

MALACHI.

Introduction

The name Malachi has the meaning of "The messenger of Jehovah," as given in

[Malachi 3:1](#),

"Behold, I send My messenger". He tells us nothing about himself in the text apart from,

[Malachi 1:1](#),

And so we know nothing, from other Bible text, about his family or life. Malachi was the last of the prophets who left a written text before the arrival of John the Baptist, when the prophecy in,

[Malachi 3:1](#) was fulfilled.

Probable dates:

When Cyrus became the king of Babylon, he issued a decree in 538 B.C. that any of the Jews who were in exile in Babylon, and wanted to, could return to their country to rebuild the Temple,

[2 Chronicles 36:22,23](#);

[Ezra 1:1ff](#).

Note: it appears that not all the Jews were willing to return, preferring to remain in Babylon.

Ezra and Nehemiah are involved with this period. Ezra visited the returned Jews in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah became the governor in 445 B.C.

[Nehemiah 5:14](#).

The conditions describe in Nehemiah are the same as dealt with in the book of Malachi.

See [Malachi 3:11](#)

Where we see reference a poor economy and poor growth of food, and this was about to be dealt with by God.

There was also a very easy going religious life, a number of evil activities had become the normal behaviour.

1) The priests ignored the sanctity of the Temple and ceremonies involved, [Nehemiah 13:1-9](#); [Malachi 1:6-2:9](#).

2) The people did not bother to bring their tithes and offerings to the Lord, [Nehemiah 13:10-13](#); [Malachi 3:8-12](#).

3) Intermarriage of the Jews, the people of the covenant with the other nations, [Nehemiah 13:23-28](#); [Malachi 2:10-16](#).

The book of Malachi was therefore written during the later years of the fifth century.

Malachi the prophet brings a message from God which shows the sovereignty of God:-

1) God is the Father,

[Malachi 1:6](#).

2) God is the master,

[Malachi 1:6](#).

3) God is a great king,

[Malachi 1:14](#).

4) God is a heavenly governor,

[Malachi 1:7,8](#).

5) God gives the laws and covenants,

[Malachi 2:4,5,10](#); [Malachi 4:4](#).

As a result, because of the behaviour of the people, the people must expect a time of judgement, but the Grace of God will show if the people hear and turn from their sinful lives.

Possible outline of the book of Malachi

Questions that God has the answer.

The love of God is doubted.

[Malachi 1:2-5](#).

How have we not honoured your Name?

[Malachi 1:6 To 2:9.](#)

Not showing respect to God.

[Malachi 2:10-16](#)

Marrying Non Jews.

Repentance is false.

Divorce had become acceptable.

We question the Judgement.

[Malachi 2:17 To 3:6](#)

What happened to the promised blessings?

The coming messengers.

Robbing God and themselves.

[Malachi 3:7-12.](#)

What have we spoken against You?

[Malachi 3:13 To 4:6.](#)

The Believers.

The evil ones.

The coming Preachers,

[Malachi 4:4-6](#)

The love of God is doubted.

[Malachi 1:2-5.](#)

Malachi has been told by God to take a message to the people, they were committing sins against God and against each other, God wanted them to return to Him.

Malachi brings the message with the words "Thus says the Lord of hosts:"

Malachi knew that the people would not accept his words so he meets any objections by say *"This is what God says. But you say....."*, Malachi could now go through all the problems and complaints of the people. God had revealed the hearts and mind of the people to Malachi, first he has to remove the hypocrisy of the priests who were very powerful people then point to the sins of the people.

The first sin Malachi points out was the lack of love for God by the people. Many of the problems that the people of God have is as result of their lack of love for God, compare [Revelations 2:4](#), where Jesus sends the message to the church of Ephesus *"despite your works, patience etc. you have left your first love."*

The people had great doubts in the love of God for them, *"In what way have You loved us?"* verse 2.

