Bible Synthesis IV

OVERVIEW OF MALACHI

Corruption of the priests – Sins of the People

Malachi ("my messenger") is quoted a number of times in the New Testament (see Introduction). Nothing is known of Malachi's personal life.

It is commonly believed that about 100 years had passed since the Jews returned from the land following the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. No doubt there was excitement in being back in the land of promise, in reestablishing the offerings, and in rebuilding the Temple. But that excitement had passed, and the nation was spiritually and morally decadent. This started with the priesthood and reached to the common people. Malachi directs his message to all.

This is the third postexilic prophet. It is addressed to the people of Israel who have returned to the land following the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. The Priests are addressed especially (1:6; 2:1). He addresses the people (2:10–11), and he addresses a faithful group among the people (4:2–3).

Haggai was sent to rebuke the people for failure to rebuild the Temple, and Zechariah brought them comfort in view of their glorious national future. Now Malachi reproves them for profaning the Temple and for despising the LORD's name. Malachi uses the question and answer method. There are no fewer than 23 questions in the book.

OVERVIEW OF MALACHI

1. GOD'S OBJECTIONS — MAL. 1 — 2

• Chapters 1 and 2 present the LORD's case against them.

• *Malachi 1:*

(1) A Message of Love —1:1–5

-1. Introduction —1:1

• The "burden" —Cf. Zech. 9:1; 12:1, 3; and Isa. 13:1 —"burden" often speaks of a divine message of judgment.

-2. The love of God for Israel —1:2–5

(1) Declaration of His love —1:2a

• The first 4 words to Israel through Malachi, "I have loved you" —cf. Jer. 31:3

• In the Old Testament we see the LORD's declaration of His love for His people *Israel*; in the New Testament we find the announcement of His love for the *world* (John 3:16).

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"Salting the Oats"

Malachi 1:1–5 — How did God demonstrate His love to Israel?

How has God demonstrated His love to us?

"Salting the Oats"

Malachi 1:6–14 — For what sins was God rebuking Israel?

(2) They question His love —1:2b

- Their response: "Wherein hast thou loved us?" (or "in what way"?)
- Why should they doubt His love?

(3. The LORD gives one illustration of His love —1:2c–5

- Speaking of both the persons (Jacob and Esau) and the nations that descended from them:

-1. He loved Jacob —1:2c

-2. He hated Esau —1:3a

- The nations specifically:

-1. The LORD laid Esau's "mountains and his *heritage* waste" —1:3b–4

- Though Edom purposed to rebuild, the LORD would throw it down.
- His indignation is against them forever.

-2. "The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel" —1:5

- Israel *did* rebuild, and with the LORD's blessing. The message of Haggai was that the LORD would be with them (Hag. 1:13; 2:4b–5). Edom could not claim such a privilege.
- Thus, the LORD had been demonstrating his great love for them. How could they miss it?

(2) A Message of Rebuke —1:6 — 2:17

-1. The sins of the Priests —1:6 — 2:9

(1) No honor to God —1:6a

- Contrasted: The honor of a son to his father and of a servant to his master.
- If the LORD be their Father (nationally), where is His honor?
- If He be their master, where is their fear?

(2) A polluted altar —1:6b–14

-1. The Priests have despised His Name. —1:6b–12

- Their response: "Wherein have we despised thy Name? —1:6c
- How?
  - Treated the table of the LORD with contempt by offering polluted bread —1:7
  - Offered the blind, lame, sick to Him —1:8a
  - They would not even offer such to the governor, for he would not accept it or them —1:8b
- Though they beseech God to be gracious, He will not because of their offerings —1:9
- No offering is preferable to a polluted offering —1:10

-2. His Name shall be great among the nations of the world —1:11

- They were despising his Name —1:6

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- But, had they been faithful, His Name would be great among all nations, AND one day it shall be. —1:11
- "… saith the LORD of hosts" —

-3. God bored them —1:13a
- Compare 1:13 with 2:17. They were wearied OF the LORD.

