

Books of The Bible

A Survey of Malachi

Introduction

Malachi is the record of a series of statements or indictments against the populace and priests of Israel, their reaction to them, and God's response.



God had pledged Israel to be blessed if they obeyed (Deut. 28:1-14), but instead of blessing and priority of place, they were a tiny minority having lost all hope, they were on a downward slope. God's love was questioned and a cynical attitude toward God was fostered. What was the value of offering perfect sacrifices, why tithing, and what profit was there in keeping God's law to Moses? However, what they did not do was look at themselves in self-examination and question why God's hand was upon them in discipline? Their defense was they had done nothing wrong! In Malachi God draws back the curtain and with pointed questions He pierces their attitudes. There is a stark reminder that if they do not obey and glorify God, others will take their place (ch. 1:11, God will use the Gentiles to glorify His Name when Israel fails). However, such will be temporary for blessing will again be placed on Israel (ch. 3:16; 4:2-3).

In Genesis there is the first prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Lord, and in Malachi the last (Gen. 3:15, compare Gal. 3:16; Mal. 3:1).

The Lord's First Coming	The Lord's Second Coming
Historical (Matt. 2:1; Lk. 1:31; 2:1-11)	Future (Mal. 3:2; 4:1-3)
As the Servant (Matt. 12:18)	As the Sovereign (Psa. 2:6)
As the rejected Son (Lk. 20:13-14)	As the reigning Son (Heb. 1:8)
He came not to judge (Jn. 12:47)	He shall come to judge (Psa. 9:8)
He came to be smitten (Isa. 53:4)	He shall come to smite (Rev. 19:15)

Malachi also prophecies of the coming of the Lord as the messenger of the covenant (ch. 3:1). This relates to His coming at Bethlehem, but he also prophecies of His coming in judgment at a yet future time (ch. 3:2; 4:1-3).

The Author

Nothing is known of Malachi apart from his name, and even that is questionable.

- a) His name means "messenger" and he is one of five messengers in the book:
 - i) Malachi (ch. 1:1)
 - ii) The Priests (ch. 2:7)
 - iii) John the Baptist (ch. 3:1)
 - iv) The Lord (ch. 3:1). The Lord is the "Messenger of the covenant" and the "Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8:6); and it is His Blood which ratified the "everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20).
 - v) Elijah (ch. 4:5)

- b) The solemnity of being God's spokesman.
 - i) The recognition of God's authority, the messenger is the servant, the steward, and therefore he must be faithful to God in the message which is given, and faithful to the people in how it is presented.

- c) The man is hid in obscurity, therefore the emphasis is on his message, not his experiences nor his behavior.
 - i) Compare Daniel and Jonah whose experiences are documented.

1. The Condition of The People

- a) Geographically - they were back in the land.
- b) Socially - they were free people
- c) Spiritually - their ancestors had come back from Babylon. With great delight they had begun and built the walls and the Temple, then things had ceased until Haggai, eventually it was all done. Now a new generation had arisen and their zeal and love for the Lord and gratitude had gone, their spiritual exercises were simply a religious formality.

2) His Time

- a) It is impossible to determine when Malachi prophesied, for apart from the two major contenders, one arguing before Nehemiah and the other after him, God simply does not tell us. Instead of focusing on when, I suggest the question ought to be “Why does God not tell when the book was written?” The answer is because the attitudes of the people and the basic responses from God are applicable for all times. There is a distinct similarity between the sins of Malachi’s day and those in first century Laodicea, and the prevailing attitude of the church in the last days.
- b) He was God’s last voice before the coming of the Lord.
- c) It was now just a time of waiting for the fulfilling of the promises such as Isa. 9:6.

3) Malachi’s Manifestation of God

- a) His Universality:
 - i) People in ancient days viewed gods as parochial deities, the gods of Babylon (Dan. 1:2); Dagon (Jud. 16:23), etc. Malachi will show that God is not parochial, but singular and universal (ch. 1:11; 4:1, 6).
- b) His Attributes:
 - i) God is also the God of all knowledge for there is laid before the people their sins and future. (ch. 1:6-8; 3:1-4; 17, 4:6)
 - ii) He is the God of recompense whither for evil doing or good. (ch. 1:3-4; 4:2-3)
 - iii) How exceedingly gracious is God, for He not only listens to their abuses against him, but will endure with them and answer them. God is not accountable to any. He is always right in every charge He brings against humanity. (ch. 1:7-8)
- c) His Sovereignty:
 - i) “I will send” (ch. 3:1)
 - ii) “He shall sit as a refiner” (ch. 3:3)
 - iii) “I will come near to you in judgement” (ch. 3:5)
 - iv) “Have I also made you contemptible” (ch. 2:9)
- d) His Titles:
 - i) “Lord” (ch. 1:1)
 - ii) “Lord of hosts” (ch. 1:4)
 - iii) “The LORD, the God of Israel” (ch. 2:16)
 - iv) “Great King” (ch. 1:14)
- e) His Words:
 - i) There are fifty-five verses in Malachi and forty-seven of them are spoken by God. To my knowledge the only book where a bigger percentage of that which God speaks is Leviticus where it is almost one hundred percent.

4) His Peculiarities

- a) Malachi is the only prophet who ends his book with a curse.
- b) He is the only prophet concerning whom the word “Malachi” is a proper name or a word meaning “my messenger” that is describing his work.