Malachi points to the grace of God, Esau should have received the blessing and inheritance, become the head of the nation but God gave them to Jacob the younger brother,

[Genesis 25:21-23,](#)

With the covenants of blessings. The Edomites received only a land but no blessings.

The words *"Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated,"* is a problems for many Believers, Paul also refereed to it in [Romans 9:10-13.](#)

As proof of the election of Israel to become His people and all who believe and trust in Jesus Christ and His saving action on the cross. The love of God for Jacob was so great that in comparison any feels or acts towards Esau would look like a feeling of hate. God does not hate a person, consider the words of Jesus to the disciples in [Luke 14:26](#), *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."* the love for Jesus is so great that any love for the family is like hatred. Look also at [Matthew 12:46-50.](#)

None of us have the heart of God and it will always be difficult for us to understand or explain the love and grace of God, neither do we have to, just accept the offer of love and grace He has offered through His Son Jesus Christ.

Verse 4: Malachi now turns to the third problem. Under the Babylonian invasion Edom had also suffered like every other nation in the area, but God only promised to restore the land of the Jews not any other nation, including the Edomites. The Edomites boasted that they would soon restore their land to the original state but God has other plans for this nation. God called this Edomite nation *"the Territory of Wickedness,"* so the invasion of the Babylonians was a judgement upon them.

God always referred to the land of the Jews as "the holy land," see [Zechariah 2:12](#) as an example,

"the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem."

Throughout the period of exile God protected the Jews and then restored them back to the land under king Cyrus, if the Jews had turned to God then He would have poured out even more blessings. The title used for God in verse 4, *"Thus says the Lord of hosts:"* has the meaning that He is "the Lord of the armies", a military title for God, Malachi used this title over twenty times.

Other examples,

[Isaiah 1:24](#);

[Isaiah 19:4](#);

[Isaiah 22:14](#).

Verse 5: *"The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel,"* reminds the Jew that they have the privilege given to them by God to tell the rest of the world about the love of God, at one time many nations came to Israel to see His blessings, see for example the times of David and Solomon, but now the world were laughing at their God.

Compare Paul's attitude when he is in prison,

[Philippians 1:12-14](#).

How have we not honoured your Name?

[Malachi 1:6 to 2:9](#)

Malachi turns to the priests, they were living in a way that made them guilty of breaking the laws of God which they should have been protecting. the message from God refers to *"My honor, My reverence, My name, My altar, My covenant, My ways."* **"My name"** appearing a number of times in this passage, the priests were a disgrace to their position and the Names of God, they dishonoured their Father, dishonoured their Master, as the chosen children. The world saw the True God through these people, who were showing no respect to their Lord and Master.

When Malachi challenged the priests their response was *"In what way have we despised Your name?"* verse 6, so Malachi tells them.

Verse 6-14: They were offering "defiled food on My altar," verse 7. The word 'food' refers to the sacrifices as given in Leviticus chapters 1 to 7. The sacrifices had to be perfect, the animals could have no imperfections,

[Deuteronomy 15:19-23](#);

[Leviticus 22:17-33](#),

All these sacrifices were pointing to the final sacrifice by the Son of God, Jesus Christ,

[John 1:29](#),

He was the perfect sacrifice, so the animal sacrifices also had to be perfect.

Verse 3: The waste from the sacrifices was always taken outside the camp,

[Exodus 29:14](#),

But God was about to *"spread refuse on your faces,"*, this would make a priest unclean and would have had to depart from the camp until made clean, *"you are not honouring the position of priest, a position of great privilege, so I'm taking it away from you"* was the meaning of this statement by God.

The so called worship was empty religion, just a ritual, which God hated.

In verses 6,7, we find a perfect description of a servant of the Lord,

"law of truth was in his mouth, no injustice in words, walked with God, turned many away from sin, messenger of the Lord."

