Introduction to the Book of Malachi

The book Malachi presents us with the final recorded revelation to a prophet from God in the Old Testament after the Israelite return from Babylonian captivity. As such Malachi, along with his predecessors Haggai and Zechariah constitute the class of minor prophetic literature known as the "post-exilic prophets." Written around 450 years before the birth of Christ, Malachi's message is given to the restored nation of Israel after the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the fifth century B.C. Returning home from captivity to the Babylonians and then Persians beginning in 538 B.C., the Jewish people underwent a massive, and foreordained, rebuilding campaign fortifying first the city walls, then the interior buildings, before completing the Temple itself in 515 B.C.

At the same time as these reconstruction efforts, the Lord was stirring repentance and obedience in the lives of his returnees drawing their hearts closer to him. As part of this spiritual reconstruction, the particular message of Malachi is directed to the priests, the leaders and the people who have all lost sight of the greatness of God. As A.W. Tozer has said in the preface to his book, The Knowledge of the Holy,

"The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking."

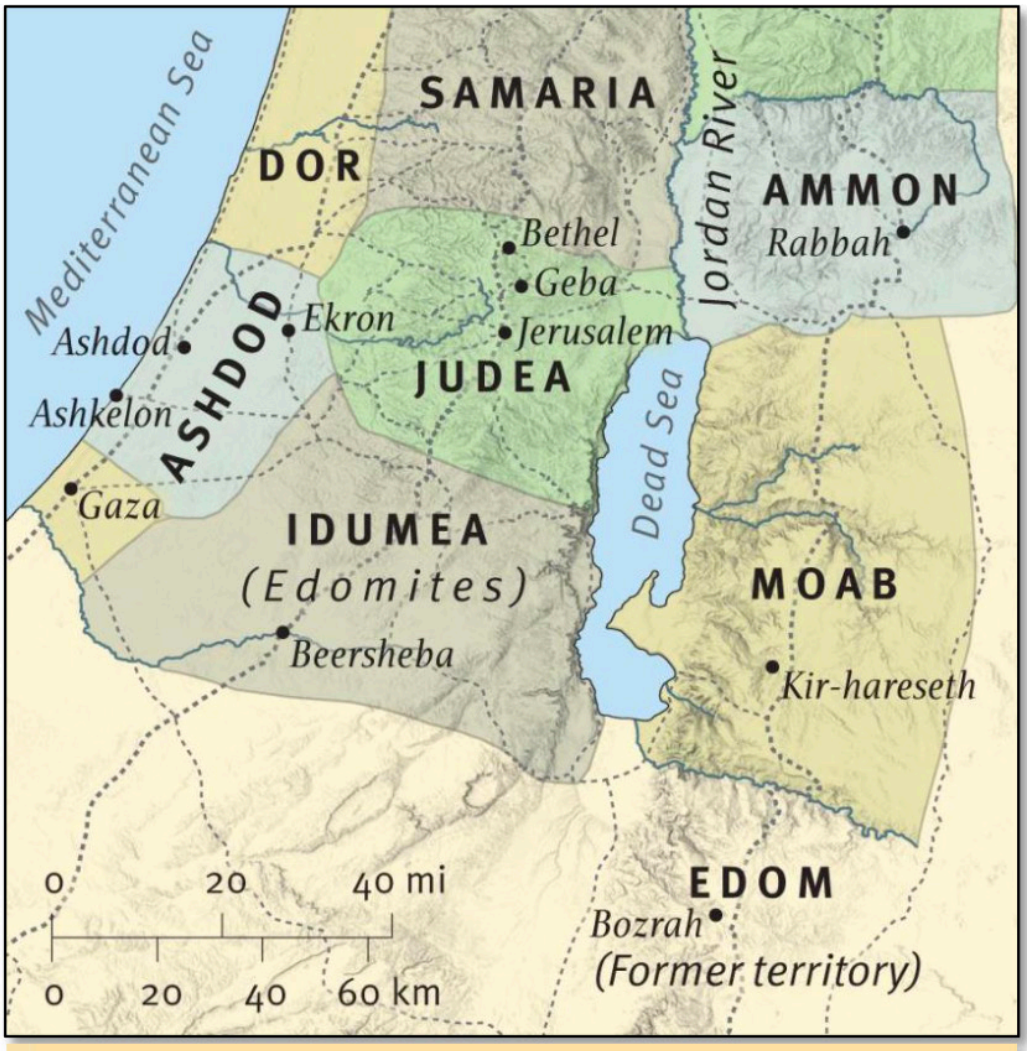
This "low view of God" in Malachi's day was causing many to forget basic truths about who God is, and what he expects of his people. Losing sight of him and the truth, the people had forgotten the love of their God and the demands of rightful worship to him. They had abandoned heartfelt relationship, replacing it with arrogant certainty that the Lord would protect them. They had abandoned the sanctity of marriage, replacing it with the approval of intermingled religious pluralism. They had forsaken the diligent teaching of the Word of God, in favor of a people-please message causing many to stumble and fall. They had given up a generous and sacrificial attitude and in its place hoarded their wealth and prosperity. In short, God was seen by the people, and taught by the priests, as someone who was low and insignificant.

