

MALACHI

STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR & DATE



Malachi, meaning “my messenger,” is traditionally named as the author of the book. However, because of the general nature of “messenger” to include priests and prophets in the Old Testament, some scholars debate whether an actual person named Malachi wrote the book, or if it is a title since the same word is used in Malachi 3:1, “I will send my messenger...” There is no reason to doubt an actual person named **Malachi** prophesied and authored the book.

Malachi’s message follows the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and is the final word to the people before approximately 400 years of prophetic silence and the arrival of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. The book can be dated to around **430-420 B.C.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The setting of Malachi is probably best understood by reviewing some history and returning again to Malachi’s time. There is a disappointing pattern displayed which the Lord addresses through the prophet Malachi – a lesson equally important for us more than 2,000 years later! **Read Nehemiah 12:27-13:31** and take note of the social and spiritual issues you discover.

538 B.C. – Exiled Jews return to Jerusalem under governor Zerubbabel

- Instructed to rebuild the temple
- Set about the work, but soon lose focus and prioritize selfish desires

520 B.C. – Haggai and Zechariah prophesy to finish rebuilding the temple

516 B.C. – Temple completed

458 B.C. – Ezra the priest and several thousand Jews arrive

- Under instruction from Persian king Artaxerxes to re-establish temple worship
- Ezra discovers the people not living according to God’s law & revival takes place

444 B.C. – Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem

- Instructed by King Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls
- Nehemiah set about reforms regarding the poor, mixed marriages, and faithful tithing

433 B.C. – Nehemiah leaves Jerusalem to return back to the king for a time

- Appoints individuals to oversee in his absence
- Jews regress and fall into sin once again

430-420 B.C. – Malachi prophesies most likely during Nehemiah’s absence

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HELPFUL NOTES

- **Respect for a Holy God** – “Certainly ‘respect’ does not adequately express what God’s holiness should arouse in us. Respect calls for politeness and such gestures as taking off one’s hat, but fear results in awe and obedience. What keeps God’s awesome holiness and unapproachable majesty from producing ‘naked terror’ is the revelation of His will, the knowledge that His is not capricious (unstable or inconsistent), and the knowledge that He is also a God of love. But the priests were showing the opposite attitude of honor, fear, and love.”
– *The New American Commentary: Malachi*
- **Malachi 1:3 – “But Esau I have hated/rejected...”** – We must understand the sense of this term “hated/rejected” and how it is used here. It is absolutely a sense of preference and priority. This same sense of the word “hate” is used in Luke 14:26 – “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” It must be understood that this “hating/rejecting” is not describing emotion, but rather demonstrates priority of choice.

In biblical times, to “choose” a son was used legally to define which son was to receive the double portion inheritance. Similarly, “hate/reject” removed legal claims of inheritance to other sons. Use of the term “hate/reject” did not mean a lesser love of an individual, but a prioritizing and elevating for legal purposes.

God had declared before birth that Jacob would be preferred over Esau (Gen. 25:23). This was further manifested when Esau willingly sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:33). Continued wickedness from Edom (Esau’s people) compelled God to bring judgment upon them. Therefore, here in Malachi the Lord is describing his “choosing” of Jacob (Israel) as the recipient of inheritance and God’s demonstrated care. God’s “hatred/rejection” of Esau is tied to God’s sovereignty to choose, but also Esau’s (Edom) willingness toward evil, so God is standing against that which stands against Him.

LITERARY STRUCTURE

Through a series of questions and answers, often mixed with sarcasm, the Lord speaks to His people about the many issues He has against them. The phrase “Lord of Hosts” or “Lord Almighty” is used repetitively to communicate the strength and power of the Lord, but also His all-knowing (omniscient) character. Nothing gets by the Lord, not even our inner thoughts! Out of 55 verses in this book, the Lord directly speaks in 42 of them. It seems the Lord wishes to be heard!

Introduction: Faithfulness of God to Israel (1:1-5)

I. Unfaithfulness of the Priests (1:6-2:9)

II. Unfaithfulness of the People (2:10-3:15)

III. The Coming Day of the Lord (3:16-4:6)

OBSERVATION WORDS

- **Lord / Lord of Hosts/Almighty**
- **Jesus** (foreshadowing, prophecies, etc.)
- **Holy Spirit** (symbols, mentions, etc.)
- **“but you say/ask/retort...”**
- **Priest**
- **“day is coming / that day...”**

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What is something the Lord taught you through this book? How will you apply this to your life?

- List all the various characteristics of God described in this book. What characteristic of God do you need to focus on in your life and why?

- How do you see Jesus represented in this book? The Holy Spirit?

- What sins are pointed out in this book? What similarities do you see between then and now – in society, in the church, in your own life?

- Read Isaiah 43:22 and compare to Malachi 1:13-14. What are your thoughts?

- Read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and consider being “chosen” (vs. “hated/rejected”) and part of the “royal priesthood.” How does this passage and Malachi chapter 2 apply to you? Why are home and private lives so important to God? What in your life needs to change in order to be a better “true” priest?

- Read the following passages, noting what the tithe is used for and results upon self and others for giving tithes and offerings:
 - Genesis 14:17-20

 - Deuteronomy 14:22-29

 - Numbers 18:9-24

 - Proverbs 11:23-24

 - Malachi 3:8-12

 - Mark 12:41-44

 - Acts 2:44-47

 - 1 Corinthians 9:3-14

 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Based on the above passages, what would you say are the purposes of tithes and offerings?

According to the whole book of Malachi, how are NOT bringing the tithes and offerings affecting Judah and the world? When we don't give tithes and offerings, what are we really saying?

- Do you, or have you ever, grown weary of serving the Lord – especially in trying times? Has it affected your awe and trust of God? What does the book of Malachi say about this and what promises are there for those who remain faithful to Him?

KEY WORD:

KEY VERSE:

KEY CHAPTER:

MINOR PROPHET REVIEW (HOSEA – MALACHI)

- What was your favorite Minor Prophets book and why?
- What have you learned by reading the Minor Prophets? How will this impact your daily life?
- How have the messages of the Minor Prophets affected your missionary zeal? What can you draw from the Minor Prophets when telling others about Christ?