However, the priests were going their own way, not even obeying the Laws of God, but worse still, they were also teaching others to turn away from the law, verse 8, they interpreted the law differently to favoured people, verse 9. So God was going to humiliate the priests before all the people.

Not showing respect to God.

[Malachi 2:10-16](#)

Malachi now turns to the sins of the people, the nation.

Marrying Non Jews.

The Jewish men had many times been tempted to chose a non Jewish wife, these women came from nations who were worshipping idols, this problem was not new, it goes back to their time in Egypt. When the Nation left Egypt the Bible tells us that it was *"a mixed multitude,"*

[Exodus 12:38](#);

[Leviticus 24:10](#);

[Numbers 11:4](#);

This was a sin against the instructions of God to keep themselves pure, [Numbers 25:1ff](#).

Unfortunately they did not learn and as a result God judged the nation many more times,

[Ezra 9:1ff](#);

[Nehemiah 13:23-31](#).

Look at [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#).

Repentance is false.

[Malachi 2:12-13](#)

These Jews, who had chosen to take a non Jew as a wife, were then going into the Temple, making offerings to God, even becoming tearful when they worshipped, seeking blessings from God, but God could read their hearts and knew how false was their worship, God therefore was ignoring them instead of forgiving them.

Again the people were asking *"For what reason?"*. verse 14, we need to remember that God will also witness all weddings and the hearts of those involved, verses 14,15. A marriage should be for life, [Genesis 2:21-25](#), God considers a married man and woman couple as one, a physical union, one flesh and should only be ended by death,

[Romans 7:1-3](#),

Or sexual immorality, [Matthew 19:9](#),

Or in some cases desertion, [1 Corinthians 7:12-16](#).

God does not like divorce, vers 16,

Jesus high lights it in [Matthew 19:3-8](#)..

A True Believer would not want to do something that is hated by God or live a life not acceptable to Him.

The mention of *"covers one's garment,"* in verse 16, is the ancient Jewish marriage proposal of marriage,

See [Ezekiel 16:8](#);

[Ruth 3:9](#),

In divorce the garment shows a *"place of violence."*

We question the Judgement.

[Malachi 2:17 to 3:6](#).

"You have wearied the Lord with your words;" was the message from God, but the people responded with *"How? Where is the God of justice?"* Verse 17. God cannot get physically tired, He is a Spirit, but He can get tired with the way people respond to His love and blessings. The Jews had forgotten what was required of them in the Covenants, the blessings from God were only given if the people, who were covered by the covenants, obeyed His Law's, in this case they were divorcing their Jewish wife, then marrying pagan women, offering the wrong sacrifices, they were withholding the tithes and offerings. How could they expect the blessings of God, the people needed forgiveness for all their sins, not rewards and justice.

The reply from God is the prophecy for two messengers, John the Baptist, verse 12,

Then Jesus Christ, [Malachi 3:1-6](#). Malachi was the last of the prophets who wrote the messages from God, John the Baptist, who is describe here, was to be the messenger who started the new Covenant, through Jesus Christ.

Isaiah also wrote about the coming messenger,

[Isaiah 40:3-5](#),

Which was picked up by the Gospel writers,

See [Mark 1:2,3](#);

[Luke 3:4-6](#);

[John 1:23](#).

Also Jesus spoke of John,

See [Matthew 11:10](#);

[Mark 1:2](#);

[Luke 7:27](#).

This response to "*Where is the God of justice?*" was not expected but when Jesus, the Son of God, came and died on the cross for the sins of the world, then the God of justice was shown.

"The messenger of the covenant,"

[Malachi 3:1-6](#)

Speaks of judgement, that the pure and holy God will pour out judgement upon the sinful people through Jesus Christ, the "*messenger of the covenant*," "*will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver*;" verse 3, "*without warning*," verse 1. The return of Jesus will bring glory for His people but also judgement at the judgement seat of Christ, a Believer knows there is a place reserved in heaven through Jesus but overlooks their failures to serve Christ.

