

## Welcome to the book of Malachi!

We have chosen 3:13 as the key verse for Malachi reflecting the theme of Sin's Dialogue. The people have returned from captivity and have apparently learned few lasting lessons from their experiences. The six questions reflect the arrogance with which the nation was pursuing God. The same six questions can give us a standard for evaluation of our own humility before God.

Also note the passages listed within the overview chart below. How does each passage relate to the corresponding section title? What do you learn about Sin's Dialogue as you consider the section titles and the key verse? Haggai is the consideration prophet, Zechariah the return prophet, and Malachi is the sign-off prophet! There will now commence 400 "Silent Years" where Word from the Lord will not only be rare, it will be non-existent! The silence will be overtaken by the voice of John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lamb of God. Malachi is the last of the three restoration prophets that spoke to the returning remnant under Ezra and Nehemiah (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).

# MALACHI

# Sin's Dialogue

<b>God's Love? 1:2</b>	<b>Weary God? 2:7</b>
<b>Priests Despise? 1:6,7</b>	<b>Way of Return? 3:7,8</b>
<b>Covenant Profaned?</b>	<b>Lord Accused?</b>
<b>2:13-14</b>	<b>4:1-4</b>

- SIX QUESTIONS -

*"Your words have been arrogant." 3:13*

## Open your heart as you read!

3:8,9 make it clear that we rob God of His rightful respect when we choose to withhold our resources from Him or from others. It is arrogant to think that God can be relegated to a nominal or figurehead position in our lives. When it comes to our energy, interest, focus, and allocation of our resources we must ask if we are participating with God. In what ways are you robbing God?



# Malachi Chapter Chart

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Here are some questions that will help you to dig deeply for interpretation in the book of Malachi. You may wish to answer these questions as you read and title chapters.

## CHAPTER 1

Why does this subject of love for Jacob and hatred for Esau continue to surface? For what purpose does Paul use this same analogy in Romans 9:10-13? There is an unfolding series of questions in this chapter. Note each one. Underline the questions and determine which are asked by God and which are ascribed to people. What do these questions reveal about the attitude and actions of the people who have returned to Israel?

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 2

Here Malachi turns to the priests, or the supposed spiritual leaders of the people. How did God view Levite's attitude toward Him? What was a priest supposed to do? What were these priests doing instead? Disdain for the priests was reflected in the moral conduct of the people. What wearied God about the peoples' words?

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 3

Why was "the purification" necessary and what did it require? What do you think that the people were doing that "robbed God"? What could these people no longer distinguish?

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 4

What is "the day" that is being referred to here? Who was God going to send? What would be the position of those who feared God?

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CONCLUSION

The series of questions in this book are critical in helping us to understand how God feels about perverting His words. We saw in Habakkuk the difference between asking questions of God and questioning God. Here we see the self-righteous questions of those who seek to justify unacceptable conduct before a pure and holy God.

### What about today?

1. How can a person fall into the trap of justifying his or her conduct before God?
2. Which "question" most reflects spiritual attitudes that you struggle with?
3. Do you feel that you have received and developed the ability of 3:18?



# ROCK BOTTOM

The book of Malachi is built around a three part pattern of dialogue involving accusation, interrogation, and refutation. For example:

**Accusation...**

Judah has dealt treacherously (2:11)

**Interrogation...**

Yet you say, "For what reason?" (2:14)

**Refutation...**

Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously.

It is painfully clear from the six dialogues in Malachi the nation had hit rock bottom spiritually. The people have become so sin-hardened that God's proddings no longer have any affect on their consciences. For 400 years after Malachi's prophecy there will be silence from God. Only with the emergence of John the Baptist in the fullness of times is the silence broken. And it is broken with those piercing words, Repent! "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) How appropriate that Malachi ends his book with a prophecy of John the Baptist (4:5,6). He is the one who was to herald the beginning of the great restoration of the hearts of a sinful people. John the Baptist is the Elijah who was to come!

## **For your consideration:**

It has been said that "sin soon separates from the Bible those whom the Bible does not separate from sin." How might this quote apply to Malachi's day and his comments in 4:4?

Read through the six questions and answers from the Malachi overview and ask yourself if you are currently guilty of any of the accusations that are leveled against Israel.

List several common attitudes toward sin. Can you find any of these attitudes in Malachi, and if so, where?

Sin would have few takers if the consequences occurred immediately! It is fitting that the last word of the Old Testament should be a curse. This was the consequence of sin in the Garden of Eden, in Malachi, as it is in our lives. Malachi brings down the curtain with a final reminder that sin must be confronted, defined, and abandoned. When the light of the New Testament shines the scene will be set for the One who alone can remove such a curse from our lives...the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ!