

THE DAYS OF ELIJAH
PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: MALACHI
Malachi 4:5-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION

After the Remnant returned from Babylonian captivity, there was a brief period of repentance and reformation. But within three or four generations—less than a century—again the Jewish people had become hard-hearted and lapsed into their old ways of idolatry, mixed marriages with pagan mates, covetousness, and oppression of the poor and dispossessed. Malachi uses a question and answer format to address the situation, to pronounce God’s curse on this kind of behavior, and to speak prophetically about the coming of a new era whose fore-runner will be the new Elijah.

B. TITLE

1. HEBREW

- **Mal’aki** = ‘My Messenger’
- Shortened form of **Mal’akya** = ‘Messenger of Yahweh’
- ‘Messenger’ is mentioned three times

2:7—For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

3:1—Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.

2. SEPTUAGINT

- **Μαλαχιας**
- Superscription added— *ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ*—‘by the hand of the messenger’

3. LATIN

- **Maleachi**

C. PLACE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

1. PART OF THE LATTER PROPHETS—THE TRULY ‘PROPHETIC’ BOOKS OF THE OT

2. TWELFTH—AND LAST—OF THE MINOR PROPHETS
3. LAST BOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—SILENCE FOLLOWS FOR 400+ YEARS

D. AUTHOR

1. AUTHORSHIP

- a. Malachi—attributed in **1:1**
 - Few scholars challenge authorship by Malachi
- b. Some scholars argue that Malachi was written by the author of **Zechariah 9-14**
 1. Malachi begins the same way as **Zechariah 9** and **12**

Mal 1:1—*The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi*

Zech 9:1—*The burden of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach*

Zech 12:1—*The burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel*
 2. Some say **Zechariah 9-14** and **Malachi** were three oracles by one anonymous author
 3. Others say all this material was by multiple anonymous authors

2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION—MALACHI

- a. Nothing *certain* is known about him
- b. Malachi's name is unique—no other person named Malachi in the Bible
 - Like Jonah and Habakkuk—no other biblical person had their names
- c. Jewish tradition
 - Says—like Zechariah before him—Malachi was a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the Old Testament scriptures.

E. SETTING

1. HISTORICAL SETTING IN BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Ezra 1-6

538—**first return**—**Zerubbabel** was governor—**Cyrus** was king

536—Temple foundation laid

534—Temple-building discontinued

520—Temple-building resumed—**Darius** was king

520 and following—ministry of **Haggai** and **Zechariah**

515—Temple completed—3 Adar (March)—6th year of Darius's reign

Esther

483-473—**Esther** was queen—**Xerxes I** was king

Ezra 7-10

457 BC—**second return**—under **Ezra**—spiritual restoration—**Artaxerxes I** was king

Nehemiah

444—**third return**—under **Nehemiah**

444-432—walls rebuilt (**Neh 1-7**)—second restoration of people under **Ezra** (**Neh 8-13**)

432—**Nehemiah** returned to Persia (**Neh 13:6**)

432-425—lapse of people into old ways—**Malachi** prophesied for reformation

425—**Nehemiah** returned to Jerusalem (**Neh 13:7**)

Nehemiah —restored tithes/Sabbath—put away foreign wives (**Neh 13:8-31**)

2. HISTORICAL SETTING AND BIBLICAL PROPHECY

a. The prophetic **promises**

- Haggai—promised—the glory of the second temple would be greater than the first
- Zechariah—promised—the Messiah would restore the Kingdom of Jehovah

b. Continuation of the political *status quo*—and religious **decline**

- The Persians still dominated the Jews—the Jewish kingdom had not been restored
- Temple worship became rote—wearisome—and corrupt

c. People became **disillusioned**

- Despite two previous revivals under Ezra—they lapsed into former sinful ways

F. DATE

1. EXACT DATE IS UNCERTAIN

2. HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

a. During Persian control of Judea—**539-333 BC**

- Persian term for governor—**pechah**—was used—**1:8**

- b. After Temple had been rebuilt—so **after 515 BC**
 - Sacrifices were being offered—**1:7-10** and **3:8**
 - Probably *many* years after rebuilding—corruption of ceremonies had set in
- c. Problems were like those described in Nehemiah—about the time he left for Persia—**432**
 - Corrupt priests—**Mal 1:6-2:9**—cf, **Neh 13:1-9**
 - Neglecting tithes and offerings—**Mal 3:7-12**—cf. **Neh 13:10-13**
 - Intermarriage with pagan spouses—**Mal 2:10-16**—cf. **Neh 13:23-38**
- d. Nehemiah dealt with these problems after returning to Jerusalem—about **425**

3. CONCLUSION

- Malachi prophesied probably during Nehemiah’s absence in Persia—**432-425**

G. STYLE AND GENRE

1. DIVINE ORACLE—CALLING FOR REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION

- The ‘burden’ of the word of the Lord—**1:1**
- Burden—**massa** = that which is lifted/carried—utterance lifted by the soul—oracle
- More than any other prophetic book—God speaks—47 of 55 verses

2. FORENSIC STYLE [LEGAL]: CHARGE—QUESTION—ANSWER

- a. God’s faithfulness to Israel

1:2ff— **Charge**—I have love you!

