

# MALACHI

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## BACKGROUND

With encouragement from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the first group of Jews to return from captivity had finished rebuilding the Temple in about 516 B.C. As the second and third waves of exiles returned in 457 and 445, Ezra and Nehemiah led the nation in spiritual revival. In about 432, Nehemiah returned to Babylon for a while, and when he returned to Jerusalem found that spiritual conditions had deteriorated (see [Neh. 13](#)). It is generally thought that Malachi ministered at about this time, reminding the people of God's love for them, calling them to repentance, warning of judgment, and foretelling great blessings for those whose hearts were right.

## AUTHOR

Malachi ([Malachi 1:1](#)). Biographical details unknown. His name means "my messenger" and appears in [Malachi 3:1](#) in translation.

## DATE

About 430 B.C. (see [Background](#)).

## PURPOSE

- To rebuke the profaning of that which is holy.
- To rebuke the abuse of proper human relationships.
- To announce both the judgment and the blessing of the coming "day of the LORD."

## UNIQUE FEATURES

- For its length, Malachi includes more questions (some 25) than any other book in the Bible—including perhaps the most famous one: "Will a man rob God?" ([Malachi 3:8](#), KJV).
- It contains the most famous OT passage on giving ([Malachi 3:8-10](#)).

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

*Revelation:*

- Both Malachi and Revelation, the last books in their respective Testaments, conclude with warnings ([Malachi 4:6](#); [Rev. 22:18-19](#)).
- Both mention Elijah as a witness to Christ's advent:
  - The mention of Elijah in [Malachi 4:5](#) probably refers to both John the Baptist at Christ's first advent and Elijah himself at the second advent (see below).
  - [Rev. 11:3-6](#) seems to indicate that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses before Christ's second coming.

*The entire Bible:*

- [Malachi 4](#) looks back at the OT and forward to the NT:
  - [Malachi 4:4](#) looks back to Moses and the law.
  - [Malachi 4:5-6](#) looks forward to Christ and his kingdom. Though [Malachi 4:5](#) in its primary sense applies to Christ's second coming, it was fulfilled in a secondary sense at his first coming by John the Baptist. There is no better link between OT and NT than these last three verses of the last book of the OT.

## OUTLINE

1. GOD'S LOVE STATED ([Malachi 1:1-5](#))
2. GOD'S LOVE SCORNEED ([Malachi 1:6-3:18](#))
  - A. The priests' contempt for God ([Malachi 1:6-14](#))
  - B. The priests' contempt for the priesthood ([Malachi 2:1-9](#))
  - C. The people's contempt for marriage ([Malachi 2:10-17](#))
  - D. The coming of John the Baptist and Christ ([Malachi 3:1-5](#))
  - E. Robbing from God? ([Malachi 3:6-12](#))
  - F. No benefit from godliness? ([Malachi 3:13-15](#))
  - G. The benefits of godliness ([Malachi 3:16-18](#))

## III. GOD'S LOVE SHOWN ([Malachi 4](#))

## TIMELINE

538 B.C.:	1st exiles return to Judah
430 B.C.:	Malachi ministers to returned exiles
c. 300 B.C.:	OT canon complete, accepted
c. 146 B.C.:	Rise of Rome
5 B.C.:	Birth of Christ

**Malachi 1:1-5** *Israel loved and preferred.* Malachi began his prophecy by declaring God's love for Israel, something Israel had doubted ([Malachi 1:2](#)). God's love was clearly seen in his preference for Israel, descendants of Jacob, over Edom, descendants of Esau ([Malachi 1:2-5](#); see [Genesis 25:23](#); [Romans 9:10-13](#)). God's choice was made not on the basis of the intrinsic worth of the two men, but on the basis of his sovereign purpose. See exposition on [§Obadiah 1:1-21](#).

**Malachi 1:6-14** *"Try giving them to the governor!"* Having established God's love for Israel, Malachi showed several ways in which Israel had scorned his love ([Malachi 1:6-3:18](#)). The priests had "despised" God by offering unacceptable sacrifices in direct violation of the law ([Malachi 1:6-8](#); see [Deut. 15:21](#)). They were treating God in a way that they would not dare treat a human leader ([Malachi 1:8](#)). Malachi called on them to either repent ([Malachi 1:9](#)) or cease their offerings altogether ([Malachi 1:10](#)). By their polluted sacrifices and empty formalism they demonstrated their contempt for God ([Malachi 1:12-14](#)). On the other hand, the day is coming when God's name will be exalted among the Gentiles ([Malachi 1:11](#)).

**Malachi 2:1-9** *Unfaithful priests.* Malachi continued his rebuke of the priests. God would "bring a terrible curse" upon them and their descendants ([Malachi 2:1-3](#)) because they had broken their covenant with him, by which he had promised blessing to the priesthood for its obedience and a curse for its disobedience ([Malachi 2:4-5](#); see [Numbers 25:10-13](#); [Neh. 13:29](#)). The priests should have been exemplary in their walk with the Lord and truthful in their teaching so that the people would have a proper example ([Malachi 2:5-7](#)). But they had failed in this mission ([Malachi 2:8-9](#)).

**Malachi 2:10-17** *Unfaithful husbands.* Israelite men, though claiming God as their Father, were profaning his institution of marriage by divorcing their wives and marrying foreign women. By doing so they broke their covenant with their first wife and committed violence against her ([Malachi 2:16](#)) by depriving her of the protection marriage afforded.

