



Overview for Malachi

Purpose: The purpose of Malachi's prophecy was to rebuke the people of Israel for neglect of the Temple, their false and profane worship, and their willful disobedience of God's commandments. The prophet also called the people back to authentic worship and offered hope through the promise of future blessings for God's people.

Author: The title of the book comes from a word meaning "messenger." This may have been the prophet's personal name, or it could have simply pointed to his role as a messenger of the Lord. No other identifying information is given about him. However, all other prophetic books in the Old Testament bear the name of the author, so Malachi is generally assumed to be the name of the prophet who wrote the book.

To Whom Written: Malachi delivered his message of judgment to a Judean audience familiar with worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Time Period Covered: Internal evidence indicates that the Temple had been rebuilt by Malachi's day and had been in use for some time. Thus, Malachi must have prophesied after Haggai, Ezra, and Zechariah, since the Temple was still incomplete when those books were written.

Date Written: The book is not precisely dated, but the date of writing is generally accepted to be between 460 and 400 B.C.

Setting: The people of Judah had been back in their land for decades following their seventy-year exile in Babylon. Though the Temple in Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the initial zeal of the returning Israelites had given way to apathy regarding the things of God and the worship He had commanded. By Malachi's time, rampant corruption existed in the priesthood and the people were experiencing spiritual depression and widespread disillusionment because the expected Messianic age had not arrived. They were focused on their difficult temporal circumstances and refused to acknowledge it was their own sinful actions that

had brought about their present situation. Through Malachi, God pointed out that disobedience had broken their relationship with Him. He summoned the people to repentance and pointed ahead to the great day of the Lord when God's people would enjoy future blessing.

Key People: Malachi, the priests

Style: Malachi's messages were bold and severe in tone. He incorporated vivid figures of speech and transitioned quickly from one point to another as he condemned the people's sins and called them to repentance. However, his messages also offer distinct evidences of the love of God, as well as His might and power.

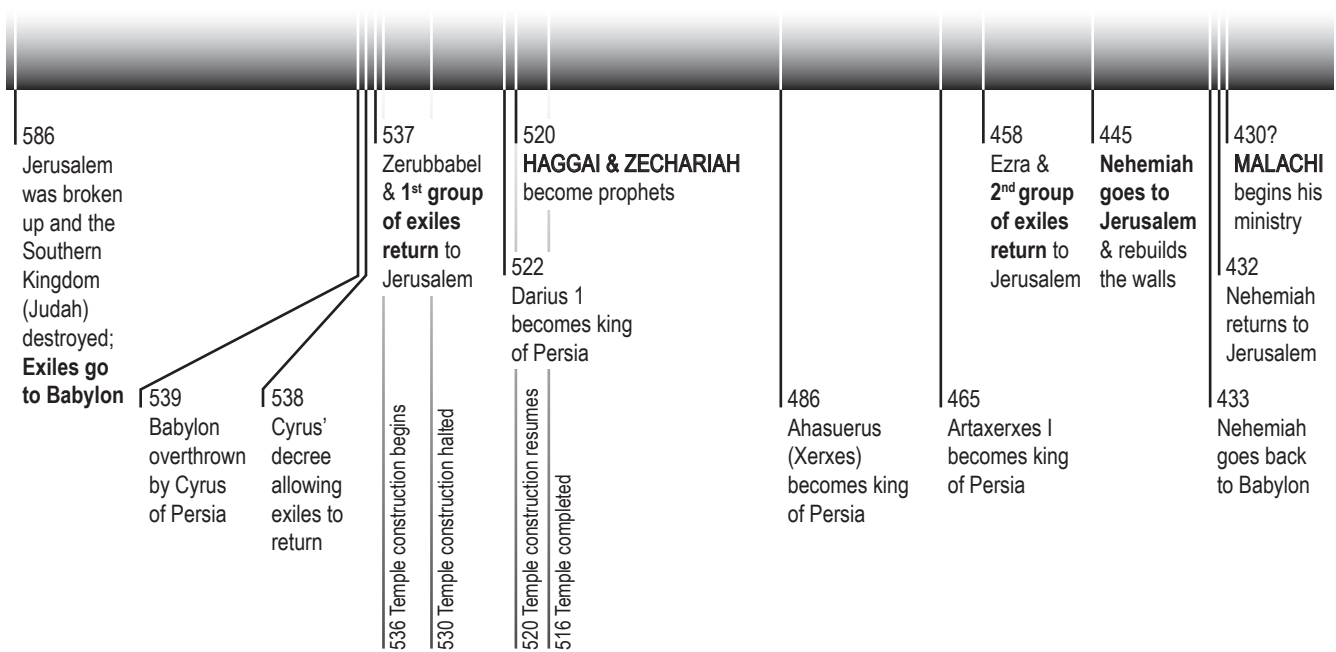
Unlike any other book of the Bible, many of Malachi's messages were delivered in the form of a public debate. The prophet used a series of questions and answers to defend the honor and justice of God. When the people disputed God's declarations or denied His charges against them, the prophet responded with incontestable evidence of their guilt. This makes the tone of the Book of Malachi one of the most confrontational in all of Scripture.

Summary: Malachi's prophecy is described in the first verses as being a "burden," meaning it was one of rebuke and condemnation. After an opening statement declaring God's love for the people of Israel, the prophet delivered God's charges against the priesthood (Malachi 1:6–2:9) and then against the people (Malachi 2:10–3:18). The closing chapter points ahead to the final triumph of the righteous in the end times. In his final words, the prophet exhorted the people to remember the Law of Moses and look forward to the coming of "Elijah," a prophet who would prepare the people's hearts for the coming Messiah. Jesus identified this prophet as John the Baptist in Matthew 11:14.

The Book of Malachi is the last prophecy of the Old Testament. A period of four hundred years would pass before the advent of Christ and the ushering in of the New Covenant.

Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

- I. Introduction (1:1)
- II. Israel's questions to God (1:2—4:3)
 - A. How has God loved us? (1:2-5)
 - B. How have we (priests) despised God's name? (1:6—2:9)
 - C. How do we (the people) profane the covenant? (2:10-16)
 - D. How have we wearied God? (2:17—3:6)
 - E. How shall we return to God? (3:7-12)
 - F. How have we spoken against God? (3:13—4:3)
- III. God's exhortation to Israel (4:4-6)
 - A. Remember the Law of Moses (4:4)
 - B. Expect the coming of Elijah (4:5-6)