

**Carl J. Haak**

*Studies in*  
**MALACHI**

Second Edition



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# Foreword

Something that increases our understanding of God's word is to be highly valued. Hence *Studies in Malachi* is to be highly valued.

Thanks to Pastor Haak for bringing to our attention a book of the Bible that is not often studied. However, this last book of the Old Testament is very much worth our study, for he shows that it was written in a time that corresponds to the present day. The chief exhortation of the prophecy of Malachi is most appropriate for our day, namely, that the worship of the Lord be sincere. Always present is the danger that the worship of God becomes a habit. This danger lies especially with ministers and teachers (the priests of today), and they received Malachi's special attention.

Pastor Haak tells us that Malachi's cure for improper worship was an eager anticipation for the fulfillment of God's promise to send his Son. As God used John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ by the preaching of repentance, may God use our study of Malachi to prepare us for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who comes as judge as well as savior.

It is to be appreciated that this study booklet is written by one who has not only the title of a pastor, but also the heart of a pastor. It is evident that the author's love for the sheep is an extension of his love for the Chief Shepherd.

Thanks to Rev. Haak for making his work of preaching a series of sermons on the prophecy of Malachi to benefit not only those who heard the sermons, but also now all who use this study guide.

**Ronald Van Overloop**

# Overview of Malachi

## Introduction

The book of Malachi is the last Old Testament prophecy written before the birth of Jesus Christ. Approximately four hundred years of silence would follow the words of this prophecy, until the time Gabriel would be sent to godly Zacharias and Elisabeth to announce the birth of the forerunner of our Lord (Mal. 3:1; 4:5; 6; Luke 1:1–20).

The importance of this book of the Bible cannot be overstated. The times in which Malachi prophesied correspond exactly to our own; the sins current among God's people and the temptations to which they were exposed correspond to our day as well. Therefore the "burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi" (Mal. 1:1) comes to us with the same urgency as it did to them. Let us pay good heed to the sobering words of this book.

Malachi brings us to the post-captivity period, the time after the remnant of Judah had returned from exile in Babylon. The people had been back in Canaan about one hundred years when God sent Malachi to them. The exact date of Malachi's prophecy cannot be determined. Best estimates place it between Nehemiah's two visits to Jerusalem.

Of the man Malachi we know very little, and nothing is revealed about him in the book itself, other than that his name fittingly means "my messenger." He appears on the scene much the way Elijah did (1 Kings 17:1) and with a very similar message and ministry.

We know more about the times in which Malachi prophesied and the evils that were present. The people had completed the temple, but its worship and priesthood had become

corrupt (Mal. 1:6–2:8). A new generation had risen that was characterized by cold formalism and spiritual indifference. They no longer had much hope for the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1–6). There was an unwillingness to part with money and possessions for the kingdom of God (v. 8). Marriages were based on lust and not on the love of God. Ungodly divorce was openly practiced (Mal. 2:10–17). All of it was really nothing less than spiritual insensitivity to the love of God (Mal. 1:2–14).

How applicable to us today! How much of the church of Jesus Christ, regardless now of the denomination, is tempted with the same sickly indifference and spiritual laxity, with the attitude that it does not make any difference if we serve God or not! The burden of Malachi is the burden to us, namely, that we turn to the Lord God in love and true worship and eagerly await the promise of his Son!

In addition to the relevance of Malachi to our day, we will be blessed in the study of this book because Malachi emphasizes the covenant of God and its implications for our lives and calls us to look for the coming of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2).

To place Malachi’s prophecy clearly in our minds, we should remember the following main events of the post-captivity period:

606–586 BC Judah is taken captive and Jerusalem is destroyed (2 Kings 25).

606–536 BC The seventy years of captivity (Jer. 29:10).

536 BC Zerubbabel leads fifty thousand Jews back to Judah (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1; Isa. 45:1–4).

535 BC The rebuilding of the temple is begun, but soon halted (Ezra 4:23–24).

520 BC Darius orders the temple to be completed. Haggai and Zechariah encourage the people (Hag. 1:1–15; 2:19; Ezra 6:14–15).

516 BC The temple is completed.

- 478 BC Esther becomes queen of Persia.
- 457 BC Ezra's journey to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:7–9).
- 444 BC Nehemiah is sent to Jerusalem. The walls are rebuilt (Neh. 1–2).

*The time of Malachi.*

- 432 BC Nehemiah returns the second time to Judah (Neh. 13:7).