Question—How have you loved us?

Answer—I have loved Jacob and hated Esau

- b. Empty worship and defiled sacrifice

1:6ff— **Charge**—Your priests have despised My name!

Question—How have we despised your name?

Answer—by defiled sacrifices and wearied attitudes towards worship

1:7— **Charge**—You have presented defiled food!

Question—how have we defiled you?

Answers

1:8—when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil?

1:8—when you present the lame for sacrifice, is it not evil?

1:8—why not present it to your governor?
1:8—will he be pleased with you?
1:8—will he receive you kindly?
1:9—will you ask God’s favor, for Him to be gracious to you?
1:9—with such and offering, will He treat you kindly?
1:13—should I receive that [your tiresome offerings] from you hand?

c. Ethical responsibility

2:10— **Question**—Do we not all have one Father?

[Problem—unethical behavior—not taking care of each other]

2:10—Has not God created us [all]?

2:10—Why do we deal treacherously with brothers and profane our fathers’ covenant?

2:13ff— **Charge**—The Lord no longer accepts your offering!

Question—Yet you say, for what reason?

Answer—You have been unfaithful to the wife of your youth—I hate divorce

d. Blaming God for injustice

2:17— **Charge**—You have wearied the Lord with your words!

Question—How have we wearied Him?

Answer—you call evil good in the Lord’s sight—you ask, where is the God of justice?

e. Second Coming

3:2ff—**Question**—Who can endure the day of His coming and stand when He appears?

Second Coming—God will purify the offerings and restore genuine worship

f. Call to Repentance

3:7— **Charge**—Return to me and I will return to you!

Question—You say, how shall we return?

[**Answer**—comes later—see 4:4—keep My Law]

Segway—to exhortation to bring tithes and offerings [below]

g. Faithlessness in giving

3:8ff— **Charge**—You are robbing Me!

Question—How are we robbing You?

Answer—in tithes and offerings

h. Lack of trust in God’s promises—and wicked behavior

3:13ff—Charge—Your words have been arrogant against me!

Question—How have we spoken against you?

Answer—You say it is futile to serve God—and you honor the wicked

H. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. ONLY PROPHET THAT ENDS WITH THREAT OF JUDGMENT INSTEAD OF HOPE
2. PROMISE OF FORE-RUNNER—FULFILLED IN JOHN THE BAPTIST
 - a. One who will prepare the way for the Lord—**3:1** (parallel—**Is 40:3**)
 - b. The new Elijah—**4:5**
3. HIS COMING—Second Coming of Christ—**3:2-4**

I. OUTLINE

GOD’S LOVE FOR HIS COVENANT PEOPLE—**1:1-5**

THE SINS OF GOD’S PEOPLE—**1:6-3:15**

The Sins of the Priests—and Empty Worship—**1:6-2:9**

The Sins of the People—**2:10-3:15**

Idolatry—**2:10-13**

Divorce [to marry foreign wives]—**2:14-16**

God’s judgment when He comes—**2:17-3:5**

Robbing God—**3:6-12**

Doubting God and honoring wickedness—**3:13-15**

GOD’S PROMISES—**3:16-4:6**

Promises of the Book of Remembrance—**3:16-18**

Promised Judgment—**4:1**

Promised Healing, Joy, and Victory—**4:2-3**

Promised Preparer—New Elijah—**4:4-6**

J. THEMES

1. GOD WANTS MEANINGFUL—NOT EMPTY—WORSHIP
2. GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO TREAT EACH OTHER WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT

3. GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL—DO NOT DESPAIR
 - His unfulfilled promises are not due to unfaithfulness on His part
 - But to people’s faithlessness and disobedience
 - Do not blame such problems on God—and never give up on God
4. REPENTANCE/OBEDIENCE WILL RESULT IN GOD’S BLESSINGS
5. THE DAY OF RECKONING IS COMING—FOR THE RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED
6. SINFUL HUMAN NATURE [OT]—NEED OF REDEEMER AND SAVIOR [NT]

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

Malachi 4—1 *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the Lord of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”* **2** *“But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”* **3** *You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the Lord of hosts.* **4** *“Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.* **5** *“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.* **6** *He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”*