As a result of all of this, Malachi's message was one calling the people away from complacency and covenant violations to return to the greatness of God. God's promises to his people would remain, as God himself would remain faithful, and yet warnings of great loss were promised if they continued on this broken pathway. Malachi will close his message with significant prophecies concerning future events which will alter the way the Jewish people would think about the Kingdom of God. John the Baptist is mentioned as a predecessor to the arrival of Messiah, and who would announce the coming of the Kingdom, and the King himself.

The Outline of Malachi

FOCUS	Privilege of the Nation		Pollution of the Nation		Promise to the Nation	
DIVISION	1:1 → 1:6 → 2:10 → 3:16 → 4:1 → 4:4					
	Love of God for the Nation	Sin of the Priests	Sin of the People	Book of Remembrance	Coming of Christ	Coming of Elijah
TOPIC	Past	Present		Future		
	Care Of God	Complaint Of God		Coming Of God		
LOCATION	Jerusalem					
TIME	c. 460 B.C.					

Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments* (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



The Setting of Malachi

c. 460 B.C.

Malachi likely prophesied several decades after the first exiles of Judah, now under Persian rule, had returned from Babylon to the minor province of Judea and rebuilt the temple. Edomites had migrated northwest from their traditional homeland just south of Moab into the area immediately south of Judea, and this land was now called Idumea. Territory that once belonged to the northern kingdom of Israel had been divided into several different minor provinces, including Samaria.

Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 1773). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

WEEK 1

"My name will be great..."

Key Terms and Meanings

- **loved** – to have great affection or care for or loyalty towards.
- **hated** – to have or feel a dislike or distaste for.
- **Malachi** – literally, "My Messenger." Most likely this was a prophet's actual name, though some scholars believe this was only a general title for an unknown prophet.
- **Edom** – The land and its inhabitants found on the high plateau to the south and southeast of the Dead Sea. The biblical term Edom, meaning "red," denotes either the name of the land (describing the red sandstone of the area) or the name of Esau the founder of the people group, in remembrance of the red stew for which he exchanged his birthright (Genesis 25:30; 36:1, 8, 19). The country of Edom was also known as Seir (Genesis 32:3; 36:30; Numbers 24:18).

Malachi 1:1-5

"The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. 2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob 3 but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." 4 If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD isangry forever.' " 5 You own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!"

WEEK 1
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. Read Genesis 25:19-34 for the story of Esau and Jacob. In addition to this, scan through Genesis 32-33. In the space below, briefly describe the kinds of men that both Jacob and Esau were.

   Jacob

   Esau

2. What, according to the Lord, has he done to the land of Edom? Why has he done this?

3. The declaration of God's love is followed with words of correction by the Lord Why is being corrected to be considered a blessing by a follower of Christ?

4. Read Romans 9:12-18. The apostle Paul cites Malachi 1:2-3 in order to lay down a difficult truth in this passage. What is that truth, and why is it so difficult?

