

SURVEY OF MALACHI

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Introduction

1. The name *Malachi* (1:1) means “*My Messenger*” or “*Messenger of Yahweh*.” The book of Malachi speaks of the coming of the “messenger of the covenant” (2:7, 3:1).
2. The author is Malachi (1:1), a man whom we know nothing about except what we can ascertain from his book.
3. Most scholars agree that Malachi prophesied during the Persian period, after the reconstruction and dedication of the Temple in 516 B.C. One indication of the date is the evidence of sacrifices being offered in the temple (1:7-10; 3:8) which was completed in 516 B.C. Evidently many years had passed since these sacrifices began since they become a wearied routine for the priests (1:13). Another indication of this is the use of the Persian term for governor, *pechah* (1:8, cf. Hag.1:1, 14; 2:21). Nehemiah was the governor of Judah during this time (Neh.5:14). The Persian kings were Artaxerxes (464-423) and Darius (423-404).
4. Malachi and Nehemiah address similar problems: corrupt priests (1:6-2:9, Neh.13:1-9), neglect of tithes and offerings (3:7-12; Neh.13:10-13), and wrongful marriages (2:10-16); Neh.13:23-28). Since each of these references in Nehemiah occurred during Nehemiah’s second return to Jerusalem (first trip in 444 B.C. with Ezra; returned to Persia in 432 B.C.; second trip to Jerusalem about 425 B.C.), and since the work of Nehemiah is not mentioned, it is likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah was absent (between 432 and 425 B.C.), almost a century after the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah who presented their prophecies about 520 B.C.
5. Malachi predicts the coming of the messenger who will prepare God’s people for the Lord incarnate (3:1; 4:5; cf. Is. 40:3). John the Baptist was this messenger/Elijah (Matt. 3:3; 11:9-14; Mark 1:3; 9:10, 11; Luke 1:17; 3:4; John 1:23). Nothing is written in the Bible between the time of Malachi and John the Baptist. This period is known as the period of 400 silent years. Nevertheless, Malachi makes it clear that during these “silent years,” God’s people were far from living as they ought. They were in great need of the coming Jesus Christ.

Outline

1. The Care of God (1:1-5)
2. The Complaint of God (1:6-3:15)
3. The Coming of God (3:16-4:6)

Main Points and Application

1. **God's confrontation regarding carelessness and indifference.** After the temple had been rebuilt and God's people had grown careless and indifferent. God uses a series of questions to confront them. They didn't feel especially loved by God or in need of much increase of growth in their spiritual lives. God confronts their degenerate views with a series of questions. What confrontational questions does God ask us?

Question #1: "How has God loved us?" (1:2-5). The message from God's word through his servant Malachi was that he loved his people. The people apparently didn't recognize any special treatment from God compared to their neighbors, so God challenges them to compare themselves with the descendants of Esau (the Edomites). It is obvious that God has loved Jacob and his descendants (Israel) but hated Esau. How does the knowledge that God doesn't love everybody weaken or strengthen our conviction of God's love for us?

Question #2: "Where is My honor...where is My respect?" (1:6-2:9). Both God and his word were despised by the church leadership in Malachi's day (1:6-14). Where and how do we see this in our day?

Question #3: "Why do you deal treacherously...to profane the covenant?" (2:10-16). God calls it treacherous treatment of one another to divorce your God-fearing spouse to marry someone who does not serve the God of scripture. It is profaning God's covenant community to marry unbelievers (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Question #4: "How have you wearied the Lord?" (2:17-3:6). What does it mean to weary the Lord with our words (2:17)?

Question #5: "How shall you return...how have you robbed God?" (3:8-12). What do we rob God of if we fail to give him the "whole tithe" (3:8-12)?

Question #6: "How have you spoken against God?" (3:13-15). How is the word of God perverted by Christians in our day, similar to that which was happening in Malachi's day (3:13-15)?

2. God's presentation of the benefits of a right fear and reverence of God:
 - A. Placement in the Book of Remembrance (3:16)
 - B. Treasured by God (3:17)
 - C. Reception of righteousness and healing (3:18-4:2)
 - D. Victory over our enemies (4:3)
3. The ministry of Elijah (i.e. John the Baptist) was to "restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (4:5, 6). What is this ministry and what happens to our land without it?