

# Participant's Guide



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## Small Group Study: *For God* - The Book of Malachi

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# MALACHI

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# Session 1: The Old Testament Participant's Guide

**Session Text: Malachi 1:1 - Read the text for this session:**

1 This is a divine revelation. The Lord spoke his word to Israel through Malachi.

## Unpacking the Text

“The Lord spoke his word...” Perhaps the most poignant aspect of that statement is that it marks the Lord’s final Word for 400 years. Between Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament written in about 435 BC, and Matthew, the first book of the New Testament that begins with the birth of Jesus in approximately 3 BC, the Lord didn’t speak. What are some things you would expect to be true about this time?



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What will you expect to read in Malachi since it is the Old Testament’s final word?

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Some read specific parts of the Old Testament - such as the Jewish laws in Leviticus - and are ready to disregard not just the Old Testament, but the whole Bible. It is true that there are laws and Jewish customs that we no longer follow in light of the New Covenant. (Read Leviticus 11, for instance). But is that a reason to disregard the creation account, the story of Moses, King David, Daniel, Joseph, Esther, and the other important accounts in Genesis through Malachi? What do you consider to be 10 critical people or stories from the Old Testament for life today?

## The Intertestamental Period

(Between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament)

*Because there was no prophetic word from God during this period, some refer to it as the “400 silent years.” The political, religious, and social atmosphere of Palestine changed significantly during this period. Much of what happened was predicted by the prophet Daniel. Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire from about 532-332 B.C. The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion with little interference. This time of relative peace and contentment was just the calm before the storm.*

*Alexander the Great defeated Darius of Persia, bringing Greek rule to the world. Alexander was a student of Aristotle and was well educated in Greek philosophy and politics. He required that Greek culture be promoted in every land that he conquered. As a result, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, becoming the translation known as the Septuagint. Most of the New Testament references to Old Testament Scripture use the Septuagint phrasing. Alexander did allow religious freedom for the Jews, though he still strongly promoted Greek lifestyles. This was not a good turn of events for Israel since the Greek culture was very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.*

Houdmann, The Intertestamental Period

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## The View from Holiness

You don't have to read very far into Malachi to see the message of Holiness taking shape.

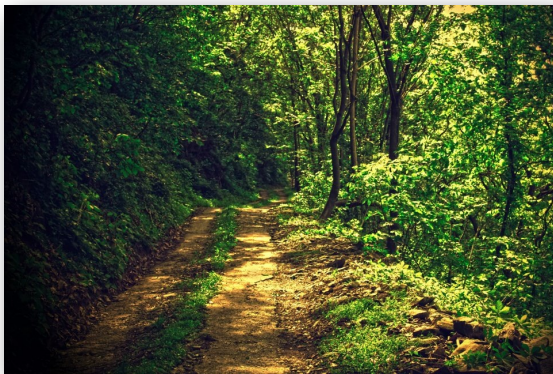
Malachi 1:6

“This is what the Lord of Armies says: A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. So if I am a father, where is my honor? If I am a master, where is my respect?”

Malachi 1:11

“From the nations where the sun rises to the nations where the sun sets, my name will be great. Incense and pure offerings will be offered everywhere in my name, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of Armies.

Words such as “honor” and “purity” speak of Holiness. And, to the last book in the Old Testament, the last book in the New Testament adds: *Let us rejoice, be happy, and give him glory because it's time for the marriage of the lamb. His bride has made herself ready. She has been given the privilege of wearing dazzling, **pure** linen. This fine linen represents the things that God's **holy** people do that have his approval.* Revelation 19:7-8.



What's the connection between Holiness and the greatness of God's Name? When God declares through Malachi that, “my name will be great among the nations,” what does that mean today and how does a life of Holiness connect?