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A Message of Hope

Key Theme

- God's plans are perfect.

Key Passages

- Malachi 3:1, 4:5; Luke 1:13–17

Objective

Students will be able to:

- Explain how the prophecy of Malachi ended the Old Testament by pointing forward to Jesus.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by working on a crossword puzzle and reciting the verse to a friend.



Activity 1: A Message of Hope Class Notes

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Students will fill out the A Message of Hope Class Notes as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

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The Lord gave the people a message of hope as the writing of the Old Testament came to its conclusion. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi spoke of a messenger to come who would prepare the way for the Messiah. The messenger did come 400 years later. He was John the Baptist.



Activity 2: Prophecy Pairs

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Students will play a matching game by turning over pairs of cards that match. A matching set includes a prophecy card from Malachi and a matching fulfillment card from Matthew or Luke.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



A MESSAGE OF HOPE CLASS NOTES

- Print one A Message of Hope Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- A Message of Hope Class Notes for each student
- A Message of Hope Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Scripture Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Scripture Sheet for each student
- Quarter 2, Lesson 11 Theme Poster



PROPHECY PAIRS

- Print and cut out one set of 12 Prophecy Pairs Game Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM for every 2 students.

- One set of 12 Prophecy Pairs Game Cards for every two students



Memory Verse

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

As we come to the end of our study of the Old Testament, we can begin looking forward to the events of the New Testament. In one sense, we have been looking forward through the whole study of the Old Testament as we considered the coming of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. The Scarlet Thread poster has been one of the tools we have used to try to understand how God has been orchestrating the events of history so that the Messiah would come into the world at the perfect time. In his first epistle, Peter makes it clear that the prophets of old were studying and prophesying about the coming of Christ.

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:10–12)

One of these prophets was Malachi. In our last lesson, we looked at how Malachi called the people to worship God rightly. God desires the right attitude in worship, rather than merely going through the motions of the religious ceremonies. In this lesson, we will be looking at how the close of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi, points forward to John the Baptist and his announcement of Jesus.

As is the pattern with many prophecies in the Old Testament, Malachi's message contains both statements about the present and the future. In Malachi 3:1 we read, "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me." Who is this messenger Malachi proclaims?

Later, God spoke of sending Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers and children toward one another (Malachi 4:5–6). But Elijah lived 500 years before Malachi, so how can this be? These were some of the mysteries that Peter was talking about in the passage above, and the answer to these questions was revealed a little over 400 years after Malachi recorded them. In fact, we learn about the identity of the Elijah-messenger from the mouths of an angel and Jesus.

About 400 years after Malachi was prophesying, the angel Gabriel visited the priest Zacharias while he was offering incense to God in the Temple. Gabriel told Zacharias that he would have a son whom he was to name John. John would have the spirit and power of Elijah and "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" to prepare a people for the Lord (Luke 1:13–17)—a direct connection to the prophecy of Malachi 4:5–6. We know this child as John the Baptist.

Malachi's role was to remind the Israelites that they were still waiting for the Seed of Abraham who would come to take away their sin. John's role was to announce the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah—the Lamb who would take away the sin of the world.

If there were any doubts about John the Baptist being an Elijah-like messenger spoken of in the prophecies of Malachi, Jesus made the connection clear in Matthew 11:7–15. Explaining the role of John, Jesus quoted Malachi 3:1 and explained the work of John in fulfilling the prophecy. Jesus said, "And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14).

We must note that later, Jesus told His disciples that Elijah was still to come and would restore all things (Matthew 17:10–13). And even John himself denied being Elijah (John 1:19–23). It seems that John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), but did not completely fulfill Malachi's prophecy. Thus, it appears that this prophecy of Malachi is a near/far prophecy, speaking of John the Baptist as the messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord, but also of a yet future coming of Elijah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5).

After Malachi, there was silence—over 400 years of silence. No prophet was on the earth, speaking on behalf of God, until John the Baptist's ministry began. This period of time is often referred to as the 400 silent years because of the lack of any word from God. God was only speaking through what had already been recorded by the previous writers of the Old Testament Scriptures, but those writings contained plenty for the Israelites to consider until the coming of Messiah.

