

## So That We Do Not Forget! (Malachi)



### SABBATH—JUNE 22

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Malachi 1; Leviticus 1:1–3; Malachi 2; Ephesians 5:21–33; Malachi 3; Exodus 32:32; Malachi 4.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘My name will be great among the nations. They will worship me from where the sun rises in the east to where it sets in the west. In every place, incense<sup>1</sup> and pure offerings will be brought to me. That is because my name will be great among the nations,’ says the LORD” (Malachi 1:11, NIV).

**KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT:** Malachi teaches us about God’s responsibility to His people. But Malachi also points to the people’s holy responsibilities to Him.

**MALACHI’S NAME MEANS “MY MESSENGER.”** We know nothing about him except what we learn from his short book. Malachi’s book ends the part of the Old Testament called the Minor Prophets (or The Book of the Twelve). Malachi’s book is also the last book of the Old Testament.

The important message of Malachi is that God showed His love for His people throughout their history. But His love also made His people responsible to Him. The Lord expected the chosen nation (Israel) and its leaders to obey His commands. Open idol worship had disappeared. (The book appears to have been written for Jews who had returned from slavery in Babylon.) But the people were not obeying the covenant.<sup>2</sup> The people were going through religious services regularly. But their worship was cold and without heartfelt feeling.

May we as a church listen to this warning!

1. incense—a substance that produces a strong and pleasant smell when it is burned.

2. covenant—promise and agreement between God and His people.

**SUNDAY—JUNE 23****GREAT IS THE LORD (Malachi 1)**

**Read Malachi 1. What problem is the prophet (special messenger) discussing? How, today, might we be guilty of the same attitude (thought or feeling) that led to this warning?**

Malachi shows the sharp (big) difference between God's love for His people and the cold attitude (feeling) of the priests. Malachi blames the priests for sinning against God's holy name. When doing their duties in the temple, the priests, who have come from the line of Aaron's family, accepted lame, blind, and sick animals for sacrifices to the Lord. Because of this, the people have been led astray into thinking that sacrifices are not important. But God taught Aaron and his sons in the wilderness that animals used for sacrifice should be perfect, without fault or spot (read Leviticus 1:1–3; Leviticus 22:19).

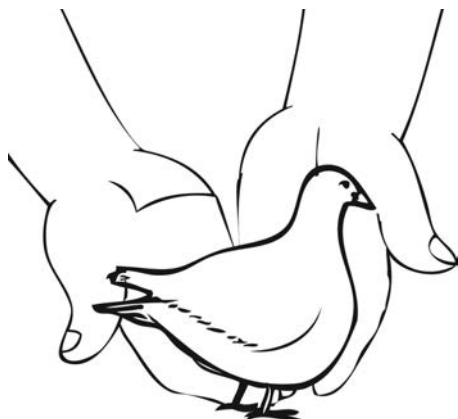


**The priests accepted lame and sick animals as sacrifices.**

Malachi then gives three important reasons why God deserves to be honored and respected by the people of Israel. First, God is their Father. Children should honor their parents. So, in the same way, the people must respect their Father in heaven. Second, God is their Master and Lord. Servants must obey their masters. So, God's people should treat Him in the same way. Third, the Lord is a great King. A worldly king would not accept a sickly animal as a gift from one of His people. So, Malachi is asking why the people would offer (give) such an imperfect animal to the King of kings, the One who rules over the whole world.

What makes the people's actions even more sinful to God? Their sacrifices could not point to Jesus, the spotless Son of God (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18, 19). To point to Jesus, their animal sacrifices needed to be perfect without fault because Jesus had to be without fault or sin to be our perfect sacrifice.

"To the honor and glory of God, His beloved Son—the Ransom, the Substitute—was crucified [put to death on the cross] and placed in the grave, which was like a prison house. The new tomb enclosed Jesus in its rocky cave. If there had been even one sin in His character [perfect life], the stone would never have been rolled away from the door of His rocky tomb. And the world with all its sins would have died."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 10, page 385. So, this is why the sacrifices that pointed to Jesus had to be perfect.



Animal sacrifices needed to be perfect because Jesus had to be without fault to be our perfect sacrifice.

### MONDAY—JUNE 24

#### LOVING AND RESPECTING OTHERS (Malachi 2:13–16)

Malachi's book is filled with the voice of a loving father who begs His children to do what is right. When the people raise questions and make complaints, God is ready to speak to them. However, most of the issues (problems) discussed by God and His people are connected with a few basic attitudes (thoughts and feelings).

