



## THE ASSESSMENT

Legendary coach, Tom Landry, said, “A coach is someone who tells you what you don’t want to hear, who has you see what you don’t want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be.” A coach does no favors flattering a player. Instead, a coach must offer a truthful assessment—“this is good, this could be better.” Truth may hurt for a moment, but we will never win with lies.

As we open the final book of our study, God offers Israel a series of harsh rebukes. This isn’t mean. It’s an accurate assessment. Unfortunately, more than any other book so far, we’re probably going to see ourselves and how we fall short as well. Fortunately though, more than any other book so far, we’ll see our ultimate hope in the coming Christ!

### MALACHI 1:6–14

<sup>6</sup> “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ <sup>7</sup> By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the Lord’s table may be despised. <sup>8</sup> When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the Lord of hosts. <sup>9</sup> And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the Lord of hosts. <sup>10</sup> Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. <sup>11</sup> For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts. <sup>12</sup> But you profane it when you say that the Lord’s table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. <sup>13</sup> But you say, ‘What a weariness this is,’ and you snort at it, says the Lord of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord. <sup>14</sup> Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The book of *Malachi* is the only one in our series written after the Babylonian Exile. In fact, it’s that final book of the Old Testament. It’s the very last word for 400 years when an angel of God broke the silence to announce the birth of John the Baptist, the messenger mentioned in Malachi 3:1.

Malachi offers a warning, but it also offers hope for the coming Messiah. Scan the QR-code for an overview.



## DISCUSSION

What’s the hardest you ever worked to accomplish a goal? What was it and what did you do?

1. What 2 relationships illustrate the issue of showing honor to God? Who has failed to do so? (6)

2. Describe the practices which showed dishonor. (7-8a)

3. What would happen in the future re: God’s name and glory? (11)

4. What is the real problem with giving God less than the best? (What does a person’s offering say about their view of God?)

5. How are you tempted to give God and/or others your second best? How can this group strengthen you by holding you accountable to give your best?

Can you honestly say in your heart that God is getting your best? If not, what does it look like to fully surrender? If you need help, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



## STUDY NOTES

### MALACHI

As we open the book of *Malachi*, Israel has returned to the land *after* the Babylonian Exile. Unfortunately, 70 years in captivity hasn't completely solidified all the lessons Israel should have learned. They're beginning to fall back into some of the same old sin patterns for which the previous generations were exiled.

God spoke through the prophet, Malachi, to issue Israel a series of warnings. Uniquely, *Malachi* is written in a sort of call-and-response style, with only God speaking. God issues 6 charges against Israel (like a courtroom drama). After each charge, instead of allowing Israel to answer, God gives the reply that he knows resides in Israel's heart. Then, God answers the anticipated rebuttal, often with specific examples of Israel's failings.

Space does not allow us to examine each charge. However, as you go back and read on your own, bear in mind that Israel's circumstances and your circumstances aren't the same. They lived 2,400 years ago in a very different part of the world. However, our hearts, our tendency to rebel against God, and our failure to remember his majesty and might are *exactly* the same. This is why we said in the introduction that, probably more than any other book, *Malachi* lays our hearts bare, shows us where we fall short, and challenges us to change.

## WE DISHONOR GOD BY GIVING 2<sup>ND</sup> BEST

Malachi 1:1–5 records God's first charge against Israel. They'd failed to remember God's favor, and his promise-making, promise-keeping love. His power extends far beyond any geographical area, and yet, this people in this place possessed God's favor—not because *they* are great, but because *he* is great. And, as we saw in *Jonah*, they were supposed to share his greatness with the world. Sound familiar?

Malachi 1:6–14 records God's second charge—building on the first. God asks, "you **honor fathers and masters**, so ***'If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name.'***"

God speaks for the priests saying, ***"But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"*** God then goes on to give examples of how they offer ***"polluted"*** offerings—animals that are ***blind, lame or sick, taken by violence***. God made the comparison

of giving these same offerings to their ***"governor"*** asking, ***"Will he accept you and show you favor?"***

The Lord issues a shocking statement, ***"Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you"*** In other words, it would be better that the temple were closed for business than for the people to continue bringing their polluted offerings. This person is ***"Cursed!"***

Question, do you despise the name of the Lord? Is he getting your best; or just what's left over after school, sports, work, or fill-in-the-blank? If you put in the same intentionality into your academic life or your athletic life as you do your spiritual life, would your teachers or coaches be proud? God has no desire to place 2<sup>nd</sup> on the podium of your heart. He is the best thing for you, he wants the best for you, so he is understandably upset when you settle for less than your absolute best. So, what does this look like?

## HOPE LIVES FOR THOSE DISHONORING GOD

There are two repeated ideas in this passage that answer our question: 1) God is the ***Lord of hosts***. And, 2) God says ***"My name will be great/feared among the nations."***

What does ***"The Lord of hosts"*** mean? This name is "Yahweh Sabaoth" or "The Lord of Heaven's Armies." God is the ***great King*** of the most powerful fighting force in all Creation. In 2 Kings 6, the prophet, Elisha, prayed that his servant could see God's army on display—and he ***"saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire."*** If all heaven's armies obediently follow God's orders, who are we to say, "No!"?

Secondly, God declares that a day is coming when all nations will elevate the ***greatness*** and/or ***fear*** of God's name. Holiness means to be "set apart." It's something special, unique. Defaming God's name isn't just demeaning or slandering it—it could also be treating it as something common. God's name isn't just about his titles, it's about *him*, his ***character***, his ***stature***, his ***glory***. God's name represents God! And, he repeatedly declares "I will be made famous." Bet on it. Now, are you going to help or hurt that process?

Is God getting your best? That answer entirely depends on how big his name and his greatness are in your life. If everyone at your church had your spiritual life, would it be healthy or would God ask them to ***"shut the doors"***? Set the bar, give your best, don't settle for less than the Lord of Hosts deserves.