



### THE BIG PICTURE – MALACHI – “MY MESSENGER”

- Christ – “In Luke's birth narrative he quotes Malachi 4:6, that the baby John will come in the "spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Then, after the Transfiguration accounts in both Matthew (17:12-13) and Mark (9:11-13), Jesus seems to clearly affirm that John the Baptist is in fact the Elijah who had "already come" to prepare the way for Jesus as intimated in Malachi 3:1. Finally, and oddly enough, in the Gospel of John (1:21), John the Baptist himself explicitly *denies* that he is Elijah. It would seem, then, that John the Baptist fulfills Malachi's prophecy in a real but figurative sense as the forerunner of Christ and His first coming, but that in some literal sense there will also be a future fulfillment, which many commentators link with the second coming of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>
- The New Testament Witness – “The influence of the closing words of the book (3:22-24) on later messianic expectation is apparent in the Jewish post-biblical literature (Ecclus. 48:10; Suk. 52b; Mid. Ps. to 42:1; Targ., Lam. 4:22; Targ. Yer., Deut. 30:4) and in the New Testament (Matt. 17:3, 4, 10-13; 27:47, 49; Mark 9:4-5, 11-13; 15:35-36; Luke 9:30, 33; John 1:21, 25). In the New Testament the end of Malachi serves as a proof text to identify John the Baptist with Elijah.”<sup>2</sup>

### WHAT TIME IS IT?

Malachi's Ministry @435 - 415 BC

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## INTRODUCTION

It is necessary at this time to review the past in order to understand the present. In review of Israel history, we see her ultimate demise with three deportations by the Babylonian powerhouse in 606 and 597 BC. The third and final deportation in 586 BC decimated the nation to its very core with the complete and utter destruction of her temple.

In accordance with the prophecies of Jeremiah Israel abides for seventy years under Babylonian rule. With the placing of Cyrus the king of Persia and the ensuing decree in 538 BC Israel is allowed to return to their homeland. Three migrations follow. First under Zerubbabel in 536, then under Ezra in 458 and finally with Nehemiah in 444. It is during this period of time, the third migration back under Nehemiah that we find the prophet Malachi.

"The work reflects the various currents of thought and modes of life in the Jerusalem of about 500 B.C.E., affording an interesting and valuable glimpse of the post-Exilic community in the period between the age of Haggai and Zechariah on the one hand, and the time of Nehemiah and Ezra on the other. The situation in Judea was one of depression and discontent. The expectations which earlier prophets had aroused had not been fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>

### I. WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

#### A. His historical context

"Malachi marks the sunset of OT prophecy." 433BC "Malachi was most likely the last prophet of the Old Testament era."<sup>4</sup>

"The conditions described imply that the return from exile had not brought anything like the messianic age. The people had lost heart. Some wept (2:13), but others had become skeptical (1:2; 2:17; 3:14f.). Adultery, perjury, oppression, and discrimination were characteristic (2:5). Organized religion was held in contempt (1:14; 3:7-12), underscored by widespread marriage with unbelievers (2:10). Anything was good enough for the service of Yahweh (1:9f). The prophetic revelations that something new was necessary -- a new heart, a new spirit, the law written on the heart, a shepherd who reflected perfectly the divine image -- would be necessary if God's people were to walk in his ways."<sup>5</sup>

"Moral deterioration and religious lethargy characterized Malachi's day."<sup>6</sup>

#### B. His global context

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### C. His contemporaries

“Spurred on by the prophetic activity of Haggai and Zechariah, the returned exiles under the leadership of their governor Zerubbabel finished the temple in 516 b.c. In 458 the community was strengthened by the coming of the priest Ezra and several thousand more Jews. Artaxerxes king of Persia encouraged Ezra to reconstitute the temple worship (Ezr 7:17) and to make sure the law of Moses was being obeyed (Ezr 7:25–26).

Fourteen years later (444) the same Persian king permitted his cupbearer Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls (Ne 6:15). As newly appointed governor, Nehemiah also spearheaded reforms to help the poor (Ne 5:2–13), and he convinced the people to shun mixed marriages (Ne 10:30), to keep the Sabbath (Ne 10: 31) and to bring their tithes and offerings faithfully (Ne 10:37–39).

