

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.



PREPARE

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



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

- ☐ "The Messenger's Message" activity page



LOVE

Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



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)
- ☐ ball



LIVE

Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible story coloring page



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 “Have you ever looked forward to something special like an event, a trip, or a visit from someone? What were you looking forward to? How did you feel as you waited?”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “The Messenger’s 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: PASS THE MESSAGE



Form kids into two teams. Invite kids on each team to line up, side by side. Think of a sentence such as “Polar bears plunge into icy cold water” and whisper that sentence into the first kid’s ear on each team. Challenge the second kid in line to listen carefully as the first kid whispers the secret message in her ear, and then pass the message along. Once the message gets to the end of the line, direct the last kid on each team to say the message aloud to see if the group passed the message accurately. Be sure the last kids on each team wait to say the message aloud until the message has made its way through both teams. Re-arrange kids in line and repeat with a different message as time allows.

SAY “Was it difficult to pass the correct message down the entire line? In today’s story we will learn how God used the prophet Malachi to share a clear message with His people. **MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH.**”

☐ OPTION 2: A BETTER GIFT



Prompt kids to think about a gift they would love to give someone to make them feel loved and special. Then challenge kids to listen to the pairs of gifts you call out and determine which gift is better. Consider using the following examples and create more of your own:

- A warm blanket or a shirt with holes in it
- A broken watch or a shiny, new bracelet
- A bike with flat tires or a new skateboard
- A baseball glove or a fly swatter
- A new box of markers or broken crayons

SAY “How did some of these gifts show thoughtfulness, while others didn’t? [Allow responses.] We wouldn’t want to give someone we love a gift that made them feel like we didn’t really care about them, right? But in our story, we’ll see how God’s people, particularly the priests, did just that. Instead of giving God the very best sacrifice, showing they loved and honored Him, they gave God blemished sacrifices. Let’s get ready to hear how Malachi told the people to repent.”

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 excited to share our Bible story with 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.

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi was also the last prophet to speak to God’s people before Jesus was born. 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, thank You for keeping Your promise to send Jesus, the Messiah. Please help our hearts recognize our sin and turn to You. Help us follow You. Amen.’ ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

SAY “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.**

The Bible is God’s Word to us. Through the Holy Spirit, God inspired people to write down His words so we could know Him and His plan of salvation. But as God’s words were being written down, God also spoke to His people through His prophets. Like the Bible, God’s prophets shared about God’s plan to save people from their sin. Today, we will see how the prophet Malachi shared God’s plan to save people through the Messiah—Jesus. ”

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 400 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

Active listening:
Challenge kids to listen carefully and raise their hands anytime they hear the word “Messiah” in the story.

Pause for effect:
After you share how there were no more prophets for four hundred years, pause for a few seconds to emphasize the silence.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God’s people had heard God’s law read and explained to them by Ezra. After hearing the law, they promised to faithfully follow God, but the people broke that promise and turned back to their sinful ways. How did Malachi say the people sinned against God? **[Allow responses.]** The priests were robbing God of the best offerings. Instead of offering the best sacrifices, the priests offered animals that were sick or had other flaws. Why does God deserve the best offerings? **[Allow responses.]** He is the great King, worthy of the very best.

The priests were supposed to help the people know God and follow His ways. Instead, they were leading the people away from God. God’s people needed someone who would be able to lead them in God’s ways. Who did Malachi say God was sending? **[Allow responses.]** Malachi said God was sending a messenger who would prepare the way for the coming Messiah. Unlike the group of priests Malachi talked about, Jesus, the Messiah, would come to lead God’s people in God’s ways. Jesus would make those who trust in Him pure and right before God.

MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH. After God spoke through Malachi, there were no prophets for 400 years. God was silent during those years. But God was still with His people, preparing the way for the Messiah to come. Years later, God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus—the Messiah. Jesus brought a message of repentance and salvation. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved. ”

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. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

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 communicates to us through His Word. **The Bible is the story of God’s plan to save people through Jesus.**”

Form kids into a large circle. Give a ball to one kid, challenge him to say the first word of the key passage, and then toss the ball to a kid across the circle from him. Encourage that kid to say the next word in the key passage. Direct kids to continue tossing the ball and saying the next word until they have said the entire key passage. Repeat as time allows.

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 “Thank You, Lord, for sending Jesus as the promised Messiah. Thank You that through Him our sins can be forgiven, and we can have eternal life with You. Help us faithfully follow You. In Jesus’ name, 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! Because of Jesus, we can be forgiven of our sin and receive eternal life. ”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

SAY “ Why did Malachi share that God would punish the wicked? ”

Discuss how God told His people that they would have to suffer the consequences of their sin if they did not repent. All sin deserves punishment. God wants us to turn from our sin, repent, and experience the forgiveness He offers when we trust in Jesus.

SAY “ Like the priests who offered lame animals, what are ways we don’t give our best to God? ”

Answers will vary. Tell kids that we don’t offer animal sacrifices because Jesus died for our sin, but we can still offer God our time, talents, and treasures. Discuss how we sometimes don’t offer our best to God when we refuse to give away our treasures for His kingdom purposes or when we don’t want to use our time to serve others. Share how everything already belongs to God, but when we offer them to Him, we do so as an act of worship. Remind kids that God is worthy of everything.

SAY “ The priests were supposed to help people follow God’s ways. How can we help people follow God’s ways? ”

Share how we can first tell people about Jesus so they can be saved. Discuss how we can also encourage Christ followers to know God more by reading His Word, praying, and going to church. Remind kids that we can also gently remind someone to turn back to God when we see them going away from Him. God uses His people to speak into each other’s lives so they follow God’s ways, loving Him and loving each other.

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





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM?

Distribute a piece of paper to each kid. Place art supplies in the center of the table for kids to share. Challenge kids to think of some ways they can offer praises to God through giving their time, their treasures, and their talents or gifts. Create a list on the board of the ideas kids share. Then, encourage kids to draw one way they can give God their very best. Once kids have finished, invite them to share their drawings with the rest of the group.

SAY “ The priests had sinned by giving God blemished sacrifices. God is worthy of our best offerings—but what matters most is a heart that loves the Lord. When we love God, we will want to give Him the very best. This may mean we choose to read our Bible over watching TV. Or it may mean we choose to serve someone in need rather than going to a friend’s house. God has given us His very best gift—Jesus! When we give back to God, we do so out thankfulness and worship for all He has done for us. ”

☐ OPTION 2: WHAT’S THE OPPOSITE?



Before this activity, write down a list of words that have opposites such as hot and cold, hard and soft, tall and short, open and closed, etc. Call out a word such as “hot” and challenge the kids to shout out the opposite of that word (“cold”). Continue shouting out different words. Then, challenge kids to think of other opposites you did not call out. Explain that when we repent, we turn away from sin and go in the opposite direction toward God.

SAY “ Today, we learned how the people sinned against God. **MALACHI WARNED GOD’S PEOPLE TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN AND REMEMBER THE PROMISED MESSIAH.** When we sin, we should confess our sins to God and go in the opposite direction toward Jesus, asking Him for forgiveness. God promised the Messiah, Jesus, because only He can take away our sins. As we follow Jesus, we continue to turn away from sin and walk in His ways. ”

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.