

# THE PROPHET MALACHI

## Malachi



God's people had returned to Jerusalem, the temple and city walls had been rebuilt, and the law had been read to the people. Even though the people promised to obey God, they turned back to their sinful ways. God sent the prophet Malachi to speak His words to the people.

God spoke to Israel through Malachi and said, "I have loved you." The people doubted God's love for them. But God reminded them of how He chose Jacob over Esau, just as He chose Israel to be His people.

God loved His people, but they didn't show they loved Him. God told Malachi to share how the priests dishonored Him through their blemished sacrifices. The priests offered animals that were blind, lame, and sick. God is a great King, and He deserves the best offerings.

God spoke through Malachi and gave the priests a warning: "If you don't listen, and if you don't honor my name, I will send a curse among you." God said that the priests were supposed to speak God's words to the people and help the people know God. Instead, the priests led the people away from God.

But God made a promise. He said, "I am going to send my messenger to clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will come

to his temple." This promise was about the coming Messiah. The Messiah would make people pure, and they would be able to give offerings that please God in righteousness.

Then Malachi said a day was coming when God will judge those who oppress the widow and the fatherless, and those who don't do justice. God told the people, "Return to me, and I will return to you." God said the wicked will be destroyed, but those who fear God will see the sun of righteousness.

After Malachi there were no more prophets for four hundred years. This was the last message from God to His people as they waited for the promised Messiah, and for the messenger who would prepare the way for Him.

*Christ Connection:* Malachi told the people to turn away from sin as they looked forward to the promised Messiah. Years later, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus—the Messiah. Jesus brought a message of repentance and salvation.



## 1 WELCOME TIME

Greet each preteen as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

- **What does it mean to ‘prepare’?**
- **What are some activities or events you might need to prepare for?**

## 2 SESSION STARTER

### OPTION 1: BE PREPARED!



Form kids into two teams. Tell kids that you will call out an event, and they must think of ways to be prepared for that event. Send one kid from each team to the dry erase board. Give them an event. Then allow them 20 seconds to write down as many ways to be prepared as they can think of. For example, for a play performance, kids may write memorize lines, create a set, make costumes, etc. If kids are stuck, another team member can run to the board and write down the ways to be prepared. The team with the most items for that event receives a point. Play additional rounds, calling out various events, such as Christmas, birthday party, moving to a new city, Science Fair, play performance, incoming guests, etc.

**SAY** “ It helps to be prepared for an event so it can be successful. Today, we will see how God wanted to prepare His people for the coming Messiah. We’ll learn how God promised to send a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah. This messenger would help people get ready for Jesus, the Messiah, by calling people to repent of their sins. ”

### OPTION 2: GUIDE ME

Before the class, use painter’s tape to mark two distinct paths about 1 foot wide. You can make the paths straight or curvy. Form the kids into two teams. Choose a kid from each team and lead them to each stand at the start of a path. Place a blindfold on each kid. Challenge the blindfolded kids to listen to their teammates as they try to guide them on the path. Pay close attention and count the number of times each kid steps outside the path. The team with the least number of missteps is awarded a point. Repeat, allowing other kids to walk the path as their teammates guide them.

**SAY** “ The goal of the activity was to stay on the path with the help of your teammates. Today, we will see how God’s people were to live in ways that pleased Him with the help of the priests. However, we’ll learn how the priests actually led the people away from God. In His mercy, God sent the prophet Malachi to give the people a message. **MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH.** ”



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

**1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY**

The Bible tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. All of the stories in the Bible fit together to tell us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Today we are going to hear about the prophet Malachi. Whether this is your first time or your tenth time hearing this story, there is always something new to learn in God's Word.

**Read from Malachi.****•What does this story teach us about God?**

God loves His people! He proved His love over and over again, and He sent the prophet Malachi to tell the people that He was sending someone who would be able to lead them in God's ways and make them pure. Malachi said God was sending a messenger who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah. When the Messiah came, He would make people righteous and able to follow His ways.

**•What command from the Lord did Malachi give the people?**

Malachi gave the people a command from the Lord. What did he tell them to do? Look at Malachi 3:7. Malachi told the people to return to the Lord. God's people needed to turn away from their wicked practices and repent. Malachi said that when they returned to God in repentance, God would return to them. **Malachi warned God's people to turn from their sin and remember the promised Messiah.**

Form groups of two or three and practice retelling the Bible story in your own words. Think of someone you could share the story with this week.

**CHRIST CONNECTION**

Malachi told the people to turn away from sin as they looked forward to the promised Messiah. Years later, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus—the Messiah. Jesus brought a message of repentance and salvation.

