

What defects were present in the animals being offered as sacrifices? (blind, crippled, diseased)

- The people were offering on the altar of God things they would have been embarrassed to offer as gifts to their political leaders. This showed they held human authority in higher esteem than God.

- Have someone read aloud Malachi 1:9.

- The irony was that, after offering such defective sacrifices to God, the people would ask Him for help and expect Him to give it.

- Have someone read aloud Malachi 1:10-14.

- What in this passage indicates that some worship is unacceptable to God? (shut the temple doors, not light useless fires, not pleased with you, will accept no offering from you)

Wrapping It Up

- When the Pharisees wanted Jesus to stop the people from praising Him as He entered Jerusalem, He said, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." God will be worshiped. The question is, will we be among those who give Him the worthy worship He deserves? Lead the class in prayer.



Faith at Home

Lead your family in a discussion of "worthy worship" -- how each member and the family as a whole can make sure their worship of the Lord truly honors Him.

- What does verse 11 tell us about the worship of God? (God will be worshiped by all nations)
- God is not limited to those of us who are offering Him unworthy worship. He knows that He will be worshiped by all nations. He does not have to settle for second-rate worship.

- Have learners find and read together God's closing statement in verse 14: "For I am a great king . . . and my name is to be feared among the nations."

Making It Personal

Group discussion

- Lead the class in a group discussion of how we may offer less than our best in worship of God today. Ask them what steps we can take to make our worship more worthy.

Teacher's Toolbox

*Getting your class into God's Word
and God's Word into your class*

ExcitingBibleStudy.com

Bible Series

Malachi 1

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HOW TO USE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: Make a four-page folded teacher's leaflet from the first two sheets by printing two-sided (or by putting the blank sides together). The other two sheets are for duplicating, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using as called for in the lesson plan.

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Faith at Home – A specific application of today's Bible passage to family life, to be used for individual reflection, family discussion, or class activity.



Getting Started

Impromptu speeches

- Write this outline on the chalkboard:

The biggest problem churches face today is . . .

- I. Unacceptable Worship (1:6-14)
- II. Unworthy Leaders (2:1-9)
- III. Unhealthy Marriages (2:13-16)
- IV. Unfaithful Giving (3:8-12)
- V. Uncommitted Service (3:13-18)

- Ask for five volunteers. Assign each of the five topics to one of the volunteers. Have each volunteer speak for 60 seconds on why that topic is

the biggest problem churches face today.

● **Worship, leadership, marriage, giving and service are the focus of the Book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi, whose name means “my messenger,” lived in the 5th Century B.C. and prophesied to the Jews who had returned from Babylonian Exile to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The people had become discouraged in their task and cynical about God’s ability to bless His people—especially in light of all the hardships they endured while the ungodly around them seemed to prosper. Malachi answered the people’s hard questions from God’s perspective.**

Exploring God's Word

Monologue

● In advance, enlist someone to prepare and present the monologue on Item 1 to introduce the study of the Book of Malachi. Give the person enlisted a copy of the monologue.

Book outline

● Display Item 3 which shows an outline of the Book of Malachi based on a series of questions from the people and God’s answers to those questions.

● Have the class read each question aloud in unison, followed by your reading of the appropriate answer. When they ask, “How can we return to you?” answer, “There is not a response to that question in this book, but other passages indicate that to return from God requires us to turn away from sin in our lives.”

Mini-report

- Have someone read aloud Malachi 1:1.
- Have someone read aloud the following mini-report on oracles (give that person a copy of Item 2).

Oracles

The Book of Malachi identifies itself as an “oracle.” The Hebrew word for “oracle” means either “burden” or “pronouncement.” The Book of Nahum is also identified as an oracle, as are portions of Zechariah and Isaiah.

An oracle was a communication from God, usually given through priests or prophets.

There were two types: decision oracles (when people sought God’s counsel about a specific situation they faced), and pronouncement oracles (which pointed out wrongdoing by the people and/or predicted the future). The Book of Malachi is a pronouncement oracle.

Claiming something was an oracle from the Lord was a serious business. Jeremiah 23:33-40 says that when

someone falsely claims to deliver an oracle from the Lord, that person will be severely punished by God: “I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence . . . I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace—everlasting shame that will not be forgotten.”

Oracles were given to produce a change in the lives of those who heard them. Anytime God communicates anything to people it is for this purpose. God does not just make conversation. When God speaks, it is important that we listen and make whatever changes are indicated.

● **The Book of Malachi is an oracle from God to the Israelites who had returned from exile to Jerusalem. The oracle identified spiritual shortcomings of those people and called them to return to God.**

Although the prophecy was originally issued to that specific group of people, it shows us what God expects of us as His people today. Where we are guilty of the same spiritual shortcomings as the people of Israel, we are also being called by God to return to Him.

The areas of spiritual shortcomings identified by Malachi are those that we talked about at the beginning of the session: **unacceptable worship; unworthy leaders; unhealthy marriages; unfaithful giving; and uncom-**

mitted service. Call attention to the outline on the chalkboard.

Questions and answers

- **The first area of spiritual shortcomings identified by Malachi was that of unacceptable worship.**
- Have someone read aloud Malachi 1:6-7.
- **What does God say the people were failing to give Him?** (honor and respect)
- **What specifically had they done that showed their contempt for the Lord?** (placed defiled food on the altar)
- **Any bread, grain, oil or animal used in sacrifice was supposed to be of the very best quality available. To offer less than the best was showing a lack of respect and honor toward God. Although he addresses the priests here as the ones who actually placed the sacrifice on the altar, the rebuke was also toward those who brought the inferior sacrifices. Malachi 1:14 says, “Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.” The man should not have brought such a sacrifice and the priest should not have accepted it.**
- Have someone read Malachi 1:8.

Monologue

My name is Malachi, which means "my messenger." My book of prophecy is the final one in the Old Testament and is the final one you will be studying in this series on the Minor Prophets.

I lived in the fifth century B.C. and prophesied to the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian Exile and had rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

By the time I began my ministry, the people had become disillusioned. The prosperity they had expected when they returned home had not come. Life was hard. They were surrounded by enemies who sought to thwart them at every opportunity. They suffered from drought and bad crops and famine. They began to doubt the love and justice of God. They began to wonder why they should bother to obey God, when it seemed that the evil and self-reliant were the ones who prospered.

In my short book of only 55 verses, I used a question-and-answer format to deal with the attitudes of the people. I posed a question which I believed was on the hearts of the people of God; then I delivered to them God's answer to the question.

Like the Jewish people when I addressed them, you as the church are now the people of God. If you will listen closely, you will hear God's message to you through me, His messenger.

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MALACHI	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1:1-5	How have you shown your love for us?	By giving you blessings you do not deserve.
1:6-14	How have we insulted you?	By giving God less than your best.
2:1-16	Why are you ignoring us?	Because you have broken your promises to God and to others.
2:17 – 3:5	How have we tried your patience?	By doubting God's justice.
3:6-7	How can we return to you?	(No answer given here) See Zechariah 1:1-4; Isaiah 1:16-19; Jeremiah 4:13; 2 Chronicles 7:14; and 1 John 1:8-9
3:8-12	How have we robbed you?	In tithes and offerings.
3:13 – 4:6	What have we said against you?	That it is useless to serve God.