

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

MALACHI



PART 4 THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

It is advisable first to read the Preface in Part 1, also the Introduction to the Minor Prophets which precedes the Study on Hosea, and to read each book prior to studying it. The section on each prophet is a complete Bible Study.

Only a brief summary of the words of the *Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed.

INTRODUCTION

The name Malachi means *My Messenger* and his message from the Lord is probably the last of the Hebrew Scriptures; although some consider the Book of Joel to be later. Malachi ministered in the 5th century as also Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Temple had been completed in 516 B.C. under Zerubbabel's governorship and the sacrificial services of worship restored. In 458 B.C. several thousand more exiles returned with Ezra, the priest and scribe, who made social reforms and revived the Temple worship that the Lord God might be glorified.

REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Jerusalem's walls were rebuilt under the leadership of God's servant Nehemiah in 445 B.C. Nehemiah was the royal cup-bearer or butler to the Persian king and given permission to return to Jerusalem as Governor. The builders, organized by Nehemiah, carried their swords ready to defend themselves against their enemies enraged that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt.

Nehemiah returned to the Persian court in 433 B.C. but in a later second term as Governor in Jerusalem he found the people had sinned in his absence.



There were mixed marriages with the surrounding pagan peoples and many had failed to tithe, care for the poor and to keep the Sabbath holy. During these years, the Jews had become despondent living in a city that had lost its former importance and the presence of the glory of the Lord had not returned to the Temple.

The words of hope expressed by the prophets, even the post exilic messengers Haggai and Zechariah, had not come to pass. The Temple worship reflected a lack of faith and zeal, for the people had begun to doubt God's justice and His Covenant of love to them.

As recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Malachi likewise rebuked the people for these same sins and warned of God's judgement to come.

ORACLE OF MALACHI

The book of Malachi or Oracle is written in a series of rhetorical questions with answers.

Read Malachi Chapter 1

The Lord Almighty assured His doubting people of His constant love for them by explaining His great love for Jacob in contrast to His regard for his twin brother Esau of Edom.

(Genesis 25: 29 - 34)

*I have loved you, says the Lord.
Yet you say, How have you loved us?*

Malachi 1: 2a

Malachi rebuked the priests for their lack of reverence in worship.

They profaned God's name by offering blemished animals for sacrifice and for failing to teach the Law and thus honour the Lord.

*A son honours his father and a servant his master. If then I am a Father,
where is My honour?*

And if I am a Master, where is the reverent fear due Me?

O priests, who despise My name.

You say, How and in what way have we despised Your name?



Malachi 1: 6

By offering polluted food upon My altar.

And you ask, how have we polluted it and profaned You?

By thinking that the table of the Lord is contemptible and may be despised.

Malachi 1: 7

Oh, that there were even one among you who would shut the (Temple) doors, that you might not kindle fire on My altar. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hand.

Malachi 1: 10

You say also, Behold, what a drudgery and weariness this is!

Malachi 1: 13a

The blessings of the priesthood had already been turned to curses because they had despised and cheated the Lord and failed to listen and give glory to God's great name.

For I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts and My name is to be reverently feared among the nations.

Malachi 1: 14b

THE VOICE OF THE LORD REBUKES THE PRIESTS

Read Malachi Chapter 2

The priests were unfaithful unlike their ancestor Levi and his son Phineas who walked with the Lord in truth and honoured His name and Covenant.

If you will not hear to give glory to My name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Malachi 2: 2a

For the priest's lips should guard and keep pure the knowledge of My law, and the people should seek instruction at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 2: 7

After rebuking the priests, Malachi goes on to rebuke the people of Judah for their unfaithfulness to the Lord and each other. The Lord no longer accepted their offerings, for the Lord desired a godly seed or offspring; the Israelite men having divorced their innocent wives and married pagan women –

married the daughter of a foreign god (having divorced his Jewish wife).

Malachi 2: 11b

For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I hate divorce.

Malachi 2: 16a

Like the priests the people also had wearied the Lord with their words.

Yet you say, in what way have we wearied Him?

You say, everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them.

Or (by asking) Where is the God of justice?

Malachi 2: 17

MY MESSENGER

Read Malachi 3: 1 - 5

Behold, I send My messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me.

Malachi 3: 1a

This word from the Lord is fulfilled in the New Testament with the birth of John the Baptist. The coming of the Messiah is foretold, God sending His messenger (John) to precede and prepare the way before Him.

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?

Malachi 3: 2a

The Lord will suddenly come to His temple to purify the priests as gold and silver are refined. Then offerings will be received in righteousness. Messiah's coming would not only bring redemption but judgement and purification of all their sins and unfaithfulness.

Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, the adulterers, against the false swearers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and who turn aside the temporary resident from his right and fear not Me, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3: 5

ROBBING THE LORD ALMIGHTY

Read Malachi 3: 6 - 12

The promise of the Lord's coming was a Call for the people to repent, change their ways and be faithful to the Covenant in their giving and service.

For I am the Lord, I do not change: that is why you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Malachi 3: 6

The Lord is ever faithful and that's why the sons of Jacob will remain His Chosen People.

Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

But you say, How shall we return?

Malachi 3: 7b

Will a man rob or defraud God?

Yet you rob and defraud Me.

But you say, in what way do we rob or defraud You?

You have withheld your tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3: 8

You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation.

Malachi 3: 9

The curse would be removed when the people gave the Lord the offerings of their harvest. A tenth of the harvest was to be given to the priests and Levites for their families.

Then all nations would call them blessed, their land productive and a delight.

Bring all the tithes (the tenth) into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Malachi 3: 10



GOD'S BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Read Malachi 13 - 18

Your words have been strong and hard against Me, says the Lord.

Yet you say, What have we spoken against You? Malachi 3: 13

Many Judeans, lacking in faith, considered the evildoers prospered and went unpunished.

You have said, It is useless to serve God, and what profit is it if we keep His ordinances and walk gloomily as if in mourning apparel before the Lord of hosts? Malachi 3: 14

Those who revered the Lord would be spared when He came to judge.

A scroll of remembrance records those who honoured the Lord and talked often together of His name.

They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I declare them to be My jewels.

Malachi 3: 17a



With these lovely words, Malachi as the Lord's mouthpiece, answered the problem of the apparent prosperity of the wicked with the difference between the godly and the ungodly made obvious.

DAY OF THE LORD

Read Chapter Malachi 4

God announced the Day of the Lord will come that shall burn like an oven as both the wicked and those who revere His name are separated.

But unto you who revere and worshipfully fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.

Malachi 4: 2a



Earnestly remember the Law of Moses, My servant, the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him on Mt. Horeb (Sinai) to give to all Israel.

Malachi 4: 4

GOD'S FORERUNNER

I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

Malachi 4: 5

Just as Elijah preceded Elisha, so Elijah, fulfilled in John the Baptist, would precede the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One – a promise of Light and Hope. In the Gospel of Luke, the Angel of the Lord told Zechariah that his promised son (John the Baptist) would go before the Anointed One in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord. (Luke 1: 17)

As Forerunner, John the Baptist, would reconcile and turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the ungodly children to the fathers as in earlier times –

Lest I come and smite the land (the earth) with a curse. Malachi 4: 6b

CONCLUSION

It is significant that the first book, Genesis, ends with – *a coffin in Egypt* and the *Voice of the Lord* in Malachi, the last book of the Minor Prophets, concludes with – *a curse*.
(Read Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14)

However, Malachi in his oracle preceded God's dire judgement with the promise of Messiah's coming. Malachi prophesied that the Messiah would be an offering to fulfil all righteousness. Messiah's sacrifice of Himself would fulfil all the offerings required in the Book of Leviticus.

What a prophetic word to conclude the Old Testament!

The New Testament is the fulfilment – the promise of ETERNAL LIFE in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This was God's plan of salvation and restoration that the prophets foretold. To remove the curse of death, Jesus, who had no sin, came to die and was crucified on the Cross to take away and save us from our sins.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not die but have everlasting life.
John 3: 16

This is the joyous message of the Gospel, for in His death and resurrection Jesus conquered sin and death. That's why He came and He has promised to return.

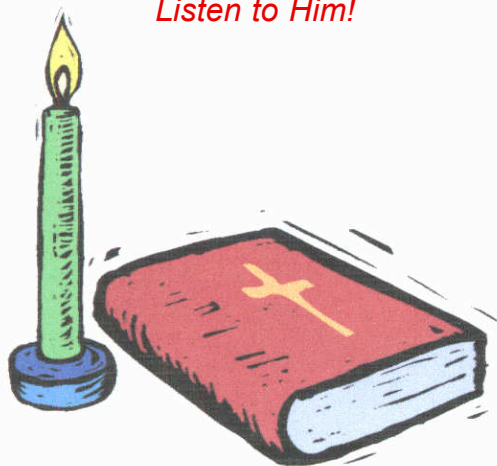
The New Testament is full of the *Voice of the Lord* in the teachings of Jesus, His ministry, parables and miracles. On His second coming, Jesus will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords in the new Jerusalem, where there will be no curse!

Until that time of blessing comes, hear the *Voice of the Lord* in the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament concerning His dear and only begotten Son - the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Light of the world.

This is My Son, My Beloved, with Whom I am and have always been delighted.

Listen to Him!

Matthew 17: 5b



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