

**Brett Owen**  
**Regent University**  
**BOTB 504 Spring 2007**

**SERMON RESEARCH AND OUTLINE**  
**Malachi**

**Historical Context:** The book of Malachi was written during the postexilic period. The term used for “governor” indicates that it was written while Israel was a small province within the Persian Empire.<sup>1</sup> During this time God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to build up the people spiritually. In 516 B.C. the returned exiles finished the temple under the leadership of their governor Zerubbabel. Worship had been re-established in Israel.

The conditions described in Malachi suggest that despite worship being restored, the people had lost heart. In the time of the prophet Malachi, about 460 B.C., none of the promises of a glorious messianic kingdom had come to pass and Judah remained a struggling and impoverished little province within the Persian Empire.<sup>2</sup> Seemingly nothing was happening in Israel’s world, God apparently was doing nothing, and Israel began to wonder if she was truly God’s Chosen People.<sup>3</sup> It is in this historical context that the book of Malachi is written.

**Date:** The exact date of when Malachi was written is not certain. Scholars date the book between the first half of the fifth century and the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>4</sup> Some argue that Malachi might have been a contemporary with Ezra or later.<sup>5</sup> It must be written after 516 B.C. because the temple had been rebuilt, which places its authorship between 515 B.C. – 433 B.C.

**Malachi the Man:** Malachi which means “my messenger” is not a personal name. In Mal. 3:1 the same word is translated as “my messenger”. The Jews who translated the Bible into Greek did not consider it a proper name either. Therefore, it is unlikely that this book was written by a prophet named Malachi and there is no evidence that sheds any light on who did write it.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> William Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old testament Survey: The Message Form and Background of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 415.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Achtemeir, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Nahum – Malachi*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 174.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>5</sup> William Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, 416.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 415.

The author exhibits a confrontational style of writing. He excoriates the priests, affirms God's covenant and predicts the future restoration.<sup>7</sup> He is primarily concerned with the fulfillment of covenant duties. He presents his message in a question and answer method. He uses a number of rhetorical questions. Seven times he puts them into the mouths of his audience (1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8, 13). In addition he asked the people several rhetorical questions (e.g., 1:6, 8, 9; 2:10, 15; 3:2).

**Theological Content:** "The message of the book can be summed up in one sentence: The Great King (1:14) will come not only to judge his people (2:1-5;4:1) but also to bless and restore them (3:6-12;4:2)."<sup>8</sup>

- Yahweh of Hosts is the most common named of God used in Malachi. (1:6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17; 4:1, 3) It means "Lord of the Armies" or "warrior God. Hosts refer to heavenly hosts of Yahweh's army: angels, cherubim, seraphim, and the heavenly bodies."<sup>9</sup>
- Malachi mentions several covenants. The author mentions the covenant with Levi (2:4, 5, 8); the covenant with the fathers (2:10); and the marriage covenant (2:14). The author also mentions the one who prepares the way of the coming of the Lord as "the messenger of the covenant" (3:1).
- Malachi mentions God's love for the Israelites. God reminds His people of His love (1:2-3).
- Malachi is accepting of foreigners and recognizes that God is father of all. The author states how there are those who fear God all around the world (1:11, 14; 2:10).
- Malachi condemns divorce (2:16).
- The day of Yahweh is also a theme in Malachi (3:1-5), but it is not all darkness and fire. The author informs Israel that the Lord has a "book of remembrance" (3:16) in which the names of those who fear Yahweh are recorded. A distinction between the righteous and the wicked will be made (3:17-18).
- The forerunner is unique to Malachi. Malachi identifies the forerunner as Yahweh's Messenger (3:1) and as Elijah (4:5). John the Baptist is recognized as the one who fulfills this prophecy.
- Malachi teaches the importance of offering the best of what we have to God (1:6-14).
- Malachi stresses tithing (3:8-12).

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>8</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, (Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> William Lasor, Hubbard and Bush, 418.

