

## Malachi

1. Introduction – Malachi confronts the sins of the Jews who have returned from exile and are now living as a restored people. The restored remnant manifests unfaithfulness just as their ancestors did, but God continues to demonstrate his faithfulness and to point the people forward to the hope of something more glorious than the present.
2. Author, date, historical setting – “Malachi” is unknown as a name elsewhere in the Bible. The meaning of the name, “my messenger,” and the lack of a genealogical reference has led some to conclude that this is no name at all but merely an editorial introduction as part of an anonymous prophecy. However, the name has a similar structure to other Hebrew names and appears in the usual place for a prophet’s name; therefore, it should be taken as a proper name. Most scholars accept the unity of the book. Some believe the last three verses are a later addition because they seem somewhat disconnected from the overall flow. However, these verses harmonize well as a further unfolding of concepts introduced earlier in the book; there is no need to view them as a later addition. Malachi was written in the Persian period. The temple had already been rebuilt (516/515 B.C.), and enough time had passed that the people had become disillusioned over their continued subjugation to the Persians. Since no mention is made of the leadership of Ezra (458 B.C. or later) or Nehemiah (445 B.C.), most scholars believe that Malachi was written earlier than this, probably in the 475 B.C. range to allow enough time after the completion of the temple for disillusionment to set in. Israel continued to be a small province within the Persian Empire and had not risen to Davidic glory. Material prosperity had been elusive. And the numbers of those returning had been a small trickle rather than a mighty flow. The people had become discouraged and had begun to wander from the Lord. Malachi speaks to this context.
3. Language and style – Malachi is structured into six disputations, each one roughly following the same pattern: 1) God challenges or accuses the people, 2) the people reply with a question that implies innocence and/or ignorance, and 3) God points to the evidence of their failure.
4. Structure (Dillard and Longman):
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  - b. Dispute about God’s love (1:2-5)
  - c. Dispute about the contempt the priests show God (1:6-2:9)
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  - f. Dispute concerning repentance (3:6-12)
  - g. Dispute about harsh words against the Lord (3:13-4:3)
  - h. Appendix – Turn to the Lord and look for Elijah’s preparatory work (4:4-6)
5. Themes:
  - a. Disobeying God is unfaithfulness to a covenant relationship. God relates to us as a father and master and calls us to pure worship from the heart and faithful obedience.
  - b. Marriage is a covenant before the Lord between a man and a woman in which two become one with the help of the Lord (2:14-16). One of the purposes of godly marriage is the raising up of godly offspring. God hates divorce and unfaithfulness. These things are at cross purposes with God’s purpose. Faithfulness involves a heart commitment between fathers and children (4:6).
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  - c. God lifts the eyes of the Israelites to look for a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord (3:1). This messenger is identified with Elijah (4:6). Christ himself identifies John the Baptist with the Elijah prophesied by Malachi (Matt. 11:14; 17:10-12).

### Reference:

*An Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. B. Dillard and T. Longman III, Zondervan, 1994.  
*A Survey of the Old Testament*, Hill and Walton, Zondervan, 2000.

## Malachi

1. Introduction – Malachi confronts the sins of the Jews who have returned from exile and are now living as a restored people. The restored remnant manifests unfaithfulness just as their ancestors did, but God continues to demonstrate his faithfulness and to point the people forward to the hope of something more glorious than the present.
2. Author, date, historical setting – “Malachi” is unknown as a name elsewhere in the Bible. The meaning of the name, “my messenger,” and the lack of a genealogical reference has led some to conclude that this is no name at all but merely an editorial introduction as part of an anonymous prophecy. However, the name has a similar structure to other Hebrew names and appears in the usual place for a prophet’s name; therefore, it should be taken as a proper name. Most scholars accept the unity of the book. Some believe the last three verses are a later addition because they seem somewhat disconnected from the overall flow. However, these verses harmonize well as a further unfolding of concepts introduced earlier in the book; there is no need to view them as a later addition. Malachi was written in the Persian period. The temple had already been rebuilt (516/515 B.C.), and enough time had passed that the people had become disillusioned over their continued subjugation to the Persians. Since no mention is made of the leadership of Ezra (458 B.C. or later) or Nehemiah (445 B.C.), most scholars believe that Malachi was written earlier than this, probably in the 475 B.C. range to allow enough time after the completion of the temple for disillusionment to set in. Israel continued to be a small province within the Persian Empire and had not risen to Davidic glory. Material prosperity had been elusive. And the numbers of those returning had been a small trickle rather than a mighty flow. The people had become discouraged and had begun to wander from the Lord. Malachi speaks to this context.
3. Language and style – Malachi is structured into six disputations, each one roughly following the same pattern: 1) God challenges or accuses the people, 2) the people reply with a question that implies innocence and/or ignorance, and 3) God points to the evidence of their failure.
4. Structure (Dillard and Longman):
  - a. Introduction (1:1)
  - b. Dispute about God’s love (1:2-5)
  - c. Dispute about the contempt the priests show God (1:6-2:9)
  - d. Dispute about Israel’s covenant breaking (2:10-16)
  - e. Dispute about God’s justice (2:17-3:5)
  - f. Dispute concerning repentance (3:6-12)
  - g. Dispute about harsh words against the Lord (3:13-4:3)
  - h. Appendix – Turn to the Lord and look for Elijah’s preparatory work (4:4-6)
5. Themes:
  - a. Disobeying God is unfaithfulness to a covenant relationship. God relates to us as a father and master and calls us to pure worship from the heart and faithful obedience.
  - b. Marriage is a covenant before the Lord between a man and a woman in which two become one with the help of the Lord (2:14-16). One of the purposes of godly marriage is the raising up of godly offspring. God hates divorce and unfaithfulness. These things are at cross purposes with God’s purpose. Faithfulness involves a heart commitment between fathers and children (4:6).
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