'religious' correctness, it is clear from Malachi's writing that they had strayed far from God in their thinking and behaviour. In addition, there was a pervading sense of insignificance and perhaps disillusionment among the Jews; several decades earlier, Haggai and Zechariah had urged the rebuilding of the temple, and called for a return to sincere devotion to Yahweh. They had prophesied future blessings, glory, and the return of God's presence. Yet, in Malachi's time they were experiencing economic difficulties, poor crops, opposition from neighbouring peoples, and the rule of a foreign superpower. Furthermore, there seemed to be no sign of the return of God's glorious presence.

It was into this context that God called and empowered Malachi to preach and write, urging true repentance from sins and wholehearted commitment to the covenant. Through Malachi, God assures Israel that He will indeed keep His promises. In fact, God promises that He is going to send a messenger, and then He Himself will come - and He will put things right (3.1-5). As Malachi concludes, so does the entire Old Testament; leaving us in glorious anticipation of what is coming in the New Testament.

Malachi has a unique and powerful literary structure; it is divided into units which have broadly this pattern: 1) God states the particular sin of His people, 2) the people question this, 3) God explains how they have indeed sinned against Him. Because of this distinctive pattern, we have called this teaching series '**Questions and Answers with the Living God**'.

**The return from Babylon happened in 538 B.C., when the Persian ruler Cyrus permitted the Jewish exiles to return (2 Chronicles 36.23). For a brief overview presentation of the Bible's storyline, please see <http://bit.ly/1cT1sLn>*



Malachi 1.1-5

1 The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

2 “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob's brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob ³ but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.” **4** If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country’, and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry for ever.’” **5** Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!” [ESV]

God choosing to spare Israel destruction shows His great love

Do you ever feel unloved by God? In this passage, God reminds Israel of His great love for them in choosing them, and then sparing them the destruction that has come to Edom.

How does looking at the cross of Jesus Christ teach us of God's love for us?



Malachi 1.6-2.9

⁶ “A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ ⁷ By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the Lord's table may be despised. ⁸ When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favour? says the Lord of hosts. ⁹ And now entreat the favour of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favour to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. ¹⁰ Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. ¹¹ For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. ¹³ But you say, ‘What a weariness this is’, and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord. ¹⁴ Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

2 “And now, O priests, this command is for you. ² If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honour to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. ³ Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. ⁴ So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. ⁵ My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. ⁷ For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. ⁸ But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts, ⁹ and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.” [ESV]

Honour your heavenly Father

In what ways do you dishonour God's Name? Think particularly about your areas of influence.

The New Testament teaches that all Christians are ‘priests’ (cf. 1 Peter 2.9). What difference does that truth make as you read this passage from Malachi?



Malachi 2.10-2.16

¹⁰ Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!

¹³ And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour from your hand. ¹⁴ But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." [ESV]

Be faithful

In what areas of your life are you guilty of faithlessness or unfaithfulness to God?

How does the gospel of Jesus Christ teach us about faithfulness?



Malachi 2.17-3.5

¹⁷ You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied Him?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”

3 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. ² “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. ³ He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

⁵ “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the Lord of hosts. [NASB]

God will put things right

In what areas of your life are you condoning injustice and deception?

In what ways are you experiencing ‘refining’ by the Lord at the present time? In what ways is this passage a comfort when we a) are being painfully refined by God b) are suffering injustice?



Malachi 3.6-12

⁶ “Because I, Yahweh, have not changed, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed.

⁷ “Since the days of your fathers, you have turned from My statutes; you have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Hosts.

But you ask: “How can we return?”

⁸ “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!”

You ask: “How do we rob You?”

“By not making the payments of the tenth and the contributions. ⁹ You are suffering under a curse, yet you—the whole nation—are still robbing Me. ¹⁰ Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way,” says the Lord of Hosts. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not ruin the produce of your land and your vine in your field will not fail to produce fruit,” says the Lord of Hosts. ¹² “Then all the nations will consider you fortunate, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of Hosts. [HCSB]

God blesses those who return to Him

In what areas of your life is there compromise or half-heartedness? How does God call us to respond?

In the gospel, how does Jesus show us what it is to give everything, and how does He help us to follow Him in this?



Malachi 3.13-4.6

¹³ “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ ¹⁴ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? ¹⁵ And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.”

¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. ¹⁷ “They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. [ESV]

⁴ “For indeed, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and everyone who commits wickedness will become stubble. The coming day will consume them,” says the Lord of Hosts, “not leaving them root or branches. ² But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. ³ You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing,” says the Lord of Hosts.

⁴ “Remember the instruction of Moses My servant, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. ⁵ Look, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. ⁶ And he 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.” [HCSB]

God’s faithful ones will not be disappointed

In what ways do you doubt God or ‘speak against’ Him?

How does this passage point us forward to Jesus? How does the gospel help us to persevere in faith?

