

Lesson 48 – “The Great and Dreadful Day of the Lord”

Malachi

Purpose: To encourage us to (1) prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) pay an honest tithe and generous offerings, and (3) experience the blessings that come because of the sealing power of the priesthood.

My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

If you are interested in downloading the PowerPoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

The story of Ezra and Nehemiah is an historical record of the Jews' return from Babylon to Jerusalem. Upon their return, they would set to build a new temple as close to the Temple of Solomon as they could afford.

There was opposition, but they trusted in Jehovah to help them overcome it. Ezra and Nehemiah are examples of placing trust in Jehovah to help them overcome adversities.

Last week's challenge was to consider what you can learn from the examples of Ezra and Nehemiah and their trust in the Lord.

Would anyone wish to share their thoughts at this time?

Who Was Malachi and When Did He Live?

As with so many of the prophets, little is known of the life of Malachi, apart from what can be learned in his book. Malachi lived after the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and is believed to have been a contemporary of Nehemiah. The book was probably written about four hundred years before the birth of Christ.

To most people, the words tithing and genealogy come to mind first when the book of Malachi is mentioned. These subjects are treated extensively, and we can learn a great deal about them from Malachi, but did you learn anything else from this prophet? For example, what should a priesthood holder be like, according to Malachi?

There is a significant tie between Malachi and the restoration of the Gospel in the Latter-Days. On the evening of 21 September 1823, Joseph Smith sought the Lord in prayer for a remission of his sins. The Lord's reply came in the person of a heavenly messenger, Moroni, who told the young man of important events soon to transpire on the earth. After telling Joseph about the sacred plates buried in the Hill Cumorah, Moroni began quoting prophecies from the Old Testament. Joseph Smith recorded that he quoted from Malachi (see JS—H 1:36–39).

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Malachi's Time and His Role as Jehovah's Prophet

The most important aspect to understanding Malachi is understanding who he was prophesying to. Malachi lived 400 years before the Lord's birth. Judah had fallen deep into apostasy and the next 400 years would be a time where Judah fell even deeper. The Jewish religion of the Lord's time began to evolve in Malachi's time where sects like Pharisees and Sadducees became dominant and the synagogue replaced the Jerusalem Temple as the place of worship.

As a result of the failure of the priests to judge and lead in righteousness, Judah had fallen once again into a serious sin. She "hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange God" (Malachi 2:11). This passage calls to mind again the often used figure in the Old Testament of the husband (Jehovah) and the wife (Judah/Israel). As solemn a bond or covenant exists between Jehovah and Israel as exists between a husband and his wife. But Judah had chosen another partner, "the daughter of a strange God," meaning that Judah had formed a temporal or spiritual alliance with a nation that did not regard Jehovah as the Lord of heaven.

Malachi 3:1-6

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

One of the messengers sent to prepare the way of the Lord at His first coming was John the Baptist. John's mission was performed in the spirit and power of the priesthood of Elias (see Luke 1:17). Elias is a name for a forerunner, one who goes before or prepares the way for someone or something greater. In that sense the Aaronic Priesthood is the priesthood of Elias because it prepares and qualifies individuals for greater blessings. Joseph Smith explained: "The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 335–36.)

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Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Our Lord is the Messenger of the Covenant. (Mal. 3:1.) He came in his Father’s name, bearing his Father’s message, to fulfil the covenant of the Father that a Redeemer and Savior would be provided for men.

When He comes to earth a second time, He will make more than one appearance before He comes in the clouds of heaven for all flesh to see Him together. At least one of those appearances includes a sudden visit to His temple, yet to be built, in Jackson County, Missouri. Elder McConkie further stated:

“Malachi recorded the promise, speaking of latter-day events, that ‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.’ (Mal. 3:1.) “This sudden latter-day appearance in the temple does not have reference to his appearance at the great and dreadful day, for that coming will be when he sets his foot upon the Mount of Olivet in the midst of the final great war. The temple appearance was fulfilled, in part at least, by his return to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836; and it may well be that he will come again, suddenly, to others of his temples, more particularly that which will be erected in Jackson County, Missouri.

“In this connection it is worthy of note that whenever and wherever the Lord appears, he will come suddenly, that is ‘quickly, in an hour you think not.’ His oft repeated warning, ‘Behold, I come quickly’, means that when the appointed hour arrives, he will come with a speed and a suddenness which will leave no further time for preparation for that great day.” (Mormon Doctrine, pp. 693–94.)

