

**PREPARATION FOR LESSON:** read the book of Malachi**BACKGROUND**

**Author and Date:** Malachi - he is a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

His ministry is in Jerusalem, from c. 430 - 397 BC.

He writes from Jerusalem c. 425 BC.

**Theme:** God's appeal: *Return to Me and I will return to you.*

**Purpose:** To continue Jewish history after the exile.

To show the disobedience in the life of God's people.

To promise the coming of their Messiah, Jesus.

**Scripture Background:** Nehemiah 13:4-31

**OUTLINE****RETURN TO ME**

Disobedience of the spiritual **leaders** 1:1 - 2:9

They offer animal sacrifices that are unacceptable. 1:8

They hate their ministry and the whole system of sacrifices. 1:13

They give false teaching. 2:8

They show partiality in carrying out the law. 2:9

Disobedience of Jewish **men** 2:10 - 16

They are mad at God because He has not answered prayer and blessed them.

They divorce their godly wives who want to worship God alone.

They marry pagan women so they can have more freedom.

Disobedience of the **people** 2:17 - 4:6 (3:24)

They accuse God of not keeping His promises.

They do not keep their promise of giving their tithes/offerings.

They make a choice to not serve or follow God.

**HISTORICAL SETTING** during the Persian empire in the 400's BC

The Jews have been in Jerusalem for over 100 years. Nehemiah, their governor, led them in rebuilding the wall. Together with Ezra he led the people in signing an agreement of obedience. After 12 years, Nehemiah went back to Susa to work in the palace for the Persian king Artaxerxes. During his 3-5 year absence, the spiritual leaders, Jewish men and people become careless. It is during this time that God raises up the prophet Malachi to speak out against the disobedience. This explains why on Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem, the people respond and return to God so quickly.

**EXPLANATIONS****Key Words and Phrases:**

- **Love and Hate** as used in Scripture.

When used literally, the words refer to emotions or feelings.

When used as an idiom, the phrase means *to choose one, but not the other*.

- **Jacob I loved; Esau I hated**

Both Jacob and Esau had the same training and information about God. Jacob chose to follow God, so God chose to work thru him. Esau rejected God, so God could not work thru him.

- **I hate divorce** 2:16 (literal Hebrew says, "he hates divorce and covers himself with violence")

God gave the law of divorce to protect people and society from those who:

are destructive, abusive, addicted or who refuse to change their wrong behavior.

He gave the law because of people's hardness of heart. Matthew 19:8

God will punish those who misuse or abuse the law He gave for good.

He reacts and disciplines when the divorce law of protection is used as an escape to have freedom to sin.

He grieves and reproves those who dare to use His divorce law as a way to break His other laws.

He grieves and responds when a godly spouse and children are devastated because they want to obey.

God does not want divorce used as an excuse for adultery, immorality or to escape responsibility.

God wants divorce available as protection for a spouse's physical, mental and spiritual well-being.



**EXPLANATIONS** *continued*

**Tithes and Offerings** in the **Old Testament**: **God** and **government** were **combined** (theocracy) so there was one command

- **Old Testament Tithes** were **TAXES** to run the nation.

It was a specific percent, compulsory and there was punishment if people did not pay them.

The tithe supported the Levites.

Some served in the temple as priests, musicians, choir members, guards, custodians.

Others lived and worked thruout the nation as teachers, judges, librarians, historians, administrators.

Some were social workers who gave food to the unemployed, migrants, widows and orphans.

- **Offerings** were a “**THANK YOU**” gift to God for what He had done for them.

There was no fixed amount; it was not compulsory and there was no punishment if it was not given.

**Tithes and Offerings** in the **New Testament**: **God** and **government** are **separate** so there is a command for each.

- **Tithes** - the **TAXES** that we pay to the government for the benefit of society.

It is a specific percent, compulsory and there is punishment if we do not pay them.

We are commanded by God to pay taxes and our bills. Romans 13:6-8

- **Offerings** - what we give to God to **SUPPORT His** work as well as a “**THANK YOU**” gift for what He has done

There is no fixed amount; it is not compulsory and there is no punishment if we do not give.

2 Corinthians 9: 6-7 *cheerful* is the Greek word *hilerion* ; we give out of pure joy and we will reap accordingly

**Observations**: Old Testament tithes were used to run a **nation**. The Church is not a nation.

The more we grow in our faith, the more we will want to give. It is a privilege and pleasure.

God does not want our giving to be controlled by a law from the outside, but a desire from within.

God’s concern is not the percentage we give, but the attitude we have when we give.

*God’s work, done in God’s way, will never lack God’s supply.*

When the Holy Spirit controls our life, we will give the right amount to the right places at the right time.

**Elijah**

- **In the New Testament**, John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah; he was not Elijah himself.

He prepared the people to believe in Jesus at His first coming

- **In the future**, before Satan sets up his kingdom, God will send Elijah himself to prepare the way for the Jews.

Thru his teaching: Jewish fathers will believe in their Messiah Jesus and will have the desire to teach their children. The children will have a desire to learn and obey. 4:5

The result will be thousands upon thousands of Jews believing and growing in their faith. They will be the ones giving God’s message during the first half of Satan’s kingdom.

**Malachi and the New Testament**

*Malachi* ends with the promise of Jesus’ coming.

*New Testament begins* with His first coming; it ends with the promise of His second coming, *Yes, I am coming soon!*

**APPLICATION: God refines us like silver and gold.** Mal. 3:3; 1 Peter 1:6-7

**Literal refining** in Old Testament times.

Precious metal was placed in a container over a fire. As the impurities rose to the top, the refiner skimmed off the dross. He would heat it up again and remove more impurities. He repeated this action until finally when he could see a perfect reflection of his face in the molten metal, he knew it was pure.

**Spiritual refining** for us today.

God refines us by turning on the heat of difficulties and sorrow. They act like a fire that causes wrong actions and wrong attitudes to surface. God wants them out in the open so we know about them, admit they are wrong and let Him remove them from our lives. His goal is to remove the dross so a reflection of Himself can be seen. It will be a reflection of His goodness, His patience, kindness and self-control - a reflection of His beauty.

