

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOKS OF
**HAGGAI &
MALACHI**

6 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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MALACHI**

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

INTRODUCTION

The books of Haggai and Malachi are written after the Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem from after the Babylonian captivity. The main thrust of Haggai's ministry (along with Zechariah) was to encourage the disheartened Jews to finish re-building the Temple which had been destroyed under the Babylonians. The book of Malachi gives no dating information, however, Malachi has always been placed last in the Minor Prophets and there is an approximate chronological order to these books in the Bible. Historically the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are highly regarded together as post-exilic prophets. The pre-exilic prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah preached for decades and mostly spoke of the coming destruction and of the judgment that would come if the people did not turn from their sinful ways and repent. We'll find the tone of Haggai and Malachi to be much different as the post-exilic prophets are full of encouragement and comfort, as the people try to repair the damage done to their nation during the captivity. It was a miracle that the Jews were back in their land and were sent by the pagan world leader Cyrus of Persia to rebuild the temple. The prophets knew this was of God and that God raised up Zerubbabel (the only living ancestor of King David) and Joshua the High Priest to lead them. The prophets knew of God's promise to always have a son of David on the throne of Israel. When the 50,000 Jews returned, they found a land that had not been cultivated for 70 years and a city that had no temple and no walls. Yet these Jews were motivated spiritually to re-establish themselves as God's people. We must not underestimate the sacrifice these people made. They left family and friends to return to a land that had been given to their ancestors but which they themselves had not seen before. These people exchanged prosperity in captivity for returning to a ruined Promised Land. But they had a dream to rebuild their city and re-establish a royal kingdom with their own king. Since they lacked resources and a labour force they decided to build a temple much smaller than Solomon's temple. As scarce resources became scarcer they became discouraged and stopped building after two years. The work halted for 14 years leaving just the foundation and lower walls completed. A temple was a luxury that they could not afford as they struggled for mere survival. With drought, disease, floods and other natural disasters they had nothing. They had returned to their Promised Land to build a new nation and instead they could hardly stay alive. They questioned whether they should have just stayed in captivity and built up more wealth for themselves there instead of returning to their homeland. By now they had been back 18 years and had pretty much nothing to show for it. It was to this depressing situation that Haggai spoke.

DAY 1



READ: Haggai 1

The book of Haggai begins abruptly and with conviction! The problem was that the Lord's house stood in ruins and God's people were doing nothing about it. Since the people had experienced a disappointing harvest season (v. 10-11) they thought that it was the wrong time to build the temple. They figured that they couldn't afford to keep building the temple because of their crop failure which caused economic crisis. What they failed to realize was that these economic hardships were caused by the very hand of God. As soon as the people stopped putting God first, things began to go wrong, but they didn't notice. Haggai challenged their thinking, "*is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while [God's] house lies in ruins*" (v. 4)? A home made of paneled wood would have been fairly luxurious in those times. They had spent unnecessary amounts of money on their own homes while ignoring God's house. The reason that God had allowed the poor harvest was because they had been using their past financial surpluses on themselves and not on the rebuilding of the temple. God tells them to "*consider their ways*" (v. 5). The

people respond positively to Haggai's message and returned to the task of rebuilding the Lord's house (v. 14). The text notes that they feared the Lord (v. 12) which led to obeying Him. The exile had taught them to listen to the warnings of the prophets and so they willingly agreed to begin rebuilding. God assures them of His presence, "*I am with you*" (v. 13), a promise that they could depend on! The Spirit of the Lord then moved not only among the leaders (Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest) but among all the people (v. 14). As the people responded to Haggai's message with obedience, in fear of the Lord, God moves among the people and they take action. The Lord awakened in them a desire to finish the building of the temple through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Because the people did not have their priorities straight God allowed them to experience hardship in order to get them to listen and follow His ways. A general theme in Haggai is putting God's Kingdom first in our lives. Ask the Lord to show you what it means to put His Kingdom first in your life. Ask Him for simple steps you can obey to move further in this direction.
2. The people responded to Haggai's message with obedience. Pray that you would be willing to wholeheartedly obey God's Word, even if it means personal sacrifice. Pray for the Canadian church to see the need for obedience to the Word of God and to desire it.
3. Just like the temple needed to be re-built in Haggai's day, the Canadian church needs to be re-built. Pray for the rebuilding and restoration of the Canadian Church. Pray for pastors to sense the urgency of the times we are living in and to desire to see their churches restored. Pray for those who are working for Church Renewal to be encouraged as they do God's work.

