

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 39– “Malachi”
September 28, 2008

Malachi: The Prophet

The name Malachi means “His messenger”, leading some to suppose that it was not a personal name but an anonymous designation for the writer. Nothing is known of the prophet’s background and he is not mentioned by name anywhere else in the Bible.

Malachi: The Times

The book is not dated by a reference to a ruler or a specific event, but internal evidence suggests a date sometime in the 5th Century B.C. (i.e., the Persian period). Malachi ministered during a time of moral deterioration and spiritual apathy. It is believed that he was a contemporary of Nehemiah, prophesying just before, during or after Nehemiah’s tenure as governor. Malachi addresses many of the same themes as Nehemiah.

The Book of Malachi: Its Unique Position

Canonically, Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi has traditionally been viewed as the last prophet of God before the emergence of John the Baptist, whose ministry Malachi predicted (Malachi 3:1). Between Malachi and John the Baptist, there were approximately 400 silent years.

Malachi is a fitting transition from the Old to the New Testament. In the Book of Malachi, God shows Himself as a personal God, personally involved with His people. A total of 47 of the book’s 55 verses show God speaking in the first person to His people.

The Book of Malachi speaks of God’s sovereign plan for the nations as well as the universal judgment and redemption He will usher in at the end of the age. Malachi’s message paves the way for the Kingdom proclamation of John the Baptist and Jesus.

The Book of Malachi: Its Literary Style

Malachi’s style differs from that of the other writing prophets. Rather than making direct proclamations, Malachi takes more of a rhetorical approach, utilizing the following pattern throughout the book:

1. ASSERTION: God makes a statement
2. OBJECTION: The hearers contest the truth of the statement
3. DEFENSE: God demonstrates the truth of the statement

This approach occurs 7 times in the Book of Malachi:

1. “*I have loved you.*” (1:2-5)
2. The priests “*show contempt for My Name*” (1:6-7a)
3. The priests “*place defiled food on My altar*” (1:7a-14)
4. “*You have wearied the Lord*” (2:17)
5. “*Return to Me*” (3:7) (partial)
6. “*You rob Me*” (3:8-12)
7. “*You have said harsh things against Me*” (3:13-14)

The Book of Malachi: An Outline

1. The love of God is affirmed. 1:2-5

2. The unfaithfulness of Israel is rebuked. 1:6-2:16

- The priests have been unfaithful. 1:6-2:9
 - They dishonor God with their sacrifices (i.e., their worship). 1:6-14
 - They do not faithfully teach the Law (i.e., the Word of God). 2:1-9
- The people have been unfaithful.
 - How? By being unfaithful to their marriage vows. 2:10-16

3. The coming of the Lord is announced. 2:17-3:5

- He will send His messenger. 3:1a
- He will come personally. 3:1b
- He will come to purify. 3:2-4
- He will come to judge. 3:5

4. The call to repentance is issued. 3:6-4:6

- The call to repent of robbery (i.e., failure to give tithes and offerings) 3:8-12
- The call to repent of blasphemy (i.e., demeaning God’s character through negative, unbelieving speech) 3:13-15
- Words of warning and promise from God. 3:16-4:6

The Book of Malachi begins with a statement of God’s love, but ends with a curse.