

Malachi to Revelation

A 15-minute class summary — Pleasant Springs Church, Discipleship School

Full twelve-lesson series: ps-church.com/discipleship/malachi-to-revelation

Before you start — notes for the teacher (*not read aloud*)

Timing. About **15 minutes**. The bracketed times are cumulative. The **[8:00]** **silent years section is the designated cut** if you are short. **Never cut the last two sections.**

The one idea this lesson carries. The whole twelve-lesson series follows a single question: **by whose authority, and through which mediator, does a holy God come to be present with sinful people?** If the class leaves able to state that question, the lesson has worked. Everything else is illustration.

 **The trap to avoid.** This material makes it easy to sneer at Aaron and Jeroboam. **Don't.** The sin is not stupidity — it is *improvising access to God on your own terms*, which is a very modern habit wearing ancient clothes. Land it on us, not on them.

Scripture. All English, ESV. The Septuagint columns are on the website.

Time of day. Deliberately time-neutral.

THE SCRIPT

[0:00] Open — the question the whole Bible keeps answering

Here is a sentence that will reorganise a lot of the Bible for you.

Every story in Scripture eventually answers the same question: by whose authority, and through which mediator, does a holy God come

to be present with sinful people?

That is the thread this series follows — twelve lessons, from a golden calf to a Lamb on a throne. Fifteen minutes to walk the whole thing.

And it starts with something people get wrong about the golden calf.

[1:15] Aaron was not inventing a new god

Ask most Christians what Aaron did at Sinai and they will say: he made an idol of a different god.

Read it again.

Exodus 32:4–5 (ESV) — "...and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!' When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow shall be **a feast to the LORD.**'"

⚠️ **A feast to the LORD.** Aaron is not naming a rival deity. He is throwing a festival for **Yahweh** — the God who just brought them out of Egypt — and building him a **pedestal Yahweh never authorised.**

That is the sin. Not worshipping the wrong god. **Worshipping the right God in a way he did not ask for, through a mediator he did not appoint.**

Hold that, because it happens again.

[3:00] And then it happens again, on purpose

Five hundred years later the kingdom splits, and Jeroboam has a political problem: his people keep going south to Jerusalem to worship.

1 Kings 12:28 (ESV) — "So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, 'You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.'"

⚠️ **Those are Aaron's words.** Almost syllable for syllable. The writer of Kings expects you to hear the echo.

Jeroboam builds an unauthorised pedestal, installs a **parallel priesthood**, and invents **a feast day of his own choosing**. And the text is blunt about what it cost:

1 Kings 12:30 (ESV) — "Then this thing became a sin..."

The northern kingdom never recovered from it. Every later king is measured against it.

Aaron improvised under pressure. Jeroboam improvised on purpose. Same calf, different motive.

[5:00] Malachi: the priesthood diagnosed

Now run forward a thousand years from Sinai. The exile is over, the temple is rebuilt, the priesthood is functioning. And God's last prophet before four centuries of silence tells them the worship has gone the same way:

Malachi 1:6–8 (ESV) — "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor?... By offering polluted food upon my altar... When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor?"

⚠️ **Hear the argument.** Not *you are worshipping another god*. **You would not treat your governor like this.** The offering is technically correct and inwardly contemptuous.

Aaron got it wrong under pressure. Jeroboam got it wrong on purpose. The post-exilic priesthood got it wrong by neglect — and neglect is the one most available to us.

And then Malachi promises the fix:

Malachi 3:1 (ESV) — "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."

[8:00] Four hundred years of silence — (cut this first if short on time)

Then nothing. No prophet for roughly four centuries.

⚠ But "silent" does not mean "empty." In those years the Jewish scriptures were translated into **Greek** — the Septuagint — which meant that when the apostles went out into the Roman world, **the Old Testament was already waiting for them in the language everybody read.**

The silence was preparation. God was not absent; he was setting the table.

[9:15] The Mediator arrives

Mark opens his Gospel by reaching straight back to Malachi's promise:

Mark 1:2–3 (ESV) — "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

The messenger has come. And behind him, the one Malachi said would come suddenly to his temple:

John 1:14 (ESV) — "And the Word became flesh and **dwelt** among us..."