-4. Boredom caused them to belittle God —1:13b–14
- For that reason they brought polluted offerings (the torn, the lame, and the sick) —1:13b
- Cursed be the *deceiver* who had in his flock an acceptable sacrifice, but offers a corrupt one —1:14a
- "I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts" —1:14b
- His Name is dreadful among the heathen (cf. v. 11) —1:14c

• *Malachi 2:*

(3) Failing in their responsibility to the Law —2:1–9

-1. A curse for failure to listen —2:1–3
- This commandment is for the Priests —2:1
- If they will not hear, if they will not "lay it to heart to give glory unto" His Name —2:2a
- He will curse their blessings — He had already cursed them —2:2b
- He will corrupt their seed —2:3a
- He will corrupt their solemn feasts —2:3b

-2. The Covenant with Levi —2:4–6
- His Covenant was with Levi (Num. 1:50; 3:45; 18:21; 25:10–13; Deut. 33:8–9) —2:4
- Levi's dedication —2:5–6

-3. The responsibility of the Priests to teach —2:7–9
- He is the messenger of the LORD of hosts —2:7
- They had caused many to stumble at His Law, they had corrupted the covenant (to teach) —2:8
- For this He made them contemptible and base before the people (the people did not respect them) —2:9

-2. The sins of the people —2:10–17

• These are social sins committed by the people.

(1) Dealing treacherously against each other —2:10–12
- They dealt treacherously by profaning the covenant in that they took wives from the idolatrous nations (Cf. Ex. 34:14–16; Deut. 7:3) —2:10–11
  · *Why? See Ex. 4:22.*
  · Ezra had to deal with this problem (Ezr. 9:1–3; 10:11).
  · Nehemiah also had to deal with it (Neh. 9:1–3 and following).
- The LORD will cut off these offenders —2:12
  · He would even cut off the Priests.

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Malachi 2 — In God's continued rebuke of Israel, for what sins is He rebuking them here?

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Malachi 3:1–6 — What message of hope is given here concerning the coming of our Lord?

(2) Hypocrisy —2:13

- Feigned repentance — the LORD would not accept their offerings.

(3) Divorce —2:14–16

- The LORD had witnessed their promises —2:14a
  - · He also witnesses the marriage vows today. He intends that we keep our vows! [See Eccl. 5:4–6!]
  - · She was his companion and the wife of his *covenant*, the husband made a covenant with her!
- The LORD made them one (Gen. 2:24), because He wanted to make them "a godly seed" —2:15
  - · For one thing, a godly seed keeps its commitments.
- God hates "putting away" (divorce) —2:16
  - · Cf. Matt. 19:6–8
  - · It removes the covering garment of protection from her.

(4) Perverting truth —2:17

- They implied that the LORD delighted in their evil.
- Or, they would say, "Where is the God of judgment?" This indicating that God was not judging their sin, and that he would not.

2. GOD'S PREDICTIONS — MAL. 3 — 4

(3) A Message of Hope —3:1 — 4:6

• This is a series of prophecies (predictions). They deal with the Coming of the Lord.

• *Malachi 3:*

-1. The Forerunner —3:1a

- • See Matt. 11:7–14 (11:10); Mark 1:2
- • John the Baptist is only a partial fulfillment. The rest is still future.

-2. The Coming of the Lord —3:1b–6

- • He shall come:
  - He is the Lord (Adonai) whom they seek.
  - He will come to His Holy Temple.
  - He is the messenger of the Covenant. That is, the NEW Covenant (see Matt. 26:26–29; I Cor. 11:23–26).
  - They delight in Him.
- • Who can abide the day of His coming —3:2–4
  - This is His coming in Glory.
  - A refiner's fire purifies — He shall purify the Priests ("sons of Levi"), so that they can offer a pure offering.

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- Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant to the LORD (acceptable, pleasing). [Cf. Gen. 8:20–22 for one example.]

• He will judge —3:5–6

- Whom He will judge —3:5
  Sorcerers, and false swearers, those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, the fatherless, that deprive the stranger of his right, and those that don't fear Him.
- He is an immutable LORD —3:6
  · He is immutable in His justice (3:5). He will judge those sins!
  · They had said (2:17) that the LORD delighted in those who do evil. He does not change!

