

MALACHI

Week 1

OVERVIEW

400 years is a long time. That's how long God let the message of Malachi sit with Israel. After the exile, God's chosen people still had not learned their lesson. In Malachi, God calls them out for being fake and unfaithful. This study will challenge us to look at our own hearts to see whether we are faking it in some area of the Christian life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

Israel's History		
Timeline	People	Text
Israel's Unfaithfulness	Ex. Solomon	Ex. 1 Kings 11
Divided Kingdom (North: Israel / South: Judah)	Rehoboam (king of Judah, son of Solomon) Jeroboam (king of Israel) Shemaiah (prophet)	1 Kings 12 2 Chronicles 10 (cf Matt. 12:24-28)
Continued Struggle		1&2 Kings 1&2 Chronicles
Israel Defeated and Exiled	Hoshea (king of Israel) Shalmanesar (king of Assyria)	2 Kings 17-18
Judah Defeated and Exiled	Nebuchadnezzar (king of Babylon) Jehoiachin (king of Judah)	2 Kings 24-25
Judah's Return and Rebuild	Cyrus, Artaxerses, Darius (foreign kings) Jeshua & Zerubbabel (Priest & Governor, Rebuilding of Altars) Haggai & Zechariah (Prophets) Ezra (Priest, Scribe of the Lord, Rebuild Temple) Nehemiah (Judah Leader both in Persia and Jerusalem, Rebuild Walls)	Ezra-Nehemiah
MALACHI		
<i>Silence – The Intertestamental Period</i>		Apocrypha (non-canonical "Books of the Church")
Another Messenger	John the Baptist and Jesus	Mark 1:1-11

READING GOD'S WORD WELL

Observation: What does the text say?

The Bible is God's Word – perfect, complete, from the very essence of His being (cf 2 Tim. 3:16-17). In the observation phase, we merely want to see what is there in the text and speak only to the facts of what God has revealed. This is so that when we go to the next phases of meaning and application, we will know what has been said and what has not been said and not insert our own ideas into it too quickly.

Some good ideas for the Observation phase:

- Seek to figure out the Who, What, When, Where
- Look for context clues and transitional phrases such as “Therefore...” or “Because of this...” or “After that...”
- Look for comparisons and contrasts, patterns, repetitions, or major themes
- Consider the type of literature that is entailed: is it a narrative story, a poem, prophetic or some other literary form?

Interpretation: What does the text mean?

In this phase, we seek to get to the meaning of the text. We want to faithfully understand what is meant from the facts of what happened or what was said, so we can know what to do with the truths. The Bible was composed thousands of years ago and has over 40 authors across three varied and developing languages, in a particular cultural setting. We want to come to the text with humility and curiosity to better understand the world that was, to be able to speak to the world as it is now.

Two key parts of Interpretation phase are:

- 1- Historic Context
- 2- Current Context

This sometimes is tricky and requires some additional understanding. Other times, we can just get most of the meaning of a text out of context clues within the particular passage. But regardless of where our maturity or understanding, God does have truth for us and we can be sure that His Word is clear – He longs for us to know Him more and more every day and for that to be what shapes our lives most.

Some good ideas for the Interpretation phase are:

- What has been said about this already in Scripture?
- Who are people and resources that I can connect with to help me better understand this?
- What might this have meant to them in their day? How do we know this?
- What does that look like now?

Application: What do we need to be, know, do, and/or love?

In this last part of reading Scripture faithfully, we want to ask and answer: what do with these truths now that we see them more clearly?

Jesus is clear: simply knowing the truth is not enough. We must live it. In Matthew 7, he uses an analogy of a house. The ability for a house to remain faithful was dependent upon the acting out of the truth, not just knowing it.

In the Application phase, we move from head-knowledge to acting out of the renewed mind (Rom. 12:1-2).

Here we get to ask and answer questions like:

- What is this passage calling for me to know more about God?
- What does this text reveal about who I am supposed to be? Or, who does it say who God is and who I am?
- What does this mean I should do next? Now that I know this truth, what should I do differently next time?
- What is this text telling me about my love for God and others? How is it calling me to love them and how will I go about doing that?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you hope you'll get out of this study through the book of Malachi?
- Have you read any parts of the Old Testament?
 - o What have you read?
 - o What has stood out to you most?
 - o If you were talking with someone unfamiliar to the OT, what would you tell them about it?
- Are you familiar with any of the prophets and their writings?
 - o What do you know about them and their stories/messages?
- Are you familiar with Malachi or other Post-Exilic writings?
- In the last week, what has your time in the Bible looked like? Do you have regular patterns or habits with Scripture reading?
- What often gets in the way of your time in the Word?
- Have you ever been shown how to read Scripture well?
 - o If so, who helped you and what was that like?
 - o Either way, how can this group help you take another step forward in this area of your life?

NEXT STEPS

- Read Malachi 1
- Make notes of Observation, Interpretation, and Application
- Bring your thoughts to group to share next week