That word is the **tabernacle** word — *he pitched his tent among us*. The presence that filled the tent at Sinai and the temple in Jerusalem **is now standing in the room, in a body**.

Nobody had to build this pedestal. God supplied it himself. That is the whole answer to the question we started with.

[11:00] The curtain, and what it meant

And then the moment the series is built around:

Matthew 27:50–51 (ESV) — "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, **from top to bottom...**"

⚠ **From top to bottom.** Not from the bottom up, as if somebody forced their way in. **It is torn from above.** God opens it from his side.

The curtain existed to say *this far and no further*. When it tears, the message is the reverse.

Hebrews 10:19–22 (ESV) — "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV) — "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

One mediator. Appointed, not improvised. That sentence is the end of the argument that started with a golden calf.

And what follows at Pentecost is not the abolition of priesthood but its **reconstitution** — this time including you:

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) — "But you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession..."

[13:15] Where it lands

So where does a story about pedestals and priesthods end?

Revelation 21:22 (ESV) — "And I saw **no temple** in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

⚠️ **No temple.** After Sinai, after Solomon, after the rebuilt temple, after Herod's — the last picture of the city has **no building for meeting God in**, because the meeting is no longer mediated by a place. **The Lamb is the temple.**

Aaron built a pedestal God had not asked for. **God has ended by making himself the meeting place.**

[14:00] Close — and the part that lands on us

Here is why this is not just an interesting thread.

The calf is not a museum piece. Every one of us is capable of doing what Aaron did — worshipping the true God on terms we invented, through a mediator we appointed. It looks like: a faith built on an experience rather than on Christ; a church shaped by what works rather than by what God asked for; a private religion that never has to submit to anything.

⚠️ **None of those are the wrong God. They are the right God, approached wrongly.** That is exactly Aaron's sin, and it is much easier to commit than idolatry.

And the answer is not that you try harder to approach correctly. **The answer is that the curtain is already torn, from the top, and there is one Mediator who did the opening.** You do not have to build anything. **You have to come through him.**

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) — "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

With confidence. That is the word — for people who once could not go past a curtain.

Let's pray.

Father, we confess how easily we build our own pedestals and call the festival yours. Thank you that you did not leave us to improvise — that you sent the Messenger of the covenant, that you tore the curtain from your side, and that there is one Mediator and he is enough. Teach us to come the way you opened rather than the way we prefer, and make us a royal priesthood in the place where you have put us. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you only remember three things

1. **Aaron was not worshipping a different god** — he called it "a feast to the LORD." The sin is improvising access to the true God. Jeroboam repeated it on purpose; the post-exilic priests repeated it by neglect.
 2. **The curtain tore from top to bottom** — opened from God's side, not forced from ours.
 3. **The city has no temple.** The question "through which mediator?" is answered by a person, and the last picture is God himself as the meeting place.
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The full series — ps-church.com/discipleship/malachi-to-revelation

Twelve lessons following one thread: **authorised mediation** — from Jeroboam's calves, through Malachi, the four hundred years, John the Baptist, Jesus, the cross, Pentecost, Hebrews, and the Lamb on the throne.

The arc at a glance: Aaron's unauthorised pedestal · Jeroboam repeats it · Malachi diagnoses the priesthood · the silent years (and the Septuagint prepared) · John the returned Elijah · Jesus the true Tabernacle · the torn veil · Pentecost and the royal priesthood · Hebrews on mediation · Revelation's Lamb who is the temple.

Discussion starters — if you have time after

1. Aaron called it "a feast to the LORD." Where have you seen the right God approached on invented terms — and have you done it?
2. Which of the three failures is nearest to you: improvising under **pressure**, on **purpose**, or by **neglect**?

3. Four silent centuries turned out to be preparation. Does that change how you read a long silence in your own life?
 4. The curtain tore **from the top**. Why does the direction matter?
 5. "No temple in the city." What is lost, and what is gained, when the meeting place is a person?
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