Some have described the Old Testament as a sign with an arrow pointing forward to Jesus. Whether we use Messiah, Christ, or Savior to refer to Jesus, all of these titles point to the deliverance of His people from their sins. The sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses were a shadow of the perfect and complete work of Jesus. The offering of Isaac and the ram that replaced him was a shadow of the sacrifice on the Cross. God brought about this plan according to His perfect timing.

All of these things were a part of God's plan throughout the history of the world He had created. All of history was marching forward to the day when Jesus Christ would come to live a perfect life, die as a sacrifice for sin upon the Cross, and then rise again to life to signify the conquering of sin and death. We can now partake of this perfect plan of redemption through our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The 400 silent years are also referred to as the Intertestamental Period. Although God was not speaking through prophets at this time, there was much going on in the world according to God's sovereign direction. Daniel had seen visions of kingdoms that would rise and fall after the Babylonian Empire began to crumble. Many of these kingdoms and empires rose and fell during these 400 years. From the Persians to the Greeks to the Romans, control over the Middle East changed hands several times during this era.

During this time, Alexander the Great ruled the Greeks (circa 336 BC) followed by four of his generals. After Alexander, the Jews were free to practice their religion under the supervision of the Ptolemaic rulers of Greece. This all changed under the persecution of the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanies, who sacked Jerusalem in 167 BC, setting up a statue of Zeus in the Temple and offering pigs as a sacrifice on the altar. In response, a group of zealous Jews rebelled against the Greeks. This revolt came to be known as the Maccabean revolt under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus. This group retook Jerusalem, though greatly outnumbered, and purified the Temple. The Jewish feast of

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, was celebrated and is commemorated to this day.

Though there was no inspired writing during this period, there are historical records. In the Apocrypha, the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees record the events of the revolt, but this is not Scripture. In fact, at several points in 1 Maccabees, the writer makes it clear that there were no prophets in Israel at the time. While these books can shed some light on select historical events, they are not infallible and offer no light to guide our path as do the true and sure words of Scripture.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord Jesus, I am in awe of you. How you love your people. Such a contrast! The people were sacrificing defiled animals. All the while you were fully committed to laying down your life for them—for me! You generously left them with hope before the 400 years of silence. You promised to come and bring redemption even while they were living in darkness. Messiah, my Savior, my Lord, when I was a sinner, you still loved me. You redeemed my life from the pit. Lord, I pray you will open the eyes of my students to see this wonderful plan of redemption. Show them, Lord, that your ways are better than the ways of the world. Draw them through your Spirit and Word to the truth and abounding hope the Gospel brings.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



A Message of Hope Class Notes

MATERIALS

- A Message of Hope Class Notes for each student
- A Message of Hope Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will complete the class notes today as we study the Bible passages. Do not

work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will learn of the special way God brought the Old Testament to a conclusion with prophecies of hope through an eternal plan.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson 11 Lesson Theme Poster. Last week we talked about the prophet Malachi. We read from the book of Malachi—the very last book of the Old Testament. We read that the people had again turned away from God. They were not worshipping the way God had commanded. They were not offering their best animals in worship but were offering God the animals that were lame, blind, defiled, or sick. Their hearts were not right before

► Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

God. They were not approaching their worship humbly in sorrow for their sins. God used Malachi to warn Israel that the worship they were offering was not acceptable. God would punish them for their sin and disobedience.

But God wanted Malachi to give another message. This was not a message of judgment, but of hope! God's message through Malachi was about a messenger who would come and prepare the way for the Messiah—the Savior—the one who would save the people from their sins. The Jews were ready for this message. They had waited a long time for the Messiah.