### **Study Questions and Activities**

1. Begin by reading through the book in one sitting. Write down your first impressions.
2. Read through the prophecy again, this time taking notes on any references to the following:
  - a. The *time* Malachi wrote (setting and historical background)
  - b. The *people* to whom he wrote
  - c. The *basic message* he brought to them

3. Make lists of the evils present in God's people and what God's word says to them about these evils.

Evils

God's word

4. List the prophecies of the birth or coming of Jesus Christ given in this book.

5. Prepare an outline of Malachi, giving the major divisions and what you feel is the unifying theme.

6. Using a Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia, do some research on the historical setting of this book.

- a. How many returns from Babylon were there?

- b. Who led them?

- c. What was the purpose for each return?

- d. What was life like for the Jews at that time?
- e. Who were the Samaritans? Find references to the Samaritans in the Bible.
7. Why should we study the book of Malachi?
8. What should be the goals of a study of the book of Malachi?

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“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob.”—Malachi 1:1–2

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:4–5

### **Recommended Resources**

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## Lesson 2

# God's Love Questioned, Proven, and Confessed

**Malachi 1:1–5**

### **Introduction**

The first five verses of this prophecy deserve serious and concentrated study by every believer. Why?

First, the words “I have loved you” stand as the foundation of the entire book, as well as the ground on which God brings his complaint against his people. All the terrible spiritual indifference, the weariness of worshipping God, the violation of God’s covenant in the married state, all of which was prevalent in Malachi’s day, was at the heart this: insensitivity and coldness to the love of God. God’s first word in this prophecy strikes to the very heart of the problem of the spiritual apathy and carelessness of that day and of our day.

Second, these first five verses reveal the truth of predestination, the heartbeat of the gospel. Sovereign predestination—eternal election and reprobation—is the truth that ascribes all glory in salvation to God, and God alone. God teaches this great truth not as abstract, cold dogma, but specifically as the battering ram against spiritual lukewarmness, and for the purpose of comforting God’s people. Indeed, what greater word from God could we possibly hear than “I have loved you, saith the LORD” (Mal. 1:2).

Malachi shows that the people of his day were questioning the reality of God’s eternal love to them. Judging from what could be seen, they were sorely tempted to doubt that love. The Samaritans, the people who lived to the north, had been bitterly hostile and had opposed the building of the temple. They accused the Jews of disloyalty to Cyrus. Also, there had been severe crop failures, droughts, and plagues that had consumed the harvests. And the people had become the plaything

of the nations. Thus with almost a cynical tone, they asked, “Wherein hast thou loved us?” (Mal. 1:2).

We must look at ourselves, as we too, in the light of sickness, pain, trials, and depression are tempted to ask the same question.

The proof of God’s love toward his people is found in the words of God to Rebekah (Gen 25:23). The Holy Spirit in Malachi and later in Paul (Rom. 9:1) shows that these words to Rebekah speak of the truth of eternal, sovereign election and reprobation. Election is God’s choosing from all eternity the persons who will be saved. God’s choice of them is not based on anything in them, but is only out of his grace and mercy (John 6:39; Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:9; Canons of Dort 1.7, 9–10). Reprobation is God’s eternal and just damnation of the persons who will perish, and that in the way of their sins (Matt. 15:13–14; Rom. 9:17–22; 1 Pet. 2:6–8; Canons of Dort 1.15; Belgic Confession 16).

It is vital to see that Jehovah speaks these truths in the context of *comforting* and *confirming* his people. Further, Jehovah God, in proving his sovereign and unconditional love for his people, refers to the well-known history of Jacob and Esau, the twin brothers born to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25; Rom. 9:10–13). The sovereignty, graciousness, unconditionality, and justice of God’s predestination are shown in this biblical example.

We are to confess God’s predestinating love! “And ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified” (Mal. 1:5). Cold indifference to the God who has said to us unworthy sinners, “I have loved you”? God shame us if that is ever the case in our hearts. Rather than sickly indifference, we who believe and experience the Reformed and biblical truth of predestination ought to sound forth praises of God for his fathomless and unquenchable love.

### **Study Questions and Activities**

1. The idea of the “burden of the word of the LORD” (v. 1)
  - a. What other Old Testament prophets use this terminology?

- b. What is the meaning and significance of “*burden of the...LORD*”?
  
  - c. How is God’s word a burden to us?
2. God’s love questioned (v. 2)
- a. What do the following verses teach about God’s love?
    - 1) Deuteronomy 7:7–8
  
    - 2) Isaiah 38:17
  
    - 3) John 15:19
  
    - 4) Romans 5:5–11
  
    - 5) Ephesians 1:4–5
  
    - 6) 1 John 3:1
  
    - 7) 1 John 4:8–10, 19

8) Revelation 3:19

- b. Define God's love.
  