5. How can we reconcile a passage like John 3:16 which records the truth that God loves the world with the fact that Malachi describes God's "hatred" for Edom?

6. What does God want the Israelites to do in response to this deliberate destruction of Edom?

7. Circle which of the two statements below is the greater truth being conveyed in Malachi 1:1-5:

God hated Edom for its wickedness, and destroyed it.

OR

God loves his people and does not destroy them despite their wickedness.

8. Read Hosea 11:1, 3–4, 8–9, and Isaiah 43:4. God's love for Israel came before her existence; he loved her in that he sovereignly and graciously elected her to be his own possession. Read Ephesians 1:3-6. How is the way God loved Israel similar to the way he loves believers in Christ? How does this truth make you feel?

9. Consider that you have a friend who while struggling with a trial in their life, remarks to you, "God's just not fair." What kinds of things should you say to that friend? What do you think would be helpful, and what would be unhelpful.

WEEK 2

"My name will be great..."

- **despised –** to look down upon with contempt; to be made despicable (cf. Genesis 25:34; 1 Samuel 17:42).
- **polluted –** to be made unclean whether ritually or morally; to be defiled (cf. Daniel 1:8).
- **entreat –** to ask or request earnestly from a position of personal weakness (cf. Exodus 3:11; 1 Kings 13:6).

Malachi 1:6-14

"[6] A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' [7] By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. [8] When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. [9] And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. [10] 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, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. [11] For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. [12] But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. [13] But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. [14] Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

WEEK 2
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. To whom is this portion of Malachi's prophecy primarily addressed?

2. What were the behaviors and attitudes that were so displeasing to God from this passage? Where do you see any of these in your life right now?

3. Read Leviticus 22:17-22. Why do you think it meant so much to God that the animals set aside for sacrifice in the Old Testament be undamaged or spotless? Read also Hebrews 7:25-27 and 10:1-14. Do you see any additional significance in the Old Testaments commands for pure sacrifices?

4. Malachi's prophecy includes an indictment against the priests who had 'kindled fire in vain' on the altar of the Lord (1:10). What do you think that means, and can we be guilty of the sense behind that sin today?

5. According to 1:13, many of the crimes committed against the Lord stemmed from a central fleshly thought. What is that mindset?

6. What is being witnessed by the Lord in 1:14? Have you ever been guilty of something like this in your own life?

7. Take some time to read through and meditate on Psalm 51. What, according to David, is more important than animal sacrifices? How can we cultivate this in our own lives?

8. What other attitudes and actions are important to the Lord along these same lines as the previous question? Complete the chart below:

Psalm 34:18 _____

Matthew 9:13 _____

Romans 12:1 _____

1 Corinthians 7:9 _____

Mark 12:33 _____

Matthew 5:23-24 _____

9. Is it accurate to say that God cares more about my heart than he does about my obedience?

10. Consider that you have a young believer in your group. They ask you the question, "How can I prepare myself for worship on Sunday mornings?" How would you answer them?

11. Discuss with your group how you would define "giving God your best" for a believer today.

WEEK 3

"You have turned aside..."

- **honor** – heaviness; glory; to understand the importance and magnitude of something or someone (cf. Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 42:8).
- **covenant** – a contractual arrangement between God and a person, or between God and a group of persons, which required binding action from one or both parties; one party often had higher status in the arrangement. (cf. Genesis 17:1-4; 2 Chronicles 21:7).
- **iniquity** – literally a twisting, distortion or bending of something; an act or feeling that transgresses something forbidden or ignores something required by God's law or character; whether in thought, speech, feeling or action (cf. Numbers 14:18; Ezra 9:13).
- **corrupted** – to ruin, destroy or annihilate (cf. Genesis 6:13; Exodus 8:24).

Malachi 2:1-9

" And now, O priests, this command is for you. [2] If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. [3] Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. [4] So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. [5] My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. [6] True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. [7] For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. [8] But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, [9] and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction."

WEEK 3
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. Is leadership something you are born with or something you learn?

