

Prepare

A Vintage Holiday series through the Book of Malachi

vGroup
Study



Prepare: vGroup Study

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Written by Aubrey Ziegler.

Design, layout, and illustrations by Christopher Wilson.

RIGHT MESSENGER

Christmas time is here. Every year people all over the world begin preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Trees are cut, lights are hung, red and green cover our homes and businesses. People flock to stores to buy the perfect gifts for everyone they hold dear. We plan trips and meals and church services. There is a lot to be done before December 25th. However, there are always some people who put off their preparation, waiting until the last minute to plan menus, buy tickets, or order presents. Nearly every online store lists a deadline—order by this date for a pre-Christmas arrival. And yet thousands of gifts still don't make it under the tree for Christmas morning. The buyers waited too long to buy and were unprepared for Christmas Day.

At this time in history, we are not only waiting for Christmas to come around every year so that we can reflect on the first coming of the Savior. We are waiting at all times for Jesus' second coming, a day that gets closer with every new morning. If we aren't careful, we too will be unprepared like the late shoppers and planners. It is so important that we not wait to follow and obey God with our full hearts and devotion. We may not know when Jesus is coming again, but one thing is for certain: he will come. Therefore, as God's people, we must not wait to prepare for him. Today and everyday is the time to prepare ourselves to see Jesus come again in victory.

- Have you ever found yourself unprepared for something?

- What kept you from preparing?

- Do you feel prepared for the second coming of Christ? Why or why not?

4"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.

Malachi 4:4

- What does Malachi exhort the people to do?

As we've already seen throughout the book of Malachi, it is extremely important for the people to love God and to obey his commandments. As Pastor Dustin reminded us during the sermon, Malachi has been about covenant faithfulness. As we've learned already, God always remained faithful to Israel, but the people of Israel had failed to do so to him in

return. Throughout Malachi, two key components of the Law are emphasized—loving God and loving people.

³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 5:3

- What is the connection between love of God and obedience?

- What does it mean that his commandments are not burdensome?

⁵“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Malachi 4:5–6

- Who would God send before the day of the Lord?

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.

Malachi 3:1

- What was God’s messenger to do?

- What would happen next?

¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”*

¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matthew 11:10–11

- According to Jesus, who was the messenger?

John the Baptist came as Elijah to prepare the way for Jesus, the promised one who would establish a new covenant with the people. Elijah was to prepare the people for the coming of Christ. And Jesus did come, despite the silence of God for 400 years. The hope of the people was restored.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:16–17

- Why did Jesus come?

Jesus first came to earth as a meek baby, fully God and fully human. Unlike every other human to ever live, he never once sinned against God. He was condemned by men and nailed to the cross on Calvary. There he showed the ultimate example of love—the perfect Christ suffered and died in our place, bearing the wrath of God that was intended for us. He humbly substituted himself for us, exchanging our sin for his perfect righteousness. Jesus proved his victory and power over death in his resurrection, assuring that we may be saved by repenting and believing in him and following him for the rest of our days. His Spirit empowers us to obey God.

- So if the Holy Spirit empowers us to obey God, why should we?

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a

pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

- What do we learn about the day of the Lord from this passage?

- What are we to do?

Jesus came before and he is coming back. As children of light, we are not destined for wrath but for salvation. No one knows the day or the hour that the Lord will return. We must always be ready for him, and our love for him should drive our obedience to him. Therefore, we must encourage one another and build one another up.

Malachi has exhorted the people throughout his book to remember the Law and to love God and obey him. They were a people awaiting the coming of the Messiah, and we too are a waiting people. God fulfilled his promises to send Jesus before, and he will do so again. Jesus won our redemption at his first coming, and he will return glorified and victorious, putting an end to sin, death, and Satan, and he will reign for all of eternity.

- Do people around you know that you love God?

- What is the evidence of your love for God?

- Why should we obey God with urgency?

- How can we encourage others as they try to obey God?

- What are some things in your life you need to repent of and how can you take steps towards obedience in the future?