



PREACHING GUIDE

JANUARY BIBLE STUDY 2017
Leader Guide



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The chapters of this January Bible Study have options for sermons. Consider the suggestions below as possibilities. The texts suggest these expositional outlines. They depend heavily on the exegesis of the biblical materials. Each sermon fits the context of the passage but also the context of the Bible as a whole. Closely reading the Book of Malachi, these expositional notes, the January Bible Study personal study guide, and other commentaries on the text will give substance to help your hearers understand the outlines. In addition, you may find help in the twenty “timeless truths” gleaned from Malachi and included at the end of the last chapter of the Expository Notes (p. 73). You will want to include numerous illustrations to open the windows into Malachi’s teachings.

Great benefit awaits by preaching through books of the Bible, such as in the annual January Bible Study. You may find it helpful to introduce these biblical books by preaching a single message that covers the entire book or the central theme. This helps to set the groups of trees, so to speak, in the context of the whole forest. You will also find two sermons that could be used to introduce this series.

Series Introduction

Sermon Title: *Malachi: An Overview*

Sermon Text: Selected passages from Malachi

Focus: God called Malachi to deliver a message to a people dominated by spiritual apathy. The message reminded the people of their sin, the accountability owed, and the hope awaiting the faithful.¹

I. The Lord’s Complaints (1–2)

A. The Nation’s Spiritual Sins (1:1–2:9)

1. Denying God’s love (1:1-5)
2. Despising God’s name (1:6)
3. Defiling God’s altar (1:7-14)
4. Disregarding God’s law (2:1-9)

B. The Nation’s Special Sins (2:10-17)

1. Their detestable worship (2:10-13)
2. Their deserted wives (2:14-16)
3. Their distorted words (2:17)

II. The Lord’s Coming (3–4)

A. To Deal in Wrath with Sinners (3:1-15). Because of:

1. Ungodly actions (3:1-5)
2. Ungodly attitudes (3:6-12)
3. Ungodly arguments (3:13-15)

B. To Deal in Reward with Saints (3:16-4:6). The righteous will be:

1. Remembered (3:16-18)
2. Rewarded (4:1-4)
3. Revisited (4:5)
4. Revived (4:6)

Sermon Title: *Overcoming Spiritual Complacency*

Sermon Text: Malachi 2:2, et al.

Focus: The people to whom Malachi spoke had allowed apathy to replace their zeal for the Lord. They had rebuilt the temple and restored temple worship, but Isaiah’s promised world dominion (49:22-23; 54:1-3; 61:5-7) had not occurred. Poverty had set in. Disappointment prevailed. The Persians still ruled. Malachi knew life’s ultimate questions had spiritual answers, not political ones. He challenged their spiritual complacency.

Introduction:

Many today walk only halfheartedly with the Lord. Malachi calls us to wholehearted faithfulness in response to who God is and what He has done.

I. Return to God (repent) (3:7).

II. Why Return to God?

- A. Because God still loves us (1:2-5).
- B. Because God is faithful (3:6).

III. How can we return to God?

- A. Fear God (1:14; 3:5,16; 4:2-3).
- B. Keep holy things holy:
 1. Give honor to God’s name (1:6-14).
 2. Worship with sincerity (2:1-9).
 3. Value marriage partnership (2:10-16).
 4. Treat others with integrity (3:5).
 5. Offer tithes (3:7-12).
 6. Fellowship with other believers (3:16-18).
 7. Look for the Lord’s return (3:1-6; 4:5-6).

Chapter 1. How Have You Loved Us? (1:1-5)

Sermon Title: *A Preacher's Burden*

Text: Malachi 1:1

Focus: Pastors who preach the whole Bible will have to confront evil. At times a pastor will have to confront some particular evil in his own congregation—an unpleasant task. Prayer will help. The example of courageous souls like Malachi will also help. See the exposition in Expository Notes for 1:1-5 to understand the burden (*massa* in Hebrew) Malachi felt.

Introduction:

A church family could be compared to one's personal family where both positive and negative words must occur. For instance, most of the time parents can use loving, positive words. However, when a toddler's fingers come close to a wall socket, parents need to yell, "No!" Sometimes we as pastors must confront evil.

- I. Malachi's Burden to Preach the Word of God against Complacency (1:1)
- II. Malachi's Forcefulness in Preaching to Confront Error
 - A. His use of questions to involve his hearers (seven times in the book—see Expository Notes for 1:1-5 for his dialogical approach)
 - B. His unashamed confrontation of wrong
 - C. His proclaiming God's promise of rewards to the righteous and punishments to the unrighteous (3:16–4:6)
- III. The Result of Malachi's Preaching God's Word
 - A. God-fearers gained strength by openly fellowshiping together (3:16).
 - B. Malachi's testimony has turned people to God through the centuries.