Judgement on the sinners.

[Malachi 3:5](#),

Gives a list of sins in Malachi times.

1) "*Sorcerers*," which are forbidden.

See [Exodus 22:18](#);

[Leviticus 20:27](#);

[Jeremiah 27:9](#);

[Revelations 21:8](#);

[Revevelations 22:15](#)

2) Adulterers.

As we have already read, the Jews were divorcing their wives to marry the pagan woman, "*You shall not commit adultery*."

3) Perjurers

False swearing, people who tell lies in court, while they are under an oath etc. This was breaking two Laws, the third commandment, "*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*." and the ninth command, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."

[Exodus 20:7,16](#);

[Leviticus 19:11](#)

4) Exploit wage earners and widows and orphans. To turn away an alien.

God has great care for those who are widows or have no parents, orphans, in addition He does not like those who misuse their workers.

See [Exodus 22:21-24](#);

[Leviticus 19:10](#);

[Deuteronomy 10:17-19](#);

[Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#);

[Isaiah 1:16,17,23](#);

[James 5:1-8](#).

5) You do not fear Me.

The reason for all these sinful acts was due to the people not now having any fear for God now, they felt that He would tolerate sin, but God responded by "*For I am the Lord, I do not change*;" verse 6. He was always holy and always will be, He cannot tolerate sin. We should be grateful that God does not change, His nature, His promises, His plans, our forgiveness through Jesus,

[1 John 1:9](#);

[James 1:16,17](#).

6) Gone away from My ordinances. You have robbed Me!

[Malachi 3:7-12](#).

How have we robbed you?

No one was giving their tithes and offerings to God. The needs of the temple and priests was through the offerings. The word *tithe* was Hebrew for "a tenth", this was meant that God expected 10 percent of the

grain, fruit and animals or money,

[Leviticus 27:30-34](#);

[Numbers 18:21-24](#);

[Deuteronomy 12:6-7,17-19](#);

[Nehemiah 13:5](#).

The 'tithe' became mis-used,

See [Matthew 23:23-24](#),

Everything was tithed and they thought it was the way of righteousness.

Because the people were not giving, as given in the covenant, then God will not fulfill His promises and blessings upon the people,

[Leviticus 25:3ff](#);

[Deuteronomy 28:1-9](#).

If we rob God we will always also rob ourselves, spiritually and financially. But we should not give just to get benefit, God can read your reasons, we give because of our love for Him.

Consider [Luke 6:37,38](#);

[1 Corinthians 9:6-8](#).

The people should be showing their neighbouring nations the blessings of worshipping the True God, instead they were failing to give this witness, verse 12,

[Deuteronomy 28:9,10](#)

There is no command for the Church to tithe, however, Paul teaches "giving as God has blessed,"

[1 Corinthians 16:1,2](#);

[2 Corinthians 8 to 9](#).

7) Your words have been harsh against Me.

[Malachi 3:13 to 4:6](#).

The last charge by Malachi against the people, four groups of people are listed:-

verses 13-15: We are gaining nothing by being servants of God. They had forgotten that we need to do it in love,

Consider Philippians 2:1-2,

"1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

the ideal Servant of God.

Verses 16-18: There was a group of faithful, true believers who feared the Lord and worshipped Him.

God was taking care of this group.

Chapter 4:1-3: "Those who have an evil heart," Malachi looks forward to the future punishment for all these people.

Chapter 4:4-6: The faithful messengers, Malachi reminds the people of two other faithful messengers, Moses and Elijah. The Law given through Moses was still the way of life for the Jew, obedience resulted in blessing.

"5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: "

Elijah, many people have had discussions on who this 'Elijah' will be, Was it John the Baptist, prepared the people for the coming Messiah, fulfilling the task as given by Malachi.

Malachi ends the book with what appears to be a warning curse,

""Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5."

We should all be serving the Lord as true and faithful servants, looking for and ready for His return.