

Malachi 1-2—God's Messenger

Background

- Malachi means “My Messenger”
- Historical Background
- Literary Feature: “The text features a series of questions asked by both God and the people. Frequently the Lord’s statements are followed by sarcastic questions introduced by “But you ask”. In each case the Lord’s response is given.” (NIV Study Bible)

Jacob vs. Esau (Malachi 1: 1-5)

1. Our first instance of “But you ask” appears in verse 2. How did God show His love to Jacob’s descendants Israel? See **Hosea 11:1** for one example.
2. It can be disturbing for us to read “but Esau I have hated”. How can this expression of God’s “hatred” be understood? Consider **Luke 14:25-26**; **Romans 9:9-16**; **1 Timothy 2:4**.

Rebuking the Priests for Polluted Sacrifices (Malachi 1: 6-10)

3. What was God’s standard for the animals offered as sacrifices (see **Leviticus 22:20-22**)?
4. According to verses 7-8, what ceremonial offenses were the priests committing that revealed their contempt for God’s name?
5. Even though the priests were violating God’s prescriptions for sacrifices, they assumed their polluted sacrifices would be acceptable though frequent repetition. See **Mark 7:6-13**.
 - a. What damage can man-made traditions do to the commandments of God?
 - b. How can traditions and ceremonies strengthen faith?

“The people knew the story of Cain and Abel and their sacrifices to God. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted, not because the Lord likes lambs better than vegetables—Abel being a shepherd and Cain a farmer—but because ‘Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock’. –People’s Bible Commentary

Giving Leftovers to the Lord (Malachi 1: 11-14)

6. What does God desire from all the Gentile nations (see v. 11)?

7. How were the priests' sins affecting this goal and the Lord's ultimate plan of salvation

8. Read **Luke 21:1-4**. Even though the widow gave the smallest offering, why was Jesus commending her over the rich people who gave abundantly?

Admonition for the Priests (Malachi 2: 1-9)

9. What instruction was the Lord expecting the priests to give to the people (verses 6-7)?

10. What did the priests do instead—and what was God's reaction?

Judah Unfaithful (Malachi 2: 10-17)

11. Malachi turns from his rebuke of the priesthood to the sins of the people. What sins did he decry (verses 11, 15-16)?

12. Why were these sins so damaging (see **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**)?

“Malachi announced strong rebukes from the Lord’s judgment throne against corrupt priests and those residents of Judah who simultaneously had broken their marriage vows and their faith with God. He used theoretical questions to spur their repentance and did not hold back when informing them of the consequences of their sins. The prophet has therefore set the stage for his prophecy’s main feature: the promised Messiah, whose prophecies we will read about in our next session.” – LifeLight Leader’s Guide

Sources:

NIV and ESV Study Bibles
Peoples Bible Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
LifeLight Leaders Guide and Study Guide on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Luke 14:25-26 ²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Romans 9:9-16 ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— ¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, ^[b] but on God, who has mercy.

1 Timothy 2:4 Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Leviticus 22:20-22 ²⁰ You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you. ²¹ And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. ²² Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the Lord or give them to the Lord as a food offering on the altar.

Mark 7:6-13 ⁶ And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” ⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God) ^[d]— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

Luke 2:1-4 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Deuteronomy 7:3-4 ³ You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.