Sermon Title: *When You Doubt God's Love*

Text: Malachi 1:1-5

Focus: The people of Israel doubted God's love for them. Their eyes looked more at their harsh conditions than at the Lord (see the introduction and the Expository Notes for 1:1-5 for the terrible conditions of their time). Malachi went to great lengths to show God still loved them.

Introduction:

As a child, did you ever doubt that your parents loved you? Maybe they spanked you for some wrongdoing. Maybe you didn't get something you wanted. You began to doubt that your parents loved you. Later you likely realized your immaturity. Malachi dealt with some spiritually immature people who doubted God's love for them. Even today people sometimes have health problems, financial problems, or relationship problems and begin to doubt God's love for them.

- I. God Loves Us with a Sovereign Love (v. 2).²
 - A. This sovereign love does not mean irresistible grace.
 - B. It does not mean predetermined election.
 - C. God wants to save all (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; John 3:16).
 - D. God does not predetermine but He does foreknow.
 - E. Sovereign love means God doesn't give up on us.
 - F. Sovereign love means God keeps His promises even when we don't.
- II. God Loves Us with a Strong Love (v. 3).
- III. God Loves Us with a Steadfast Love (v. 4).
- IV. God Loves Us with a Seeking Love (v. 5).

Chapter 2. How Have We Despised Your Name? (1:6–2:9)

Sermon Title: *Dishonoring God's Name*

Text: Malachi 1:6-14

Focus: One often hears God's name taken in vain—on television, at ball games, even in "polite" company. But taking God's name in vain occurs in ways other than cursing. *Vain* means "emptiness." When people worship God halfheartedly, they empty His name of meaning and thereby take His name in vain. (NOTE: Malachi mentioned God's name six times in the first chapter.)

- I. We Profane His Name by Not Offering Our Whole-Hearted Worship (1:6-10).
 - A. We must treat God better than we treat our governor (1:8).
 - B. We must not offer our holy God our rejects (1:8,13-14).

C. We must not expect God's favor if we give Him second-best (1:8-10).

II. We Profane His Name by Not Realizing His World-Wide Greatness (1:11,14).

III. We Profane His Name by Not Following Through on Our Vows (1:14).

Sermon Title: *The Fear of God*

Text: Malachi 1:6,14

Focus: The fear of God constituted one of the major themes of Malachi. Most of the returned Israelites seemed not to fear God. Because they failed to fear the Lord they fell easily into sin. We face the same problem. A look at any good concordance reveals hundreds of entries about the fear of God. Yet, Christians seldom hear preaching and teaching about the fear of God. People who do not fear the Lord today fall into sin easily, just as they did in Malachi's day.

- I. The Fear of God Described
 - A. Fear of God describes how we should respond to the God who knows our thoughts and deeds.
 - B. Fear of God carries the idea of reverence and respect.
 - C. Fear of God also involves internal terror, awe, and obedience.

II. The Fear of God Deserved (1:6)

III. The Fear of God Restored (1:14)

Chapter 3. Why Are We Unfaithful to One Another? (2:10-16)

Sermon Title: *A Marriage Made in Heaven*

Text: Malachi 2:10-16

Focus: Of all the Old Testament prophets, Malachi alone called the wife a "marriage partner." He clearly proclaimed the sinfulness both of divorcing one's wife without cause and of marrying outside the faith. He pointed out the correlation between how a man treats his wife and how he relates to God. He mentioned the word "treacherously" (*bagad* in Hebrew) five times in these seven verses and twice he mentioned "watch yourselves carefully." Believers should carefully attend to their homes.

I. Marrying Outside the Faith Profanes the Lord's Sanctuary (2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

II. Acting Treacherously in the Home Renders Worship Worthless (2:13-15).

A. God doesn't receive the offerings (prayers) of one who practices treachery in the home (2:13; 1 Pet. 3:7) because of:

1. The covenant of a marriage (2:10,14)

2. The partnership of a marriage (2:14)

3. The purpose of a marriage (2:15)

4. The injustice created by the breaking of a marriage (2:16)

B. Therefore watch yourselves carefully in relationships in the home (2:15,16).

Chapter 4. Where Is the God of Justice? (2:17-3:5)

Sermon Title: *God's Tired of It!*

Text: Malachi 2:17

Focus: Can God grow weary? After all, Scripture teaches God does not change (Mal. 3:6). Yet Scripture also reveals many times God has emotions (Gen. 6:6; Judg. 10:16; Ps. 2:4-5). The New Testament also pictures Jesus with strong emotions (Luke 19:41; John 2:13-17; 11:33-35). The Bible teaches we cannot describe God as apathetic because humanity's pain, burdens, and lostness move Him. Neither can we describe Him as pathetic because human emotions do not rule Him.

