

Malachi: The Prophet of Remembrance

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Background

1. Malachi, Malachias, Malachk or Mal'achi (Hebrew: מַלְאָכִי, - "listen, messenger, angel) was the writer of the Book of Malachi, the last book of the minor prophets and of the Old Testament
2. His name is a diminutive form of Mál'akhîyah, the "messenger of God"
3. He prophesied after Haggai and Zechariah (Mal. 1:10; 3:1, 10) 420 BC
4. It is possible that Malachi is not a proper name, but simply means "messenger of Jehovah" (Easton's Bible Dictionary)
5. The Septuagint version contains the superscription "by the hand of His messenger or angel"
6. Malachi probably lived and prophesied during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. The abuses which Malachi mentions in his writings correspond with those which Nehemiah found on his second visit to Jerusalem in 432 BC (Neh. 13:7)
7. Nothing is known of the personal life of the author of Malachi, although it has been suggested that he may have been a Levite. In fact, Mal. 1:1 is the only place in the Bible where Malachi is mentioned.

B. Purpose

1. The Book of Malachi was written to correct the lax religious and social behavior of the Israelites, particularly the priests, in post-exilic Jerusalem. It is written in six short sermons.
2. The prophets urged the people of Judah and Israel to see their exile as punishment for failing to uphold their covenant with God; however, it was not long after they had been restored to the land and to Temple worship that the people's commitment to their God began to fade.
3. In 1:2, the people of Israel question God's love for them. It is so serious that Malachi is confrontational with his audience.
4. Malachi accused the people of failing to respect God as He deserves. They were offering substandard sacrifices and begrudging even that
5. The priests were charged with being complicit in the people's malaise and worship weariness
6. In 2:10, Malachi addresses divorce. He deals with divorce both as a social problem and as a spiritual problem
7. Malachi criticizes them for questioning God's justice. He reminds them that God is just, exhorting them to be faithful as they await that justice.
8. He points out that the people have not been faithful manifested by neglecting to offer their full tithe to God. The people had come to believe that no good comes out of serving God.
10. The book of Malachi begins 450 years of silence in which there are no inspired prophets, and ending with a promise that a messenger would come to prepare the way for the Lord. 450 years later that silence was broken by John the Baptist with the inspired declaration that the Lord has come - Mal. 4:1-6

I. THE MESSENGER'S MESSAGE

- A. Malachi is written in a pattern of an accusatory statement, a denial by the accused in the form of a question, and the accuser's evidence that his statement is just
 - 1. How has God loved us? - Mal. 1:2-5
 - a. God's answer is that you are still here and Edom is gone.
 - 2. How have we despised God's name? - Mal. 1:6-7
 - a. They offered God defiled offerings and treated sacrifices with contempt
 - 3. How have we defiled God? - Mal. 1:8-9
 - a. You have offered less than your best to God
 - b. The table of the Lord is defiled - Mal. 1:10-12
 - c. God won't accept the offerings they are giving, and they look at their offerings and blame God
 - 4. How tiresome it is! - Mal. 1:13-14
 - a. They blame God for their boredom.
 - 5. Why are the priests insincere? - Mal. 2:1-9
 - a. They no longer held God in awe, and they are not teaching truth
- B. Why do you deal treacherously with your brother? - Mal. 2:10
 - 1. Marrying heathens - Mal. 2:11-12
 - a. "Everyone is created by God, so it doesn't matter who I marry."
 - 2. Why does God no longer listen to us? - Mal. 2:13-16
 - a. They were not honoring their marriage covenants
 - 3. Where is the God of Justice? - Mal. 2:17 - 3:6
 - a. They weary God by claiming the evil are accepted by God, implying that He is fickle
 - b. God's going to show them His judgments by refining them and bringing judgment against sinners
 - 4. How can we return; what can we do? - Mal. 3:7
 - a. Claiming they don't know how to repent, or that it is pointless
- C. How have we robbed God? - Mal. 3:8-12
 - 1. Not giving as required is stealing
 - 2. How have we spoken against God? - Mal. 3:13-15
 - a. In their arrogance they claimed it wasn't worth serving God
 - b. They are sorrowful, but it seems that God doesn't listen. They ignore their responsibility for this
 - 3. God remembers who serves and does not - Mal. 3:16-18
 - 4. The next prophet will make a distinction - Mal. 4:1-6; Luke 1:16-17

II. LESSONS

- A. We can get careless in our service, bored with what we do, think that God doesn't care or doesn't really mean what He says, and think that it really doesn't make a difference any way
- B. But judgment is coming - 2Cor. 5:10
- C. How will we appear in God's book of remembrance?