In 433 b.c. Nehemiah returned to the service of the Persian king, and during his absence the Jews fell into sin once more. Later, however, Nehemiah came back to Jerusalem to discover that the tithes were ignored, the Sabbath was broken, the people had intermarried with foreigners, and the priests had become corrupt (Ne 13:7–31). Several of these same sins are condemned by Malachi (see 1:6–14; 2:14–16; 3:8–11).<sup>7</sup>

“The prophet’s concerns mirror those of Nehemiah’s, suggesting that Malachi prophesied to the people while Nehemiah left the city for several years, beginning in 432 BC (Nehemiah 13:6).<sup>8</sup>

## II. WHO WROTE THE BOOK?

Malachi, "My Messenger." "Tradition says Malachi was a member of the 'Great Synagogue' and was a Levite."<sup>9</sup>

“Malachi is identified with Mordecai by R. Naḥman and with Ezra by Joshua b. Ḳarḥa (Meg. 15a). Jerome, in his preface to the commentary on Malachi, mentions that in his day the belief was current that Malachi was identical with Ezra ("Malachi Hebraei Esdram Existimant"). The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel to the words "By the hand of Malachi" (i. 1) gives the gloss "Whose name is called Ezra the scribe." According to Soṭah 48b, when Malachi died the Holy Spirit departed from Israel. According to R. H. 19b, he was one of the three prophets concerning whom there are certain traditions with regard to the fixing of the Jewish almanac. A tradition preserved in pseudo-Epiphanius ("De Vitis Proph.") relates that Malachi was of the tribe of Zebulun, and was born after the Captivity. According to the same apocryphal story he died young, and was buried in his own country with his fathers."<sup>10</sup>

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### III. TO WHOM DID THE PROPHET PREACH?

Malachi preaches to the remnant of believing Jews who have been in the land for almost one hundred years.

“The book of Malachi is the last of the twelve Minor Prophets, and little is known of the author himself aside from what may be inferred from the contents of his book. Unlike Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi prophesied some time after the completion of the temple in 515 B.C. In fact, it appears that Malachi prophesied over fifty years after Haggai and Zechariah. Like Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi ministered during a difficult period of time, but the problems he faced were slightly different. It had been decades since the temple had been completed, yet the glories of the messianic kingdom had not arrived as expected. But neither had the people lived up to the stipulations of God’s law (cf. Nehemiah). Politically, Israel was a minor province in the massive Persian empire. The nation was suffering from economic and agricultural problems. The most serious problem, however, from the prophet’s perspective was spiritual. Idolatry was apparently no longer a serious problem, but the people lacked zeal for the Lord. Spiritual discouragement and apathy were rampant. Malachi was called into this situation to explain the delay in the fulfillment of God’s restoration promises.”<sup>11</sup>

### IV. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK?

- A. To remind the people that Yahweh will do all that he can to help his people
- B. To remind the people that Yahweh will hold them accountable for their evil when He comes as judge
- C. To remind the people that Yahweh will honor them for their faithfulness when He comes as judge
- D. To urge the people to repent of their evil for covenant blessings to be fulfilled<sup>12</sup>

"Malachi the prophet and Nehemiah the builder were contemporaries, and the situations Nehemiah faced--corrupted priests, mixed marriages, neglected tithes--formed the basis for Malachi's sermons."

“The prophet pleads with a people who are rebels against their covenant Head. He urges them to return to God.”<sup>13</sup>

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The people have become apathetic and lazy toward the things of God. “The purpose of Malachi is that sincerity toward God and a holy manner of life are absolutely essential in the lord's eyes if His favor is to be bestowed upon the crops and the nation's economic welfare. Israel must live up to her high calling as a holy nation and wait for the coming of the Messiah, who by a ministry of healing as well as judgment will lead the nation to a realization of all her fondest hopes.”<sup>14</sup>

## V. AN OUTLINE FOR MALACHI

### A. Malachi as literature

“Malachi used a dialectical or disputational style. In this style he introduced each of his six messages by a charge or command addressed to the people.”<sup>15</sup>

“Repetition is a key element in the book. The name “LORD Almighty” occurs twenty times.”<sup>16</sup>

Malachi is called an “oracle” (1:1) and is written in what might be called lofty prose. The text features a series of questions asked by both God and the people. Frequently the Lord’s statements are followed by sarcastic questions introduced by “(But) you ask” (1:2,6-7; 2:14,17; 3:7-8,13; cf. 1:13). In each case the Lord’s response is given.