**Read Malachi 2. Several issues are dealt with, but what is the one practice that the Lord complains to His people about? Read Malachi 2:13–16.**

All the Jews recognized God as Father and Creator in their worship. But not all of them were living as if God were the Lord of their lives. Malachi takes marriage as an example to show their lack of faithfulness to one another. According to the

Bible, marriage is a holy union (relationship; tie) established by God. The people of Israel were warned against marrying outside the faith. If they did, they would not be faithful to the Lord and would fall into idol worship. (Read Joshua 23:12, 13.)

God had planned that marriage should last a lifetime. But in Malachi's time, many men were breaking the vows that they had made with their wives when they were young. Seeing their wives grow older, the husbands would divorce them and marry younger and more beautiful women. For this reason, God says, he hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). This strong warning shows how serious God is about marriage. But, unfortunately, so often people still do not take marriage seriously. The strict rules in the Bible about divorce show just how holy marriage is.

Divorce was legal in Israel (Deuteronomy 24:1–4). For this reason some men did not waste time breaking their marriage vows by cheating on their wives. They just divorced. So, toward the end of the Old Testament period, divorce appears to have become common. This is happening in many countries today. But in the Bible, marriage is a holy covenant (agreement) before God (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:21–33).

**Read Malachi 2:17. What warning should be taken from these words based on the day's lesson? Or even in general? How could we be in danger of having that same attitude (thought or feeling) even without thinking about it?**



Marriage with unbelievers often led to idol worship.

because they are not faithful in the returning of their tithes and offerings.



To fail to return tithe is the same as robbing God.

## TUESDAY—JUNE 25

### TITHE<sup>3</sup> IN THE STOREHOUSE (Malachi 3:1–10)

**What is God saying to His people in Malachi 3:1–10? What are the most important points or parts of these verses? And why would they all be tied together? In what ways are these things all related to each other?**

With these verses, God repeats the basic message of the Minor Prophets: His love always remains the same. In verse 7, God's call is heard once more: "Return to me, and I will return to you" (NIV). The people then ask: "How shall we return?" (RSV). This question is like the one in Micah 6:6 about the bringing of sacrifices to God. But in Malachi, a certain answer is given. Surprisingly, it deals with the question of the people's tithing, or their failure to pay tithe. In fact, God scolds the people for stealing from what belongs to Him. This happens

Tithing means giving 10 percent of your income. This practice is taught in the Bible to remind us that God owns everything, and all that people have comes from Him. The tithe was used in Israel to support the Levites, who ministered (worked; served) in the temple. To fail in the returning of one's tithe is the same as robbing God, Malachi says.

Malachi 3:10 is one of those rare verses in which God challenges people to put Him to the test. At the waters of Meribah in the wilderness, the children of Israel test God's patience again and again. Sometimes He is angry about it (Psalm 95:8–11). But this time God is inviting Israel to put Him to the test. God wants them to see that they can trust Him in this matter. According to the verses, this is something that has special, spiritual meaning for the people.

3. tithe—the money we are to pay back to God. He asks us to give one-tenth of what we earn.

How does the act of tithing (and of giving offerings) make you stronger spiritually? In other words, when you cheat on tithe, why are you cheating yourself, not just God?

### WEDNESDAY—JUNE 26

#### A SCROLL (BOOK) OF REMEMBRANCE (Malachi 3:14, 15)

In Malachi 3:13–18, the people complain that the Lord does not care about the nation’s sins. Those who practice (do) evil and injustice appear to escape unpunished. So many people wonder why they should serve the Lord and live a holy life when evil seems to go unpunished.

**Read Malachi 3:14, 15. Why is it easy to understand this complaint? How does the Lord answer? (Read Malachi 3:16–18.)**

It is easy to grow discouraged in this world when so much evil seems to go unpunished. This causes people to wonder if God will do anything about it. But the message is that God knows of all these things. And He will reward the people who are faithful to Him.

**The wording “a scroll [book] of remembrance” is found only here in the Bible. What do Exodus 32:32; Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 4:3; Isaiah 65:6; and Revelation 20:11–15 teach about God’s books, the**

place where people’s names and actions are recorded?

What we need to know is that the Lord knows all things. He knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19) and those who are not. All we can do as sinners is (1) claim His perfect character, (2) claim His promises of forgiveness and power, and (3) die to self and live for Him and others. We do these things knowing that in the end our only hope is in His grace.<sup>4</sup> If we put our hope in ourselves, we are sure to be disappointed, one way or another.

