



K-Ist Lesson

Introduction

Refer to Lesson 113 Flip Chart. Zerubbabel and the first group of Jews returned to Judah to rebuild the temple and the altar so the people could offer sacrifices to God as he commanded.

Refer to Lesson 115 Flip Chart. When Ezra went back to Jerusalem, he heard that the Jews were marrying foreign people who didn't worship the true God. Ezra helped the Jews understand their sin, and as a consequence, they had to send away their wives and children who worshipped false gods.

Refer to Lessons 116–117 Flip Charts. Then God sent Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah prayed and trusted God. He came up with a plan for the Jews to be ready to fight against enemies as they worked on the wall. As governor of Jerusalem, Nehemiah helped the poor people in the city and gathered everyone to hear Ezra read God's laws.

- ? Today, I have a gift in this bag. Who will come and show us what it is? Choose a student to pull out the used/broken toy or game. Show it to the class and have student return to seat.
- ? How would you feel if someone gave you something like this for your birthday? Allow discussion.
- ? Why would you not be happy with this gift? Allow answers. It isn't new/it's broken. It shows that the person didn't care to spend the time or money to get you something special.

If you brought the optional gift bag with treats: Maybe this gift would be better. Pass out treats to each student.

In today's lesson, we'll see how the Jews were bringing sacrifices to God that were not their best—kind of like giving a bad gift—and God was not pleased. The Jews began to disobey God's commands for worship and sacrifice, so God sent his prophet Malachi with two messages: a warning and a message of hope.

God's Warning About Worship

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. We're going to read from Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament.

- ? Show the Lesson Flip Chart. Malachi was a prophet around the time of Nehemiah. God gave him a message about something that the priests weren't doing right. Take a look at the Flip Chart. Can you tell what they were doing wrong? They were offering imperfect animals.
- ? Why would it be a bad thing to offer an animal like this to God? Allow discussion.

Malachi 1:8

Let's find out what God thought about the way the priests were worshipping him. Listen to Malachi 1:8. Have the student with the Bible bring it up and turn to the sticky note. Read the verse.

- ? When the priests offered blind animals in sacrifice, God said, "Is that not" what? Evil.
- ? What did God call it when the priests offered lame (crippled) or sick sacrifices? Evil.

When the priests gave animals that were sick or blind as offerings, they dishonored God and didn't show respect. God said that it was an evil thing for them to do; their hearts were not right. He commanded that any animal sacrificed in the temple should not be sick, blind, or weak. It was supposed to be the BEST animal they had since they were offering it to a holy God to cover their sins.

The priests were setting a bad example for the people. Their job was to teach the people how to obey God and to show them a good example of worshipping him. Instead, they were causing the people to disobey and sin against the Lord.

God expected his people to treat him with the right heart attitude of honor and respect. The Bible tells us that God was not pleased with the priests or with their sacrifices of sick animals.

Through Malachi's message, God told the priests that if they would not listen and begin to honor him the right way, their offerings would bring a curse instead of a blessing.

Psalm 51:17

How could the people make this right? What kind of attitude does please God? Psalm 51:17 tells us the answer. Read the verse.

- ? What kind of sacrifices does God want us to give? What kind of spirit? A broken spirit.
- ? What kind of heart? A broken and contrite heart.

A broken and contrite heart is one that is truly sorry for sin and wants to obey God. We need to be careful about what kind of attitude we have in our hearts. God wants us to be obedient with an attitude of worship that shows we love and honor him and are sorry when we do wrong.

We don't offer animals to God anymore, but we worship him in other ways. We can praise God, pray to him, and obey him by doing good things because we love him. We need to be careful, though. It can be easy to say we're doing things to worship God but deep inside, we may really just want others to think we're great because of what we do. Is that our best worship? That's like offering a sheep with a broken leg!

Sometimes, we may worship only halfway. For instance, when we pray, do we think about the words we're saying, or do we think about something else—like going out for ice cream after church? That certainly is not our best, is it? That's kind of like giving a sick goat that lost all its hair! We must remember to offer our best worship from our hearts because God deserves it.

God's Promise of Hope

Refer to the Lesson Flip Chart. God had another message for Malachi to give the people. But this was not a message of warning—it was a message of hope! Malachi said that a special messenger would come to prepare the way for the Messiah.

The Messiah was the anointed one, chosen to be the Savior who would save people from their sins. The Jews were ready for this message. They had waited a long time for the Messiah to come.

- ? Who is the Messiah, the one who came to save sinners? Jesus.

That's right. Malachi wrote about Jesus 400 years before he was born! And he wrote that a messenger would come before the Messiah to tell the people how to get their hearts ready for him.

- ? Can you guess who the messenger was that came before Jesus? Allow guesses.

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Let's find out who this messenger was. We're going to jump ahead 400 years to the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament. In the first chapter of Luke, he tells about a priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. They were both getting old and had no children yet, so they were praying that God would give them a child.

Luke 1:13 & 16

As Zechariah went into the temple one day, he was surprised when an angel came and spoke to him. Listen to what the angel said. Read Luke 1:13.

- ? What did the angel say they would have? A son.
- ? What were they supposed to name their son? John.

Refer to the Lesson Flip Chart. Zechariah and Elizabeth's son was John the Baptist. He came just before Jesus and told the people that the Messiah—Jesus—would be coming.

But the angel said more. Listen to verse 16. Read the verse.

- ? What would John do? He would turn many of the children of Israel, the Jews, to whom? To the Lord their God.

Malachi said a messenger would tell the people about the Messiah so that they would be ready to turn to the Lord and believe in him when he came. John the Baptist did that, just as Malachi said.

Refer to the Lesson Flip Chart. God gave Malachi two messages for the Jews. First, he warned the priests to stop disobeying God and to worship him with the right heart attitude. And second, he delivered a message of hope to remind the people that a messenger would come to make things ready for the Messiah, who would save sinners.



The **PRIESTS** dishonored God because their hearts were not right.



JOHN told the people how to get their hearts ready for the Messiah.



Malachi wrote a message of warning and of hope.