Introduction:

When the returned exiles blamed God for their troubles, it wearied Him. He didn't grow weary in the sense that His inner nature changed (Isa. 40:28). He grew tired of their complaints. His impatience grew out of a violation of His love and justice. His weariness revealed His disappointment that they had not served and loved Him from a whole heart.

God grows tired of people who:

- I. Say God Sees Evildoers as Good (2:17)
- II. Say Those Who Do Evil Please God (2:17)
- III. Question God's Presence (2:17)

Sermon Title: *The Lord's Coming*

Text: Malachi 3:1-5

Focus: Those who question the goodness of God toward His followers will see the Lord Himself personally respond by coming to them. Many will not expect what happens when He comes, however. He will judge those who live apart from Him.

The Lord's Return Will Be:

- I. Certain ("See" or "behold" is used for events certain to happen, 3:1)
- II. Personal ("He is coming," 3:1)
- III. Sudden (3:1)
- IV. Exacting (3:2-5)
 - A. Like a refining fire and a cleansing soap to restore (3:2-3).
 - B. Will judge sorcerers, adulterers, liars, and oppressors of widows, orphans, wage earners, and foreigners (3:5).

Chapter 5. How Can We Return? (3:6-12)

Sermon Title: *Return to God*

Text: Malachi 3:6-12

Focus: The way we handle material possessions reveals the health of our relationship with God and with others (Matt. 6:24). Serving God spiritually does not make up for failing to serve Him materially. When we realize the depth of God's love for us we eagerly give our best in worship, service, and material goods. We can trust God to open heaven's floodgates for our needs.

Introduction:

Malachi set his words about tithing in the context of repentance. Withholding tithes and offerings reveals an unwillingness to repent and return to God. Faithfulness with our material goods reveals the fruit of our repentance.

- I. God's Case Against His People (3:6-9)
 - A. We rob God (3:8).
 - B. We live under a curse (3:9).
- II. God's Challenge to His People (3:10-11)
 - A. Test God by tithing and see God open the windows of heaven for our needs (3:10).
 - B. Test God by tithing and see God conserve our goods (3:11).
- III. God's Commitment to His People (3:7c,12)
 - A. God will return to us (3:7c).
 - B. God will lift the curse so that others will consider us blessed of God (3:12).

Sermon Title: *Why Tithe?*

Text: Malachi 3:6-12

Focus: God expects the Christian to tithe. (See materials in Expository Notes on 3:6-12 that show the tithe began before the giving of the Law, the tithe continued through the ages, Jesus endorsed giving the tithe, and the New Testament nowhere absolves believers of the sacrifices and joys of tithing.)

- I. We Rob God When We Fail to Tithe (3:8-9).
- II. We Rob Ourselves of His Provision (3:10-12).

Chapter 6. What Have We Spoken Against You? (3:13–4:6)

Sermon Title: *Rewarded by God*

Text: Malachi 3:16–4:3

Focus: Serving God in Malachi's day, as in ours, did not bring popularity. But those who fear God and have high regard for His name have His ear (3:16), receive His notice (3:16), and will obtain His reward.

Those Who Fear God:

- I. Don't Go Through Life Alone
 - A. They fellowship with one another (3:16).
 - B. God notices them (3:16).
 - C. God hears their talk together and their prayers to Him (3:16).
- II. Find Their Records in His Book of Remembrance (3:16)
- III. Hear Him Call Them, "Mine" (3:17)
 - A. He treasures them as His special possession (*segullah*; 3:17).
 - B. He pours on them His special compassion (3:17).
- IV. Will Jump with Joy One Day (4:2)

Sermon Title: *The Day of the Lord*

Text: Malachi 3:18–4:6

Focus: The last Old Testament prophet closed the last prophetic book of the Old Testament with the sentence, "Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Introduction:

The Day of the Lord will reveal the difference between those who serve God and those who do not (3:18). "Otherwise" indicates our clear choice concerning that Day. What we choose here determines our place in eternity. Malachi's hearers could still choose, and so can we.

- I. For the Wicked Who Do Not Serve God, Eternal Judgment Awaits (3:16–4:1,3).
- II. For the Righteous Who Serve God, Reward (3:16-17), Joy (4:2), and Family Closeness (4:6) Awaits.
- III. Therefore, Avoid the Curse by Turning to God!
 1. Revised from John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 182-83.
 2. This outline is from a sermon by Adrian Rogers, "When You Doubt God's Love" from Malachi 1:1-5, n.p., n.d.