

## Malachi – An Introduction

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and Malachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets. Malachi concludes the Old Testament while providing an introduction to the New Testament.

### **Who wrote the book of Malachi? Malachi**

Malachi is not mentioned by name in any other books of the Bible. His parents, tribe and city of origin were not provided.

### **Who was the target audience? The people of Judah (referred to as Israel)**

Judah, the tribe of Benjamin and some of the Levites were the ones who continued to worship at the temple in Jerusalem after Solomon died. The northern tribes all broke away and set up their own king and their own places of worship.

### **When was Malachi written? We don't know for sure but it is widely agreed that he prophesied after the return from the exile.**

Unlike Haggai, Malachi did not provide dates when his prophecy was given. Based on the content of Malachi, it seems clear that he came after the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Malachi assumes the existence of the temple and is therefore after Haggai and Zechariah. Some of the sins of the people that Malachi addresses are similar to sins that Nehemiah addressed. It may be that Malachi and Nehemiah were contemporaries. Just as Haggai supported the work of Zerubbabel, so Malachi may have supported the work of Nehemiah.

### **Where was Malachi written? It was probably written in Jerusalem but that is not certain.**

The references to the temple, the priests, the sacrifices and the tithes make it reasonable to think that the prophecy was given in Jerusalem.

### **Why was Malachi written? It was written to encourage Judah to submit to the guardianship of the Mosaic Law while they awaited the arrival of the Messiah.**

While Judah was awaiting the Messiah, their guardian, the Law, revealed that they were sinners. While still under the law, the people of Judah needed to obey the law in order to be blessed. Disobedience brought curses. The writing of Malachi was closer to the coming of the Messiah than any other Old Testament prophet. Judah was assured that the Messiah would suddenly come to his temple. "Elijah" would come before the Messiah to prepare the way.

## Structure and Content

Malachi has a unique structure. In between the introduction and the conclusion there are six assertions by God concerning Israel. After the assertion, Malachi recites the people's questioning of God's assertions. God then responds to the people's questions and objections.

- Intro 1:1 – God's message to Israel (Judah) through Malachi
- A series of six "conversations" which include an assertion by God, question(s) by Israel, and a response by God
  - God Loves Jacob 1:2-5
  - The priests dishonor God by their illegal sacrifices and other failures as teachers of God's law 1:6-2:9
  - Judah profanes the covenant by marrying pagan women and divorcing their first wives 2:10-16
  - The people believe that God is not just because the wicked prosper 2:17-3:5
  - The people rob God by not giving their tithes 3:6-12
  - The people believe that it is vain to serve God because he doesn't distinguish between the good and evil 3:13-4:3
- Conclusion 4:4-6 – God will send Elijah the prophet before the day of Yahweh.