Pass out the Scripture Sheets. Today we'll read about that hopeful message. We'll be using these Scripture Sheets to read our Bible verses today. We are going to compare the prophecies the Lord gave Malachi in the Old Testament with the record of what happened in the New Testament. I want you to understand that what Malachi prophesied did come true. We'll start with Malachi 3:1. This is God's message to the people through His prophet, Malachi. It is a message of great hope for the Jews who had waited so long for news of the Messiah! Will someone read Malachi 3:1?
Choose a student to read the verse.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? The Lord was sending someone. Who was it? *A messenger.*
- ? And what was the messenger going to do? *Prepare the way.*
- ? Yes. This messenger was going to prepare the way, but for whom? The verse says "before Me." Who is that "Me" talking about? *Malachi 3:1. God, Jesus.*
- ? Who were the people seeking, according to this verse? *The Lord.*
That's right. God would send a messenger. This messenger would prepare the people for the coming of the Lord—the promised Messiah. They had been waiting a long time for news of the Messiah. And, finally, God sent Malachi to give news of what was to come.
- ? Now look at the class notes. Will someone read #1 for us? How will you answer that? *Assign a reader. Messenger.*
- ? And how about #2. Who had the people been waiting for and seeking? *The Lord.*
- ? And #3? Will someone read that? What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Prepare.*
- ? Malachi refers to the one who is to come as the "Messenger of the covenant." What can you tell me about that—about the Messenger and about the covenant? *Allow discussion.*
- ? Refer to Lesson 3 Lesson Theme Poster. We talked about the covenants several weeks ago. The Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Let's review that a

bit. Who can tell me what the Old Covenant was? You can take a look at this Lesson Theme Poster.

- ? The Old Covenant included daily animal sacrifices by many priests. And the sacrifices never did take away the sins of the people. So what was different about the New Covenant? Again, look at this Lesson Theme Poster. *Allow discussion. Assign someone to read the Lesson 3 Lesson Theme Poster.*

The New Covenant was about Jesus. He put an end to the Old Covenant when He died on the Cross to take away the sins of all who would believe. His perfect sacrifice ended the Old Covenant.

Let's get back to Malachi 3:1. God was going to send a messenger. This messenger was NOT the Messiah, but he would prepare the hearts of the people for the Messiah's coming—for the coming of Jesus Christ! Jesus would be the Messenger of the New Covenant. He would put an end to the Old Covenant the Jews lived under.

- ? Will someone read #4 on your class notes for us? How will you answer that? *Malachi 3:1. Assign a reader. New Covenant.*

God gave more information about the messenger who would come to prepare the way for the Messiah. Let's read Malachi 4:5. *Choose students to read the verse from the Scripture Sheet.*

Malachi 4:5

- ? Who did Malachi say the Lord would send? *Elijah, the prophet.*

Refer to History of Israel Poster. Well, this could be confusing. Elijah lived about 500 years BEFORE Malachi. What did Malachi mean? We can go to the New Testament and get more information. We'll read Luke 1:13–17. *Assign readers.*

Luke 1:13–17

- ? Who was speaking here? *Luke 1:13. An angel.*

- ? The angel was speaking to Zacharias. What was the angel's message? *Luke 1:13. You will have a son.*

- ? And what did the angel tell Zacharias to call his son? *Luke 1:13. John.*

- ? Does anyone know who this was? This person—the messenger—called John? *Allow discussion.*

The messenger, the one called John, was John the Baptist. He came just before Jesus. He told the people that the Messiah—Jesus—would be coming. And they should prepare the way for Him!

- ? Someone read #5 on your class notes. Let's complete that. What is the answer? *Assign a reader. Messiah.*

- ? What would be special about this man named John—the messenger Malachi told about? There are four things in Luke 1:14–16. Who can tell me the first thing mentioned? *Luke 1:14. Many will rejoice at his birth.*

- ? And the second thing? *Luke 1:15. He will be great in the sight of the Lord.*

- ? **And the third thing?** *Luke 1:15. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit.*
- ? **And the fourth?** *Luke 1:16. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.*
- ? **This was a special man—this man named John. Look at your class notes. Someone read #6 for me? How will you answer?** *Luke 1:14. Assign a reader. Rejoice.*
- ? **And someone read #7 please. How will you answer?** *Luke 1:15. Assign a reader. Great.*
- ? **How about #8. Who can read that? How will you answer?** *Luke 1:15. Assign a reader. Filled.*
- ? **And someone read #9. What is the answer?** *Luke 1:16. Assign a reader. Turn.*
- ? **Now look at Luke 1:17. It says something else about John the Baptist. He would come in the spirit and power of someone. Who was that?** *Elijah.*
- ? **Yes. Now where else did we read about Elijah? Look at your Scripture Sheets. Can you find it? Someone read the other verse Elijah is mentioned in.** *Assign a reader. Malachi 4:5.*

Malachi said Elijah, the prophet, would come. And Luke said that John the Baptist would come in the power and spirit of Elijah. They were both saying the same thing. God would send John the Baptist as a prophet who would remind the people of the great prophet Elijah.

