



STORY 52

The Great and Awesome Day of the Lord

MALACHI 3-4

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Malachi 3-4.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

1
Read

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

2
Teach

We are at the end of the Old Testament! Soon our adventure in the New Testament begins. What are some of your favorite stories so far? Maybe when God brought sad Joseph out of prison and into power over Egypt? Or when God used the birth of a baby to turn Bitter Naomi into Blessed Naomi? Or when God protected Daniel while he was in the lions' den? All these stories tell us more about the Snake Crusher whom God would use to deliver us. He was the promised offspring of Abraham. He was the goat taken outside the camp. He was the Passover Lamb. He was the tabernacle that made a way for sinful people to be with a holy God. The Snake Crusher's entrance is getting closer and closer,

clearer and clearer. But before he comes, we have one more prophet's voice to hear. What will this last prophet say?

TELL THE STORY

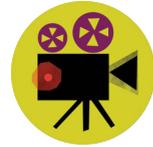
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
Because of our
Savior, all who
turn to God have
a great future!

The last prophet's name is Malachi. And he had some pretty hard things to say. Because even after all the other prophets, even after the exile and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, God's people were still turning their backs on God. They were not bringing the right animals into the temple for sacrifice (and the priests didn't care about it). Men were divorcing their wives, marrying women who worshiped pagan gods, and then worshiping those gods too. They stole from God (by not giving him their tithe), treated the poor poorly, and refused to care for those in need (widows, orphans, and refugees). It was like nothing had changed in a hundred years! So Malachi warned that God's day of judgment was coming. On that day, Malachi said, the wicked would be burned and become like ashes in a fireplace: "utter destruction" (Mal. 4:6). Sounds like the Snake Crusher will be crushing more than just Satan.

But the Snake Crusher is also a rescuer. And Malachi didn't just have hard things to say. He also spoke about how the day of judgment would also be a day of salvation for those who trust in the Lord. He uses beautiful poetry to express this good news: "The sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall" (4:2). We should be like the righteous. They not only personally trusted in the Lord and obeyed his com-

mands but also got together regularly to read the Bible and to remember how great God is. Blessings always follow those who follow the Lord!

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher. {5 minutes}

Through Malachi, God said, “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me” (3:1). The messenger will prepare the way for the day of God’s returning and living with his people. The New Testament tells us that John the Baptist is this messenger who prepared the way for the Lord Jesus, Immanuel (God with us). Jesus is the good news God’s people have been promised since the very beginning! He is the Snake Crusher that was promised to Eve. He is Abraham’s offspring bringing a blessing to all nations. He is the Branch from David’s family tree, who rules as the forever King of the forever kingdom. Jesus is the Passover Lamb, the goat taken outside the camp, and the one who delivered from the fiery furnace.

God’s people didn’t know exactly what to look for when God would return to live with his people. But if they paid attention to the Bible, they knew that their coming Savior would be a *teacher* greater than Moses, a *priest* purer than Aaron, and a *king* wiser than Solomon. They knew he would be born of a virgin, preach good news to the poor, heal the sick, and then suffer and die for his people’s sins. They also knew he would rise from the dead and someday return to judge and save. The Bible was full of pictures to show them what their coming Savior was like. And soon he would appear, not as a mighty king, but as a helpless baby.

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** Have you ever been punished for doing something wrong—and then done it again? Why do you think we do that? After God’s people returned from exile, did they fully obey God?

TAKEAWAY: Even after the judgment of exile, God’s people did not obey God’s word.

3

Engage

Memory Verse
For you who
fear my name,
the sun of
righteousness
shall rise with
healing in its
wings.

MALACHI 4:2

2. QUESTION: Since God’s people continued to disobey God, what did Malachi say would happen? What would happen if they turned back to God?

TAKEAWAY: Malachi warned that the day of the Lord will mean judgment for those who don’t return to God—and salvation for those who do.