DAY 2



READ: Haggai 2

The first prophecy in this chapter (v. 1-9) comes just 27 days after the people had begun working on the temple. It seems as though the older generation was criticizing the present temple, complaining that it didn't measure up to the splendor of Solomon's temple. Haggai's prophetic word encouraged them to keep rebuilding and not worry about the small size or simplicity of the temple they were building. The key was that they were building a house for God so that God could dwell with them. The people are urged to "*be strong*" (v. 4) and not to fear (v. 5). The promise was that God was with them! Haggai's prophecy then turns to their future as He predicts that God will "*shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land*" (v. 6) so that "*the treasures of all nations shall come in*" (v. 7). This prophecy speaks of God shaking the nations so they will send their treasures. History tells us that this is exactly what happened as silver and gold was sent from Persia to help with the rebuilding (Ezra 6:4). God owns all the silver and gold in the world, since He is Creator, so a lack of resources is not a problem to God. He will make it so that they have the resources that they need to do the work that He is asking them to do!

Haggai's second prophecy (v. 10-19) begins with a comparison of clean and unclean objects. If meat is consecrated because it was in direct contact with a holy garment, could that meat pass on that holiness to a third object, such as some bread or stew (v. 11-12)? The answer was no. In a similar fashion, ceremonial uncleanness (like from touching a dead body) could be transferred much more easily than holiness (v. 13). Anything touched

by an unclean person becomes unclean. Haggai then goes on to say that since people are defiled (v. 14) whatever they do or whatever they offer is also defiled, particularly in regard to rebuilding the temple. The people were trying to build a clean and consecrated temple but they were unconsecrated. A Dirty people can't build a clean temple. Since they were building the temple they thought that they were godly but they were actually contaminating the temple because they were not walking in obedience. The poor harvests (v. 16,19a), blight, and mildew (v. 17) were related to the sin of the people. But future abundance is assured (v. 19b) as long as the people would heed this message from God, repent and obey.

The final prophecy (v. 20-23) in this chapter is for Zerubbabel, who acted as the Governor of Israel. Haggai tells Zerubbabel he was the signet ring of God (v. 23). The ring symbolized royal authority and ownership, like how the king would seal legal documents with a ring. Zerubbabel was of David's lineage therefore it will be from his line that a future king would come. We know this future king to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In what area of your life do you lack resources? Ask Jesus what He wants to say to you about this today. Ask Him to show you what He is doing through this lack and how you can align your life to His will and grow because of it.
2. God is not so much concerned about what we do for Him but whether we're clean to do it. As we seek to put God's kingdom first life becomes about living right and living for God versus staying alive or making a living. Ask the Lord to speak to you about the way you live your life (obedience, character, fruit of the spirit, etc.). Is there something you need to confess today? How can you continue to grow in faithfully obeying the Lord?
3. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the future king prophecy given to Zerubbabel. But Jesus is not presently on this earth ruling as a king. He will take His place on the throne of David when He returns again, then He will overthrow the kingdoms of this world (v. 22) and rule forever. Ask the Lord what He wants to say to you about His imminent return. Are you ready? What tasks does He want you to complete before He returns? How can you align with Him to bring in a great Harvest of souls before He returns?

DAY 3



READ: Malachi 1

It is assumed that Malachi was the last of the Minor Prophets because the book contains references to temple worship meaning the building of the temple must have been finished. The people were practicing their Jewish religion but it had become mainly a formality. They attended temple services and performed sacrifices, mainly out of tradition. Their attitude toward their religious life was to do as little as possible; this included both time and money. When people have this sort of attitude towards their spiritual lives then moral decline naturally follows.

The first chapter of Malachi begins with God's response to the peoples' questioning of His love (v. 2). Malachi answers with a dialog about Jacob and Esau. To fully understand what is being said here we must go back 1500 years to the book of Genesis. Jacob and Esau were twins born to Isaac and Rebekah and were the grandsons of Abraham. Esau was the older one but Jacob deceitfully stole the birthright and blessing of the firstborn. Through

Jacob's line the messianic promise would come, he was the one who experienced God's sovereign favour whereas his brother Esau experienced rejection in terms of that role. It is important to note that the words "*loved*" and "*hated*" in this passage do not mean in Hebrew what they mean to us in English. Rather, the term love is to care for someone and seek his or her highest good whereas hate means to not care for someone or seek his or her good. So, God is not saying that He feels animosity, bitterness or resentment towards Esau but rather He is speaking about their roles in the redemptive history of mankind. Yet these verses go much deeper than merely mentioning the fates of these two men. In fact, God is actually referring to the nation of Israel (the descendants of Jacob) and the nation of Edom (the descendants of Esau). As the people question the love of God, He reminds them of His promises to them. Although the Israelites experienced judgment through the exile they had returned to their land and would survive. Edom's fate was not as secure. God saw how the Edomites treated the Israelites during the Babylonian captivity and as a result they were now under God's judgement which would be permanent and irreversible.

Malachi then turns the table on the Israelites. Instead of questioning God's love for them what actually should come into question is their love for God. The people were dishonoring God through their offerings and the priests were guilty of doing nothing to stop it. Offerings are a significant part of the worship of God. Instead of choosing the best animals for sacrifice, as detailed by Moses, the people were giving God the worst animals – the blind, the crippled and the diseased. They were offering God the unwanted leftovers, something they wouldn't even give to their Governor (v. 8). God's simple solution was to shut the temple doors – He would rather receive no offering at all than sacrifices offered with disrespect. He was not pleased with them and will not accept their offerings (v. 10)! Yet God speaks of a future time of great blessing which will include the offering of incense and pure offerings to Him by the nations (v. 11). In the future His name will be great among the nations even though presently it wasn't great among His own people, the Israelites. Their selfish, insincere worship was being rejected by God. They were deceiving themselves and were not treating God like the great King He is.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Malachi is asking the people to think about how God was caring for them and to be thankful. This is a lesson for all of us. When we feel like we would like to complain we should reflect on all that God has done for us and be thankful. Ask the Lord to show you 5-10 things that you can be thankful for today.
2. When we offer God shallow, insincere worship we don't honor Him as a great King. Ask the Lord to show you what sort of worship He would like to receive from you (for example: serving, giving, loving, singing, etc.). Then commit to obeying what He has told you.
3. Pray for believers to grow in giving generously to God's kingdom out of a heart of love and joy.

DAY 4



READ: Malachi 2:1-16

In the first chapter of Malachi the Lord rebukes the people for offering cheap sacrifices of lame, blind and diseased animals. In this chapter Malachi begins by condemning the priests who were not honoring the Lord. If the priests will not hear and repent then God promises to curse their blessings (v. 2). They will be disciplined for what they have done (v. 3) to bring them back to a proper respect of the covenant (v. 4). The Lord had chosen

the line of Levi to be the priestly line. Levi himself is given as an example of reverence, truth, godly character and preserving and promoting God's Word (v. 5-6). The priests had a special responsibility to teach the Law of Moses and to be knowledgeable messengers of God's Word (v. 7). Because they had turned from the way and gave the people what they wanted to hear instead of the truth they had caused many to stumble (v. 8). The result was that the priests were despised and humiliated before the people (v. 9). Religious leaders are required to speak the truth to the people, not a watered down message that is more palatable, and they are also required to live godly lives, which the people ought to be able to see. The priests had done neither and therefore God was not pleased with them.

Malachi then turns his focus back onto the people by mentioning areas where their belief and behaviour was failing. The first area was in mixed marriages through marrying outside the people of God (v. 11). Marrying a pagan woman was strictly forbidden in the covenant law because this would lead to apostasy. When the people became distressed because God refused to accept their offerings, (withholding His blessing, v. 13), Malachi's reply reveals the second problem in their society - divorce. Since marriage is a covenant affirmed before witnesses God was acting as a witness against husbands who were unfaithful to their wives (v. 14). In God's eyes marriage is not a two-way relationship between husband and wife but rather a three-way relationship between husband, wife and God. When a man and a woman join together in marriage it is the Lord Himself that makes them one as there is a "*portion of the Spirit in their union*" (v. 15). This oneness is essential to God's plan for marriage. One reason is because it provides a proper environment to raise godly children. There is no doubt that God hates divorce (v. 16) because it destroys something that He created and loves – marriage. There is also no doubt that God allows divorce in particular circumstances, although it is never commanded. Because of our own wickedness and hardness of heart God gives permission for divorce in two circumstances; sexual immorality (Matt. 19:1-9) and desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:10-16). Incompatibility, unhappiness, or discontentment is not a biblical reason for divorce. If someone does not have biblical grounds for divorce God regards them as still married and any subsequent relationship is considered adultery (Matt. 19:8-9). Malachi concludes with telling the people to "*guard yourself in spirit*" (v. 17). This warning tells us to be careful to keep our hearts soft before the Lord and not allow ourselves to become hard, critical or embittered towards our spouse. It is important to realize that we can change our feelings towards our spouse.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Mediate for a few moments on God's holiness. Then re-read the chapter, asking Him to show you evidence of His holiness in the chapter. What does He want to reveal to you today about your relationship with Him in the area of personal holiness?
2. Ask the Lord to reveal to you if you have any ungodly attitudes or feelings towards your spouse. Confess what He shows you, admitting that you are wrong (not blaming your spouse). Then ask Him to grow you in godly character, attitudes and feelings towards your spouse.
3. Pray for Christian marriages to better reflect oneness. Ask the Lord to show you 3 things that you can pray for your own marriage or for the marriages of your family members.

DAY 5**READ:** Malachi 2:17-3:12

At the end of chapter two we find that the people are wearying the Lord with their sin (2:17). Sin has an interesting way of changing our thinking about things and in this case the people believed that the wicked prospered and had it better than the godly. Their theology had gotten twisted leading them to struggle in their understanding of God's justice.

Chapter three introduces a messenger who is none other than John the Baptist and speaks of the Messiah coming to His temple (3:1). The people had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah thinking that His arrival would be good news. What they didn't realize was that the coming Messiah, who would confirm the Lord's covenant, would also come as a refiner's fire or launderer's soap (3:2). In this picture we see that the Messiah is coming to clean, not destroy. The beauty of this representation is that God is going to purify His people and burn all the dross away. Those who are seeking the Lord must understand that fire means testing, purging and purifying which is not necessarily an easy thing to go through. We serve a God who is not indifferent towards us but rather who desires to make us clean so that we can bring acceptable offerings to Him in righteousness (3:3-4). God's ultimate purpose is to purify society and change the hearts of mankind. When Jesus finally returns in glory and sits on David's throne ruling the nations, evil will be quickly punished as He draws near for judgement (3:5). Because God does not change, He remains faithful to His covenant (3:6) and will not destroy the people of Israel, even when they deserve it. God longs for His people to return to Him through repentance (3:7). The next few verses expose one of the areas where Israel had sinned – robbing God of tithes and offerings (3:8). The people had withheld their tithe, keeping what rightfully belonged to God. This was robbery. Because the people did not give as He commanded, God did not bless them materially or spiritually the way He otherwise would have. Their stingy hearts showed that they were far away from God, because God is the greatest giver. The answer to their struggles was obedience to God by bringing all the tithes to Him. It wasn't like these people weren't giving anything to God; they just weren't giving all the tithes to Him. We must not partially obey God, we must fully obey Him. The Lord actually commands the people to test Him in this (3:10). It's like He's saying, "see if you can give to me and be the poorer for it?" The response God promises when His people give as He tells them to is blessing through provision and protection such as needed rain and removal of pestilence (3:11). God then reminds them of the Abrahamic covenant that all nations will call Israel blessed (3:12). But it is all dependent on their repentance and obedience.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Everything we own belongs to God; He owns 100% of all our resources, financial and otherwise, and He wants to be functional Lord of this area of our lives. Thank the Lord for the resources and finances that He has given you.
2. Invite the Lord to speak truth into your heart about the way that you steward your resources and finances. Ask Him to show you something that you may not have seen before.
3. In Malachi 3:7 God says, "Return to me, and I will return to you." Ask the Lord to show you an area in your life where you need to return to Him fully or where you have been obeying Him partially. What does the Lord require of you in this area?
4. Pray for lost friends and family members who need to return to the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you a word, thought or picture so that you can pray strategically for these people.

DAY 6**READ:** Malachi 3:13-4:6

So far Malachi has made five complaints against the people:

- 1) They doubt His love (1:2-5).
- 2) They dishonor God in their burnt offerings by sacrificing sick and diseased animals (1:6-2:9).
- 3) They have marriage offenses such as marrying pagan women and divorce (2:10-16).
- 4) They have committed other moral offences that require a refiner's fire or laundry soap to purify (2:17-3:5).
- 5) They have robbed God with their offerings by not giving the full tithe (3:6-12).

Malachi now gives the sixth and final complaint against the people. This complaint begins with Israel's bold and blasphemous grumbling that it is vain to serve God (3:13-15). These were harsh words spoken by the people against the Lord. They saw the prosperity of the proud and wicked and felt it was useless to serve God believing that those who didn't serve God seemed to have it so good. The people couldn't see the benefits of following the Lord's ways. But a group of people who feared the Lord came together and talked with each other, encouraging each other in the Lord. Instead of complaining they decided to put their trust in God. God noticed their actions and recorded it in His book of remembrance. The Lord then says that these faithful believers "*shall be mine*" (v. 17). When the arrogant and evildoers are burned up like stubble (4:1), these faithful believers will be remembered as righteous and will be rewarded.

