

Malachi

MEANING “My Messenger”

AUTHOR: Malachi

TIME WRITTEN: Possibly between 432 and 425 B.C.

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 39th Book in the Bible
- 39th and last book in the Old Testament
- 17th of 17 books of Prophecy
- 12th and last of 12 Minor Prophet Books
- 38 have preceded it. 27 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 4

VERSES: 55

WORDS: 1,782

KEY WORD: An Appeal to Backsliders

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Malachi 2:17 - 3:1** - “You have wearied the LORD with your words; yet you say, “In what way have we wearied Him?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”
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, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.”
2. **Malachi 4:5-6** - “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

KEY CHAPTER: Malachi 3

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MALACHI:

1. The only Old Testament mention of Malachi is in Malachi 1:1.
2. Malachi, a prophet in the days of Nehemiah, directs his message of judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security in their privileged relationship with God.
 - a. Using the question-and-answer method, Malachi probes deeply into their problems of:
 1. Hypocrisy
 2. Infidelity
 3. Mixed marriages
 4. Divorce
 5. False worship
 6. Arrogance
 - b. So sinful has the nation become that God’s words to the people no longer have any impact.
 - c. For our hundred years after Malachi’s ringing condemnations, God remains silent. Only with the coming of John the Baptist (3:1) does God again communicate to His people through a prophet’s voice.
3. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. to rebuild the city walls some thirteen year after Ezra’s return and reforms in 457 B.C.

- a. Nehemiah returned to Persia in 432 B.C., but came back to Palestine about 425 B.C. and dealt with the sins described in the book of Malachi.
- b. It is therefore likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah was absent between 432 B.C. and 425 B.C. almost a century after Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy (520 B.C.)
4. The Book of Malachi is a prelude to the four hundred years of prophetic silence broken finally by the words of the next prophet, John the Baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" **John 1:29**.
5. In Malachi 3:1, Malachi predicted the coming of the messenger who will clear the way before the Lord. John the Baptist fulfilled that prophecy.
 - a. **Malachi 3:1** - "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, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts."
 - b. Four hundred years later when "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord" (**Matthew 3:3**) was heard, breaking the long silence of prophetic revelation.

SUMMARY OF MALACHI

INTRODUCTION:

- A. The people of Israel became disillusioned.
 1. They began to question God's providence as their faith imperceptibly degenerates into cynicism.
 2. Internally they wonder whether it is worth serving God after all.
 3. Externally, these attitudes surface in:
 - a. Mechanical observances
 - b. Empty ritual
 - c. Cheating on tithes and offerings
 - d. Crass indifference to God's moral and ceremonial law.
 4. Their priests are corrupt and their practices wicked, but they are so spiritually insensitive that they wonder why they are not being blessed by God.
- B. Using a probing series of questions and answers, God seeks to pierce their hearts of stone. In each case the divine accusations are denied.
 1. How has God loved us? (1:2-5)
 2. How have we [priests] despised God's name? (1:6 - 2:9]
 3. How have we [people] profaned the covenant? (2:10-16)
 4. How have we wearied God? (2:7 - 3:6)
 5. How have we robbed God? (3:7-12)
 6. How have we spoken against God? (3:12-15)
- C. In effect the people sneer, "Oh come on now; it's not that bad!"
 1. As their perception of God grows dim, the resulting materialism and externalism become settled characteristics that later grip the religious parties of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
 2. In spite of all of this, God still loves His people and once again extends His grace to any who will humbly turn to Him.
- D. There are two major divisions in the book:
 1. The Privilege of the Nation. (1:1-5)

2. The Pollution of the Nation. (1:6 - 3:15)
3. The Promise of the Nation. (3:16 - 4:6)

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE NATION. (1:1-5)

- A. The Israelites blinded themselves to God's love for them.
 1. Wallowing in the problems of the present, they are forgetful of God's works for them in the past.
 2. God gives them a reminder of the fates of Esau (Edom) and Jacob (Israel).

THE POLLUTION OF THE NATION. (1:6 - 3:15)

- A. The priests have lost all respect for God's name and in their greed offer only deceased and imperfect animals on the altar.
 1. They have more respect for the Persian governor than they do for the living God.
 2. Moreover, God is withholding His blessings from them because of:
 - a. Their disobedience to God's covenant.
 - b. Their insincere teaching.
- B. There are many problems with and among the people.
 1. The people are indicted for their treachery in divorcing the wives of their youth in order to marry foreign women. (2:10-16)
 2. In response to their questioning the justice of God, they receive a promise of the Messiah's coming as well as a warning of the judgment that He will bring. (2:17 - 3:6)
 3. The people have robbed God of the tithes and offerings due Him, but God is ready to bless them with abundance if they will put Him first. (3:7-12)
 4. The final problem is the arrogant challenge to the character of God (3:13-15), and this challenge is answered in the remainder of the book.

THE PROMISE OF THE NATION. (3:16 - 4:6)

- A. The Lord assures His people that a time is coming when the wicked will be judged and those who fear Him will be blessed.
- B. The day of the Lord will reveal that it is not "useless to serve God" (3:14).
- C. Malachi ends on the bitter word "curse." (The last word in the Old Testament)
 1. Although the people are finally cured of idolatry, there is little spiritual progress in Israel's history.
 2. Sin abounds, and the need for the coming Messiah is greater than ever.