

MALACHI – God’s Answers to His People’s Doubts, Questions, and Apathy

The book of Malachi is a significant and unique portion of our Bible, placed as the final book of the Old Testament. Since we are people who have a high view of scripture, we view Malachi as a prophetic text that provides insight into the nature and character of God, and so much more.

Authorship

Most scholars support that “Malachi” was a real person and the author of this book. The structure of the superscription is like other superscriptions of prophetic books. The Hebrew word מלאכי (*mal’ki*) fills the slot where most prophetic books place the name of the author. In verse 1, the word “through” was a common Hebrew way to identify the agent that accomplished something. Thus, the prophet Malachi. It is worth noting that the word means “my messenger.” There is a small group of scholars who believe “Malachi” was a title given rather than a personal name. I would contend that “Malachi” was a real person and the author of the book. Please note the book’s emphasis is clearly on the message rather than the messenger. Out of 55 verses as many as 47 are the personal addresses of the Lord!

Historical Setting

Scholars place the writing of this book from around 450 BC to 420 BC (although could be earlier or later). This places the writing during the post-exilic period of Israel’s history. The Persian empire had conquered Babylon and allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland. These were challenging times as God’s people attempted to rebuild their lives and nation after the Babylonian exile, replete with political, social, and religious issues. There were struggles for power and influence, racial tensions, corruption among leadership, and complacency.

Malachi’s prophecies address many of these challenges. By way of “oracles” (a prophetic speech of a threatening or menacing character; often spoken against nations), Malachi provides God’s answers to the people’s questions. Please note – they are “the word of the LORD.”

Literary Structure

To further explain, the book of Malachi is a collection of prophetic messages that are structured as a series of disputes/dialogues between God and the people of Israel. The oracles of Malachi are characterized by a question-and-answer format, in which the prophet raises a question or issue, and then responds with God’s divine answer/explanation. Each are extremely relevant for today’s Christian. In addition, another feature of the book of Malachi is the use of covenant language, which underscores the relationship between God and His people. Malachi emphasizes God’s covenant faithfulness and the people’s covenant obligations, highlighting the consequences of their faithfulness or lack thereof. Finally, the book also includes several symbolic actions/signs that reinforce the prophetic message. For example, the metaphor of marriage is used to describe the relationship between God and His people, and to emphasize the consequences of their unfaithfulness.

Theological Themes

An overarching theme of the book is the *faithfulness of God*. Malachi emphasizes that God is faithful to His promises and that He will fulfill His covenant with His people, even when they are disobedient and unfaithful. This faithfulness is seen in God’s promise to send a messenger who will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord, as well as in His promise to bless those who are

obedient to His commands. Malachi describes God as a loving father who desires the best for His children, and who seeks to restore His people to a right relationship with Him. This theme underscores the importance of trust and faith in God’s character and His promises.

Another important theme in the book of Malachi is the *importance of worshiping God in spirit and truth*. Malachi rebukes the people of Israel for their complacency and lack of reverence in their worship and emphasizes the need for sincere and wholehearted worship that honors God. This emphasis on sincere worship is consistent with conservative theology, which emphasizes the importance of worship as a means of glorifying God and expressing gratitude for His grace and mercy.

The book of Malachi also addresses the *issue of sin and the need for repentance*. Malachi highlights the consequences of sin and disobedience, while also offering hope and the promise of forgiveness to those who repent and turn back to God. This emphasis on repentance is consistent with our theology, which emphasizes the need for repentance and faith as instruments of God’s rescue plan, resulting in salvation.

Malachi’s prophecy about *the coming of Christ* is another significant aspect of the book. See 3:1. Conservative theology affirms the belief that Malachi’s prophecy was fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ. Malachi’s prophecy underscores the importance of Christ as the Savior of the world and highlights the continuity between the Old and New Testaments.

The book of Malachi emphasizes *the importance of the covenant between God and His people*. Malachi reminds the people of Israel of their obligation to remain faithful to the covenant and to honor God with their lives. This emphasis on the covenant is consistent with our theology, which affirms the belief in the importance of the covenant as the foundation of the relationship between God and His people. This theme underscores the importance of obedience and faithfulness in the covenant relationship.

Judgment is also a prominent theme in Malachi. The prophet warns of the consequences of disobedience and unfaithfulness, emphasizing that God will judge those who dishonor Him. He describes this judgment in vivid terms, using images of fire and destruction to convey the seriousness of God’s wrath. This theme underscores the importance of repentance and obedience in avoiding God’s judgment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the book of Malachi is a significant and unique part of our Bible that provides insight into the nature and character of God. Its themes of faithfulness, worship, sin and repentance, and the covenant are all consistent with conservative theology, which emphasizes the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, and the need for faithful obedience to God’s commands.

Malachi provides a rich framework of prophetic messages. The themes highlight the importance of obedience, integrity, and trust in God’s character, and they emphasize the consequences of failing to honor the covenant relationship with God. May God move in us as we study!



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