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Chapter 16

Audio Lesson: Old Testament number 89



Objective: To understand the message of the book of Malachi.



“They will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

—Malachi 3:17-18

Malachi is the last prophet in the Old Testament. He preached after the time of Nehemiah, when the people of God had a form of religion that lacked substance and denied the reality of a relationship with God. Their problem was they had religion but no relationships. The message of Malachi's heart was that God wanted to have a love relationship with His people, but the priests and the people of Judah were not interested in knowing and loving God. They did the rituals they thought God had commanded, but they were spiritually cold and apathetic. Like Hosea, Malachi believed the people of God were committing spiritual adultery with this world. He became a messenger of repentance whom God used to draw His people back to Him. His prophecy was a warning to the spiritual leaders of the people of Judah that the outward practice of religion without the inner life of true faith was far from what God intended for His love to accomplish.



1. **True** or false? Malachi prophesied about 100 years after Haggai and Zechariah.
2. **True** or false? Nehemiah and Malachi addressed many of the same problems.
3. True or **false**? After the Jews came back from Babylon, they returned to the same idolatry and immorality they had done before the captivity.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What was the main spiritual problem of the Jews of Malachi's time?
 - a. Worshiping idols
 - b. Extreme immorality
 - c. Falling away, or apostasy**
 - d. Heresy, or false doctrine

5. According to Malachi's literary style, how did the people respond to his message?
 - a. They talked back, or argued with him.**
 - b. They accepted everything he said.
 - c. They grieved over their sins.
 - d. They picked up stones to throw at him.

6. What is the first message in the book of Malachi?
 - a. God loves His people.**
 - b. God is still very angry.
 - c. God does not care who or how we worship.
 - d. Judah will overthrow the Persian government.

7. Why is it important for us to know that God loves us?
 - a. If we know His love, we will never sin.
 - b. If we know His love, He will never discipline us.
 - c. If we know His love, we will become very wealthy and influential.
 - d. Without His love, we have no hope.**

8. How did the people of Judah dishonor the Lord's name?
 - a. They told other nations that God had mistreated them.
 - b. They gave unworthy offerings and sacrifices to God.**
 - c. They taught their children that God did not exist.
 - d. They said Abraham was their father, not God.

9. How does God feel about divorce?
 - a. He hates it because it opposes His plan for couples and children.**
 - b. It pleases Him for us to change partners because He wants us to be happy.
 - c. It angers Him so much that He will never forgive someone who is divorced.
 - d. He prefers for us to marry additional partners rather than replace the ones we have.

10. How is it possible to rob God?
 - a. By taking something from His temple
 - b. By eating animals sacrificed to Him
 - c. By withholding tithes and offerings due to Him**
 - d. By stealing Bibles

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love another."

—1 John 4:11



How well do you think you know God's love? Do you believe that He knows you personally? Why or why not? How should your belief about God's love affect how you live?



Thank God that He knows you perfectly and loves you completely. Ask Him to let you see more and more of His love and give you opportunities to share His love with others. Ask God to keep you from practicing ritual without the reality of relationship with Him, and to help you always worship Him in spirit and truth.



Going Deeper

1. What was the literary form of the prophet Malachi? _____

2. In what ways did the prophet Malachi and the great leader Nehemiah address the same problems of the people of God? _____

3. What was the opening and primary message of the prophet Malachi? _____

4. How did the people of God respond to that message, and how did Malachi respond to their response? _____

5. If you believe Almighty God loves you personally, how do you know that is true? _____

6. How does God feel about divorce, and why does He feel that way? _____

7. What obstacle that was blocking the work of God was addressed by the prophet Malachi? _____