- c. In what ways do we question the love of God toward us? Be specific.
  
- d. How ought the knowledge of God's love be our daily comfort?
  
- e. Discuss and prove from scripture this statement: The love of God toward his people is not measured in things or in the absence of things, but solely in the cross of Jesus Christ.
  
- f. Discuss and prove from scripture this statement: God's love toward us may not be questioned.

3. God's love proven

- a. How does Paul use Malachi 1:2 in Romans 9:13?
  
- b. Read the articles of the Canons of Dordt mentioned in the introduction (1. 7, 9–10, 15) and the scriptural passages in support of election (John 6:39; Rom. 8:29–30;

Eph. 1:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:9 ) and reprobation (Matt. 15:13–14; Rom. 9:17–22; 1 Pet. 2:6–8).

- c. What is meant by the following?
- 1) Unconditional election
  - 2) Sovereign election
  - 3) Gracious or free election
  - 4) Just reprobation
  - 5) Particular election
- d. Why is the example of Jacob and Esau so appropriate in proving God's sovereign predestination?
- e. How does God's hatred of Edom (Esau) prove his love for Jacob (his people)?
- f. What ought to be our response to these truths (2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:19)?

g. How should these truths produce the following?

- 1) Humility
- 2) Assurance
- 3) Adoration of God
- 4) Thankfulness
- 5) Zeal for missions and witnessing

h. The boast of the Edomites and the Lord's answer

- 1) Who was Edom?
- 2) Look up the words *Edom* and *Edomites* in a Bible concordance and give a brief review of Edom and its significance.
- 3) What attitude did the Edomites express in verse 4?
  - (a) Do we see this attitude today?

(b) Do we even fight this attitude in ourselves?

4) What do we learn in the strong answer of the Lord to Edom's boast?

4. God's love confessed

a. What did God promise that Israel would see (v. 5)?

b. Did God promise anything more than Edom's destruction?

c. What does this promise mean for us today?

d. In what ways ought the confession of God's gracious love toward us be evidenced in our lives and words?

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“And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”—Romans 9:10–13



## Lesson 3

# Where is My Honor?

## Malachi 1:6–14

### Introduction

The loving reverence for God, the sincere worship of his holy name, the living service and dedicated lives that are alone worthy of God, were all absent among the people of Malachi's day. This was evident in the manner in which they worshiped God. It was not that the temple was abandoned and the outward rites of religion altogether neglected, but it was all performed in a cold, indifferent, and resentful way. This was especially true of the priests, the spiritual leaders, but it characterized also the people as a whole.

The basic instruction of this section of the book of Malachi is well summarized by John Calvin in his commentary:

Nothing is indeed so precious as his worship; and he had instituted under the law sacrifices and other rites, that they might worship him spiritually. The whole of religion is despised when one despises the external acts of worship according to the law.

The corruption of the true worship of God came out in three ways.

First, it was evident in what was offered. The Old Testament law of sacrifices was very clear (Lev. 22:17–33; Deut. 17:1). The people offered “polluted bread” (Mal. 1:7); “the lame and the sick” (v. 8); “that which was torn, and the lame, and sick” (v. 13); a female of the flock when they had a male (v. 14).

Second, the corruption was evident in the awful attitude they had toward the worship of God. The Lord requires a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 50:7–23; 51:17; Hos. 6:6; Micah 6:6–8). Instead they considered the worship of God “weariness” and “snuffed at it” (Mal. 1:13).

Third, corruption was evident in the crass and hardened impenitence they showed when God reproved them for all of this. When God's prophet confronted them with their terrible sins, they had the audacity to deny them (vv. 6–7). That is pride at its worst.

The prophet brought reproof! He told them that Jehovah had, in two respects, a just cause against them. First, “If then I be a father, where is mine honour?” (v. 6). The truth that the almighty God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, is become my Father ought to evoke the deepest honor, respect, reverence, and awe before him, which will be seen in how we worship him and how we live before him. Second, “If I be a master, where is my fear?” (v. 6). Malachi brought out the truth of God's sovereignty when he referred to God as “the LORD of hosts” (vv. 8, 11, 14). Because he is the master of the heavenly hosts and king of all glory, nothing but the deepest, humblest fear and reverential awe ought to characterize the people who worship him and call him their God.

This study ends with God's powerful assertion that he will be worshiped by a people gathered out of all the earth (v. 11; Zech. 8:23; John 4:21–23). This is a beautiful, powerful, and comforting prophecy of the gathering of the church of Jesus Christ in the new dispensation, the existence of which is for the sole purpose of rendering praise and worship to his name. Why is this so certain? “For I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts” (v. 14).