III. EXPOSITION

A. PROMISED JUDGMENT—THE DAY THAT IS COMING—v1

1. CONTINUES IDEA OF JUDGMENT—FROM 3:2
 - a. Negative—warning—repent!
 - For those who are arrogant and evil
 - b. Necessary for justice—and to vindicate God’s character
 - They have questioned God’s character—*where is the God of justice*—2:17
 - c. Warning of judgment—continued in New Testament
 - John—the axe is at the root—trees that do not bear good fruit will be burned—Mt 3
 - Jesus—is coming with the winnowing fork—Mt 3
 - Jesus said—trees that do not bear good fruit will be burned—Mt 7

B. PROMISED HEALING, JOY, VICTORY—DAY I AM PREPARING FOR YOU—vv2-3

- a. For those who fear my name—not arrogant and evil
- b. Sun of righteousness

- 1. **Righteousness**—to restore our relationship with God
- 2. God—our **sun of righteousness**

Is 60:19-21—the sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor.

- 3. John the Baptist’s mission to proclaim—spoken by Zacharias

Lk 1:76-79—Go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace”

- 4. Fulfilled by Jesus

Mt 4:16—The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

- c. **Healing** in wings

- 1. Jehovah—*I am the LORD, who heals you*—**Ex 15:26**
- 2. Christ—Suffering Servant—*by his wounds we are healed*—**Is 53:5**
- 3. Picture of God’s healing mercy—forgiveness

➤ **Between the wings of cherubim—Ark of Covenant—above mercy seat**

- d. **Joy**—skip about like calves

- Analogous to joy expressed by all creation

Is 55:12—*For you will go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

e. **Victory**

- Total defeat of wicked[ness]—destroyed and reduced to ashes

f. Conditional requirement

1. This is the Lord's Second Imperative—in Malachi
2. The First Imperative was—**3:7**—*Return to Me!*
 - Response by people was—*How shall we return?*
 - Unanswered by the Lord earlier
 - Now He gives the answer
 - Return—by remembering the Law of Moses
3. The condition for God's blessing—remember and keep My Law!

C. PROMISED PREPARER

1. THE *great and terrible day*

- a. **The Day of the Lord**—prophesied in 9 books—18 times in the OT

1. Isaiah—3 times—**2:12; 13:6, 9**
2. Jeremiah—1 time—**46:10**
3. Ezekiel—2 times—**13:5; 30:3**
4. Joel—5 times—**1:15; 2: 1, 11, 31; 3:14**—and 'that day' **3:18**
5. Amos—2 times—**5:18, 20**
6. Obadiah—1 time—**1:15**
7. Zephaniah—2 times—**1:7, 14**
8. Zechariah—1 time—**14:1**
9. Malachi—1 time—**4:5**

- b. Phrase is identical only in Joel 2:31

- c. Prophesied by others with greater intensity—but they all end in hope

- d. Malachi—is the only prophet that ends with a final threat—of God's curse—**4:5**

2. ELIJAH THE PROPHET—WILL PREPARE THE WAY

- a. Continues the idea of the coming ‘messenger’—in **3:1**

3:1—*Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before me.*

- b. Like the ‘angel [messenger] of the Lord’ that went before Israel—**Ex 23:20**

- c. Identity—John the Baptist

1. Announced by Gabriel to Zacharias

Lk 1:16-17—*And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.*

- Fulfills Malachi’s prophecy—**v5**—to—*restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers*

2. All the Gospels—identify John as the one who prepared the way for Christ

- **Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 1:17; 3:4; Jn 1:23**

3. Jesus’ testimony

- a. Commending John and his ministry—**Mt 11**

- b. Said Elijah had already come—obviously referring to John—**Mt 17** and **Mk 9**

D. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS LAST OT PROPHECY

1. A CLOSING WARNING

- Human sinfulness continues
- Only repentance and obedience will avert God’s curse

2. HOPE FOR COMING DAYS

- The Day of the Lord will bring judgment—upon arrogance and evil
- But it will also bring redemption—for those who fear the Lord

3. SUSPENDED TENSION

- This is not the end of the story—but the end of the beginning
- When Elijah comes it will not be the end—but the beginning of the end
- The story is not finished—wait on the Lord
- And the Word of God was silent—over 400 years

4. DAYS BEYOND ELIJAH—SECOND COMING

- a. Second-coming—and final judgment and restoration—prophesied in [3:2-5](#)
- b. Our obligation—to prepare the way—proclaim His Second-coming

DAYS OF ELIJAH

**These are the days of Elijah,
Declaring the word of the Lord
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,
Righteousness being restored.
And though these are days of great trial,
Of famine and darkness and sword,
Still, we are the voice in the desert crying
"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"
Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call,
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.**