

Notes & Outlines

MALACHI

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WRITER: Malachi

“Malachi” means *my messenger*. The Septuagint gives its meaning as *angel*. An angel was a messenger and could be either human or spiritual. There are some who conclude, therefore, that Malachi is only a title and that the name of this prophet is not known. Surely our information of him is as limited as it is regarding the angels. Others have suggested that he was a spiritual angel, but there are no grounds for this.

The message, not the messenger, is the important issue. The Western Union boy is not as important to you as the message he delivers. You want his message, not his name or to visit with him.

TIME: Probably 397 B.C.

He concluded the prophets, as Nehemiah concluded the historians. He prophesied either during the latter period of Nehemiah’s governorship or immediately after it.

MESSAGE:

This one, who was the messenger of the Lord, delighted in using his own name when referring to other messengers. He made 3 mighty references:

(1) He referred to Levi as “the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (2:7). This suggests that every witness of God is an *angel* of the Lord.

(2) He announced the coming of John the Baptist as “my messenger” (3:1). John the Baptist was the Malachi of the New Testament and began where Malachi of the Old Testament left off. Malachi was the first radio announcer who said, “The next voice you hear will be that of the Lord’s messenger.”

(3) He also made the definite reference to Christ as “the messenger of the covenant” (3:1). The angel of the Lord of the Old Testament is the pre-incarnate Christ.

The method adopted by Malachi is first to quote a declaration or interrogation God makes to Israel. Then he gives Israel's answer, which is supercilious and sophisticated sarcasm. Finally, he gives God's telling reply, which is equally biting sarcasm.

Malachi's prophecy reveals an age deadened to sin. They were drugged to an unconsciousness of sin. They were in a spiritual stupor with no conviction, which is the lowest state of sin. They mouthed surprise that God would find fault. They were peevish and petulant children who affected ignorance. They pretended to know everything but were woefully lacking in a knowledge of essentials.

OUTLINE:

- I. The love of God for Israel, Chapter 1:1-5**
- II. The priests reprov'd for profanity, Chapters 1:6 — 2:9**
- III. The people rebuked for social sins, Chapter 2:10-17**
- IV. The prediction of the two messengers, Chapter 3:1-6**
- V. The people rebuked for religious sins, Chapter 3:7-18**
- VI. The prediction of the day of the Lord and of the Sun of Righteousness who ushers it in, Chapter 4**

COMMENT:

I. The love of God for Israel, Chapter 1:1-5

vv. 2-5 — God's declaration: "I have loved you, saith the LORD."

People's interrogation: "In what way hast thou loved us?"

God's answer: "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

The people were questioning and doubting the love of God, so God reminds them of the origin of the nation. Back when Jacob and Esau were twins in their mother's womb, God noted a distinction between the two (Genesis 25:22, 23). But that was about 1500 years before He stated it as He does here. This presents a problem: Why would God say that He loved Jacob and hated Esau? The real problem is not with God hating Esau but with God loving Jacob. It had to be of love and grace (see Romans 9:10-13). Their subsequent history demonstrates that God was right in loving Jacob over Esau (see notes on Obadiah).

vv. 4, 5 — God's dealing with Edom (Esau) in contrast to His

dealing with Israel (Jacob) is like comparing hate with love.

II. The priests reproved for profanity, Chapters 1:6 — 2:9

Chapter 1

v. 6 — God’s interrogation: “If, then, I be a father, where is mine honor?”

God’s declaration: “O priests, that despise my name.”

People’s interrogation: “In what way have we despised thy name?”

v. 7 — God’s double declaration: “Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar.”

People’s interrogation: “In what way have we polluted thee?” To pollute God was a serious charge if true. They dismissed the charge with an indifferent nod of the head and a pretended ignorance.

God’s answer: “In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.”

v. 8 — This explains how they made the table of the Lord contemptible. God required all offerings of animals to be without spot or blemish. When an old cow got sick or injured, they rushed her to the temple as a sacrifice. God suggested, in a vein of sarcasm, to try offering the sick cow for taxes. They were making that which was holy a commonplace thing.

v. 9 — Their hearts are polluted, and the bread, therefore, is polluted.

v. 11 — They are giving a wrong witness to the Gentiles, and God intends His name to be great among the Gentiles.

v. 12 — The Gentiles profaned the name of God because of the lives and actions of God’s people. Their hearts are polluted, and their ritual is contemptible.

v. 13 — “Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it!” This further aggravated their backslidden condition. People were actually saying that God bored them. In any endeavor, when the heart is not

in it, it becomes an awful bore. Why do you think men adopted a ritual, wore robes, chanted and marched? They were tired of spiritual worship. The people thought that something was wrong with God. It never occurred to them that something was wrong with them: “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it” (2 Timothy 3:5).

v. 14 — This sorry condition caused them to offer to God the corrupt, the lame, and the sick.