### THURSDAY—JUNE 27

#### THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Malachi 4)

Only a short time before, the people asked, “Where is the God of justice?” (Malachi 2:17, NKJV). But in the beginning of chapter 4, a serious promise is given that one day God will judge the whole world. As a result, the proud will be destroyed along with the wicked, just as stubble is burned up in fire. Stubble is the unusable part of the grain. And it lasts only seconds when thrown into a blazing (burning) furnace. On the Day of the Lord (the Second Coming), fire will destroy the world, just as water did in Noah’s day.

**Read Malachi 4. What great difference is shown between the saved and the lost? Read also Deuteronomy 30:19 and John 3:16.**

4. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

The future end of the wicked is described in verse 1. But verse 2 focuses on (is about) future blessings of God's righteous (holy) people. The question "Where is the God of justice?" is answered again. But this time it is answered with the promise that the day will come when the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings (NIV). The rising of the "sun of righteousness" is a symbol for the dawn of a new day. This one marks a new period in the history of salvation. At this time, evil will be destroyed forever. And those who are saved will enjoy the fruit of what Christ has done for them. Then the universe will be made eternally safe.

Malachi ends his book with two warnings. The first is a call to remember God's messages through Moses, the first five books of the Bible and the foundation of the Old Testament.

The second warning speaks of the work of Elijah as a prophet (special messenger). Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elijah called people to repent (turn from sin) and return to God. Jesus Himself saw John the Baptist as a fulfillment (completion) of that prophecy (special message from God) (Matthew 11:13, 14). But we also believe it has a fulfillment at the end of time. This is when God will have a people who fearlessly will preach His message to the world. "There are those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. They are like faithful Elijah. They are doing the work of John the Baptist in the spirit of Elijah who prepared the way for Christ's first com-

ing."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, pages 72, 73.

**How are we to fulfill this holy work? How well are we doing in this mission?**

### FRIDAY—JUNE 28

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** "God blesses the work of men's hands, that they may return tithes to Him. He gives them the sunshine and the rain. He causes crops to grow. He gives health and ability to men and women so they can earn income. Every blessing comes from His care. He desires men and women to show their thankfulness by returning tithes and offerings to Him. They are to dedicate [give in service] their income to His service, so that His vineyard will not remain empty. They are to study what the Lord would do if He were in their place. . . . They are to take all difficult matters to Him in prayer. They are to show an unselfish interest in the building up of His work in all parts of the world."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 707, 708.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Think more about the Bible and marriage. Marriage itself is holy because it is created by God Himself. For this reason marriage comes with some very strict rules about divorce. After all, how holy and how important would marriage be were it easily ended in divorce? If you could get out of it for the poorest of reasons,

then marriage itself would be cheap and foolish. How do the strict rules against ending a marriage prove just how special it is?

② As a class, carefully go over Malachi 2:17. What do we as Seventh-day Adventists say to those who might be having the same thoughts that are found in this verse?

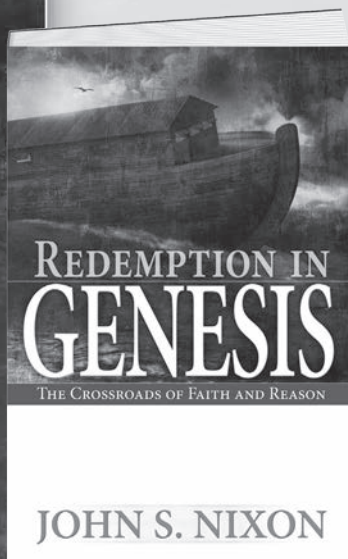
③ Malachi 4 talks about the full destruction of lost sinners. Nothing remains. How is this teaching different from the idea of hellfire that

burns eternally? Why is the difference between these two views a good example of how false doctrine (teaching) can lead people to misunderstanding the character (who God is) of God?

④ In his famous work “The Grand Inquisitor,” Russian writer Dostoevsky describes the church in his time as having things so well under control that it does not need Christ anymore. Are we facing that same danger today? If so, how so? Could this danger be more hidden than we know? How?

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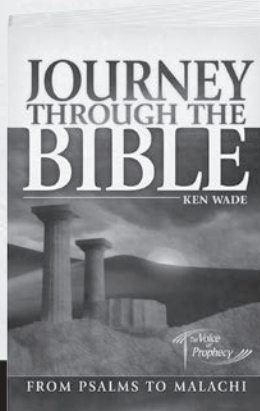
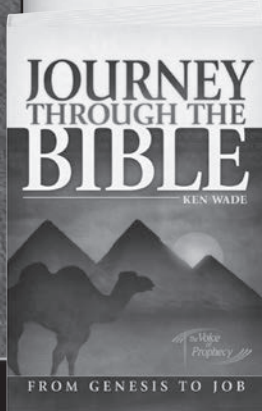


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