Does this word of God speak to you? How does it find you in respect to your worshiping God? What about your attendance at the house of God? What about your prayers? your reading of scripture? your entire life as you are to live it in sincere praise of God? Put yourself before the question: “If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?”

## **Study Questions and Activities**

1. True worship of God

- a. We must remember that worship is not academic; for God, who is a great king and our sovereign Lord by grace, requires us to worship him. What constitutes true worship of God?
  
- b. What is the meaning of the word *worship*?
  
- c. Consult a Bible dictionary and find verses in scripture that express the idea of worship.
  
- d. What do the following texts teach about worship?
  - 1) Psalm 95:6
  
  - 2) Psalm 96:9
  
  - 3) Psalm 81:9
  
  - 4) Matthew 18:20
  
  - 5) Revelation 7:9–12
  
  - 6) Revelation 15:4

- e. What is the purpose of worship (Ps. 27:4; 84:1–3; 122:1–4)?
  
  - f. What is meant by the following characteristics of true worship?
    - 1) In spirit and in truth (Ps. 51:15–17; Isa. 1:10–17; 57:15; John 4:24)
  
    - 2) Reverence (Ps. 89:7)
  
    - 3) Humility (Micah 6:6–8; Hos. 6:6)
  
    - 4) Joyful, thankful, and active (Ps. 96:1–2; 111:1)
  
  - g. What does the second commandment teach about the true worship of God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 35)?
  
  - h. Think about and discuss these statements: Worship is not first for us, but for God. The question to be asked of any worship service is not first, what did I get out of it? but did it bring glory to God?
2. The shameful abuse of worship in Malachi’s day, the spiritual attitude it revealed, the judgment of God upon it, and the warning it gives to us

- a. List the abuses of the worship of God that Malachi exposed.
- 1) To what does “polluted bread upon mine altar” refer? Does it refer to the table of showbread or to all the sacrifices in general?
  - 2) What were the requirements regarding the animals sacrificed to God (Lev. 22:17–33)?
  - 3) Why were those requirements important (1 Pet. 1:18–20)?
  - 4) What was the priests’ responsibility in all of this?
  - 5) What does Malachi mean by “who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought” (v. 10)?
  - 6) Who is the deceiver in verse 14?
  - 7) What is his deception?

- b. What attitudes were present among the priests?
  - c. Explain these attitudes over against Isaiah 1:10–17.
  - d. What is meant by the responses of the people in verses 6–7 to the charges against them of their failure to honor and to fear God in their worship?
  - e. Why are these responses so chilling and dreadful?
3. Jehovah brings out that this irreverence and apathy is an attack on his fatherhood and sovereignty.
- a. What does it mean that God is our Father (Matt. 7:7–11; Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:4–7; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Days 9, 46)?
  - b. How should God’s fatherhood and sovereignty evoke true honor and reverence for God?
  - c. What is the meaning of the “LORD of hosts”? Consult a Bible dictionary.
  - d. Explain from 1 Chronicles 29:11 what is implied in the sovereignty of God.

- e. How should God's sovereignty evoke deep reverence and tears of repentance in us?
  - f. Explain the promise of verse 11 in the light of Psalm 113:3, Zechariah 8:23, and John 4:21–23.
  - g. Let us now in our hearts answer the questions of Malachi 1:6: "If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"
4. For further study on the laws of sacrifices, consult the following passages:
- a. Sin offering (Lev. 4:1–35; 6:24–30)
  - b. Guilt offering (Lev. 5:14–6:6)
  - c. Burnt offering (Lev. 1:3–17; 6:8–13)
  - d. Grain offering (Lev. 2; 6:14–23)
  - e. Drink offering (Num. 15:1–10)
  - f. Peace offering (Lev. 3; 7:11–21)

- g. Wave offering (Ex. 29:24–27; Lev. 23; Num. 15)
  
- h. Thank offering (Lev. 7:12–15; 22:29)
  
- i. Freewill offering (Lev. 7:16; 22:18–23)
  
- j. Ordination offering (Ex. 29:19–34; Lev. 8:22–32)

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“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.”—Malachi 1:6, 11

### **The Prayer John Calvin Offered after Expounding on Malachi 1:6–14**

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased in thy infinite mercy not only to choose from among us to be priests unto thee, but also to consecrate us all to thyself in thine only begotten Son,— O grant, that we on this day may purely and sincerely serve thee, and so strive to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may be pure and chaste in mind, soul, and body, and that thy name so shine forth in all our performances, that thy worship among us may be holy, and pure, and approved by thee, until we shall at length enjoy that glory to which thou invitest us by thy gospel, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen.