

CRY

2026

OUT

POSTEXILIC PROPHETS

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH & MALACHI

COVENANT^{EFC}

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STUDY 8

IS OUR WORSHIP DEFILED? (Malachi 1:6–2:9)

COVENANT^{EFC}



WELCOME

Ice-breaker Activity: A Great Gift?

Each person shares (in one minute) one meaningful gift which they had received from someone and what made it meaningful.

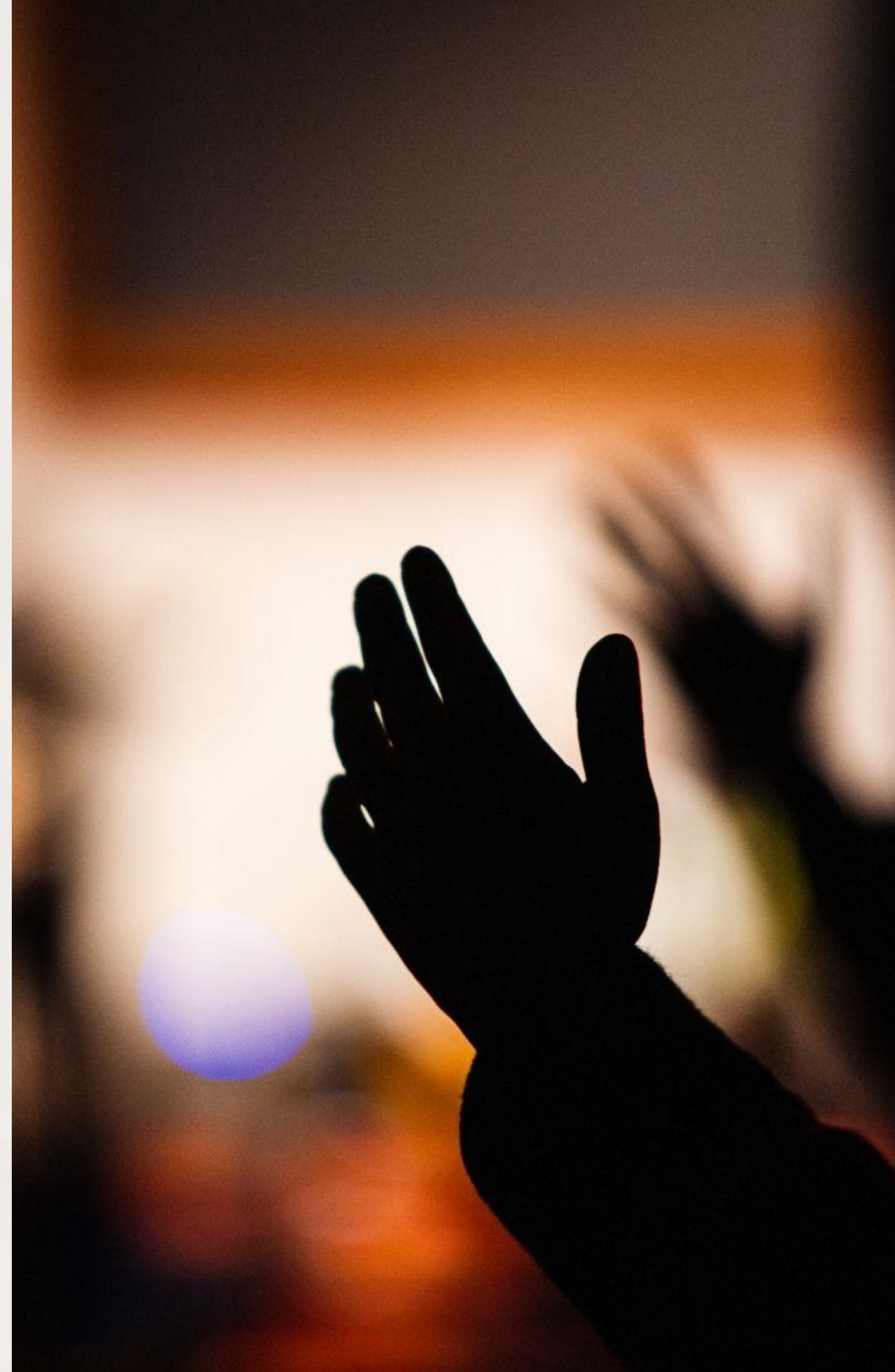




WORSHIP

Let's prepare our hearts to bring an offering of worship to the King.

- Offering (Paul Balloche)
- Heart of Worship (Matt Redman)
- I Offer My Life (Don Moen)
- Worth It All (Awaken Generation)





WORD

STRUCTURE OF MALACHI

6 PROPHETIC DISPUTATIONS

1

The LORD's
love

(1:1-5)



2

Faithless
priests

(1:6-2:9)



3

Faithless
people

(2:10-16)



4

The LORD's
messenger

(2:17-3:5)



5

Robbing the
LORD

(3:6-12)



6

The Day of
the LORD

(3:13-4:3)

Final charge:
Remember
the law!

