

Malachi

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Malachi using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Malachi—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to Malachi, paying particular attention to the *Historical Background*, *The Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Malachi to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Malachi, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Malachi as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:2.** Why do the people of Judah doubt the love of God? What is the basis of God's election of Israel as a chosen people? Quoting this passage in Rom 9:13 as a witness to God's sovereign freedom, what does Paul conclude from Malachi's words?
2. **1:3.** As a Semitic figure of speech, what does "hated" mean? How is it possible to say that Esau's descendants, the Edomites, were not loved? In this context, to what are love and hate not primarily related? When was Edom laid waste? Where did the Edomites live? Of what is Edom's judgment in history not regarded as a sign? Why does the Catholic Church teach that God predestines no one to hell?
3. **1:7.** About what polluted food is the Lord speaking? What is the Lord's table? Why was it called his "table"? Even so, what was Israel cautioned against thinking? Speaking of the Eucharistic altar as "the table of the Lord", what does Paul's language indicate?
4. **1:8.** What kind of animal does the Mosaic Law forbid to be used for sacrifice? Who would inspect the people's offerings to determine if they were suitable for sacrifice? Since God is worthy of our best gifts and presenting him with defective gifts is an offense to him, what attitude does withholding our best from the Lord reveal? If an earthly ruler is displeased by his subjects offering damaged goods as tribute, what does that say about the Lord?

For application

1. **1:2–3.** Have you ever questioned God's love for you? For example, how do you respond when you notice that a fellow Catholic has more spiritual gifts than you do? Or when your prayers seem to go unanswered? Or when you sin grievously and feel that you are too wicked to be forgiven? How have you resolved such questions?
2. **1:6a.** How have you showed honor to your biological father? Whether your relationship with your father was excellent or difficult, or even nonexistent, how have those circumstances colored your relationship with persons in authority over you? How do they affect your relationship with God the Father?
3. **1:7b.** In 1 Cor 11:17–22, Paul lists several abuses around the table of the Lord and recommends solutions in vv. 27–34. How would you apply these verses to respect for the Eucharist as practiced in your parish? In your family? Within your own heart? Of what do you need to repent, and how can you model true respect?
4. **1:11.** As stated in the note for this verse, the Mass is a sacrifice. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, what is offered? How is it offered? Who participates in this offering? Who benefits by it (cf. CCC 1362–72)?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:4.** What is the Lord's covenant with Levi? What gift does it include? Where else is this arrangement of priestly mediation in worship called a "covenant"?
2. **2:9.** What is partiality? In what activity was it forbidden by the Law of Moses? Who is the perfect standard of impartiality?
3. **2:14.** If marriage is not a civil contract devised by human authorities, what is it? What does it mean for spouses to be bound together by a matrimonial covenant? In the OT, of what covenant is marriage a reflection? In the NT, of what is it a sacramental sign? What does the faithlessness of Israelite men suggest? What does the role of the wife as "your companion" suggest about marriage?
4. **2:16.** What is the literal wording of the translation "I hate divorce"? In Deuteronomic law, when were marriages terminated? What does Malachi assert, however? Although the standard for marriage at creation was lifelong monogamy, when was divorce permitted, and how was it regulated? How did Jesus restore marriage to God's original intent? Why was divorce and remarriage, disallowed under the New Covenant, allowed under the Old Covenant? To what is divorce equivalent?

For application

1. **2:5–7.** Whom would you consider your favorite preacher or religious teacher? What impresses you about him? How does that person's instruction build and confirm your faith? What would you like to imitate as you provide instruction?
2. **2:11.** Read the note for this verse. What advice does Paul give to Christians who are married to unbaptized spouses (1 Cor 7:12–14)? What is religious indifference? Why is religious indifference spiritually dangerous within a marriage between baptized and unbaptized persons? In granting a dispensation for such a marriage, what stipulations might a bishop place on the Catholic partner?
3. **2:15.** What does Malachi state as a reason for marital fidelity? According to the *Catechism*, what is the twofold end of marriage (CCC 2363)? Why can these ends not be separated?
4. **2:17.** Who nowadays says that “everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them”? What possible truth might there be in that assertion? How do you answer a person who says that a loving God would never consign anyone to eternal punishment?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** With whom is “my messenger” identified? What is his mission? Whom does Jesus identify as the messenger of Malachi's prophecy? How did John signal his acceptance of this role? What does Jesus' interpretation of the prophecy indicate? How does the messenger prepare the way? Who is the “Lord whom you seek”?
2. **3:6.** How is the immutability of God manifested? Even when his people are unfaithful, why does God continue to be faithful? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, why is God entirely immutable? Why are the Israelites not consumed as a result?
3. **3:8.** By what means does one rob God? What is a tithe? What did the Mosaic Law decree about one's yearly harvest and livestock, and for what was it used?
4. **3:10.** What is “the storehouse”? Although testing the Lord is generally forbidden, how might it be allowed? What was the challenge put to Malachi's generation? What does obedience to the covenant unleash? What are the “windows of heaven”?

For application

1. **3:2–3.** What might these verses have to do with the doctrine of Purgatory? What is the purpose of Purgatory? What sin might someone be committing who is content with going to Purgatory rather than preparing in advance for heaven?
2. **3:8.** What are the precepts of the Church (CCC 2041–43)? Why does the Church impose these precepts? Although the Church has no positive stipulation about tithing, what does the fifth precept state Catholics are obliged to do?
3. **3:10.** How much of your annual income do you give to the Church? If you do not tithe a full ten percent, what prevents you? How willing would you be to take up Malachi's wager?
4. **3:14–15.** How do the psalms address the objection of Malachi's audience (e.g., Ps 37)? What solution do they recommend for the devout Christian? Why does Jesus say that those who mourn are blessed (Mt 5:4)?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:2.** What does the dawning of the sun of righteousness signal? In Near Eastern iconography, of what is the winged sun a symbol? According to St. Hippolytus quoting this verse, how does Jesus act as that sun? What healing is offered? What does the image of calves leaping from the stall suggest?
2. **4:4.** How had the community in Judah been violating the Torah? With what mountain is Horeb associated?
3. **4:5.** With whom is Elijah the prophet identified? To what Jewish belief did his departure from the world and assumption into heaven give rise? According to Jesus, how is the prophecy of Elijah's coming fulfilled? How did the angel Gabriel announce that Elijah would come?
4. **4:6.** As translated, what does the expression “turn the hearts” denote? But if the preposition “to” is rendered “together with”, then what does the expression indicate? To what “land” does the text refer?

Malachi

For application

1. **4:2.** How might the rising of the “sun of righteousness” refer to the action of the Holy Spirit? When people pray for the Spirit to “set their hearts on fire”, for what are they praying? What changes should they begin to notice in their lives?
2. **4:4.** What does the word “remember” in this verse call on you to do? Can you list the Ten Commandments from memory? Which of these did Jesus remind the rich young man to keep (Mk 10:19)? Why do you think Jesus did not mention the first three commandments?
3. **4:6.** In our culture, what happens when fathers abandon their children and children despise their fathers? How does the turning of the hearts of fathers and children toward each other signify the beginning of a new creation?