

March Teaching Theme: The Book of Malachi

讲员 Speaker: Pastor Linghui Tian / Dr. Stacy Minger

题目 Topic: God of Justice

经文 Scripture: Malachi 2:7 - 3:5

Monthly Theme: For the next two months (outside of Easter), we will be walking through the prophetic book of Malachi. Malachi is a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah; thus, the historical context for this book is the same as Ezra-Nehemiah's. It is debated if Malachi's prophetic ministry comes in between Zerubabel and Ezra's return to the land or if it is shortly after the ending of Nehemiah, which we just looked at last week. Either way, we know that God was speaking through Malachi to the people of Israel within the same storyline and context as Ezra-Nehemiah. Recall, in the Ezra-Nehemiah, the hopes were high upon the return to the land, but after it is all said and done, the people prove to be just as corrupt, unjust, and unfaithful as before the exile. Malachi steps onto the scene to confront the sin, corruption, and injustice that has become characteristic of this new generation in the land. Something lurking in the background of the story of Ezra-Nehemiah that we did not mention in our last series is the pressures of mixed allegiances within the Israelite leadership. Recall that the temple and wall project and the paychecks of many Israelite leaders were being funded by the Persian government, which had other plans and agendas. So, for instance, the Persian government would have likely used the temple to collect governmental taxes, opening up the door for confusion and corruption. Thus, it is likely that these mixed allegiances to Yahweh and the Persian government contributed to the failings of Israel at the time. And this is the context that Malachi confronts - a lack of full allegiance to Yahweh, leading to corrupt, unjust, and unwise actions. The book is divided into six disputes between God and the people. Most of these disputes are formatted with God making a claim, the people responding in disagreement, and God responding with the final word.

三月 March: 瑪拉基書 Malachi (四旬期 Lent)

March 6th – 神的愛與信實 God's Love & Faithfulness (瑪拉基書 Malachi 1:2-5 – Dispute 1)

March 13th - 鄙視聖殿 Despising the Temple (瑪拉基書 Malachi 1:6-2:9 -Dispute 2)

March 20th – 拜偶像與離婚 Idolatry & Divorce (瑪拉基書 Malachi 2:10-16 - Dispute 3)

March 27th – 公義的神 God of Justice (瑪拉基書 Malachi 2:17-3:5 - Dispute 4)

Structure of Book:

Dispute 争论 1 - 1:1-5

Dispute 争论 2 - 1:6-2:9

Dispute 争论 3 - 2:10-16

Dispute 争论 4 - 2:17-3:5

Dispute 争论 5 - 3:6-12

Dispute 争论 6 - 3:13-18

Conclusion 结论 - 4:1-6

Dispute Format 争论形式:

1: God makes a Claim 神宣告一件事

2: The People Respond in Disagreement 百姓反驳

3: God Responds 神回应

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (Pastor Tian)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Pastor Tian)

[Sermon Video](#) (Dr. Stacy Minger)

[Overview: Malachi](#) (Bible Project) [English]

[Overview: Malachi](#) (Bible Project) [Mandarin]

[Map of Israel/Judah/Edom before the Babylonian Exile](#)

[Maps of the Persian Empire](#)

[Map of Judah \(Yehud\) under Persian rule](#)

[Timeline of Rebuild under Persian Rule](#)

Discussion Questions (Pastor Linghui Tian)

- (1) Read Malachi 2:7-3:5 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) 如何正确理解2:17节"公义的神在哪里"这句话?为什么当时以色列人会这样质问上帝?生活中,我们是否也有过类似怀疑神公义的时候?How to correctly understand the sentence "Where is the righteous God" in 2:17? Why did the Israelites question God in this way? Have we ever had similar doubts about God's justice in our life?
- (3) 当以色列人质问上帝公义的同时,是否他们自己的行为比他人好,还是与他人一样(参考3:5)。这对今天的基督徒有哪些提醒?When the Israelites questioned God's righteousness, whether they themselves acted better than others, or the same as others (cf. 3:5). What reminders does this have for Christians today?
- (4) 如果上帝是公义的上帝,为什么上帝没有立即惩罚作恶的人(参考结18:23、33:10-11,彼后3:9和玛3:6)。如果上帝是给人机会的上帝,是不是这个机会是无限延伸的?这对今天的基督徒有哪些帮助?If God is a righteous God, why does God not immediately punish evildoers (cf. Ezekiel 18:23, 33:10-11, 2 Peter 3:9 and Mal 3:6). If God is the God of opportunity, is that opportunity infinite? How does this help Christians today?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: Please take note of the context, both recalling what we learned in Ezra-Nehemiah and using the above resources (maps, videos, etc.). Here the people complain that it appears God's justice is absent as evil people seem to do well. God responds point to the future, that God's justice and deliverance will come. Included in this justice is his putting the people of God on trial as well, where they must answer, did they give false witnesses, did they defraud their workers of their wages, did they oppress the widows and fatherless, did they deprive the foreigner, the immigrant of justice. If we desire the God of Justice in our world, we too must examine our lives, whether we have acted for justice or not. This passage also contains clear New Covenant ties with reference to the "messenger sent to prepare the way," calling people to repentance of their sins in preparation for the Lord-Messiah to come. And we know that messenger was John the Baptist and the Lord coming to his temple is none other than Jesus

the Christ, who has offered us deliverance from our sins, empower us for a transformed life, and promised he will come again to execute justice, making all things right.