Refer to the Quarter 2 Lesson 11, Lesson Theme Poster. We talked about the great prophet Elijah a long time ago! God used him in mighty ways! And the Bible says that John the Baptist would come in the spirit and power of the great prophet Elijah! This was a special messenger with a very special message.

- ? **Look at #10 on your class notes. Can someone read that please? What is the answer?** *Assign a reader. Elijah.*
- ? **Now go back to Malachi 3:1. What did this messenger come to do? Look in Malachi 3:1 and at #3 on your class notes.** *He would prepare the way before the Lord.*
- ? **That's right. And why did John the Baptist come when he came in the spirit and power of Elijah? It is at the very end of Luke 1:17.** *He would make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*
- ? **Now read #11 on your class notes. How will you answer that?** *Assign a reader. Make ready.*

Discover the Truth

Malachi was a prophet of God. His message was a message of hope. The people had waited for word of the Messiah. And God gave them word through Malachi that the Messiah would come.

Do you see? John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi. Malachi said the messenger would be like Elijah—the great prophet. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah!

Malachi said the messenger would come and prepare a people for the coming of the Lord, the Messiah. The messenger, John the Baptist, did that! He called the people to be ready and prepare for the Lord. He was indeed a great man in the sight of the Lord, and many rejoiced at His birth. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he turned many people of Israel back to the Lord their God.



Prophecy Pairs

MATERIALS

- One set of 12 Prophecy Pair Game Cards for every two students

INSTRUCTIONS

Go through all the cards with the class before beginning. Explain they are to match the Old Testament prophecy with the New Testament fulfillment.

Pass out one set of cards to every 2 students.

Review all the cards with the class. We are going to play a matching game. I want you to match the Old Testament prophecy from Malachi to the New Testament fulfillment—from the books of Luke and Matthew. Take turns

trying to match the cards. The one with the most matches wins!

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

What we did today was to confirm Scripture with Scripture. We saw something written in Malachi. We searched the Scriptures in the New Testament and saw that what God promised through Malachi came true in John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. The things that Malachi wrote about did happen! But the people waited over 400 years to witness them.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The book of Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. This was the Word of the Lord to Israel. *Refer to Lesson 11 Lesson Theme Poster.* Malachi had warned the people to turn back to God. God's judgment was coming on them.

But today's lesson was not a message of judgment but a message of hope. This was a message that told the people that the long-awaited Messiah was going to come. The Messiah would restore God's people and bring with Him forgiveness of sins. The Old Testament ended with a promise that Jesus would come.

But when would this happen? Only God knew. And now we know because we are blessed with the entire written Word of God. We know

that the people waited 400 years to hear from God again. Four hundred years of silence and no word from God through any prophets about the coming Messiah.

But when the 400 years were over, the messenger that Malachi spoke of—John the Baptist—did come preaching that the Messiah—the Lamb of God—had arrived.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Today we have reached the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi. What God had to say through Malachi spoke of the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus would come, and before Him a messenger would be sent to announce His coming. In the New Testament we will read about Jesus and how His coming changed the world.

The Bible is one perfect message from God. From Genesis to Revelation, its message is the same. From the beginning, it tells us about God, His people, and His plan to redeem them through the Savior, Jesus Christ.

God brought about this plan of redemption according to His perfect timing. It was always God's plan—throughout the history of the world He had created. All of history before Christ was moving to the day when Jesus would come to live a perfect life, die as a sacrifice for sin upon the Cross, and then rise again to life conquering sin and death. It is this perfect plan of redemption that we can look to and believe in so we can enjoy eternal life with the only perfect one—the only one able to take the punishment for our sins—the precious Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ.

► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Nehemiah 9:6 You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them. And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God who gives us hope in Jesus.
- Thank God for His perfect plan to send Jesus to be our Savior from sin.
- Ask God to help us look to God's plan of redemption and to tell others about it.