

- Last week we looked the prophet Micah and noted that it was written about the same time as Isaiah. (Micah 1:1-16) Micah confronts injustice and reminds Israel that God has a history of confronting injustice in his people and indeed among the nations he rescued them from (Micah 2-6:5) Micah famously explains what God requires of us – to do justice and love mercy. (Micah 6:6-8) Micah says God will punish them again for allowing injustice to become so rampant, but that one day he will create a way to them to permanently reject this injustice. (Micah 6:9 – 7:20)
In our history lesson, we looked at how Herod the Great became the puppet ruler of Israel on Rome’s behalf. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great)
- This week we will look at the short book of the Bible we call Malachi and talk about how the Jews in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem haven’t really gotten any better than they were before the exile and how God will again ultimately promise a chance for them to redeem themselves as a people. In our history lesson, we will look at the rise of the people known as the Samaritans and their belief system.
- The book we call Malachi is probably written after Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel reconstructed Jerusalem and records God’s accusations against the people who are living in the rebuilt city, along with their responses, and God’s responses to their responses. The word Malachi means something like “messenger of God.” There may have been a person called Malachi, or the book may have been written by Nehemiah, Ezra, or even Zerubbabel. We really aren’t sure, and it doesn’t really matter. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malachi>)
- Malachi opens by pointing out how God loves Israel, and how He has for a long time – as evidence the book of Malachi notes that God even established them. (Malachi 1:1-5)
- The book of Malachi first accuses Israel of defiling God at the altar to which Israel says “how did we do that?” (Malachi 1:6), and the book of Malachi responds by noting that the Israelites commonly offer their inferior animals, and even the priests are okay with this fact. (Malachi 1:7-14).
- The book of Malachi indicates the priests are to be disciplined. (Malachi 2:1-9).
- Leaders are to be held to a higher standard, because they can lead people astray so they are responsible not just for themselves. (James 3:1)
- The men of Israel were also divorcing their wives and wrecking their families to intermarry Canaanite women. God says they will be disciplined for this (Malachi 2:10 – 3:7)
- God accuse the Israelites of robbing him. They say “how have we robbed you?” God answers that they are not giving proper tithes (one tenth, read about first in Genesis 14-18-20 commanded in Deuteronomy 14:22-27) (Malachi 3:8-15)
- Tithing is no longer commanded. Instead we give back to God (all things belong to God anyway) as an act of worship. It is more important the attitude with which we give than how much. (2 Corinthians 9:7) Christ will condemn those who do not give with this attitude, no matter how religious they are. (Matthew 23:23) (Luke 21:1-4)
- The book of Malachi closes with a reminder that all will be recorded (written and remembered) and the “Day of the Lord” will come again. (Malachi 3:16 – 4:6).

- Turning our attention to history, let's talk a little about the Samaritans, what they believed, and how they were perceived.
- Samaria was a region in Northern Israel where the King of Assyria settled folks after the exile of the northern kingdom, and sent a prophet there to teach them the ways of the Israelites after they were attacked by lions sent by God. They still implicitly rejected God because they kept other gods too. (2 Kings 17:24-41)
- Some Israelites also inhabited that land, such that the Samaritans developed a spurious claim to be descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. There was a mountain called Mt. Moriah where God established the original covenant with Abraham. Samaritans believe that place is Mt. Gerizim in the north, but mainstream Judaism (and all the kings and prophets) point to the Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (today known as the "Temple Mount") as the real Mt. Moriah. The heart of this controversy continues today.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritans>
- The controversy itself is one-sided in that the Jews were right about this. They were always right and they knew it, so they tended to look down on Samaritans as ignorant for clinging to their false beliefs. That's why Jesus picked a Samaritan as the helper for the man in the parable he told, where the two Jewish leaders at first refused to help the man (Luke 10:25-37) We still use the phrase "Good Samaritan" today.
- The "controversy" over which mountain to use for worship was also why Jesus told the Samaritan women at a well in the Mount Gerizim vicinity that the day was coming when worship would not take place at that Mountain OR the Mountain in Jerusalem. (John 4:7-26) Jesus is obviously not just not taking sides here, he is pointing out that there will not be a physical place appropriate for worship, but also that people will worship God "in spirit and in truth."

Questions:

1. Who wrote the book of Malachi?
2. When was the book of Malachi written?
3. What does the book of Malachi record?
4. How does the book of Malachi note God's love for Israel?
5. What is the first accusation made the book of Malachi? What evidence is there?
6. Why should priests be disciplined?
7. What were the men of Israel doing that were so bad?
8. What is tithing and where do we read about it? Is it applicable today?
9. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. How does it close?
10. Who were the Samaritans and where did they come from?
11. Why did Jesus pick a Samaritan to illustrate helping a neighbor?
12. Why did Jesus say that the day is coming when worship on either mountain would not happen?