

## The Minor Prophets

### Malachi

Malachi's ministry took place nearly a hundred years after the decree of Cyrus in 538 b.c., which ended the Babylonian captivity and allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:23). This was some 80 years after Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the rebuilding of that temple with promises of God's blessing, the engrafting of the nations, prosperity, expansion, peace, and the return of God's own glorious presence (cf. Haggai 2; Zech. 1:16–17; 2:1–13; 8:1–9:17). To Malachi's disillusioned audience, these predictions must have seemed a cruel mockery. In contrast to the glowing promises, the harsh reality was one of economic distress, prolonged drought, crop failure, and pestilence (Mal. 3:10ff.).

In spite of the promises of the coming Messiah and God's own glorious presence (e.g., Zech. 1:16ff.; 2:4, 10–13; 8:3–17, 23; 9:9–13), Israel experienced only spiritual destitution. As Malachi 3:1 implies, the Most Holy Place in this second temple had no visible manifestation of the glory of God. Though God was certainly alive and well (as revealed, e.g., by his remarkable providences in the book of Esther), it was a period in which God's people had to live more by faith than by sight.

1. Mal 1:2-5 – The Lord's Love for Israel
  - a. Malachi 1:2-3 2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob 3 but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."
2. Mal 1:6-2:9 –Priests' Corrupt Offerings
  - a. Mal 1:6 – a son honors his father...where is my honor?
  - b. Mal 1:7 - You offer polluted food...
  - c. Mal 1:8 - You offer the blind and lame animals
  - d. Mal 2:8 – You have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction.
3. Mal 2:10-16 – You Have Profaned the Covenant
  - a. Malachi 2:11 - Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.
  - b. Malachi 2:13–16 13 And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."
    - i. Lord is witness against them for they have been unfaithful to their wife by covenant (2:14)
    - ii. He made them one because He seeks Godly offspring (2:15)
4. Mal 2:17-3:5 - The Messenger of the Lord
  - a. Malachi 2:17 - You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "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?"
  - b. Mal 3:2 – who can endure the day of his coming

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- c. Mal 3:3 – He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and purify the sons of Levi...
- d. Mal 3:5 – I will draw near to you for judgment...swift witness against sorcerers, adulterers, liars, oppressors...those who do not fear the Lord
- 5. Mal 3:6-12 – Robbing God
  - a. Mal 3:6 - “For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”
  - b. Mal 3:7 – Return to me and I will return to you...
  - c. Mal 3:8 – Will a man rob God?
  - d. Mal 3:10 – Bring the full tithe...put me to the test...I will open the windows of heaven and bless you.
  - e. Mal 3:12 – Then all nations will call you blessed...
- 6. The Lord will visit His justice on evildoers
  - a. Malachi 3:13-15 - 13 “Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ 14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’ ”
    - i. It is vain to serve God
    - ii. What is the profit of keeping his charge?
    - iii. Evildoers prosper, put God to the test and escape...
  - b. Malachi 3:16-18 - 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 17 “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.
    - i. The Lord remembers...
    - ii. I will spare them...
    - iii. You shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked...
- 7. Malachi 4 – the Great Day of the Lord
  - a. Mal 4:1 – The Day is coming, burning like an oven...all evildoers will be stubble...shall set them ablaze
    - i. 2 Peter 3:1-13 - 1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count

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slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- b. Malachi 4:2 - But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 4 – Remember the law of Moses that I commanded him at Horeb
- c. Malachi 4:5-6 - <sup>5</sup> “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

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**Malachi's Sixfold Wake-up Call to Renewed Covenant Fidelity**

Disputation	Reference	Summary	Focus
Disputation 1	<a href="#"><u>1:2–5</u></a>	Malachi begins by defending the reality of God's elective love for Israel, a love which calls for robust covenantal obedience and sincere worship as its proper response. Instead, the people were dishonoring God by their worthless offerings and the hypocritical formalism of their worship.	Israel is to remember the Law of Moses.
Disputation 2	<a href="#"><u>1:6–2:9</u></a>	Malachi exposes these offenses and rebukes the priests for condoning them and thereby violating the Lord's covenant with Levi.	
Disputation 3	<a href="#"><u>2:10–16</u></a>	Malachi condemns marriage to an idolater as infidelity against Israel's covenant with the Lord, and he condemns unauthorized divorce as infidelity against the marriage covenant between a husband and his wife, to which the Lord is witness.	
Disputation 4	<a href="#"><u>2:17–3:5</u></a>	Malachi broadens his indictment as he promises that the Lord will vindicate his justice. This will take place when “the messenger of the covenant” comes to judge the wicked (when the Lord will function as a witness not only against adulterers, as in <a href="#"><u>2:10–16</u></a> , but also against other offenders) and to purify his people so that their offerings will be acceptable at last.	Israel is to remember the promise of Elijah and the coming day of the Lord.
Disputation 5	<a href="#"><u>3:6–12</u></a>	Malachi returns to the subject of Israel's begrudging offerings. The people experienced material adversity and were under a curse—not in spite of their behavior, but because of it. Accordingly, Malachi challenges them to conscientious tithing, which will be rewarded with divine blessing.	
Disputation 6	<a href="#"><u>3:13–4:3</u></a>	Malachi assures his grumbling contemporaries that evildoers, who seem to escape divine justice because of their prosperity, will yet be judged, while the Lord will deliver those who fear him.	
Summary	<a href="#"><u>4:4–6</u></a>	Malachi summarizes the main points of his prophecy: remember the Law of Moses (the focus of disputations 1–3), and remember the promise of Elijah and the coming day of the Lord (the focus of disputations 4–6).	