

Malachi

Introduction

A. The Man

1. His name means “messenger.” Because of his being the last Old Testament prophet he is known as “the seal of the prophets.” Others have called him “the prophet of the didactic-dialectic” or “the lecturer” because of his style.
2. Malachi is not mentioned in the New Testament or by Josephus. His name is stated I verse one without any further information as to his family or hometown. Some have opined that this leads to the conclusion that Malachi was not a proper name.
 - a. The Targum (Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible) attributed authorship to Ezra. Jerome agreed.
 - b. Other traditions attributed the book to Nehemiah, Zerubbabel or Mordecai.
 - c. Because of similarities between Mal. 1:1 and Zech 9:1 and 12:1, some modern scholars believe that it is at least a second appendix to Zechariah. Remember that many of these same scholars believe that Zech. 9-14 was done by someone else at a later time. An analysis of the text shows that this is incorrect, as Malachi has nothing in common with Zech. 9-14.
 - d. The evidence is inconclusive. The argument for the anonymity of Malachi is just as strong. Malachi was used as a proper name in 2 Esdras 1:40, the Talmud and the heading of the LXX.
 - e. Malachi should be recognized as the proper name for the author. It would be strange for the last book of the Minor Prophets to be the only one without the author’s name in the first verse.
3. Nothing is known of his life outside of our text. He was an excellent teacher. He was devoted to the pure and sincere worship of God. Tradition indicates that Malachi was a Levite who was born at Supha and who lived in the region of Zebulun.

B. The Mission

1. Malachi fits the scenarios of Ezra and Nehemiah. Yet, there is no uniformity of opinion as to the relationship between Malachi and Nehemiah, the governor. There are at least five different opinions:

- a. He prophesied before the coming of Ezra in 457 B.C.
- b. He prophesied between Ezra's coming and that of Nehemiah in 445 B.C.
- c. He was co-worker of Nehemiah.
- d. He prophesied between the two governorships of Nehemiah (after 432 B.C.).
- e. He prophesied just after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem for his second governorship.

2. Only one small piece of evidence helps us narrow these options.

- a. Malachi challenged his audience to present an offering to the governor (1:8).
- b. Yet, the Bible indicates that Nehemiah did not require gifts from those he governed (Neh. 5:15, 18).
- c. Therefore, one might deduce that Malachi prophesied at a time when Nehemiah was not governor.
- d. On this one piece of evidence the position has been taken that Malachi prophesied between the governorships of Nehemiah, or sometime between 432 and 425 B.C.

3. His mission was to correct the abuses and attitudes of the Jews in the last half of the fifth century B.C. His commission was to announce the Messiah's coming and the day when men would worship God in spirit and in truth.

- a. In his day, Jerusalem had just been rebuilt and repopulated. The Temple had been functioning for about 100 years.
- b. The Persians were still in power and their practice was to all religious freedom to her subjects.
- c. While they had some problems from their neighbors, for the most part they were free to practice their faith as they saw fit.

4. Spiritually, they had lost the joy of their salvation and their zeal for God.

- a. The priesthood was corrupt. The people were bringing faulty sacrifices and the priests would approve them for presentation before God.
- b. Religious apathy and skepticism were running rampant.
- c. Tithes were neglected.

- d. Divorce was common.
 - e. Yet, the people and priests refused to admit that anything was wrong.
5. In this environment Malachi engaged in public debate with hypocrites and apostates. When he was through he had exposed the rotten foundation upon which their relationship with God was built.

C. The Message

1. Smith: "In his message Malachi reaches back to clasp the hands of Moses and reaches forward to clasp the hands of Messiah and his forerunner."
2. In the Hebrew Bible, these fifty-five verses are divided into three chapters. In the ancient versions it was divided into four chapters. The English translations have followed the latter division.

| The Structure of Malachi | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------|
| Introduction: Yahweh's Sovereign Love | The Priest's Sin Against Love | The People's Sin Against Love | Final Exhortation |
| 1:1-5 | 1:6-2:9 | 2:10-4:3 | 4:4-6 |

3. Malachi's style is more of a narrative prose than any other prophetic book. The parallelism is less pronounced. The imagery is not detailed and lacks the flair of other prophetic works.
4. His method has been labeled as "didactic-dialectic" or dialogue. This is a reference to public debate. There are seven patterns of such dialogue in Malachi:
 - a. Malachi makes an affirmation about some sin in the Jewish community.
 - b. The people would then object to the charge by means of interrogating Malachi. They would, in effect, demand that Malachi explain the charges and provide his proof.
 - c. Malachi would then refute the objection by presenting his evidence. Thus, the pattern in his teaching method was affirmation, objection and refutation. Clearly, this is the most argumentative book of the Minor Prophets.

5. The theme of Malachi is “the sovereign love of God” (1:1-5). Both the priests (1:6-2:9) and the people (2:10-4:3) had sinned against that love.
6. This is indeed a sad message. After all they had been through, they had made little progress spiritually and as a nation.

Malachi

Outline

1. Divine Love Slighted (1:1-2:4)

A. The Privilege of Israel (1:2-5)

1. The proposition (vs. 2)
2. The proof (vs. 3-5)

B. The Pollution of the Altar (1:6-10)

1. Accusation and denial (vs. 6)
2. Unholy offerings (Vs. 7-8)
3. Unclean intercession (vs. 9)
4. Undesirable service (vs. 10)

C. The Profanation of the Name (1:11-14)

1. Future honor of God's name (vs. 11)
2. Present dishonor of God's name (vs. 12-14)

D. The Punishment of the Priests (2:1-4)

1. The threat of the curse (vs. 1-2)
2. The result of the curse (vs. 3)
3. The design of the curse (vs. 4)

2. Broken Covenants (2:5-16)

A. The Priestly Covenant Perverted (2:5-9)

1. The ideal of the covenant (vs. 5-7)
2. Betrayal of the covenant ideal (vs. 8-9)

B. The National Covenant Broken (2:10-12)

1. The covenant defiled (vs. 10)
2. The nation defiled (vs. 11)
3. Judgment announced (vs. 12)

C. The Marriage Covenant Abrogated (2:13-16)

1. Unlawful divorce hurts innocent people (vs. 13)
2. Unlawful divorce violates a covenant (vs. 14)

3. Unlawful divorce frustrates divine purpose (vs. 15)
4. Unlawful divorce angers God (vs. 16)

III. The People Sin Against Love (2:17-4:6)

A. The Sin of Doubt and Skepticism (2:17-3:6)

1. The complaint of the people (2:17)
2. The promise to the people (3:1)
3. The purpose of His coming (3:2)
4. The result of His coming (3:3-6)

B. The Sin of Dishonesty and Theft (3:7-12)

1. The indictment (vs. 7-8)
2. The predicament (vs. 9)
3. The inducement (vs. 10-12)

C. The Sin of Disillusionment and Cynicism (3:13-4:3)

1. Words of the sinners (3:13-15)
2. Words of the saints (3:16)
3. Words of God (3:17-4:3)

IV. Concluding Words (4:4-6)

- A. An Exhortation (vs. 4)
- B. A Warning (vs. 5-6)