While the law apparently allowed divorce in some cases (see exposition on [§Deut. 24:1-4](#)), [Malachi 2:16](#) expresses God's firm disapproval of the practice (see exposition on [§Matthew 19:1-12](#)). Neither divorce nor polygamy has ever been God's plan. They are not good bases on which to rear godly families, for they violate the marriage covenant ([Malachi 2:15](#)). Marriage problems always indicate underlying spiritual problems ([Malachi 2:10, 13-14](#)).

Not only had the Israelites tried to make their evil ways seem good through their insincere piety ([Malachi 2:13-14](#)); they mistook God's slowness in judgment for his approval of their evil ways ([Malachi 2:17](#)). Such thinking "wearied" God, but he would graciously respond by sending the Messiah (see [Malachi 3:1-5](#)).

**Malachi 3:1** *The messenger and the Messenger.* The Lord says he will send his "messenger" ([Malachi 3:1](#)), a word applied by three NT writers to John the Baptist (see [Matthew 11:10](#); [Mark 1:2](#); [Luke 7:27](#)). He will prepare the way for the "God of justice" whom they seek ([Malachi 2:17](#)), Jesus Christ, who will "suddenly come to his Temple" as the "messenger of the covenant" (see [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)).

**Malachi 3:2-5** *Some purified, others punished.* When the Messiah comes, he will exercise the judgment for which Israel longed (see [Malachi 2:17](#)), but it won't be against the heathen: He will judge the godless of Israel, especially priests ([Malachi 3:2-3](#)). A cleansed priesthood will minister effectively

to a cleansed nation ([Malachi 3:3-4](#)). Sorcerers, adulterers, liars, and oppressors will be judged ([Malachi 3:5](#)).

**[Malachi 3:6-12](#)** *"Stop stealing and I'll start supplying."* God declared his unchanging love for Israel and invited them to return to him ([Malachi 3:6-7](#)), then discussed tithes and offerings as one way they could do so ([Malachi 3:8-12](#)). They had withheld a part of their offerings, for what they considered to be good reasons ([Malachi 3:10](#)). But by doing so they were renouncing God's sovereign authority. In robbing God, they had robbed themselves of his blessing and provision. The remedy? Render to God that which is rightfully his and trust him to supply their needs. They could never out-give him ([Malachi 3:10](#))!

**[Malachi 3:13-15](#)** *No gain from godliness?* Many in Israel had adopted a worldly perspective. To them it seemed that God favored the wicked while the godly reaped no tangible benefits from their godliness (compare [Psalm 37](#); [Psalm 73](#); [Matthew 6:19-34](#); [1 Tim. 6:6](#)).

**[Malachi 3:16-18](#)** *The world's most wonderful diary.* Amid Israel's spiritual decline was a remnant of people drawn together by obedience to the Lord. God not only listened to their worship but also, figuratively speaking, wrote their names in his "scroll of remembrance." God would bring them safely through the Tribulation and make them his special treasure. God always keeps before himself the names of those in fellowship with him.

**[Malachi 4:1-3](#)** *Fire of judgment, Sun of Righteousness.* "The day of judgment is coming"—that is, the Great Tribulation—when all the wicked in Israel will be utterly destroyed. The righteous, on the other hand, will bask in the warmth of the "Sun of Righteousness," Jesus the Messiah (compare [Luke 1:78](#)).

**[Malachi 4:4-6](#)** *"Remember Moses, prepare for Elijah!"* Malachi ended his prophecy by urging Israel to keep the law, and to look forward to the coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom. The promised Elijah is best understood as John the Baptist (see [Matthew 11:13-14](#)). While he was not Elijah literally, he did the work of Elijah, even as Malachi himself had done. (See [Comparison with Other Bible Books](#).)

## MALACHI

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM MALACHI)

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**Key Fact:** Last recorded prophet to Israel ([Malachi 1:1](#))

**Total Bible References:** 1 ([Malachi 1:1](#))

**Key References:** [Malachi 1-4](#)

### *Malachi Speaks*

At God's leading, I began my prophecy by speaking of Jacob and Esau, and concluded it with references to Moses and Elijah. The sad truth is that my people resemble Esau more than any of the other three! ([Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 4:4-5](#))

Like Esau, we have despised our birthright. We have both insulted and cheated our great King. ([Malachi 1:8, 14](#); [Malachi 3:8](#); [Genesis 25:34](#))

Yet he still loves us and actually records our devotion to him in a special book of remembrance. Amazing! But even more thrilling, he views us as precious jewels, to be carefully gathered and preserved. ([Malachi 1:2](#); [Malachi 3:16-17](#))

As I understand the divine plan, Elijah will help prepare for this glorious future day, when "the Sun of righteousness will rise with healing in his wings!" ([Malachi 4:2](#), [5-6](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Malachi*

- "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" OT saints often doubted this ([Malachi 1:2](#); see [Genesis 42:36](#); [Lament. 3:1-19](#)). But the fact remains: God really does love us! (See [Jeremiah 31:3](#); [John 3:16](#); [Ephes. 2:4](#).)
- The only offerings acceptable to God are those that are both "living" ([Romans 12:1](#)) and loving ([Malachi 1:6-9](#)).
- Think and speak good things about God, so that your devotion for him will be recorded in his special diary ([Malachi 3:16](#))!

### *Key Verse*

" 'Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,' says the LORD Almighty" ([Malachi 3:1](#)).