(4:4-6)

Setting the Context: Offerings & Sacrifices in the Old Testament

- A key element of Israelite worship included offering sacrifices at the altar (Lev 1-6), and the priests were entrusted with offering on the altar the sacrifices brought by the people.
- Mosaic law details the requirements of these sacrifices, and clearly prohibited the offering of blemished animals, including those that were lame or blind (Lev 22:18-25; Deu 15:21).
- Sinfulness and impurity constantly threatened the unique covenantal relationship that the Israelites had with a holy God. Thus, sacrifices were a **God-given means** by which the people could be cleansed, and this relationship with God maintained, despite their shortcomings.

Setting the Context: What Offerings & Sacrifices mean for us *today*

- In the NT, Jesus is depicted as the one perfect sacrifice (Heb 10:12,14) which reconciled to God a sinful people who have received his atoning work by grace (Rom 3:21-26).
- Petterson says: “The language of sacrifice or worship [is used] ... to speak of the actions Christians should do in response to all that God has done in Christ.”
- Christians are called to “offer [their] bodies as a living sacrifice” to God as worship (Rom 12:1-2; 6:13, 16).*

*Petterson, Anthony R. *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Apollos Old Testament Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015, p. 343.

Activity 1: Read & Discuss

Read Malachi 1:6-14 and answer Questions 1 & 2.

1. What is the problematic situation that the prophet is addressing among God's people?
2. How does Malachi use the analogy of giving gifts to one's governor (Mal 1:8) to point out the people's wrongdoing?

Crucial context: Who were the priests in Old Testament times?

- In the context of Malachi, there is no distinction made between the priests and the Levites whether in rank or function. They played the “dual roles of worship leader and teacher”, and were “the ‘national leaders’” of Judah over “the citizens of the province”.*
- The Israelite priests were appointed by God as mediators between the divine and human realms, in charge of the temple duties (which included the sacrificial offerings) and of teaching and instructing the people (Mal 2:5-9).

*Hill, Andrew. *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*.

Crucial context: Who are God's priests today?

- It may be easy to assume that learning from the priests' actions and attitudes in Malachi only applies to religious leaders and teachers of our day.
- Yet, the NT, through passages like 1 Pet 2:9, teaches us that ***all believers in Christ are priests!***
- As we are called not only to be disciples but disciple-makers, we are called similarly to walk with God in peace and uprightness, guarding knowledge and instruction as part of our gospel witness to those around us.
- ***Why this matters:** What God says to the priests is applicable to all of us as well (not just pastors), because we are His **priests** that **bridge** others to Him.*

Activity 2: Read & Discuss

Read Malachi 1:12 to 2:9 and answer Questions 3 to 5

3. Looking at 1:12-13, what seem to be some of the attitudes behind the priests' actions in allowing this problematic situation to occur?
4. In 2:1-3, what shocks you the most out of all the things that God says here to the priests? Why?
5. What was God expecting from the priests, as reflected in his covenant with Levi (2:4-9)?

🔍 Exegetical Insight: Is God being sarcastic?

- Yes, the prophet seems to depict God using sarcasm to intensify his rebuke of the priests and people in Malachi.
- The repeated statement in 1:8 can actually be read as a sarcastic declaration by the prophet “When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, there is no evil! And when you offer those that are lame or sick, there is no evil!” (cf. NJPS, ‘it doesn’t matter!'; NEB, ‘there is nothing wrong’).*
- “And now, entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us.” (1:9) is a sarcastic reference to the Aaronic benediction (Num 6:24-26), which was a prayer the priests were supposed to pray to garner God’s favour on behalf of the people.

*Hill, Andrew. *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*. Vol 28. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Nottingham: Inter-varsity Press. 2012.

🔍 Exegetical Insight: Is God being sarcastic?

- “My name will be great among the nations” (1:11) – sarcastically turns the comfort in Malachi 1:5 into a harsh jab – while Israel fails to worship their God, every other nation and place will offer up pure offerings to YHWH.
- **Why this matters:** *We cannot conclude from the speech of God that it is perfectly okay to be sarcastic to one another (it can be hurtful). Rather, all this shows that God is not afraid of using cutting words to pierce his people’s hardened hearts – words that come from a heart of love. When God has a tough message for us, do we listen? Or do we take offence?*



Prayerfully reflect on your own

1. What do you identify with in Malachi's depiction of God's people and priests?
2. What is something that God might be revealing to you about your attitude or behaviour in your worship or witness?
3. Is there anything that surprised you today about the way God communicates with his people?



Share and pray for one another

- Share your reflections on the three questions with others in your small group. Be as authentic as you can be.
- Remember to keep confidence and maintain a safe space for one another.
- Pray for one another, committing what is shared to the LORD in prayer.



Additional Resources for Further Study

- Hill, Andrew. *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Vol 28. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.* Nottingham: Inter-varsity Press. 2012.
- Petterson, Anthony R. *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Apollos Old Testament Commentary.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.
- Baldwin, Joyce G. *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 28. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972.
- Verhoef, Pieter A. *The Books of Haggai and Malachi.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987.
- Taylor, Richard A., and E. Ray Clendenen. *Haggai, Malachi. Vol. 21A. The New American Commentary.* Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004.