In the last few verses of the book of Malachi we find the last few prophetic words of the Old Testament after which the Lord would be silent for some 400 years. During the coming time of silence the people will go through some very tough times (Maccabean Revolt against Antiochus) and will need to stand strong. Malachi warns the people to obey the Law (4:4). God then promises to send them another prophetic voice, "*Elijah the prophet*", before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. Although this prophecy refers to John the Baptist it will only be completely fulfilled before the Second coming of Jesus when God will send another prophetic voice to the people of Israel during the terrible time leading up to Christ's second coming. In these verses we also find the promise that this "*Elijah*" will "*turn the hearts of the father to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers*" (v. 6) which speaks of the people of Israel turning to the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, referring to the restoration of the Jews. The final sentence ends with a threat of a curse; if Israel does not repent God will deal with them.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord to show you 5-10 benefits that you have experienced here on earth because you have chosen to walk in His ways. Then ask Him to show you 5-10 future benefits that you will experience in eternity.
2. The final chapter of Malachi gives us a warning as it shows the fate of two different kinds of people. Re-read Malachi 4 asking the Lord if there are any warnings that He would like to give you from this passage.
3. We live with the hope that Jesus is returning soon, preparing not only ourselves but others for His return. Church Renewal Ministry works to prepare those outside of Southland for the return of Jesus. Ask the Lord to show you how you can become more involved in Church Renewal Ministry. For example; giving resources, volunteering at events, praying, attending prayer summits, seeking renewal in your own life and in the life of your family, etc.

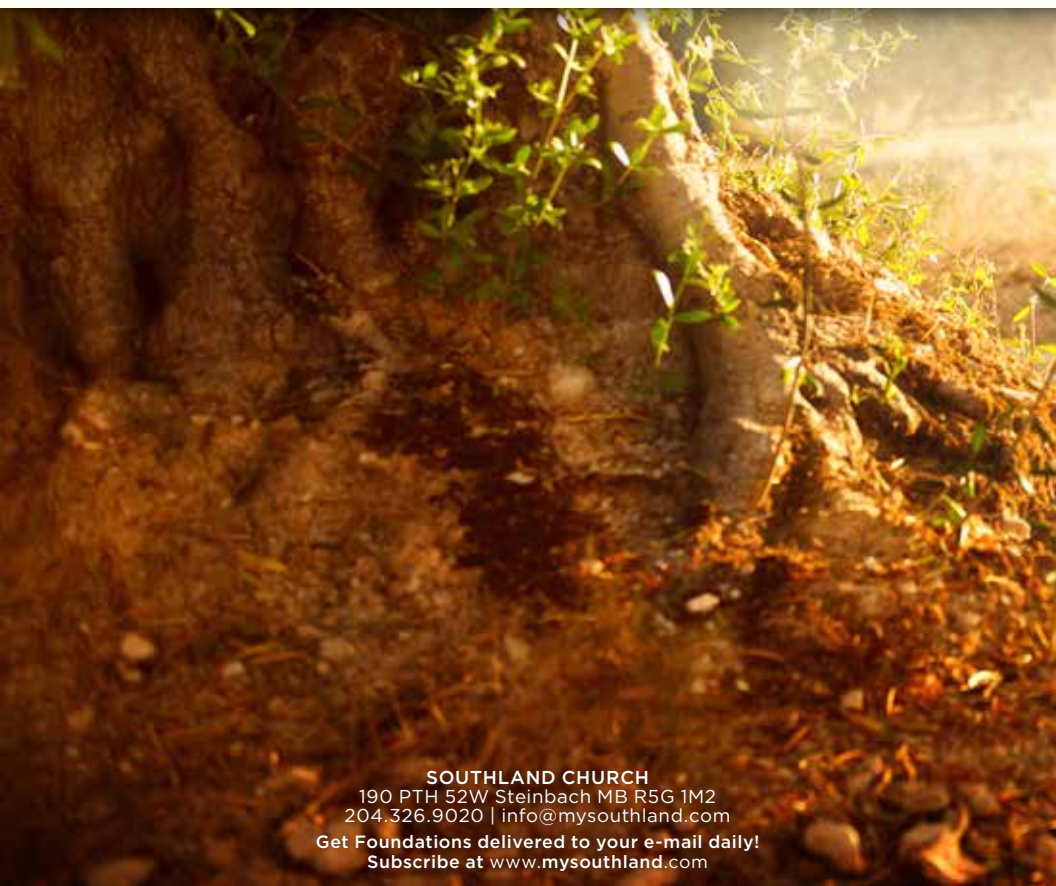


The Books of Haggai & Malachi

Although the Jews were allowed to return from exile and rebuild the temple, the community began to lose hope. Their worship degenerated into rituals that lacked heart and they began to morally slip into disobedience. Only through repentance and obedience will they again experience God's blessing.

Malachi 3:7b (NIV)

"Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty



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