

THE PROPHET MALACHI

MALACHI



KEY PASSAGE: John 20:31

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the Bible about? The Bible is the story of God's plan to save people through Jesus.

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.

STORY POINT: Malachi warned God's people to turn from their sin and remember the promised Messiah.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

The book of Malachi reveals how people who have experienced God's miraculous works can quickly turn away from following Him. God had delivered His people from captivity and helped them restore Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. And yet, shortly after their promise to obey the Lord's commands, they were living in a way that was displeasing to Him. Complacency and corruption had replaced faithfulness to God's Word.

Malachi told the people they were offering blemished sacrifices. He revealed how their leaders—particularly the priests—were leading the people astray. Malachi also told the people they had dishonored God in their marriages in two ways: First, they married women of foreign descent who worshiped other gods. Secondly, men were divorcing their wives for unjust reasons that were selfish—treating marriage as if it were disposable.

Despite the unfaithfulness of God's people, God again remained faithful. In Malachi 3, God told them that He had not destroyed them because they are His people. He called them to return to Him. He promised that if they returned to Him, He would return to them. God invited them to repent and return to Him just as He did time and time again throughout the Old Testament.

As Malachi urged the people to return to God, he also foretold the coming Messiah—Jesus. Malachi spoke of the sun of righteousness who would bring healing—a picture of Jesus as the light of the world who would bring redemption. Specifically in Malachi 3, God shared His plan to send a messenger who would clear the way for the Messiah. In His sovereignty, God fulfilled this prophecy through the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, as one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight" (Luke 3:4).

The book of Malachi serves to remind us of the dangers of growing apathetic in our walk with the Lord. Help kids see how Malachi also reminds us that when we do fall short, God is faithful and ready to restore us when we turn back to Him. Through Jesus, we see God's grace and mercy to redeem and restore all who trust in Him.



PREPARE

THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



WELCOME

10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



LEARN

25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



LOVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



LIVE

15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel



PREPARE

PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- ☐ "What's the Message?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)

- ☐ dry erase boards, 2
- ☐ dry erase markers, 2

Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ painter's tape
- ☐ blindfolds, 2



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set



LIVE

Journal and Prayer

- ☐ Journal Page
- ☐ "True or False?" activity page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "The Prophet Malachi" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 18, Session 4" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment

- ☐ "Bowman Family Photos" printable

Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "Life in His Name (John 20:31)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ cardstock
- ☐ watercolor paint (optional)



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid 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.

SAY “What does it mean to ‘prepare’? What are some activities or events you might need to prepare for?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “What’s the Message?” activity page.

SAY “Today, we will learn how God sent the prophet Malachi to share an important message with His people. **MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH.**”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ 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.**”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, kids! My name is [your name], and I’m happy to see you. Did you bring a Bible with you? If so, can you please take it out? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] Today, we will be in the Old Testament book of Malachi.

Where is Malachi in the Old Testament? [Allow responses.] Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and is named after the last prophet God sent to His people during Old Testament times. We’ll see how Malachi shared how God was going to send a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah. Today, we will learn that **MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH.** [Display the Story Point Poster.] Let’s pray together: ‘Dear God, all throughout the Bible You promised You would send a Savior. As we hear about the promised Messiah, please help us to have ears that hear and eyes to see your truth. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “ Let’s review our big picture question. Do you remember what it is? [Allow responses.] **What is the Bible about?** What is the answer? [Allow responses.] **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.** Let’s say the answer one more time: **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.**

As we read the Bible, we learn about all the people God used to write down His words. The writers of the Bible shared different events with different people and time periods, but they all have a common message: **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.** Even when God’s people turned away and rebelled, God’s plan to send Jesus into the world was still at work. Today, we’ll see how the last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi, was sent by God to remind His people that the Messiah was coming. ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ God’s people had returned to Jerusalem, but the city was in ruins and the wall around the city was destroyed. God used Nehemiah to lead the people to rebuild the walls even though their enemies tried to stop them. God also used Ezra to help the people hear and know God’s law. In response, God’s people confessed their sins and promised to obey God. Yet, the people failed to remain faithful to God. Today, we will learn how God sent the prophet Malachi to tell His people to turn from their sin and share the good news of the coming Messiah. ”



LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Malachi. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Prophet Malachi.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

THE PROPHET 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. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Define it: Tell kids that the name *Messiah* means “anointed one,” and it pointed to the Deliverer who would come to rescue people from their sins. Share that the name *Christ* in the New Testament also means anointed one.

Name the prophets: After you share how there were no more prophets for four hundred years, invite kids to name as many prophets in the Old Testament as they can remember, reminding them of how God was faithful to send many messengers to His people.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ After Ezra led the people in reading the law and prayer, God’s people promised to obey Him. Yet, in our story today, we saw how God’s people turned away from Him again. What were some of the ways the people disobeyed God? [Allow responses.] They doubted God’s love for them, grew lazy in their worship, and offered blemished sacrifices. Even the priests, who were supposed to lead the people toward God, disobeyed and led the people away from God. When we doubt God’s love and fail to trust His good commands, it’s easy to be led away from true worship.

But God did love 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. Who did Malachi say God was sending? Look at Malachi 3:1-4. **[Ask a volunteer to read Malachi 3:1-4 aloud.]** 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. Unlike the priests, Jesus, the Messiah, would come to lead people to God. Jesus would make those who trust in Him pure and right before God.

Malachi also gave the people a command from the Lord. What did he tell them to do? Look at Malachi 3:7. **[Ask a volunteer to read Malachi 3:7 aloud.]** 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. ”

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY “ 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? ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 4” Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. If God can’t look at sin, how can He look at us?
2. How does faith in Jesus wash away our sin?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

Display the “Bowman Family Photo” printable. 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 here from Taiwan. Valley Life Church and a Chinese Baptist church in the area are both reaching out to the people from Taiwan.



LEARN

THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

SAY “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.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud John 20:31 together.

SAY “God spoke through prophets, like Malachi, to share the good news of the coming Messiah. 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.

Lead kids to sing “Life in His Name (John 20:31).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “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.”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Malachi 3. Explain that the book of Malachi was written by the prophet Malachi. Share how it is the last book of the Old Testament and is part of the Minor Prophets division.

Consider pointing out Jerusalem (H5) on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Malachi 3:1 or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verse aloud.

SAY “ God promised to send the messenger to prepare the way before the Messiah, and He did! When we come to 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. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ 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.)

SAY “ 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.)

SAY “ 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.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: 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.

SAY “Was your story an accurate message? 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.”

☐ OPTION 2: BIBLE BOOK CHALLENGE

Form kids into teams of three or four and give each team a Bible. Determine a list of books kids will need to find in their Bible based on clues you provide. For example, for the book of Jeremiah, you might provide the following clues: “The book is named after a prophet.” “The book is in the Old Testament.” “The book comes after Isaiah.” The first team to find the book earns a point. Repeat, calling out clues for various books as time allows. The team with the most points wins.

SAY “Long ago, God spoke to His people through prophets, like Malachi. Today, God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible. **What is the Bible about?** [Allow responses.] **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.** From Genesis to Malachi to Revelation, we read the Bible to know God and His plan to save us from sin. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved! I encourage you to continue spending time reading God’s Word each day.”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, praising God for His mercy to call people to repent and save them through Jesus. As time allows, lead kids to complete “True or False?” on the activity page.