

April Teaching Theme: The Book of Malachi

讲员 Speaker: George Wong / Dr. Ted Moon

题目 Topic: The Day of the Lord

经文 Scripture: Malachi 4:1-6

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](#) (Wong)

[Sermon Video](#) (Moon)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Moon)

[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 4 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) A central biblical theme is present in the closing of Malachi - The Day of the Lord. Watch the [“Day of the Lord” video](#) together. Discuss how this helps us understand the big picture and how it helps catch Malachi 4.
- (3) One of the great hopes of judgment is that evil will prosper no more. What evil do you see around you that you grieve and wish was no longer? What are evils we have participated in that we need to repent of?
- (4) Re-read Malachi 4:2. How do the images of these metaphors paint the reality for those who walk allegiance to YHWH? How do these images help us understand the “Day of the Lord” for the people of God?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Malachi 4:

V1: “This day of Yahweh—which verifies Yahweh’s integrity as the God of justice (2:17) and corrects the misconception that God does not punish the wicked—will be a day of destruction and annihilation...Even so, Mal 4:1 provides reassurance for the righteous that Yahweh is engaged in the life and fate of all. By pointing to the future, the righteous are compelled to trust God and wait for the actualization of that future and the confirmation of God’s justice against the wicked.” (Jacobs, M. R.)

V2: “The formulation “sun of righteousness,” is unique to Mal 3:20. Nevertheless, some propose that the imagery of the leader as a solar luminary is not unique. The mode of the rising is depicted with reference to its wings—healing in its wings. The “healing” refers to the wings’ restorative effect. **The healing addresses diseases, disasters, brokenness, and anything that distracts from wholeness.** Thus, **despair is manifested by a lack of healing** (cf. Jer

14:19; Prov 6:14–15; 2 Chr 21:18; 36:16). Healing, however, is manifested by prosperity and security (Isa 19:22; 57:18; Jer 30:17; 33:6). **The imagery of the sun seems to belong to the Near Eastern “description of the winged sun disk,” which brings to mind the royal figure of the king as the protector of right order and justice (cf. Ps 72).** Even so, various Old Testament images of Yahweh as the sun might more readily facilitate our understanding of the “sun of righteousness” here in Mal 3:20. For example, in Ps 84:11, Yahweh is “sun and shield”: For the LORD God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Ps 84:11[12] NRSV). In Isa 60:19–20, Yahweh will be the people’s light so that they have no need for the sun; Yahweh will be their sun.” (Jacobs, M. R.) This same image is picked up in Revelation 22:4-5, where God is the people’s light.

V3: Those who fear Yahweh will subdue the “wicked,” a dominance represented as trampling, which is also the language used for the way the underprivileged are treated in Amos 2:7 if you recall our series from last year. “whereas the God-fearers are enlivened and thrive, the wicked are subdued and annihilated. Such images of the fates of the righteous and the wicked signify that the God of justice is attentive to the community, and individuals who perceive the wicked as enduring or even thriving are mistaken.” (Jacobs, M. R.)

V4: Here, the people of God are called back to the Torah (Law of Moses, the first five books of our Bible), both to recall their identity/story and ground their ethical responsibilities back in the covenant agreement their ancestors made with YHWH. Part of that covenant agreement was the possibility of Yahweh’s cursing the land for its disobedience (dishonoring Yahweh) and holding out the chance of Yahweh’s averting the curse because of the people’s repentance. With this foundation, the legitimacy of the prophet’s claims have grounding.

V5: If you recall, in the New Testament, John the Baptist is said to be “Elijah” coming before “the Day of the Lord.” In the Hebrew mind, Elijah is different than the other prophets, but he is a “super prophet” of sorts because he is said to have ascended into heaven without experiencing death. Thus, if any prophet can bring them transformation, Elijah has to be the one.

V6: “The focal point is the relationships within the covenant community. Malachi readily shows the intergenerational or transgenerational connections as the basis for the critique and thus stands with others in their critique of the community’s behavior—either the community has abandoned the ways of the ancestors and gone astray, or the community is following the evil ways of the ancestors and is disobeying (Mal 3:7). The evil of the ancestors impacts their descendants (Ezek 20:18)...The turning of the ancestors and descendants conveys the father’s receptivity to the children in passing on the legacy, while the children’s turning to the father denotes their receiving the legacy.” (Jacobs, M. R.)

“This final verse is, therefore, a hopeful message and consistent with the overall tone of Malachi. How is it hopeful? God’s integrity concerning evildoers and reward for the righteous are being undermined. However, the final message is that, while Yahweh intended to come bringing destruction, Yahweh will first send Elijah as a warning. The hope is that the community will heed

the warning and return to Yahweh. The announcement thus addresses the perception of Yahweh's lack of justice and emphasizes that Yahweh is just, yet it provides the community with a chance to return to Yahweh." (Jacobs, M. R.)