

The Book of Malachi

His Name	The name “Malachi” translates to “my messenger.” The name is fitting. Malachi prophesies not only the coming of the Messiah. He also prophesies the forerunner of the Messiah: John the Baptist.
Time in the Post-Exile	Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all Post-Exilic prophets. Haggai and Zechariah stressed the need to rebuild the temple. Malachi, however, criticizes the sacrifices made in the temple. This means Malachi wrote after Zerubbabel built the temple (at least the foundations). Consequently, Malachi is later in the Post-Exilic period than the other two. Thus, the reason the last book in the OT is Malachi.
Main Idea	<p>More than 100 years had passed since the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile. The temple was built, finally. However, all was not well in the land, even with a temple:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Priests were offering sacrifices with blemishes even though the law demanded animals without defect. (2) The men of Judah were not treating their wives as the Lord wanted them to and they were wondering why the Lord would not accept their sacrifices. (3) People were not giving to the Lord as they should have been. <p>So, enter Malachi. His message is this: turning back to God will now require divine intervention. Divine intervention was the only way to avoid another banishment from the land. And it will come through the return of Elijah (by way of John the Baptist) and the Messiah, who is Christ the Lord.</p>
Operating on False Hope	When Israel returned to the Promised Land, they held their heads high, and their hopes were high. They thought that if they rebuilt the city and the temple, all of the great promises of God would come true. The messiah would come and set up his kingdom. Then, he would reign and bring peace to the nations. That didn’t happen. The Post-Exilic Israel had proved to be as unfaithful to God as their ancestors.
Last Hope in the Last Book	<p>Israel’s story is the story of God’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness. As the last book in the OT, it serves as a summarization of sorts to this key theme of the OT. But it also serves as a book where God makes it known that Malachi will not be the final word. There will be divine intervention, as Malachi expresses in the last words of the OT:</p> <p><i>⁵ “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.” (4:5-6).</i></p>
Design	Malachi is a series of disputes/arguments between God and his people. Each section begins with God making an accusation that is followed by Israel disagreeing. Then God responds and offers the last word. In the first three accusations, God points out Israel’s corruption. In the final three, he deals with it.
Key Verse	<i>“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.” (2:1)</i>

The First Three Accusations: Exposing Israel’s Corruption

#1	Israel is corrupt because they are suspicious of the love of God. They didn’t really believe it.
<i>² “I have loved you,” says the Lord. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob,³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.” ⁴ Edom may say, “Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.” But this is what the Lord Almighty says: “They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord. ⁵ You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!’ (1:2-5)</i>	
#2	Israel is corrupt because they bring offerings/sacrifices that are blemished, and the priests allow it
<i>⁶ “A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’” ⁷ “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ “By saying that the Lord’s table is contemptible. ⁸ When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says</i>	

the Lord Almighty. ⁹ “Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the Lord Almighty (1:6-9).

#3

Israelite men were divorcing their wives and then marrying non-Israelites and adopting their worship practices. Then they wondered why God didn't answer their prayers.

¹⁰ Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another? ¹¹ Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god. ¹² As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty. ¹³ Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. ¹⁴ You ask, “Why?” It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. (2:10-14)

The Second Three Accusations: What God is Going to Do About It

**In these series of accusations, the people were inclined to think “condemnation.” Instead, they get “intervention.” This is where the prophetic materials related to the NT come into fuller view.

#1

There is Great Injustice. Therefore, I Will Send a Messenger.

¹⁷ You have wearied the Lord with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask. By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?” “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. ² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years. (2:17-3:4)

#2

There is a Great Robbing of God. Therefore, I Will Make a Storehouse if You Test Me in This

⁶ “I the Lord do not change. So, you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ ⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty. (3:6-12)

#3

There has Been Great Unfaithfulness. Therefore, I Will Send Elijah

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. ³ Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty. ⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees, and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. ⁵ “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

Between Malachi and Matthew: 400 Years of Silence

And Then This Man Shows Up on the Scene, like Isaiah and Malachi Said He Would:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, ^{make} straight paths for him.’” ⁴ John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River (Mt 3:1-5)