**2 MISSIONS MOMENT**

Remind kids that Brian Bowman and Valley Life Church desire to reach the people living in Phoenix, Arizona, with the hope of the gospel. Share how a new job opportunity has invited several hundred people to move to Phoenix from Taiwan. Valley Life Church and a Chinese Baptist church in the area are both reaching out to the people from Taiwan. Explain that most of the people moving to Phoenix from Taiwan know little about Jesus. They are learning about Jesus from Valley Life church members who care about them. Sharing the good news of Jesus shows that the church members love the people of Taiwan because they want them to be saved from their sins. The church members also expect that many of the Taiwanese people who have become believers in Jesus will eventually move back to Taiwan. The church members hope that if the new Taiwanese believers move back to Taiwan, they can tell people in Taiwan about Jesus.

Pray for these Taiwanese people as they hear the good news of Jesus. Pray for the Valley Life volunteers as they share the gospel and help meet the needs of the Taiwanese people.



## LEARN

### THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

#### 3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

Like God’s people, we all need Jesus to turn our hearts back to God and save us from sin. We can’t do this on our own. Jesus came to save us from the judgment our sin deserves, make us right with God, and give us eternal life. Have you turned from your sin and trusted in Jesus?

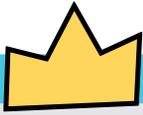
#### 4 PRAY

Dear God, You continued to show Your love for Your people by sharing the promise of salvation through the coming Messiah. You have shown Your love to us by giving Your one and only Son to die on the cross for our sins. Help us love You and worship You wholeheartedly. Amen.

### THE GOSPEL

#### GOD’S PLAN FOR ME

The gospel is the good news—the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use Scripture and the guide provided below to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.

				
<b>GOD RULES</b>	<b>WE SINNED</b>	<b>GOD PROVIDED</b>	<b>JESUS GIVES</b>	<b>WE RESPOND</b>
Ask: “Who is in charge at home?” Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.	Ask: “Have you ever done something wrong?” Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.	Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.	Ask: “What is the best gift you’ve ever received?” Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.	Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: “Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus.” Read Romans 10:9-10.



## THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

### 1 THINK ABOUT THE STORY

- If God can't look at sin, how can He look at us?
- How does faith in Jesus wash away our sin?

### 2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Distribute Bibles. Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Malachi 3. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Malachi 3:1.

Remind preteens that God promised to send a messenger to prepare the way before the Messiah, and He did! In the New Testament, we learn how John the Baptist is the messenger who called people to repent because Jesus, the Messiah, had come. Jesus is the Savior people were waiting for! Jesus came to earth and later went to the temple to teach people about God. Jesus is called the Messenger of the covenant because He would provide salvation through His life, death, and resurrection. Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven. Read aloud Malachi 3:1 again. Then lead the group to discuss the following questions.

#### 1. What might tempt you or others to turn away from God?

Remind kids that God's people had turned away from God yet again. Discuss how we are all tempted to turn away from God because we are sinners. We might be tempted to follow our friends instead of God. Or we might be tempted to love sports, activities, or school more than we love God. Remind kids that anytime we turn away from God, He invites us to return to Him through repentance.  
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mal. 3:7.)

#### 2. Do you ever doubt God's love? Why?

Discuss how God's people doubt God's love for them. When we doubt God's love, we are failing to trust God's words and His promises. God will never change. When He says He loves us, He means it. Remind kids that God showed His love to us by sending His only Son to die on the cross for our sins.  
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 5:8.)

#### 3. What is one way you can display your love for God this week?

Explain that the Israelites failed to show they loved God when they offered blemished sacrifices. Tell kids that God is worthy of the very best. Encourage kids to think of ways they can give God their best this week out of love for Him, such as spending more time in prayer, reading the Bible, helping family members, working hard in school, etc. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 12:1-2.)

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### BIG PICTURE QUESTION

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**What is the Bible about?**  
**The Bible is the story of God's  
plan to save people through Jesus**

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## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### 1 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 20:31. Lead them in reading the key passage aloud together. Discuss how God spoke through prophets, like Malachi, to share the good news of the coming Messiah. Explain that today, we have the whole Bible which shares God's plan to save sinful people through Jesus.

Distribute a piece of cardstock to each kid. Challenge kids to write out the key passage on the cardstock. Then encourage kids to use markers or paint to illustrate the key passage. Invite kids to share their drawings with the group. Display the illustrations on the wall of your room or a hall where people can see them.

### 2 PRAY

Invite volunteers to share prayer requests. Then pray, praising God for His mercy to call people to repent and save them through Jesus.

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#### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

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### MESSENGERS

Provide each kid with a piece of paper. Direct kids to write a sentence that begins to retell today's Bible story. For example, kids may write, "God called the prophet Malachi to share a message." Then lead kids to fold their paper into a paper airplane. On your start, direct kids to toss their paper airplane into the air. Lead kids to go and retrieve a paper airplane that is not their own. Next, direct kids to continue adding to the previous words. Repeat this process for several rounds until kids have had time to retell most of the story. Finally, invite kids to find their original airplane and read the story others helped write.

Ask preteens if their story was an accurate message. Tell kids that God's words are always true, and He sent the prophet Malachi to give a message to His people. Malachi warned God's people to turn from their sin and remember the promised Messiah. Today, we can read the Bible to hear this same message: repent of your sins and trust in Jesus to be saved.