2. To whom do you think these words from Malachi in this passage most applies? Consider 1 Peter 2:9. Do you think a case can be made that it also applies to all followers of Christ?

3. Malachi 2:3 records for us an especially graphic image of God's rejection of the priests and their offerings. Just as dung is discarded so too would the priests be discarded in their shame (see 2:9). According to 2:4-8, what are the reasons why God does this?

4. Do you feel like God's judgment of the priests is too harsh? Read James 3:1. Why do you think there seem to be higher standards for those who spiritually lead God's people than others? In what ways is such a higher standard a good thing? In what ways might it be unfair or even harmful?

5. Read all of Matthew 23. What similarities do you see in Jesus' words to the Pharisees with Malachi's? What specifically does Jesus rebuke the religious leaders of his day for?

6. Levi is mentioned in this passage as a representative for the priests (See Numbers 3:12–13, 41, 45 for more of the story). In 2:5, the Lord says that the covenant with Levi was one of "life and peace" and also of "fear." What does it mean to fear the Lord in this way?

7. What does the lack of the fear of the Lord result in for the priests (2:6–8)? Do you see any evidence in your life that the fear of the Lord is not where it needs to be?

8. Describe a time when you felt God called you to do something. If you were speaking to friend who felt convinced that they were being called into full-time ministry, what sort of counsel would you give them?

9. What does God expect of His priests (2:1–9)? Compare this to what God expects of church leaders (elders) in Titus 1:5–9. What are the similarities? Are there any differences?

10. With all that you have learned this week, how would you relate the importance of godly biblical leadership to an 8-year-old in your family?

Pharisees

One of the parties or movements within Judaism of the late Second Temple period (ca. 150 B.C.–A.D. 70). The Pharisees were noted most for their exact observance of the Jewish religion, their accurate exposition of the law, their handing down of extrabiblical customs and traditions, their moderate position with regard to the interplay of fate and free will, and their belief in the coming resurrection and in angels.

WEEK 4

"Judah has been faithless..."

- **profaning** – to violate the sacred character of someone or something (like a place, object or institution) (cf. Exodus 20:25; Psalm 55:20).
- **faithless** – deal treacherously; to do wrong against someone by not being faithful to a person or standard (cf. Proverbs 22:12; Jeremiah 3:20).
- **guard** – to keep watch over; to protect or focus closely on something (cf. Genesis 2:15; 3:24)

Malachi 2:10-16

"Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to oneanother, profaning the covenant of our fathers? [11] Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. [12] May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts! [13] And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. [14] But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. [15] Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in yourspirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. [16] "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

WEEK 4
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. Malachi's message now turns towards the serious charge of the Israelites' intermarriage with foreign nations. Read Deuteronomy 7:1-4 and 1 Kings 11:6-10. Why was this so grave an offence?

2. Verses 10-16 can be understood in terms of two sins of worship directly related to two sins of marriage. Complete the chart below to see this more clearly:

Sin of worship #1 (2:11a)
Sin of marriage #1 (2:11b)
Sin of worship #2 (2:13)
Sin of marriage #2 (2:14)

3. What is one major truth that you see from the chart above? Read 1 Peter 3:7 and Matthew 5:23-24. How does the New Testament support the principles behind Malachi's message?

4. Read Numbers 12:1-9. What indication is there in this passage that God's concern in marriage is less about marrying across races and more about marrying a follower of the Lord? Are there any other instances in the Bible that you can think of that highlight God's inclusive love for all races?

5. In terms of marriage between a husband and a wife, do you believe that there is any application of Malachi's message today?

6. Which do you feel is more dangerous, an overtly anti-Christian lifestyle, or one that claims Christ and is subtly infused with false religions?

7. Verse 15 speaks of a husband and wife being made "one" by God through his Spirit. In what ways are they one?

8. Verses 15-16 provide several truths for protecting marriages. List some of them below. How would these look like in your life? Read Jeremiah 2:2 and Revelation 2:1-7. Regardless of whether you are married or not, how do these same truths apply to you with respect to your relationship with the Lord?