-3. A requisite for blessing —3:7–12

• They had gone away from His ordinances (the tithe —vv. 8–12). —3:7a

• He calls on them to return. —3:7b

• They ask, "Wherein (in what way) shall we return?" —3:7c

• Answer: The Tithe —3:8–12

(1) They have robbed God —3:8–9

- "Wherein (how) have we robbed …?
- His answer: "In tithes and offerings." [Offerings are also His.] Two tithes were required of them:
  -1. The annual Tithe to support the Levites (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21, 24, 26)
  · It was for the work of the LORD.
  -2. Another Tithe brought to Jerusalem for the LORD's feast (Deut. 14:22), excepting every third year it was for the needy (Deut. 14:28–29).
- Because of this robbery of God, the whole nation is cursed with a curse —3:9

(2) He tells them to bring the Tithes —3:10

-1. That there may be meat in my House (for the priests).
  - It was for the work of the LORD.
-2. To prove Him by it that He will bless them abundantly.

(3) He promises them blessing —3:11–12

- He will rebuke the devourer (all the pests that destroy crops) —3:11a
- The vine will not cast its fruit before the time —
- All the nations shall call them blessed because it is "a delightsome land." —Because of the abundance of the blessings of God! [Amen! and Amen!!]

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Malachi 3:7–12 — What message of hope is given here concerning God's blessing?

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"Salting the Oats"
Malachi 3:13–15 - What message of rebuke is given concerning serving God?
Malachi 3:16–18 — In these verses how does God describe His faithful remnant?
Malachi 4:1–3 — How does God contrast His judgment with His blessing in these verses?
Malachi 4:4 — What final reminder here in the Old Testament does God give His people?
Malachi 4:5–6 — How does this final Old Testament promise relate to our nation today?

-4. Arrogant words —3:13–15

- He accuses them of "stout" words against Him. As usual, they say, "What have we spoken so much against thee?" —3:13
- Answer: "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God, and what profit that we have kept His ordinance …?" —3:14
  - The "ordinance" here must also have been that of the Tithe (cf. 3:7, "ordinances," followed by His accusation of 3:8–9).
- Again they are perverting truth by calling the proud happy, etc. —3:15

-5. His Jewels — a faithful few —3:16–18

(1) The book of remembrance for them that feared the LORD —3:16

- Those who feared the LORD spoke to one another and the LORD heard them and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them. {GOD DOES NOT FORGET THE RIGHTEOUS.]

(2) He calls them His "Jewels" —3:17

- "… they shall be mine …"
- "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

(3) They (the righteous) shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked … —3:18

• *Malachi 4:*

-1. The nature of His judgment —4:1–3

- It shall burn like an oven — the proud and wicked shall be burned like stubble.
  - It will not leave them root or branch.
- To them that fear His Name — 4:2–3
  - The "Sun of righteousness" shall appear to them —4:2a
  - There will be healing in His wings —4:2b
  - They will flourish (grow up) —4:2c
  - They shall tread down the wicked — "for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (they shall be burned —v. 1). [Consider the implication of this.] —4:3

-2. He calls them to remember the Law of Moses —4:4

-3. Promise of Elijah to come before the coming of "the great and dreadful day of the LORD" —4:5–6

- See Matt. 17:11–13 which relate to this statement:
  (Also notice Mark 9:11–13 and Luke 1:17)

(1) He shall come to restore all things first —17:11

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(2) He came and they killed him —17:12a

- He spoke to them of John he Baptist —17:13

(3) They shall also kill the Son of Man —17:12b

- He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children. —4:6a
- He shall turn the heart of the children to their fathers. —4:6b
- "… lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." —4:6c

-4. Closing word of the Old Testament —4:6

- "curse" —
- Notice how the Old Testament begins — with creation and blessing. How does it end? With the threat of a curse upon the earth.

- How important is it that there be family harmony? It is very urgent then that the head of every home lead his family in a regular study of God's Word! This is the principal means by which the family can be drawn to the Lord and thus together.

END OF MALACHI

END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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