3. QUESTION: What were some things we’ve seen in the Biggest Story so far that pointed to Jesus as the coming Savior?

TAKEAWAY: The whole Old Testament gives us pictures to point us to Jesus, the promised Savior.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Red Light, Green Light

Supply List: none

Line children up on one side of the room. Choose someone to be “It” and have him or her stand at the opposite end of the room and call out “Red Light” or “Green Light.” On Green Light, the players move forward. On Red Light, the players freeze. Any child who “It” sees move returns to the starting line. The winner is the one who reaches the opposite side of the room first. Tell the child who is “It” to take long pauses after calling “Red Light” to remind us that the Israelites waited a long time for the Messiah’s coming.

Option 2: Watch for Jesus

Supply List: construction paper

Before Class: Write the name Jesus on a piece of construction paper.

Have children stand in a circle. Instruct them to walk clockwise while keeping an eye on the leader. When the leader holds up the *Jesus* paper, they must freeze. If a child moves when the *Jesus* paper is in the air, he or she is out. Play continues until one child remains.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Smile Game

Supply List: chairs

Before Class: Set chairs in a circle (one per child).

Have children sit in chairs. Choose someone to be “It.” Have him or her walk around the circle, stop in front of a seated child, and say, “If you love Jesus, please, please smile,” and do something silly to get the child to smile (without touching the child). Without smiling or laughing, the seated child should reply, “I really love Jesus, but I just can’t smile.” If the seated child smiles, he or she becomes “It.” If not, the child who is “It” must try to make someone else smile.

Option 2: Unscramble Relay

Supply List: plastic cups, permanent marker

Before Class: Write one letter per cup to spell the names Messiah, Savior, and Immanuel (one set per team). Scramble each set of cups and stack them on the opposite side of the room (one stack per team).

Divide children into teams. On “Go” the first person on each team crawls “leaping like calves from the stall” (Mal. 4:2) by moving as fast as he or she can on all fours to the stack of cups. The child then picks up two cups and runs back to the team (on two feet). The next person repeats the process and the team continues until all cups have been collected. To finish the race, the team must unscramble the cups and spell *Messiah, Savior, and Immanuel*. The first team to finish wins.

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Watch for Jesus Craft

Supply List: construction paper (white, black, blue, green, brown), yarn, glue, scissors, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 1-inch pieces of yarn (twelve to fourteen per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of white paper, black paper, and paper that matches his or her eye color. Set yarn pieces, glue, scissors, and markers on tables. Have children draw two large oval shapes (eyes) on the white paper, two circles on the eye-colored paper, and two smaller circles on the black paper. Instruct the children to cut out the circles and to glue them to the ovals (colored circle first, then black). Glue on yarn pieces for eyelashes. Have children write “Watch for Jesus” on the construction paper.

Option 2: Weaving Placemat

Supply List: construction paper, scissors, rulers, glue sticks, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut various colors of construction paper into 1-inch strips. Make a sample craft.

Set glue sticks and paper strips on tables. Give each child a piece of construction paper, and instruct the children to fold it lengthwise. Have them draw a line down the length of the paper 1 inch from the open edge. Next, draw lines from the folded edge to the line they just drew spaced 1 inch apart. Cut along these lines. Open the paper. Use the precut strips of paper to weave through the slits in the base paper by going over and under. For subsequent rows, alternate the weaving pattern, going under the strips that you had gone over on the last strip. When the placemat is filled, cut the ends of the strips and glue them to the base paper to secure. Write the phrase “Jesus is our hope” on the placemat.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Names of Jesus Mobile

Supply List: large construction paper, scissors, yarn, hole punches, staplers, markers

Before Class: Gather supplies. Cut 3-inch strips lengthwise from 11" x 18" construction paper (one per child). Cut a variety of lengths of yarn (ranging from 12 to 16 inches). Make a sample craft.

Brainstorm different names of Jesus with the children and display them. Set paper strips, yarn pieces, construction paper, scissors, hole punches, staplers, and markers on tables. Have children write “Jesus Name above All Names” on a paper strip and staple the ends together to form a circle. Have the children write at least five different names of Jesus on construction paper, then cut around each name to form different shapes. Have children punch holes around the paper circle and in the top of each name/shape. Create a mobile by threading yarn through the holes to attach shapes to the circle. Add a piece of yarn to the top for hanging.

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Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.