



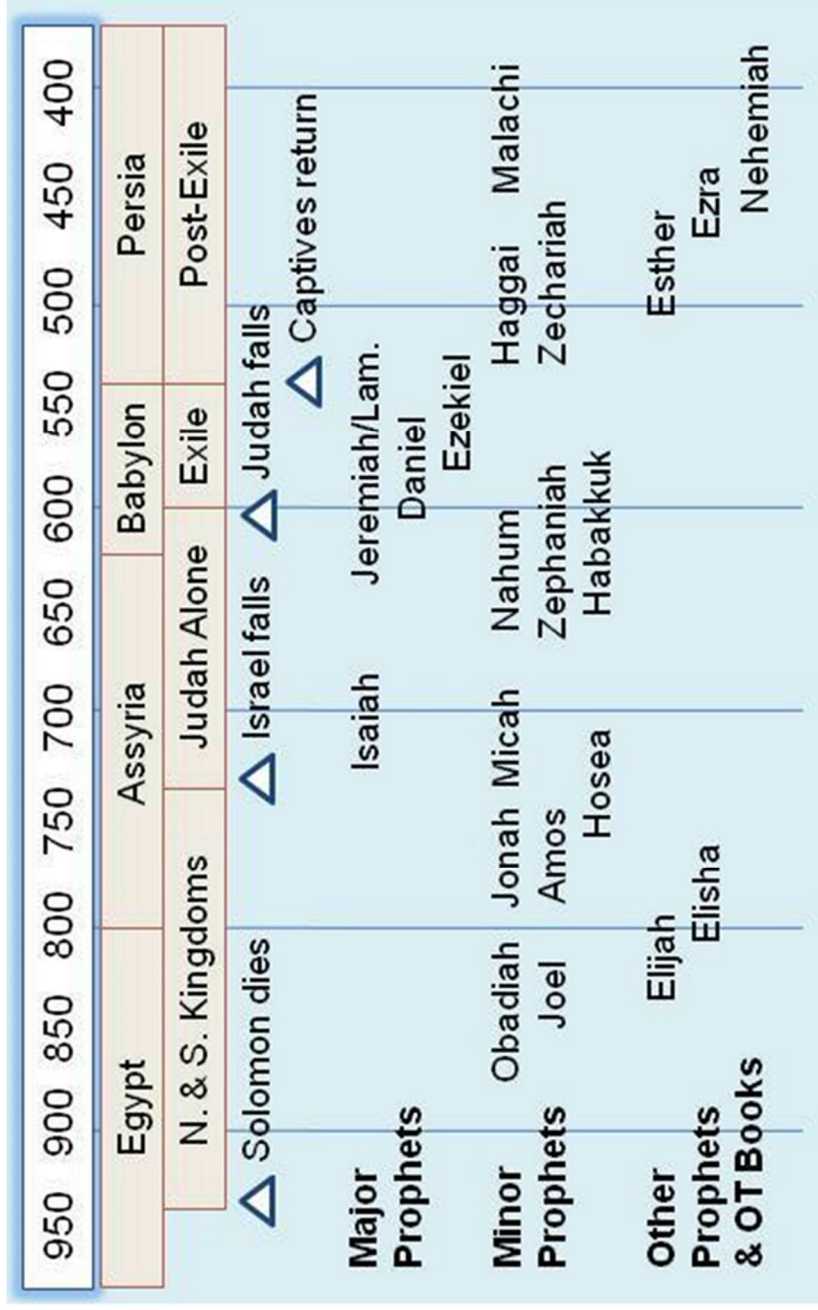
## **Malachi**

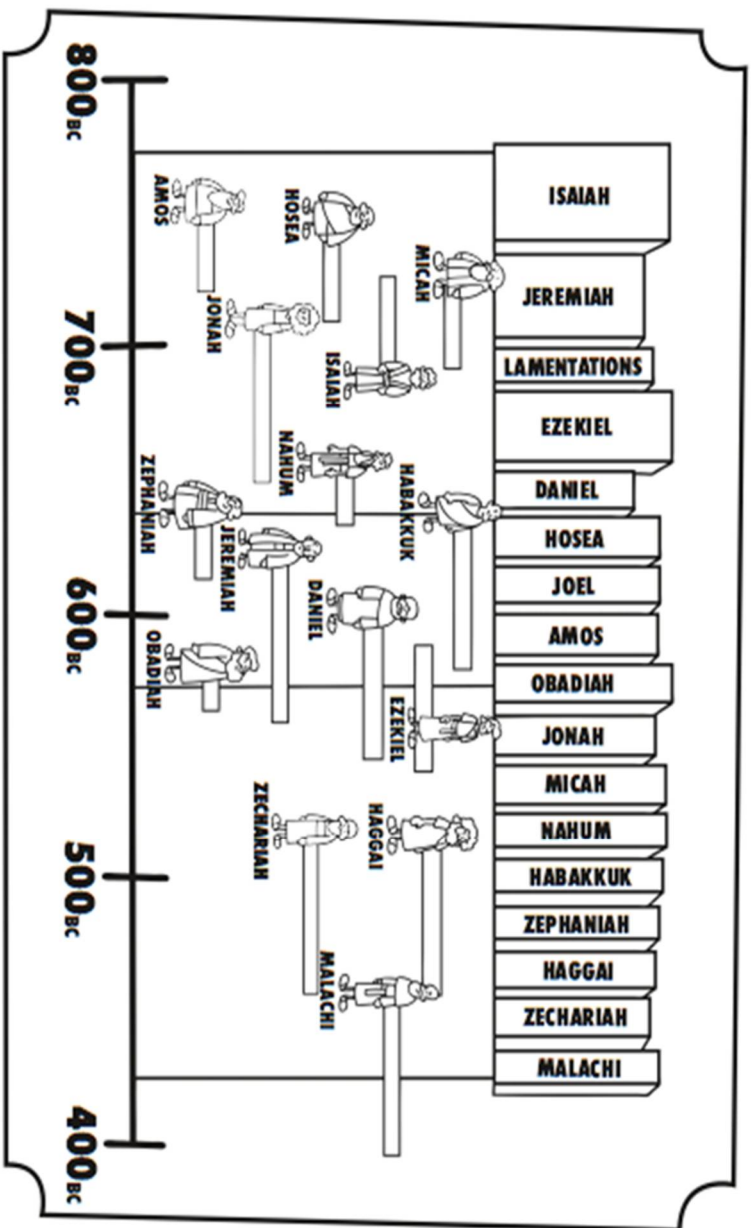
by Bernard Gabbott

### **Memory verse:**

"For My name will be great among the nations,  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.  
Incense and pure offerings will be presented in My name  
in every place  
because My name will be great among the nations,"  
says the LORD of Hosts.

***Malachi 1:11***





## The Major & Minor Prophets

## Some basics...

Malachi is one of the twelve Minor Prophets—'minor' not because of their importance but because of the size of the books in their names. In fact, in our Bibles, Malachi is the last of the Minor Prophets, closing out the Old Testament. As one author states, Malachi is 'the transition link between the two dispensations' (P.A. Verhoef, The Books of Haggai and Malachi., (NICOT, William B. Eerdmans: 1987), p.153).

Whilst many of us know where Malachi is in our Bibles, it is a little harder to know how to place him in the history of the people of God, in terms of time and geography and moment.

'Malachi' is not heard of in any other book in the Bible. But the formula of verse 1 encourages us to view him as a real person.

Malachi is a prophet: he speaks God's word, to God's people, calling them back to right relationship with God. After all, they are his people, 'a royal priesthood', a nation in a binding covenant with him (Ex.19:1-18). In this covenant, the book of Deuteronomy is crucial, outlining both the blessings and curses that come from upholding or disobeying, respectively, the covenant that defines them. In this sense, the covenant blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28-30 sit behind much of what Malachi speaks.

Malachi is hard to place in terms of time—there is a vast debate about a vast range of times! One clue is Malachi 1:8, and the word for 'governor' there refers to a Persian position. So, it is reasonable to assume that God's mob are under Persian rule. This places Malachi AFTER the return from the Exile, when God's people had been removed from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and taken away by Babylon (the period in which Daniel speaks). When Persia took over Babylon, the policy of Cyrus (the Persian Emperor) was to return people to their lands. God's people had been sent back to the land of Israel, and given instructions and resources to rebuild the Temple, and Jerusalem. Remember Haggai?? This places Malachi after Ezra and Nehemiah, and probably after Haggai and Zechariah (in Malachi's time, God's people had obviously completed the Temple, and had had

time to slide significantly backwards in their Temple worship of God. The Temple was finally rebuilt in 516BC, so we are some-time after that!