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[Malachi 3:7-12](#)

7 ¶ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

8 ¶ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve said:

“In addition to giving ourselves, and giving our services, the Lord has asked us to give of our means and our substance. We have men in the Church who give their time, they will go when they are asked to preach, they will perform a public duty, but it is hard to do the little duty that is seen in secret by them and God alone and their presiding officers. And so we are asked to contribute our tithes and offerings, not only because the Church needs money to build itself, for before there was an organization of the Church, God introduced the principle of sacrifice in order that his servants and his children might be tested, that they should bring the best of their lands and of their herds. ... They were burned upon the altar of sacrifice; but the giving sanctified the souls of those who gave. ...

“The prophet Malachi declared that in the last days the Lord should send his messenger to prepared the way before him, and he called upon Israel, and I interpret that to mean latter-day Israel, to return unto him and promised that he would return unto them, and they said: “Wherein shall we return unto Thee?” And he said: ‘In your tithes and offerings ... for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house.’

“And I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that we need the tithes of the Saints in order that the kingdom might go on, for it shall be builded just as rapidly as the faith of the Saints can build it, and it is retarded when there is a lack of faith.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1939, pp. 44–45.)

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Malachi Chapter 4

At the Second Coming, the proud and wicked will be burned as stubble—Elijah will return before that great and dreadful day.

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 ¶ But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

4 ¶ Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

5 ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Malachi 4:5-6

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This earth has a destiny. Its purpose is to provide a place for people to work out their eternal salvation before the Lord. Part of that salvation depends on their acquiring the necessary ordinances, in righteousness, that will seal them to God and to each other for time and all eternity. But the ordinances are not for the living only. Otherwise, billions would have been denied these blessings simply because the necessary priesthood power was not available in the time or place they lived.

Joseph Smith was told by Moroni that Elijah would come. Moroni mentioned the “promises made to the fathers” (JS—H 1:39) in ancient times. These promises, Moroni said, would assist in turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “What was the promise made to the fathers that was to be fulfilled in the latter-days by the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers? It was the promise of the Lord made through Enoch, Isaiah, and the prophets, to the nations of the earth, that the time should come when the dead should be redeemed. And the turning of the hearts of the children is fulfilled in the performing of the vicarious temple work and in the preparation of their genealogies.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:154.)

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Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in fulfillment of the Lord's promise recorded by Malachi. His visit occurred on 3 April 1836 in the Kirtland Temple. The priesthood keys Elijah brought were the sealing powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the means whereby that which is bound and sealed on the earth is also bound and sealed in the heavens.

Commenting on the meaning of turning hearts, Joseph Smith said: "Now, the word turn here should be translated bind, or seal. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion." (Teachings, p. 330.)

Elder Theodore M. Burton said: "This turning of hearts to family relationships means establishing and sealing patriarchal lineage within the sacred confines of the temple and carrying that family inheritance into our daily lives. That is why, even if we do build temples, if we do not keep the covenants made in them, we will be rejected as a people." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 81.)

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Between the Testaments

During the four hundred years that followed Malachi, we know of no prophet in Israel. Though services had been interrupted, the temple rites had continued during most of that time. Priests had made the proper sacrifice on the great altar, and the people had continued to pray daily while a priest had offered incense upon the altar in the holy place. All had gone like clockwork until one day a priest named Zacharias did not reappear as quickly as he should have from the holy place after his service. The people began to marvel and conjecture. And well they should have, for once again the veil had been lifted, and God's word was proclaimed. The humble and aged Zacharias, of the priestly order of Abia, stood in the presence of an angel. "Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son. ... And he shall ... make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13, 17.) This long-desired child was to be a messenger who would go forth in the spirit and power of Elias to declare that the kingdom of God was at hand. Once more Israel would be extended the covenant and the promise. Once more the keys and power were to be proffered to them. He who came to prepare the way was called John, or in Hebrew, Johanan, "gift of God." Israel had a prophet once again, a forerunner, the prophet that would prepare the way for Jehovah's coming to earth as the Son of God and the Messiah that Judah had awaited for so long. And thus the Old Testament, or old covenant, was brought to a close and the New Testament, or new covenant, begun.

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Consider what you have learned studying the Old Testament. Today, take the time to write down at least 10 truths that you have been taught this year by the Old Testament. Here is one to start.

Jehovah would always fight the Israelites battles for them, if they would only let Him by their faith and obedience. Jesus Christ will do the same for us by our faith and obedience.