Repetition is a key element in the book. The name “Lord Almighty” occurs 20 times (see note on 1Sa 1:3). The book begins with a description of the wasteland of Edom (1:3-4) and ends with a warning of Israel’s destruction (4:6).<sup>17</sup>

“The style of the book is more prosaic than that of any of the other prophetic books; the parallelism met with in the others is here less pronounced, and the imagery often lacks force and beauty.”<sup>18</sup>

“The style of the book of Malachi is that of disputations. Some have called it 'discussions.' Others call it 'Socratic,' or 'catechetical,' or question and answer style. But dispute is probably the best word to use to characterize the style.”<sup>19</sup>

### B. Malachi outlined

“The contents of the Book of Malachi fall into six clearly marked sections introduced by a statement of the Lord or of the prophet, which is then challenged by the people or the priests, and defended by the Lord Himself in words of reproach and doom.”<sup>20</sup>

The book of Malachi is built around a series of questions. Notice the series.

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- 1:2 "Wherein hast thou loved us?"
- 1:6 "Wherein have we despised thy name?"
- 1:7 "Wherein have we polluted thee?"
- 1:12 "The table of the LORD is polluted"
- 2:14 "Wherefore [actually 'wherein']?"
- 2:17 "Wherein have we wearied him?"
- 3:7 "Wherein shall we return?"
- 3:8 "Wherein have we robbed thee?"
  - 3:13 "What have we spoken so much against thee?"
  - 3:14 "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance,"

1. Introduction: The Burden of Malachi (1:1)
2. First Oracle: Respond to God's Love (1:2-5)

The election of Israel over Edom and Edom's judgment.

3. Second Oracle: Honor God (1:6-2:9)

You have brought contemptible sacrifices.

4. Third Oracle: Be Faithful as God's Covenant People (2:10-16)

You have had illegal intermarriages and divorce.

5. Fourth Oracle: Hope in God (2:17-3:6)

There is no hope for God's justice.

6. Fifth Oracle: Obey God (3:7-12)

The nation has failed to give tithes and offerings.

7. Sixth Oracle: Fear God (3:13-4:3)

The nation has endorsed evil.

8. Conclusion: Be Prepared for God's Coming (4:4-6)

I came across the following structural chart for Malachi and was impressed. I've included it for your benefit.

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## STRUCTURAL CHART OF MALACHI<sup>21</sup>

### First Movement – Priests Exhorted to Honor Yahweh (1:2-2:9)

¶MOTIVATION: Yahweh's Love 1:2-5

¶PROBLEM: Failure to Honor Yahweh 1:6-9

COMMAND: Stop Vain Offerings 1:10

¶PROBLEM: Profaning Yahweh's Name 1:11-14

¶MOTIVATION: Results of Disobedience 2:1-9

### Second Movement – Judah Exhorted to Faithfulness (2:10-3:6)

¶MOTIVATION: Spiritual Unity 2:10a, b

PROBLEM: Faithlessness 2:10c-14

COMMAND: Stop Acting Faithlessly 2:15-16

¶PROBLEM: Complaints of Yahweh's Injustice 2:17

MOTIVATION: Coming Messenger of Judgment 3:1-6

### Third Movement – Judah Exhorted to Return to Yahweh 3:7-4:6

“The order of the notional slots in the third movement (3:7-4:6) is rearranged so that the command elements, naturally prominent, are on the outside and the problem element is marked as prominent by being placed in the center of the chiasm. The reason for this is most probably that the prophet wants to conclude his discourse on the naturally prominent note--the command.

¶COMMAND: Return to Yahweh with Tithes 3:7-10a

MOTIVATION: Future Blessing 3:10b-12

¶PROBLEM: Complacency toward Serving God 3:13-15

MOTIVATION: The Coming Day 3:16-4:3

¶COMMAND: Remember the Law 4:4-6

## VII. KEY DOCTRINAL IDEAS OF MALACHI

“The theological message of the book can be summed up in one sentence: The Great King (1:14) will come not only to judge his people (3:1-5; 4:1) but also to bless and restore them (3:6-12; 4:2).”<sup>22</sup>

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“Malachi came along at a time when the people were struggling to believe that God loved them (Malachi 1:2). The people focused on their unfortunate circumstances and refused to account for their own sinful deeds. So God pointed the finger back at them, and through Malachi, God told the people where they had fallen short of their covenant with Him. If they hoped to see changes, they needed to take responsibility for their own actions and serve God faithfully according to the promise their fathers had made to God on Mount Sinai all those years before.”<sup>23</sup>

#### A. Emphasis On The Usage Of Yahweh Of Hosts

Over thirty-nine times Malachi uses the word "LORD" (1:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17; 3:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17; 4:1, 3, 5). When it is considered that there are only fifty-five verses in Malachi one should be able to see his emphasis. Again, the covenant name of God is invoked throughout his message.

Another favorite phrase is "LORD of hosts" (1:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 12, and 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17; 4:1, 3). This phrase occurs twenty-four times in Malachi. God's mastery over all things created is emphasized in His title, "LORD of hosts."

