

BIG IDEA: God loves us and deserves our very best

BIBLE BASIS: Malachi 1-4

KEY VERSE: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Colossians 3:23 (NIV)

THE BIG BIBLE STORY- MALACHI

Watch the Preschool video: <https://youtu.be/yT4QfgNSQAo>

Watch the Elementary video: <https://youtu.be/HPGShWZ4Jvk>

A long time ago, the Jewish people ignored the prophets God sent to warn them to turn away from their sin. God kept His word and punished them by sending them to Babylon for 70 years to be prisoners (Jeremiah 25:11). After 70 years God kept His promise to let His people return to Jerusalem. God sent prophets to encourage the Jewish people who returned to their city that was destroyed. Like we learned last week, God used Ezra and Nehemiah to help rebuild the temple and the walls.

Today we are going to be studying Malachi, the last minor prophet in the Old Testament.

The name Malachi means "my messenger". God had a message for His people. **Malachi reminded the people that God loved them.** The Jewish people were surprised at Malachi's message because they said, "How have you loved us?" We don't know why the Jewish people felt like God didn't love them. Maybe they felt like God didn't love them because the Messiah had not come and the promises of peace and God's blessing were not happening.

God loved His people and was very disappointed that they thought that He didn't love them. They had seen God's power, protection and His faithfulness to keep His promises.

God always keeps His promises and never stops loving His people. God was working out His plan to send the Messiah who would rescue His people.

God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. (Is. 55:8-9) His timing is not like our timing. **God's people turned away from God because they could not see what God was doing and decided to believe He stopped loving them.**

God sent Malachi to tell them that God loves them very much but is very disappointed with them.

The Jewish people had seen God keep His promise to allow them to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of being in Babylon. He helped them rebuild the temple and the walls were rebuilt in 52 days. However, they returned to wicked, sinful behavior.

Before Jesus came and died on the cross for our sins, the Jewish people were to worship God at the temple and bring sacrifices. God required His people to bring animals to the priests that were their best. God was disappointed with His people because they brought offerings to Him that they would never offer to their rulers/leaders.

God loves us and deserves our very best.

Malachi told the priests that the Lord was disappointed with them because they were not being the kind of priest that pleased Him. Malachi 2:7-8a "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from His mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction."

The priests should have been leading the people to do what is right and teaching them truth from God's word. They should have spoken boldly and told the people their offerings were evil.

Malachi told the people that God was going to send a messenger who would prepare the way before Him. God has promised that one day He is going to punish the wickedness of the earth. The day that God will punish all wickedness is often called the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament.

God told the people they were robbing Him. They wondered how they could rob God. They forgot that everything belongs to Him and they were to give Him a small portion, 1/10 of their money or gifts back to Him. God was disappointed that the people were saying that it was useless to serve God. They began saying that the proud and evil are blessed by God.

Malachi tells us about a group of people that heard God's message and believed it. They didn't want to be wicked and disappoint God. They wanted to live their lives to please Him. They would gather together and talk together about the Lord. "The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed His name." Mal. 3:16

The last chapter of Malachi warns God's people that the day is coming when He will punish the wicked. He encourages those who fear God that when that day comes, "the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall." Mal. 4:2

After Malachi gave this message to God's people, the Lord was silent for 400 years. He did not send any more prophets to His people. Those 400 years must have been very difficult for God's people. If the people understood how much God loved them, they would trust and obey Him and believe He would keep all of His promises.

BIG BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS

For Preschoolers:

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- Why does God deserve our very best?
- How was God the hero of this story?

For Elementary:

- What was your favorite part of this story?
- How did Malachi help his people?
- How can we begin to give God our very best?
- How does this story inspire you to help others around you?

BIG BIBLE STORY ACTIVITIES

Prayer Station prompt: Write a prayer to God and tell Him why He deserves our best.

Journal Station prompt: Can you think of a time that you let The Lord down? Write a letter to God and tell Him about it.

Bible Station prompt: Read it for yourself: Malachi 1: 2-5. Say a prayer to God of how thankful you are that though you may fail, He still loves you.

Art Station prompt: God loves us no matter what! Draw a picture of you being thankful to Jesus for loving is so much.

Source: Ministry-to-children.com