Chapter 2

vv. 1-9 — The priests will be judged severely for permitting this sordid condition to exist. God had given them “the law of truth.”

v. 7 — Levi was a messenger of the Lord (see MESSAGE).

v. 8 — The Levites had caused the people to sin.

III. The people rebuked for social sins, Chapter 2:10-17

v. 10 — Although God is not the Father of each individual Israelite, He is the Father of the nation. Therefore, the individuals enjoy a brother relationship which makes the sin of dealing treacherously with each other more heinous and glaring. (A church fight is a disgrace to the cause of Christ.)

vv. 11, 12 — The second social sin is that of men who had divorced their wives to marry heathen and pagan women. Again the sons of God looked upon the daughters of men as in Genesis 6:2. This is a grievous sin which will cause God to amputate this diseased member from the nation.

vv. 13, 14 — This is the fourth sarcastic question of the people to God’s charge of hypocrisy. They had exchanged reality in religion for emotion and weeping. They put on a good show. They brought their offerings. God refused to accept it or them. Their question is of injured innocence: “Why...?” God spells it out for them: D-I-V-O-R-C-E.

vv. 15, 16 — This is God’s estimate of divorce.

v. 17 — This is the fifth sarcastic question of the people to God’s charge of phony and pseudo-worship. If they are bored with religion,

so is God. His reaction is, “You make Me tired.” But the people respond, “In what way have we wearied him?” Contemptuously and impudently they contradict God. God lays it on the line, and He tells it as it is: “When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of justice?” They introduced a “new morality.” They thought it was new, just as men today think it is new. They contradict God’s standard and cover it with pious platitudes. They also say that there is no hell. However, God is not dead — He is weary and bored.

IV. The prediction of the two messengers, Chapter 3:1-6 *(A parenthesis)*

v. 1 — The first part of this verse is quoted in Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, and Luke 7:27 as fulfilled by John the Baptist.

The last part of the verse can refer only to Christ, but it was not fulfilled at His first coming (see notes on Habakkuk 2:20).

vv. 2-6 — This is a clear reference to the second coming of Christ. John the Baptist is the messenger who announced the first coming of Christ. Christ will need no messenger to announce His second coming — He Himself is that Messenger.

V. The people rebuked for religious sins, Chapter 3:7-18

v. 7 — This is the sixth sarcastic question that the people give to God’s penetrating charge. God calls upon them to repent: “Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts” (see Zechariah 1:3). “But ye said, In what way shall we return?” They are not aware that they are no longer having fellowship with God — because the temple is crowded, and the people are going through the ritual.

v. 8 — This is the seventh sarcastic question that the people raise to God’s charge: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.” This is a shocking charge. “But ye say, How have we robbed thee?” As usual, they deny the charge. God is direct and spells it out loud and clear: “In tithes and offerings.”

1. Tithes — some scholars think there were 3 or 4 tithes.
2. Offerings — above the tithes.

Of Israel, under Law, God demanded tithes. God is not a shylock of the sky — He was blessing them materially, and they were to recognize that.

v. 9 — The withholding of blessing was due to the fact that they had robbed God.

v. 10 — For the church today, this is not the basis for giving. Believers are not under the Law.

vv. 11, 12 — Honesty with God would make them a blessing to all nations.

v. 13 — This is the eighth and last sarcastic question that the people raised to God's charge: "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD."

vv. 14, 15 — They were blaming God for their apathetic and pathetic condition.

vv. 16-18 — There was always a remnant that served God. The remnant in that day will be among the jewels of the Lord when He arranges them for display.

VI. The prediction of the day of the Lord and of the Sun of Righteousness who ushers it in, Chapter 4

v. 1 — This is a vivid description of the Great Tribulation Period.

v. 2 — Christ will return to the earth as the Sun of Righteousness. He ushers in a new day, brings light and healing, lifts the curse, and brings life to a dying world.

For believers today He is "the bright and morning star." The morning star appears before the sunrise.

v. 3 — Wickedness will be put down as soon as it appears during the Millennium.

v. 4 — The Law will be the rule of the kingdom.

vv. 5, 6 — Elijah will evidently be one of the witnesses during the Great Tribulation (see Revelation 11:3-12).

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1976.
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- Ironside, H. A. *The Minor Prophets*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.
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- Tatford, Frederick A. *The Minor Prophets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Klock & Klock, n.d.
- Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981.
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