

Return Period:
Malachi- Time Marches On *Malachi* 1:1- 4:6

Malachi, "My Messenger" is the last prophetic book in the Old Testament. Malachi is the last word from God in the Old Testament era. *The Reese Chronological Bible* dates Malachi at 397 BC. He was the prophet during the later times of Nehemiah.

Nothing is known of his personal life apart from this book. His book is authenticated in the New Testament by references to it. (See **Matt 11:10; 17:12, Mark 1:2; 9:11,12; Luke 1:17; Romans 9:13**). He is simply a messenger from God.

At this point in history Abraham had been called out, Israel had become a great nation in number in Egypt. They had been delivered from bondage, spent 40 years in the wilderness because of their unbelief, gone through the period of Judges, had three kings as one nation. Been divided into two nations, both of which had been taken into captivity, and had returned from captivity to rebuild the temple and the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

Captivity had purged them from idolatry. Since the captivity they have never been a nation that followed false gods. Still the spiritual climate in Israel at the time of Malachi was indifference and lack of real commitment. About a century had lapsed since the return from captivity and while there had been no resurgence of idolatry that had sent them into captivity they only had a form of godliness.

Malachi's method of writing is known as dialectic, "*investigation through discussion and reasoning*." His purpose was to deliver stern rebukes to the priests and the people, to call them

to repentance, and to promise God's future blessing. His theme is God's love in spite of Israel's failures and sin.

I- God's Love for Israel- *Mal* 1:1-5

II- Rebuke of the Priest- *Mal* 1:6-2:9

III- Rebuke of the People- *Mal* 2:10-17; 3:7-18

IV- Promise of Messengers to Come- *Mal* 3:1-6; 4:1-6

I- God's Love for Israel- *Mal* 1:1-5

The first few verses set the theme of Malachi. In answer to the question of Israel, "***How have you loved us,***" God seems to make a statement that contradicts His very nature. He says He loved Jacob and hated Esau. Remember that Jacob and Esau were twin brothers born to Isaac. (See **EXTRA STEPS A.**) God is showing that He chose the nation of Israel even above their brothers. Esau descendants were the nation of Edom and God indeed hated the way they treated His chosen people.

II- Rebuke of the Priest- *Mal* 1:6-2:9

God rebuked the priest of the day through Malachi. The temple worship that was begun anew under Ezra had fallen into a state of corruption. They had a form of religion but did not know the true God. A form of religion in a lot of ways is more dangerous than outright paganism. You can show a pagan there is a God and he will believe. A religious man already has just enough to feel he does not need anymore.

The first rebuke of the priest was for cheating the Lord with their corrupt offerings. The best was to be given in sacrifice but only the maimed and blind were being offered. **1:7-8.**

Another rebuke of the priest was the sorry example they had set before the people. **2:7-9.**

III- Rebuke of the People- Mal 2:10-17; 3:7-18

The rebuke of the people was for social sins as well as religious sins. Malachi had a great deal to say about sins of divorce and remarriage. They were rebuked for marrying women of strange gods. **2:11** The problem was compounded because they were divorcing their Jewish wives to marry these pagan women. **2:14**

The religious sin they were rebuked for was for **"Robbing God."** **3:8** They had robbed him by not bringing their tithes and offering into the storehouse. This passage is the one Malachi is most noted for. This is the only place in scripture that God says to try him. He will be faithful if we will my friend. Notice it says He will open up the windows of heaven and pour out blessings and rebuke the devourer. There are a lot of ways God pays back our faithfulness in giving to Him in worship. He pays installments in health, sanity, peace, joy, children and many other ways. He often rewards us with things money cannot buy.

IV- Promise of Messengers to Come- Mal 3:1-6; 4:1-6

Malachi was not only a fiery preacher but was also a prophet. Moses gave us the first prophecy in the book of Genesis. Malachi will give us the last prophecy of the Old Testament. Malachi you will recall means, *"My Messenger."* He was the messenger of the messenger to come. He gives us the last word before the coming of Messiah. He in fact says the next voice in prophecy you will hear will be the messenger that will introduce Messiah.

3:1 "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me..."

This is a prophecy concerning John the Baptist. John has been called the Malachi of the New Testament because he picked up the message where Malachi left off four hundred years earlier.

Malachi said that the true messenger of God would, **"...suddenly come to his temple."** Remember Jesus stood one day and read the scripture and declared Himself to be Messiah. He appeared suddenly.

Malachi not only told us about the messenger that would come before the First Advent of Christ but also about one that will come before the Second Advent. **Rev 11:3-12** speaks of two witnesses that will appear in the last days. These witnesses will appear during the tribulation period. Many scholars say that one of these witnesses will be Elijah based on **Mal 4:5.**

There is a great promise that I wish to close the book of Malachi with. It is a hope and our desire as believers to see this day. **4:2 "...unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..."**

Application to Life's Steps:

- 1- God is a sovereign God in all His ways. He chose Israel and rejected Esau in His sovereignty.
- 2- God's love for Israel has been a true unconditional, godly love.
- 3- God wants us to offer only our best to Him and is never pleased with a maimed or blind offering.
- 4- Men and women who are entrusted with leadership should seek to be good examples for others.

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5- God wants His people to walk in a path of righteousness in their relationships.

6- God wants His people to worship Him by giving back some of what He has given them.

7- God is a God of hope event in dark times.

Retracing our Steps:

1- The name Malachi means? _____

2- Who was the last Old Testament prophet ? _____

3- What was the reasons for the rebuke of the priest? _____

4- What was the reason for the rebuke of the people? _____

5- Who was the messenger to come in **Mal 3:1?** _____

6- Who is the messenger Malachi prophesied about that is still to come? _____

Time Marches On!

While the next four hundred years will not have a prophetic voice from God there was a lot of history that set the stage for the coming of Messiah.

When Malachi ends the world power were the Persians. When the New Testaments begins the Romans are in power. The Greeks overthrow the Persians and the Romans conquer them in turn. (See **STEPS IN TIME VI.**)

When the Old Testament closed the language of the New Testament, Greek, was not the language of the world. God in His sovereignty arranged this. He allowed this language, which is so precise, to become the language of the world and the New Testament.

When the Old Testament closed there were no Pharisee, Sadducees or Sanhedrin. These groups that would become such important parts in the crucifixion of our Lord.

The temple was the center of the religion of Judaism. The rise of the synagogues, so important in the spread of the gospel, came during the four hundred years of so called silence.

The temple was polluted by the sacrifice of a swine on the altar during these years as well by Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

(See my work on Daniel, *Daniel, The Prophecy of History*, for greater details.)

This event among others was the seed bed of a revolt of the Jews known as the Maccabean Revolt. This revolt against the mad man Epiphanes was lead by an aged priest named Mattathias and his five sons. His third son named Judas, known as Maccabee, became the military leader after Mattathias died.

The writings of this period are known as the Apocrypha. These books, while of historic value, were rejected by the early church fathers as being non-canonical. While they are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church as scripture, there are several reasons Protestants reject them. They were not a part of the Old Testament during the time of Jesus and the early church. In addition Jesus, nor any New Testament writer, ever quotes any of these books.

The apocryphal books were not declared to be authentic Scripture until the Council of Trent in 1546. This was hundreds of years after the canon we have was set.

While there was no prophetic voice during this period of time we see that God was still active in His sovereignty arranging circumstances of history for His cause.