

# INTRODUCTION TO 39<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## MALACHI (432-420 B.C.)(17<sup>th</sup>)

A. The writer, recipients and date of the book of Malachi.	1
B. The division of the book of Malachi.	1
C. The main messages of the book of Malachi.	1

### **A. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.**

Malachi is the last of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name ‘Malachi’ means ‘*my messenger*’. He prophesied to Israel (1:1). Because he called *the governor* by its Persian name, just as Ezra did, he prophesied after the exile during the Persian Empire (1:8)<sup>1</sup>. The second temple functioned and *the people had already lost their initial fervour for the worship of the Lord at Jerusalem, as their sins show* (1:7; 2:1; 3:1,10). Thus Malachi must have prophesied quite some time after Haggai and Zechariah. His preaching resembles that of the governor Nehemiah<sup>2</sup>. He probably prophesied around **432-420 B.C.**

### **B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.**

The book of Malachi may be given the title, “**Condemnation of sin and announcement of the Day of the Lord.**”

Two parts:

1. Malachi 1:1 to 2:16. Condemnation of sin.
2. Malachi 2:17 to 4:6. Announcement of the Day of the Lord.

### **C. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI.**

#### **1. The people of God may not dishonour God by giving to him unworthy gifts.**

The people of Israel should have brought their best sacrifices and gifts to God. However, they brought sacrifices to God, which they would not even dare to bring to the governor! They sacrificed the injured, crippled or diseased animals. Therefore, *their sacrifices were useless, because God will not accept such sacrifices* (1:10).

#### **2. The priests of God may not cause the people to stumble.**

The priests of Israel should have stood in awe of God’s name, should have given true instruction, should have walked with God in righteousness and peace and should have turned many people from sin (2:5-7). However, they themselves had *turned away from following God’s ways, had violated the covenant, had shown partiality in matters of God’s law and had caused many people to stumble by their wrong teachings* (2:8-9). Therefore, God would send a curse on the priests and would turn their blessings into curses (2:2).

#### **3. The people of God may not divorce or marry unbelievers.**

‘*Marriage*’ is a solemn matter, because God regards it as a covenant between one man and one woman who both believe in God (2:14). Therefore, God’s people may not marry unbelievers. In marriage, God makes these two people one in body and in spirit. And through marriage, God seeks godly offspring, that is, children who would trust and obey him (2:15). God’s people, who are married, may not break faith with their marriage partner.

#### **4. The Day of the Lord.**

The Day of the LORD begins with the first coming of Christ.

In general the pious in Israel questioned God’s rule on earth and asked, “Where is the God of justice?” (2:17). They did this because they saw that the wicked people prospered and were apparently tolerated by God (3:14-15). Therefore the prophet announced that the Day of the Lord would come unexpectedly (3:1). *The Day of the Lord would begin with the coming of “the Angel of the covenant”. Elsewhere he is called “the Angel of the Lord”<sup>3</sup>, which is the second person of the Triune God in his function as Mediator of the Old Covenant. The Angel of the Lord is therefore the manifestation of Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period.* He would be like a refiner’s fire and separate the wicked from the righteous (3:2,18).

The Day of the LORD reveals the names of the righteous.

As a response to the prophet Malachi’s prophecy, ‘a scroll of remembrance’ was written in Israel, containing the names of the righteous, that is, the names of those who feared the Lord and honoured his name (3:16). Thus already during the Old Testament days, the nation of Israel itself made a very clear distinction between those who are wicked and those who are righteous, as Romans 9:6 teaches, “Not all who are descended from the nation of Israel are *the true Israel.*” The righteous were able to bring offerings of righteousness (3:3)<sup>4</sup>. While chapter 3:4 described these righteous people as people belonging to Jerusalem and Judah, Zechariah 1:11 described them as people coming from all the nations in the world! This shows that *what the Old Testament says concerning the righteous people in Israel must be applied to the righteous people of all the nations in the New Testament! Old Testament prophecy finds its fulfilment in the New*

<sup>1</sup> Ezra 5:14

<sup>2</sup> Malachi 2:11; Nehemiah 13:10-13,23; 3:8-10

<sup>3</sup> Zechariah 1:12

<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:1

*Testament and therefore must always be interpreted in the light of the New Testament!* On the Day of the Lord, it would become very clear who are the righteous and who are the wicked.

The Day of the LORD will burn the wicked as stubble.

The Day of the Lord will burn like a furnace. All the wicked will be stubble, set on fire by the Day of the Lord, and they will be completely destroyed (4:1). But for all the righteous, their righteousness or salvation will rise like the sun, driving all wickedness away and bringing healing of every wound and every sickness and rescuing from every suffering (4:2).

*The Old Testament prophecy is veiled and cannot make a distinction between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.* In the light of the New Testament, at the first coming of Jesus Christ, faith in Jesus Christ would separate the righteous from the wicked<sup>5</sup>. And at the second coming of Jesus Christ, everyone will finally see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked<sup>6</sup>, between those who serve God and those who do not (3:18).

---

<sup>5</sup> John 3:16

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 25:31-34