

A CLOSER LOOK

Fifteen times in the opening chapter, Malachi uses the word LORD to describe God. In our modern translations, whenever LORD is capitalized, it is referring to the Israelite's most sacred name of God, Yahweh.

God introduced himself to the people of Israel with that special personal name (Read Exodus 3:14-15). The Jewish people considered the personal name of God to be so holy that it should never be spoken aloud. How does this change or deepen your reading of the first chapter?

Continue your study of this chapter in your homework throughout the coming week.

FINAL THOUGHTS FOR CHAPTER ONE

The proper response to God's love and protection is action. It is not enough to merely think or ponder His truth, we must live it out in our own lives. God, through Malachi, warns His people of the dangers of stagnant and hard-hearted faith. The major way that God allows our faith to grow and remain fresh is through living out what He says.

CHALLENGE

What is one area of your life where you're offering a "polluted" sacrifice to God? In other words, where are you not giving God your best? Identify that area, and in faith take one step to work at giving God your best in that area.

MALACHI

A 4 WEEK STUDY

GOD CHOOSES TO PROTECT
AND LOVE HIS PEOPLE

WEEK 1



GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

MALACHI

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

Malachi's message is this: When faced with faithlessness and profanity, God chooses to protect and love His people.

This sounds an awful lot like the Gospel, doesn't it? God's people forget and falsify His justice and love, and His response is to deal severely with sin while providing ways for His people to come to Him.

Malachi (lit. my messenger) is the last of the Old Testament (OT) prophets through whom God communicated His message to His people. Jewish tradition identifies Malachi as a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the Scriptures.

Malachi writes a convicting account of the widespread faithlessness of the Jews. Writing in the late fifth century B.C., the Jews had rebuilt God's temple but the ritual of their religious routine led to the hardening of their hearts. Malachi calls the people to repentance with respect to:

- The priesthood, which had become corrupt
- Worship, which had become routine
- Divorce, which was widespread
- Social justice, which was being ignored
- Tithing, which was neglected

After two millennia of OT history, none of the glorious promises of the Abrahamic or Davidic covenants had been ultimately fulfilled and the long-anticipated Messiah seemed nowhere in sight. Pronouncing judgement on their sin, Malachi pushes the eyes of the Jewish people towards the coming Messiah, Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. What has been your experience with Old Testament Bible studies?
2. Do you think the Old Testament is as relevant as the New Testament? Why or why not?
3. Do you sometimes question God's judgement? Does it seem that in our society evil is rewarded and good is punished? Explain your response.

"FOR FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN TO ITS SETTING MY NAME WILL BE GREAT AMONG THE NATIONS." (MAL. 1:11)

MALACHI 1: GOD'S PROTECTION AND YOUR DEVOTION

Malachi begins with the truth that God chooses to protect and love His people. He is not forced into this choice, rather He gets glory by choosing not to be "angry forever," (v.4) with His chosen people.

Yet despite the choice and action of God to love His people (v.2), His name is dishonored by the people whom He has chosen. Israel refused to give God the best of their flock for a sacrifice according to God's commands. Instead the people:

- "Offer[ed] polluted food," (v.7)
- Animals that were, "blind," "lame or sick," (v.8)
- Kindled the Lord's anger in a terrible pronouncement of judgement, "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on My altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you." (v.10)

God was displeased with His people and He sent his messenger, Malachi, to proclaim this. The message is clear: God deserves your best. His name "will be great among the nations," (v.11) and your response should be reverence and delight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss these with your group as you consider the messages of chapter one.

VERSES 1-5

1. Recount the ways that God has shown His love for you. Share with the group. Have you responded joyfully and thanked God for these lately? Or have you been quick to forget, and even question God's love in your life?
2. When Israel recognizes the conquering power of God, they will say, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!" (v.5) How does God get glory from the destruction of those against His people? Do you struggle with the idea that God glories in the destruction of His enemies? How and why?

VERSES 5-11

1. How is God a father to His people? In what ways does He demonstrate this in this text and in others?
2. It seems that God is to be honored and feared by His people, especially in the way that they think and approach Him. What are the modern-day equivalents of offering unacceptable, polluted sacrifices to God? Do you offer such "sacrifices" to God? How?