

Malachi

Original Historical Setting

Author: Malachi

Written: ~420 B.C.

Audience: Israelites in Judah after they returned from exile

Occasion: The Temple has been rebuilt and sacrifices have been renewed. However, after some time, the people are just going through the motions. God speaks through Malachi to get the people's attention.

Timeline:

516 BC – Temple is completed

458 BC – Ezra leads a group of returnees

444 BC – Nehemiah leads a group of returnees

~420 BC – Malachi begins his ministry

World Events that occur simultaneously

470 B.C. –Socrates is born

445 B.C. –Sparta and Athens begin a 30-year truce

428 B.C. –Plato is born

Features and Structure

Malachi quotes the people's questions and the offers an answer, sometimes in the form of a question adding to the adversarial feel of the book

OUTLINE

Ch 1-2 God's rebuke of the people's neglect of God and proper worship

Ch 3-4 God's announcement of the coming messenger and day of Judgment (and blessing).

Memory Verse: Malachi 1:11

Genre/Literary style

Prophecies written in Hebrew prose

Key text(s)

1:11 – From the rising/setting of the sun My name shall be great

3:1 – Prepare the way

4:2 – Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in His wings

What to look for

- Keep in mind that this is the last message left stirring in the minds of the people through the 400 years until Jesus is born.
- Notice how the people were missing the point of worship. They were just going through the motions instead of allowing it to flow from sincere devotion and love.
- Both Matthew and Mark identify the messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah as John the Baptist.
- Note the reference to the Day of Judgment. Malachi vows, "For behold, the day is coming." When it does, justice comes with it. Evil is trampled and the righteous will "grow fat like stall-fed calves."

Interesting facts

- When Jews eat the Seder Passover meal, some leave the door cracked open and set out an extra glass of wine called the "Elijah cup." They do this in anticipation that Elijah will someday return as Malachi predicted announcing the Good News of salvation.
- The name Malachi means, "messenger" prompting some to see this as a title rather than a name.
- Although there are two lists of Saint Malachy (Malachi) that are long, confusing with suspicious history, that has not stopped folks from believing that he foretold of when the last pope would serve. According to one list, that began with Pope Celestine II in 1143, the last pope will be the next pope.