There are two timelines on the first two pages to help you picture this...

Malachi addresses similar issues to those of Haggai and Nehemiah (in fact, one author suggests that Nehemiah 13 outlines all the same issues!!). God's people are back. God's people are despairing—where is God? God's people decided that God is not worth it, if God doesn't seem to think his people are worth it. And so, laziness, compromise, abuse, and li-service have entered into the lives of the people who belong to God, who are meant to represent him to the world. Malachi meets this despair, in a series of 'disputes' (each has an accusation from God, a response from God's people, and an application), bringing God's people back to the right and true wholehearted worship of God!

## Study 1: Malachi 1:1-5

### Comprehend

1. Read the Malachi 1:1-5.
2. What are we reading? (vs.1; cf. Is.13:1)
3. What is God's 'charge'? (vs.2)

What is the response of God's people? (vs.2)

4. How does God 'prove' his love for his people? (vs.2-3)
5. How does God 'demonstrate' his love for his people? (vs.4-5)

### Consider

1. Read Genesis 25:19-26.  
How does this help us understand the 'love' and 'hate' of God?

Does Jacob deserve God's love? What does this demonstrate—about God and about Esau and Jacob?

How did Esau/Edom respond when God's people were taken into Exile (cf. Ezek.35:15; Obad.10-11; Ps.137:7)

What does God promise to show, and how?

2. Read Luke 23:32-49 (cf. Is.52:13-53:12)  
How might Jesus 'appear', and what might Jesus be tempted to think?

And, yet, what happened to Jesus? (Phgil.2:5-11)

What does this demonstrate about God?

### **Contact**

1. Is there any way in which we might be like God's mob in Malachi, doubting the love of God for us as his people?  
Why?
2. What demonstration do we have of the love of God for us as his mob? (cf. Rom.8:31-39)

Do we deserve this? (cf. Rom.5:6,8)

3. What does this prove about God, and his love for his people?

**Study 2: Malachi 1:6-2:9****Consider**

1. Read Malachi 1:6-2:9.

2. What is God's charge? (1:6-7)

Who is the charge to? (1:6-7)

How do they respond? (1:6-7)

3. What is the evidence of God's priests not honouring him?  
(1:8-9)

How has this spread to all God's people? (1:12-13)

4. What is the purpose of worship? (1:11)

What does God state? (1:10,14)

What will happen? (1:14)

5. How will God bring this honour about? (2:1-7)

What will happen if the priests do not reform? (2:2-3)

What should the priests be like? (2:7)

What are they doing—and what is happening? (2:8-9)



## Comprehend

1. What is the key charge that God lays here against the priests and his people?

How is this being shown?

2. What does God desire, and deserve? And how must this reform the conduct of the priests and people?
3. How is Jesus the type of priest, and people, that God desires? (cf. Matt.26:42; Mk.10:45; Eph.5:25-27)

What does this achieve? (cf. Matt.27:54; Phil.2:5-11)

What does this mean God's people can do now?  
(cf. Rom.12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

## Contact

1. Do you think we ever dishonor God by offering him the 'seconds'? How, and why?
2. What rebuke is there for God's people here, today?
3. What might it look like to give God the sacrifice that honours his name, and character, and reputation, in Narrabri?

### Study 3: Malachi 2:10-16

#### Comprehend

1. Read Malachi 2:10-16.
2. What truth does Malachi start with? (vs.10)

What charge does this lead to? (vs.10)

3. How is this 'betrayal' expressed? (vs.11)

How is this received by God? (vs.12)

4. What does God charge about the response of his people? (vs.13)
5. Why has God rejected their sacrifices? (vs.14)
6. What is God desire, and design, for the marriages of his people? (vs.15)

And what is his final warning? (vs.16)

#### Consider

1. The big picture here is covenantal faithfulness, as it is expressed in the daily covenant of marriage which points to God (remember our series on 'God and sex'?)

What is the covenant God has made with his people?  
(cf. Ex.19:1-18; Deut.6:1-4)

Why is marriage such a crucial daily display of this?

