

## Ephesians and Malachi: God-Fullness

### Lesson 1: Experiencing the Fullness of God

As we begin the study of both Ephesians and Malachi, our first week will focus on two foundational truths that anchor our study: **God is gracious, and the Bible reveals God**. In these two passages we see God as gracious through His promise to come to His people (Malachi 3.1) and His fulfillment of His promise in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3.19). The Bible reveals God, His character, truth, and Jesus as Messiah. Ask God to reveal Himself as gracious in your study of His word: “Lord, reveal yourself as gracious as I read Your Word.”

**Malachi 3.1** Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

**Ephesians 3.19** ...to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

#### **Diamonds:**

1. In the first sentence of Malachi 3.1, God declares He will “send my messenger” who will “prepare the way before me.” This is the first of two “messengers” in this verse. Just as today we prepare our homes and our hearts to receive guests who have promised to come visit us, kings would send messengers to make preparations for their royal arrival. According to Jesus, this first messenger is John, often known as John the Baptist or Baptizer (Matthew 11.1-10, Luke 7.20-28). Read Mark 1.1-8 and John 1.19-31. What was John’s purpose and what did John do?
  - a. How will you prepare to study God’s word this year? What circumstances make your commitment to this year’s study difficult? What strategies have been effective in the past when your desire to remain committed to Bible study wanes or becomes inconvenient?
2. In the second sentence of Malachi 3.1, God reveals that, after the forerunner (John the Baptist) has prepared the people by announcing Messiah's impending arrival, “the messenger of the covenant” they have been looking for is coming to his temple, and he is coming suddenly. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. However, this second “messenger” is not going to meet their expectations of guaranteed material prosperity and easy living. Rather, Jesus was coming to His temple and to His people to judge their sin and to offer salvation to all people. What do you learn about Jesus from the following verses: Matthew 1.18-23; Luke 19.10?
3. Jesus is the “messenger of the covenant”. A covenant is a formal binding agreement or sealed promise. The Old Testament documents God’s covenant with His people, while the New Testament documents God’s fulfillment of the covenant through the “messenger of the covenant” found in “the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” so that we may “be filled with all the fullness of God” (Malachi 3.1; Ephesians 3.19). According to 2 Corinthians 3.6, how is this new covenant, secured by Jesus, different and/or the same as the old covenant that God made with His people?

- a. Skim Jesus' conversation with His disciples in John chapters 14 and 15. What does Jesus say that helps you better understand any connection between Jesus as the "messenger of the covenant" and the security Jesus provides to live in "the fullness of God" today?

**Deity: Gracious**~To be gracious means 'to favor,' 'to show kindnesses' to an inferior, and 'to be compassionate.' In the Old Testament of the Bible, this adjective applies to God, indicative of His favor and mercy, His long-suffering, and general inclination of favor and kindness (Nehemiah 9.1-38). In the New Testament, God's attribute of "gracious" is used in connection with our salvation (Ephesians 1.7-8).

4. How does God reveal Himself as gracious in Malachi 3.1 and in Ephesians 3.19?

**Diamond Mining (optional)**: God is gracious because He is love (John 15.13; Philippians 2.1, 5-8). His character is to love even if love is not returned to Him (Nehemiah 9.16-20; Romans 5.8). He will give us good things because of His goodness (Matthew 5.45; Nehemiah 9.25). He extends favor, mercy, and kindness to whoever He pleases because this reflects who He is (Ezekiel 36.26-32; Matthew 9.36).

God is gracious because He is our Creator (Genesis 1.27). Even when we don't acknowledge Him or worship Him, He still endows us with good things because He wants to (Exodus 34.6-7). God created mankind as good and He won't turn His back on His creatures or creation. (Isaiah 30.18.)~from <https://www.allaboutgod.com/god-is-gracious.htm>

5. What life circumstances make it difficult for you to believe God is gracious toward you today?

- a. How does a better understanding of God as gracious change the way you think about or handle those difficulties?

**Doctrine: The Bible**~The Bible is a collection of 66 writings by more than 40 human authors. It is God's special and unique written revelation of Himself to human beings and, as such, its words are not only the words of the human authors, but also the very words of God (2 Timothy 3.15-17; 2 Peter 1.20-21).

6. What value does studying the Bible have for you? Why do you study the Bible?

**Diamond Mining (optional):** The Bible is without error (in the original manuscripts) because God cannot err or lie (Numbers 23.19; 2 Samuel 22.31; Proverbs 30.5; John 17.17). Therefore, the Bible never affirms anything that is contrary to fact. It is consistent, meaning it tells one great story, the story of redemption, and it does not contradict itself. God promises to work through the Bible to accomplish His purposes, including the salvation of the lost (Isaiah 55.10-11; 1 Peter 1.23-25; Psalm 119).

Four themes capture the flow of the Bible's message and are an important backdrop for studying God's Word. First, the earth is God's creation. He created the earth in perfection. Second, sin entered through Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's command. This is commonly referred to as "The Fall". Third, God always had a plan to redeem His people and His creation. The life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus accomplished "Redemption". Fourth, God's future promise of "Restoration" or "Consummation" of His Church (God's people) and His creation can be trusted.

7. Regarding the Bible, what are you curious about?

- a. What insight, understanding, renewed hope, and/or answered question do you want to see during this year's study?

**Scripture-Soaked Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, for the Bible. Thank You for providing Your word in the Bible so that we may know Your character and Your promises and live in every circumstance secured in Your love. We praise You for sending Your messenger, John, to prepare the way as evidence of Your steadfast commitment to fulfill *all* of Your promises (Malachi 3.1). We praise You for delighting us in sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3.1). Lord, please keep us steadfast throughout this Bible study, seeking Him so that we may truly know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge and be filled now and forevermore with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3.19)

**Your Personal Scripture-Soaked Prayer:**