

March Teaching Theme: The Book of Malachi

讲员 Speaker: Dr. Victor P. Hamilton

题目 Topic: Robbing God

经文 Scripture: Malachi 3:6-12

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.

四月 April: 瑪拉基書 Malachi (四旬期與復活節 Lent/Resurrection)

April 3rd – 為貪婪悔改 Repent of Your Greed (瑪拉基書 Malachi 3:6-12 - 爭議 5 Dispute 5) (四旬期 Lent)

April 10th – 倘若惡人興盛, 事奉神有甚麼益處? Why Serve God When the Wicked Prosper? (瑪拉基書 Malachi 3:13-18 - Dispute 6) (四旬期 Lent)

April 17th – 空墳墓 The Empty Tomb (John 20) (復活節主日 Easter Sunday)

April 24th – 上帝之日 The Day of the Lord (瑪拉基書終章 Malachi 4:1-6 - Conclusion)

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](#)

[Sermon Slides](#)

[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 William R. Horne)

- (1) Read Malachi 3:6-12 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) Why do we as a community and individuals often have a hard time talking about money? Why do you believe how we use our “wealth & possessions” is one of the most frequently discussed topics in Scripture? What mindsets keep us from being “cheerful givers”?
- (3) Divide up into three smaller groups and assign a reading of one of the following Scriptures to each group: Deuteronomy 14:22-29, Leviticus 27:30-33, & Numbers 18:21-32. After each group has read their passage together, come back as a large group and share insights from your group's reading on the “tithe” in the Hebrew Bible.
- (4) With those same three small groups, assign one of the following New Testament passages to each group: Matthew 23:23-26, Acts 2:42-47, 2 Corinthians 9:6-9. Then, come back together as a large group and share your insights.

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Please take note of the context, both recalling what we learned in Ezra-Nehemiah and using the above resources (maps, videos, etc.). This passage is the most well-known from the book of Malachi as it is often used in messages about tithing. Our familiarity and lack of comfort with this passage and the idea of tithing expose our mindsets surrounding money and possessions. We have been trained with the mindset that all of our resources are ours for the taking and consumption to be used however we desire. But, in the grand scheme of things, all good gifts are gifts from the Creator God; thus, everything we possess is truly not ours. Hence, the accusation in Malachi of the people of God, robbing God with their lack of generosity. When we shift our mindset from greedy possessors to grateful recipients, it frees us for generosity (dare, I say, radical generosity). As you will see throughout the passages you will read together, the people of God have always been called to live as a community of generosity. This was a call for the people of Israel (often failed) and a characteristic of the early church. The two main places

we see funds of the people of God used in both the Old and New Testament are for support of the work of God (clergy) and for lifting up and providing for those in need.