

Malachi – Overview

Malachi is about the future hope that will arrive with a new, or second, Moses and a new, or second Elijah bringing judgment, justice, and joy when the kingdom of God is establishing on earth.

Judah had returned from Babylonian captivity with high hopes of:

1. Being restored to their land
2. Re-establishing the kingdom
3. Re-building the temple
4. Welcoming the restoration of the presence of the Lord to Jerusalem and the Temple.
5. Establishing the kingdom of God that ruled all the nations in peace and prosperity

The people of Judah had returned with high eschatological hopes that included the appearing of the glory of the Lord and the establishment of Israel as a kingdom that ruled the world with a son of David (or, the Son of David), the Messiah, on the throne in Jerusalem.

Historical timeline and eschatological expectations:

- 539 – Cyrus decrees Judah can return to land
- 538 – Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest lead captives back
- 520 – Zechariah and Haggai the prophets encourage people to overcome and build temple
- 516 – the temple is completed in Jerusalem
- 458 – Ezra returns to teach the people of Judah the Law of Moses
- 445 – Nehemiah returns to build the wall of Jerusalem
- 430 – (about) Nehemiah returns for second term as governor
- 430-425 – Malachi prophecies to Judah and writes this book

Events and Attitude in 425 BC

1. It had been around 114 years since the prophecy of the promised return from captivity had been fulfilled. (Propheesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc.).
2. Judah had faced heavy, oppressive opposition from the surrounding nations after their return to Judah concerning:
 - a. Economics
 - b. Governmental independence
 - c. Religious independence
 - d. Temple construction
 - e. Agriculture and prosperity
 - f. Interference from neighboring foreign powers
 - g. Poverty
 - h. Population growth and reconstruction in the city of Jerusalem
 - i. Reconstruction of walls to protect Jerusalem and the temple
 - j. Dedication to the Mosaic Law and a lifestyle separate from pagan nations
3. The people of Judah along with the priests and Levites had become:
 - a. disoriented concerning God's plan and timing
 - b. disinterested in God's purpose and covenant promises
 - c. culturally confused

- d. hopeless in this age
- 4. In their ignorance and confusion Israel was blaming God and erroneously justifying themselves, their attitude and their actions.
 - a. It wasn't their fault, they said.
 - b. God had failed, they believed.
- 5. So, the need for Malachi

Malachi's Book – A General Outline

1. Series of six disputes all based on the legal covenant God has with Israel.
 - a. The legal covenant was established by Moses.
 - i. The Mosaic Covenant was established with the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to confirm and establish the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant God had made to Abraham.
 - b. Warnings and calls to return to the covenant were repeated by the prophets from Moses to the exile (and, during and after the exile).
 - i. The prophets recorded God's faithfulness to the covenant
 - ii. The prophets had recorded Israel's failure to keep the covenant
 - iii. The prophets warned Israel to return to the covenant
 - iv. The prophets explained and predicted the punishments for covenant violations
 - c. A dispute is presented:
 - i. Accusation - Each dispute begins with a statement or a claim by God concerning the Covenant that charges Israel with violation of the Covenant.
 - ii. Demand for Proof - Each accusation by God is greeted with ridicule, rejection, a request for explanation or a demand to present some proof of violation.
 - iii. Conclusive Evidence – Each rejection, request for explanation or demand for evidence is met with overwhelming proof that the people of Israel have violated the Covenant.
 - d. **Six disputes:**
 - i. **1:2-5** – God has a covenant with Israel
 1. God says, I have a covenant with Israel.
 2. Israel says God does not have a covenant with Israel. Prove it!
 3. God says look at Edom.
 - ii. **1:6-2:9** – Israel does not fear God and they despise His Temple in Jerusalem
 1. God says, Israel despises me and gives me no honor.
 2. Israel says, "How have we despised your name?"
 3. God says look at your worship practices in the temple
 - a. People bring lame sacrifices
 - b. Priests/Levites accepted the people's lame sacrifices and made no effort to correct their failure to properly obey the covenant. The priests let it slide.
 - iii. **2:10-16** – Israel is not faithful to Covenant(s) (Mosaic and Marriage)
 1. God says, Judah has married daughter of a foreign god
 2. Israel says, "We repented of that! Why does God not show us favor?"
 3. God says, because the men of Judah used this "separate from foreign wives" as an excuse to abandon any of their wives breaking the covenant of marriage.

- iv. **2:17-3:5** – God has grown weary as Israel accuses Him of being unjust
 - 1. God says, Israel has wearied YHWH
 - 2. Israel says, “How have we wearied him?”
 - 3. God says, by saying anyone who does evil is considered to be good in the eyes of YHWH and by asking stupid questions like, “Where is the God of justice?”...because:
 - a. The day of judgment IS coming
 - b. But, can you endure that day of judgment? Will you stand?
 - c. He will be like a refiner’s fire purifying the Levites and Judah!
 - d. It will happen like this:
 - i. God will send the messenger of the covenant to prepare the way (the new Elijah, the greatest prophet)
 - ii. Then, I, the Lord you are seeking, will come to the Temple (the new Moses, the Messiah)
 - e. This will establish justice!! Punishment and reward.
 - f. (This is given further detail in **4:1-6**)
 - v. **3:6-12** – God does not change, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants are intact
 - 1. God says, “Return to me!” and “Stop robbing from me!”
 - 2. Israel says, “How shall we return?” and “How have we robbed you?”
 - 3. God says, bring the full tithe into the storehouse and stop neglecting provisions for the Temple and its function.
 - vi. **3:13-21** – Israel says it is useless to serve the Lord
 - 1. God says, Israel’s words are hard against Him.
 - 2. Israel says, “How have we spoken against you?”
 - 3. God says, when you said,
 - a. “It is vain to serve God.”
 - b. “What profit is there in keeping his charge?”
 - c. “What profit is there in walking before the Lord or repenting?”
 - d. “The arrogant are the blessed ones.”
 - e. “Evildoers prosper.”
 - f. “Evildoers test God and they escape.”
 - i. And, now a point of doctrine: Some people in Judah fear the Lord and shared these thoughts with others of like mind. YHWH heard them and had their names written in a book so he remembers to spare them at judgment and reward them for serving him. When YHWH fulfills what he wrote in that scroll, “Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.” (3:16-18)
- Nations mentioned and would see God’s glory mentioned in 3 of the 6 disputes (#1,2, 5):
 - 1:5 – “Great is the LORD beyond the border of Israel!”;
 - 1:11 – “From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations.”
 - 1:14 – “I am the great King, says the LORD of hosts; my name will be feared among the nations.”
 - 3:12 – “Then all nations will call you blessed.”