2. How was Jesus faithful to this covenant? (cf. Heb.4:14-16; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor.5:21)
3. What does this mean for God's people and their marriages now? (cf. Eph.5:21-33)

### **Contact**

1. How might we reflect the same charge as God has brought against his people in Malachi? Why?
2. How might we return to reflect the nature of God, and his relationship with his people, in our marriages?
3. Why is this so important?

## Study 4: Malachi 2:17-3:5

### Comprehend

1. Read Malachi 2:17-3:5.
2. What is the charge from God, and the response, in 2:17?

Why are God's people's words so wearying?

3. Who does God say he will send? (3:1)

And who will come hot on his heels? (3:2)

4. What will the work of the 'messenger' be like? (3:3-4)
5. And what will God do when he comes? (3:5)

### Consider

1. How does God prove his justice and love for justice here?
2. As he paints a vision of a future day, how do John the Baptist and Jesus fit with this? (cf. Mark 1:1-15; Matthew 17:1-12)
3. What does this fulfilment tell you about the nature, work and person of Jesus?

How has God's justice been shown in Jesus? (cf. Rom.3:21-26)

**Contact**

1. Do you think we might prove wearisome with our words before God—what kind of words might these be?
2. How does the cross of Jesus (and the preparatory work of John the Baptist) prove the justice of God?

What else does this prove?

3. What goodness is there in this reminder of the justice of God?

## Study 5: Malachi 3:6-12

### Comprehend

1. Read Malachi 3:6-12.
2. What is God like, and how is this expressed? (vs.6)
3. In light of this, what is the charge against God's people—and their response? (vs.7-8)
4. What are God's people doing—and what has it led to? (vs.9; cf. Deuteronomy 28-29)
5. What does God command, and why? (vs.10-12)

What will this prove, and to whom? (vs.10-12)

### Consider

1. How is this situation similar to the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3?
2. How does Jesus display his wholehearted devotion, unchanging devotion, to God? (cf. Phil.2:5-11; Mk.10:45)

As Jesus is devoted to God, what does God do? (cf. Ps.16; Is.52:13-53:12; Phil.2:5-11)

3. How are God's mob exhorted to respond to God's unchanging mercy? (Rom.12:1-2)

**Contact**

1. How might we 'rob" God?
  
2. In what ways might we be tempted to doubt the goodness and generosity of God? Why?
  
3. What does the life, death and resurrection of Jesus teach us about God's unchangeable commitment?
  
4. Why might we be confident that wholehearted giving to God will demonstrate his generosity?

## Study 6: Malachi 3:13-4:3

### Comprehend

1. Read Malachi 3:13-4:3.
2. What is the charge, and response? (3:13)

What have God's people decided? (3:14-15)

3. What do some of God's people do? (3:16)

What does God state, and what will be seen? (3:17-18)

4. God describes a 'day' coming—what will happen on that day, and what will be seen? (3:18-4:1)
5. Those who have responded rightly to God's clear words will experience what on that day? (4:2-3)

### Consider

1. Why do you think God's people then might have come to the conclusion of 3:14-15?
2. Did Jesus ever come to this conclusion? Why/why not?
3. How does Jesus deal with the 'arrogant'?

And how is Jesus' life the moment of judgement on sin?  
(cf. Mk.10:45; 2 Cor.5:21)



**Contact**

1. Do you think we ever utter similar 'harsh words' against God? Why/why not?
2. How/why might we need to repent? (cf. 3:16)
3. What can we look forward to?

## Study 7: Malachi 4:4-6

### Comprehend

1. Read Malachi 4:4-6.
2. This closing section is a little different in format. What are God's people to remember? (vs.4; cf. Ex.19:1-8)
3. What are God's people to look forward to? (vs.5)

What will he bring in? And what will God do?

### Consider

1. Consider the Exodus and when God's people received the commands at Horeb (Ex.19ff). When were they saved? Why did they receive the commands? What was the purpose of the commands?
2. Who is Elijah? (cf. 1 Kings 18-19; 2 Kings 2)
3. Who does Jesus identify as 'Elijah' (Matt.17:1-13)

What does that mean for the identity and work of Jesus?

Why is this so crucial?

### Contact

1. If the Elijah-figure has come, and Jesus (God) has come, what are we waiting for?

As we wait, what do we do with Malachi 4:4? (cf. Rom.3:21-31; Matt.5-6)

2. What is coming? Why is this good, and terrifying?