5) Malachi’s Manifestation of Christ

- a) There is a delightful attestant to the deity of Christ in ch. 3:1 and Matt. 3:3
 - i) Malachi reads: “He shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord . . . shall suddenly come to His temple” (ch. 3:1). It is important to notice the words and who the speaker is. The speaker is the Lord, Jehovah, and He says: “He shall prepare the way before **Me**”, and the **Lord** shall suddenly come to His temple.
 - ii) When our Lord was here John Baptist preached: “Prepare ye the way of the LORD” (Matt. 3:3). This same clause with the word LORD capitalized (which is normally translated Jehovah), compare Isaiah 40:3. Thus, the Old Testament Title “Jehovah” in Matthew is applied to the man Jesus! Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.
- b) He is called the “Sun of Righteousness” (ch. 4:2); “the Refiner and Purifier of silver” (ch. 3:3)

6) Malachi and His Relationship To The Other Prophets

- a) The prophets can be divided into those before the Babylonian captivity and those after it. Isaiah and Jeremiah were written before the captivity, Lamentations was written during it, and Ezekiel and Daniel during it, but with a view to after it. The “minor” prophets (Hosea to Malachi) are in the same two lines of thought. Hosea to Zephaniah deal with before the captivity and Haggai to Malachi after it.

7) Keys

- a) Key Verses:
 - i) “Behold, I will send my Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before me” (ch. 3:1)
- b) Key Words:
 - i) “Ye say” (10 occurrences in 8 verses) (ch. 1:2, 6, 7, 12; 2:14, 17; 3:8, 13), and “ye said” (ch. 3:7)
 - ii) “Return” (5 occurrences) (ch. 1:4; 3:7, 18)
 - iii) “Wherein” (6 occurrences) (ch. 1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8)
 - iv) “Lord of hosts” (24 occurrences) (ch. 1:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17; 4:1, 3)
 - v) “Fear / feared” (ch. 1:6; 2:5; 3:5, 16; 4:2)
- c) Key Concepts:

In this we see how insolent a backslidden saint can deteriorate to. With a total lack of fear of God, they argued with God.

8) The Sins of The People

- a) Religious degradation manifested in corrupt sacrifices (ch. 1:8, 13) and manifesting a lack of the fear of the Lord (ch. 1:6, 7, 12, 13) resulting in many to stumble (ch. 2:8), and the judgment of God on them (ch. 2:9).
- b) Religious and moral degradation with spiritual adultery (ch. 2:10-13), and physical adultery (ch. 2:14-16).
- c) Making light of the threatening of God (ch. 2:17) because of their sins (ch. 3:5-9, 13-15).
- d) Such was the degradation of the people that they not only questioned God’s evaluations (ch. 1:2, and the questioning with the word “wherein”), ignored His word (ch. 2:6), but also mocked the

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truthfulness of His coming in judgment (ch. 2:17). Furthermore, the sacrifices, etc., were an abomination to God and they viewed serving God as that which was without benefits (ch. 3:14).

9) Quoted in the New Testament

- a) While the New Testament gives the names of a number of the writers of the Old Testament, yet Malachi is never named. He is quoted, as in Matt. 11:10; Mk. 1:2, and is referred to in Lk. 7:27.

10) Structure

- a) This is the book of unrequited love. The Lord expresses His love for them (ch. 1:2) but the evidence of love is missing among the majority of those in Israel. With this in view, one structure is:
 - i) The pronouncement of spurned love (ch. 1:1-5)
 - ii) The performance, showing spurned love (ch. 1:6-2:17)
 - iii) The pleadings, despite a spurned love (ch. 3:1-5)
 - iv) The profundity of the love that was spurned (ch. 3:16-4:6)
- b) The book is sharply divided into two sections:
 - i) God’s charge against them (ch. 1:1-2:17)
 - ii) God’s coming to them (ch. 2:17-4:6)
- c) As a people:
 - i) They were a privileged people (ch. 1:1)
 - ii) They were a corrupt people (ch. 1:6-3:15). Scattered comments, see under “Sins of the people” No. 8.
 - iii) They were an advised people:
 - 1. The Lord was not restricted to them to glorify His name (ch. 1:11, 14)
 - 2. They would be punished for their sins (ch. 2:2-9; 3:2; 5, 9; 4:1)
 - iv) They were a people with promises from God (ch. 3:1, 4, 10-12; 16; 4:2-6)
- d) The book in table form.

Declaration from God	Arrogant Attitude	Response
“I have loved you” (ch. 1:2)	“Wherein hast Thou loved us?” (ch. 1:2)	Ch. 1:2-5
“Where is mine honour. . . Fear?” (ch. 1:6)	“Wherein have we despised Thy name?” (Ch. 1:6)	Ch. 1:7
“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar” (ch. 1:7)	“Wherein have we polluted Thee?” (ch. 1:7)	Ch. 1:7-12
“Neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (ch. 1:10)	“Behold, what a weariness is it!” (ch. 1:13)	Ch. 1:13-14
“Ye priests . . . Good will at your hand” (ch. 2:1-13)	“Wherefore?” (ch. 2:14)	Ch. 2:14-16
“Ye have wearied the Lord” (ch. 2:17)	“Wherein have we wearied Him?” (ch. 2:17)	Ch. 3:1-7
“Return unto me” (ch. 3:7)	“Wherein shall we return?” (ch. 3:7)	Ch. 3:8-12
“Will a man rob God?” (ch. 3:8)	“Wherein have we robbed Thee?” (ch. 3:8)	

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Declaration from God	Arrogant Attitude	Response
“Your words have been stout against me” (ch. 3:13)	“What have we spoken so much against Thee?” (ch. 3:13)	Ch. 3:14-4:6

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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