#### B. The Issue Of Evil's Present: Theodicy

Yahweh has been accused of being unjust, has been unfaithful to His covenant responsibilities, does not care about the quality of the sacrifices, and has satisfaction in those who do evil. Against this Yahweh maintains three basic truths about His reign:

1. Yahweh is Lord over all (1:14)
2. Yahweh had elected Israel (1:2, 3)
3. The day of Yahweh will be a day of wrath (3:1-5)

#### C. The Telling Of The Forerunner

Malachi prophecies about Elijah the prophet (4:5). See also John 1:21; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 7:24-29; Matthew 11:14 and 17:10-13.

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## APPLICATION

- Do not doubt in the midst of life's lameness that God cares.
- Because God is silent does not mean He is not there.
- Your performance is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.
- Your relationship with God is far more important than your rituals for God.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.intervarsity.org/followingchrist/features/feature.php?id=580>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0013\\_0\\_13077.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0013_0_13077.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0013\\_0\\_13077.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0013_0_13077.html)

<sup>4</sup> *The NIV Study Bible* on Malachi.

<sup>5</sup> LaSor, Hubbard, Bush, 502.

<sup>6</sup> *The Criswell Study Bible* on Malachi.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.biblica.com/niv/study-bible/malachi/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.insight.org/ministry/bible/malachi.html>

<sup>9</sup> *The Open Bible* on Malachi.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10321-malachi-book-of>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/top-5-commentaries-on-the-book-of-malachi/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://bible.org/article/introduction-book-malachi>

<sup>13</sup> *The Open Bible* on Malachi.

<sup>14</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 431.

<sup>15</sup> Craig A. Blaising, "Malachi," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty – Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1574.

<sup>16</sup> *The NIV Study Bible* on Malachi.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.biblica.com/niv/study-bible/malachi/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10321-malachi-book-of>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.textexcavation.com/malachi.html>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0013\\_0\\_13077.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0013_0_13077.html)

<sup>21</sup> [https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/OTeSources/39-Malachi/Text/Articles/Clendenen-MalachiStructure-CTR.pdf](https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/OTeSources/39-Malachi/Text/Articles/Clendenen-MalachiStructure-CTR.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.biblica.com/niv/study-bible/malachi/>

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# THE BOOK OF MALACHI

ORACLE	INTRODUCTION (1:1)	1 <sup>ST</sup> ORACLE (1:2-5)	2 <sup>nd</sup> ORACLE (1:6-2:9)	3 <sup>rd</sup> ORACLE (2:10-16)	4 <sup>th</sup> ORACLE (2:17-3:5)	5 <sup>th</sup> ORACLE (3:6-12)	6 <sup>th</sup> ORACLE (3:13-4:3)	CONCLUSION (4:4-6)
“YOU SAY” QUESTION		1:2	1:6, 7, 12	2:14	2:17	3:7, 8	3:13, 14	
LORD [This can include its occurrence with “LORD of HOSTS” and “The DAY of the LORD.”]	1:1	1:2, 4, 5	1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8	2:11, 12, 13, 14, 16	2:17; 3:1, 3, 4, 5	3:6, 7, 10, 11, 12	3:13,14,16; 4:1, 3	4:5
LORD of HOSTS		1:4	1:4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8	2:12, 16	3:1, 5	3:7, 10, 11, 12	3:14, 17; 4:1, 3	
DAY of the LORD “Day”					3:2		3:17; 4:1, 3, 5	4:5

1<sup>ST</sup> ORACLE (1:2-5 [SEED PROMISE])

Q – How have you LOVED us?

A – By destroying your enemies!

The same approach the Serpent took in the Garden. Creates doubt in the heart.

2<sup>nd</sup> ORACLE (1:6-2:9 [BLOOD PICTURE])

Q – How have we DISHONORED You?

A – By offering blemished sacrifice!

The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel.

3<sup>rd</sup> ORACLE – (2:10-16)

Q – How have we proven FAITHLESS?

A – By proving faithless to your spouse!

4<sup>th</sup> ORACLE – (2:17-3:5)

Q – How have we TIRED YOU OUT?

A – By living unjust lives!

5<sup>th</sup> ORACLE – (3:6-12)

Q – How have we ROBBED You?

A – By failing to give to God!

6<sup>th</sup> ORACLE – (3:13-4:3)

Q – How have we spoken AGAINST You?

A – By dismissing the value of OBEDIENCE!

\*Notice the tone of 3:16-4:6.