9. How would you counsel a Christian who is considering marrying a non-Christian?

Marriage

In ancient Israel, under normal conditions the activities connected with marriage (preceded by betrothal) were: the transfer of the bride to the bridegroom's home by joyful processional, the marriage feast usually taking place in the evening and often lasting many days, and the consummation. Normally the young man's parents chose the bride. The resulting discussion about the marriage occurred between the groom's parents and the bride's parents, and often neither of the young people were consulted.

WEEK 5

"I will send my messenger..."

- **wearied** – to cause someone to be physically and mentally fatigued. Implies exhaustion based upon great toil or labor (cf. 2 Samuel 23:10; Psalm 6:6).
- **refiner** – one whose work deals in smelting metal, usually with a cruc ble and high heat; to sift or to test by fire (cf. Isaiah 1:25; 48:10).
- **fuller's soap** – launder's soap; the soap associated with a fuller, or one who treads upon soiled clothing or scours it until white (cf. Genesis 49:11. This is the sense of the wording found in Mark 9:3).
- **draw near** – to step up to; to get close; to confront; to move towards or near (cf. Genesis 37:18; Exodus 29:3).

Malachi 2:17-3:5

" You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" [1]"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. [2] But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. [3] He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. [4] Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. [5] "Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts."

WEEK 5
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. What sorts of activities, things, or even people have the tendency to wear you out easily?

2. As this section of Malachi begins, we are told that the Lord himself is "wearied." Within the context, what two sinful statements are being accepted by the people of Israel that have prompted this weariness? How is this similar to the New Testament's teaching in Romans 1:29-32 and 2 Peter 3:1-4? Do you see these two sinful statements accepted in the culture around us today?

3. Linking 2:17 with 3:1, what is the Lord's promised response to Israel's em bracing of these sinful statements?

4. 3:1 actually describes two different messengers. Who are they, and what is their role? In Matthew 11:7-10, Jesus quotes this passage directly. Whom does Jesus say is the first "messenger"?

5. Does Malachi's comparison of the arrival of the Lord to a refiner's fire, and a fuller's soap mean that the Lord will completely destroy opposition? How does this make you feel?

6. Malachi 3:3-5 details several tasks that the Lord will accomplish when he arrives. Complete the chart below to outline these more clearly.

Task #1 (v3)
Task #2 (v4)
Task #3 (v5)

7. Looking at these tasks, can we say that they have all been fulfilled by Christ already? Why or why not?

8. In considering what the Lord promises to accomplish, do you think it is significant that the work is said to begin with "the sons of Levi"? Look back to Malachi 2:4-8 before you answer.

9. Consider that a friend of yours looks at the list in 3:5 of sins to be judged, and is personally convicted by many of them. How would encour age them also through God's word? To what passages would you direct them?

10. Can it be said that all of the sins in 3:5 stem from the final one mentioned: "and do not fear me"? Is this over-simplifying things?

Already, But Not Yet

The theological concept of "already but not yet" holds that believers are actively taking part in the kingdom of God, although the kingdom will not reach its full expression until sometime in the future at Christ's return. As believers in Christ we are "already" in the kingdom, but we do "not yet" see it in its glory. Often, the prophets of the Old Testament foresaw the culmination of the events as a "not yet" physical reality while Jesus and the New Testament followers of Christ understood better this interim period of "already" spiritual reality (Acts 1:6–7; Hebrews 2:8–9).

WEEK 6

"Will man rob God?"

- **return** – to go or come back to a place, condition, or activity where one has been before (cf. Genesis 3:19; Joshua 1:15).
- **rob** – to take something away by force or without the consent of the owner; whether something physical or something abstract (This word is found only here in Malachi 3 and Proverbs 22:23).
- **tithes** – an offering of a tenth part of one's possessions; including produce and livestock (cf. Genesis 14:20; 2 Chronicles 31:5).
- **test** – literally to test metals by melting; to try in order to ascertain the nature of something, including imperfections, faults, or other qualities (cf. Psalm 7:9; Proverbs 17:3; Jeremiah 9:7).

