

MALACHI

Author: Malachi

Date: 430 B.C.

Malachi's name means "My Messenger." He was a prophet in the post-exilic period about a hundred years after the return of the Jews to Judah. The city of Jerusalem and the second temple had been rebuilt, but the enthusiasm had worn off. Following a period of revival under Nehemiah, the people had backslidden and had become lax and mechanical in their worship of God. Malachi directed his message of love and judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security. He probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, marriage, divorce, false worship, arrogance, and neglect of tithes and offerings.

The people of Israel had become disillusioned and doubtful. Internally, they wondered if God's messianic promises would ever be fulfilled and whether it was worth serving God after all. Externally, these attitudes were manifested in empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings, and indifference to the moral and ceremonial law. Malachi challenges these problems and attitudes and calls the people to a new commitment and obedience.

This is the last book of the Old Testament. For four hundred years after Malachi's ringing condemnations, there is not a prophet from God speaking. Only with the coming of John the Baptist does God again communicate with His people through a prophet's voice. The last two chapters of the book contain dramatic prophesies of the coming of the Lord and John the Baptist. Israel flocked to the Jordan River four hundred years later as they heard "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord,'" (Matthew 3:3; Malachi 3:1).

Theme: Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of true worship of the Lord and called them to repentance.

Key verses: "For I am the LORD, I do not change,"(3:6). "Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name," (3:16).

OUTLINE

- I. The Privilege of the Nation – God's Love for Israel (1:1-5)
- II. The Pollution of the Nation – God's Complaint against Israel (1:6 – 3:15)
 - A. The Sin of the Priests of Israel (1:6 – 2:9)
 - B. The Sin of the People of Israel (2:10 – 3:15)
- III. The Promises to the Nation (3:16 – 4:6)
 - A. The Rewards of the Book of Remembrance (3:16-18)
 - B. The Rewards of the Coming of the Messiah (4:1-3)
 - C. The Prophecy of the Coming of God's Judgment (4:4-6)

Application: *Malachi gives us practical guidelines about commitment to God:*

1) God deserves the best we have to offer (1:7-10); 2) We must be willing to change our wrong ways of living (2:1-9); 3) We should make family a lifelong priority (2:10-16); 4) We should welcome God's refining process in our lives (3:3); 5) We should tithe our income (3:8-12); 6) There is no room for pride (3:13-15). God demands great sacrifices on our part, but we can be sure it will be worth it in the end. 7) There is a distinction between evil and good.