## OUTLINE OF MALACHI

- I. God Declares his Faithful Love for Israel (1:1-5)
  - A. The superscription (1:1)
  - B. God declares His love for Israel (1:2)
  - C. God proved His love by choosing Jacob over Esau (1:3-4)
  - D. Israel will testify God's love (1:5)
- II. God Rebukes the Priests for Being Unfaithful (1:6-2:9)
  - A. They offer unworthy sacrifices (1:6-14)
    - 1. They dishonor God's name (1:6-7)
    - 2. The offerings are unacceptable (1:8-9)
    - 3. God is not pleased (1:10-13)
    - 4. Those who offer blemished sacrifices are cursed (1:14)
  - B. They broke their covenant obligations (2:1-9)
    - 1. God warns of a curse on those who break covenant (2:1-4)
    - 2. God reminds them of covenant standards for priests (2:5-7)
    - 3. God rebukes the priests (2:8-9)
- III. God Rebukes the People for Being Unfaithful (2:10-16)
  - A. God accuses them of breaking covenant (2:10)
    - 1. They were marrying foreign women with foreign Gods (2:11-12)
    - 2. They were divorcing their wives (2:13-16)
      - a. God hates divorce (2:16)
- IV. God Declares He Will be Faithful to Israel (2:17-4:3)
  - A. God will judge the wicked (2:17-3:5)
    - 1. The people have wearied God (2:17)
    - 2. God will send a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord (3:1)
    - 3. God will purify Israel for acceptable offerings (3:2-4)
    - 4. God will judge the wicked (3:5)
  - B. God will bless those who repent (3:6-12)
    - 1. God declares His unchanging faithfulness (3:6-7)
    - 2. God accuses them of cheating Him with their tithes (3:8-10)
      - a. God instructs them to test Him through proper tithing (3:10)
    - 3. God describes the blessing they will receive for repentance (3:11-12)
  - C. God will reward those who serve Him (3:14-4:3)
    - 1. The people say it is vain to serve God (3:13-15)
    - 2. God replies that He will remember the faithful and judge the wicked (3:16-18)
    - 3. God contrasts the wicked and the righteous (4:1-3)
- V. God Prepares Israel for the Lord's Coming (4:4-6)
  - A. God commands the people to remember the Law of Moses (4:4)
  - B. God announces the forerunner (4:5-6)

**SERMON OUTLINE**  
**GOD IS FAITHFUL**  
**MALACHI 2:17-4:3**

**Key Idea:** The book of Malachi confronts the people of Israel at a time when they doubted God. God declares in Malachi that He is unchanging (3:6) and reassures Israel that He will be faithful.

I. Introduction

- A. How often do we doubt God today?
- B. God answers His people in the book of Malachi with the assurance that He is Faithful.
- C. God calls for repentance and desires faithfulness.

**Key Idea:** The people of Israel have wearied God with their words. They have questioned his justice and think that evildoers will prosper (2:17). God answers them by assuring them a messenger is coming who will prepare the way of the Lord (3:1) and He will purify Israel for acceptable offerings (3:2-4). God is just and he will judge the wicked (3:5).

**Illustration:** Today many Christians feel the same way. They see worldly and wicked people prosper all around them, i.e. Hollywood and many question God's justice. Many people do not fear God or His judgment. The church needs to stand firm on the Word of God, have proper fear of the Lord, and trust God because He is just and He is the Righteous Judge.

**Key Idea:** God declares his unchanging faithfulness and delivers a call to repentance (3:6-7). God will bless those who repent and honor Him with proper tithes (3:8-12).

**Illustration:** In Jesus' parable of The Prodigal Son the Father demonstrates God's Love. God is forever faithful even when we choose to sin. He is waiting for us to repent and come back home. When we repent and obey our Heavenly Father, He will bless us.

II. Cause and Effect

- A. If you repent and "bring all the tithes in the storehouse" then "I will open the windows of heaven" (3:10)
  - 1. Then "all the nations will call you blessed" (3:12)

**Key Idea:** The people of Israel have spoken against God by saying it is vain to serve Him (3:13-15). God replies that He will remember the faithful and judge the wicked (3:16-4:3).

**Illustration:** Is it vain to serve God? Absolutely not, there is no better way to live! Being able to serve God is actually an act of God's grace. It is His gift that man, who are by nature rebels are actually able to serve God. Serving God brings purpose to our lives and is eternal in its impact and importance. Serving God whole-heartedly is to worship God and live according to His will.

III. Contrast

- A. Wicked – "burned up like straw . . . like a tree-roots and all" (4:1) vs. Faithful – "rise with healing in his wings . . . leaping with joy" (4:2).

**Conclusion:** Are you at a point in your life where you doubt God? God is unchanging and forever faithful. He is the Righteous Judge who consumes all evil. Examine yourself today and allow God to refine you with His refining fire. Repent from your sins. God is waiting with his arms open wide, waiting to bless you. Serve God with all your heart, soul and mind. As a child of God, rest assured that He is in control. He will remember your faithfulness.