Malachi 3:6-15

"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' 8 Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. 11 I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. 12 Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. 13 "Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' 14 You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.' "

WEEK 6
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. Malachi 3:6-7 are key verses in the book. From what you have studied so far why is this true?

2. In 3:8-10 God articulates another sin that the Israelites are committing as a whole. What is that sin? Look also at Matthew 6:19-21. From both passages, what is at the root of this sin that is so upsetting to the Lord?

3. Suggest some helpful responses for how would you answer your friend who says to you, "If God is so powerful, he doesn't need my money."

4. In the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 9 provides greater clarity for understanding financial giving to the Lord. From that passage list some of the principle of what God wants to see in our giving in the chart below (add more lines if you need):

Reference
v.
v.
v.
v.

5. According to the Lord's promise in Malachi 3:10–12, what kinds of things would result from the Israelites'' obedience in this area?

6. Having read 3:10–12 and then also 2 Corinthians 9:6, your friend at church now concludes "If I give my money to the church, God will give me more money in return." Is she correct? How would you answer her?

7. Read Luke 22:1–4. How does this account support what you've learned so far about giving?

8. Read Philippians 4:19. Is it easy or difficult for you to trust God to supply your needs? Have you ever felt like God has failed to provide for your needs?

9. Closely examine Malachi 3:13–15. Why does a "be good and God will accept me" understanding of salvation lead to a "God owes me" kind of thinking? Do you see how these verses relate to financial giving?

10. Are there any areas of growth that the Lord is challenging you in through this week's text?

Jesus & Money

Jesus talked much about money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables were concerned with how to handle money and possessions. In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

Howard L. Dayton, Jr., Leadership, Vol. 2, no. 2.

WEEK 7

"They shall be mine..."

- **feared** – to be afraid; to tremble; to have profound respect for something; typically used of a person in regards to God (cf. Deuteronomy 20:8; Exodus 18:21).
- **remember** – to keep in mind for intention or consideration; to remember is not simply to recollect but also to obey, to live according to what has been taught (cf. Genesis 8:1; Exodus 2:24; Deuteronomy 8:2).
- **awesome** – awe-inspiring; wonderful; revered. Most uses of the word in the Old Testament connote fear or terror (cf. Genesis 3:10; Nehemiah 4:14)

Malachi 3:16-4:6

"Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. [17] "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. [18] Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. [2] But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. [3] And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts. [4] "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. [5] "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. [6] And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."

WEEK 7
LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

1. If you were to rate them, what are the top 3 best days of your life?

2. If you haven't already done so on the text on the previous page, circle all the occurrences of the word, "day."

3. Horeb was a significant site for Israel for many reasons. Consult the references below to see what happened there, and briefly summarize each.

Exodus 3:1-2

Exodus 17:6-7

1 Kings 19:8-18

Deuteronomy 5:2

Psalm 106:19

What is another name for Horeb?

4. Malachi 3:16-18 records the repentance of some of the Israelites and of their names being recorded in a "book of remembrance." Why is it so comforting for the believer to consider that God has promised to not forget them?

5. According to 3:16-4:2, what is the defining characteristic of those that God says, "They will be mine"? What does it mean for you to "fear the Lord"?

6. Compare 4:1-3 with 3:2-3. What is the difference, specifically between the two fires?

7. What is the "healing" that will come on the "day of the Lord" and how will it come? (See Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 12:10-13:2; 1 Peter 2:24-25)

8. How does 4:5-6 complete the job description of the earlier referenced messenger in 3:1?

9. Judgement day is a fearful prospect, but for the Christian there is a sense in which our judgement day has happened – the day Jesus died for our sin and rose victorious over sin and death.
Having been united to Him through faith we may now consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to Christ (Romans 6). How does this truth free you to live the holy life God has called you to live in Jesus?

Elijah at Mount Horeb

It is likely that this future prophet is identified with Elijah not because Elijah was spared from death, as if this might permit a literal return to life, but because the future messenger would have a prophetic ministry similar to that of the historical Elijah.

Crossway Bibles. (2008). The ESV Study Bible (p. 1779). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.