



Malachi

- Author:** Malachi is Hebrew for messenger. Someone who referred to himself as a “messenger might have written the book” or it might have been written by someone named “Malachi”. The Hebrew word for Malachi is only mentioned in the book of Malachi.
- Time:** Malachi does not state a date or references to any rules that would indicate the date of the writing. However, by the time of the writing, the Temple had been rebuilt (1:10; 3:1,10), the Edomites had suffered a crushing blow (1:3). The reference to ‘governor’, suggests that the book is set after the exile (when Judah was ruled by governors like Nehemiah, rather than by kings). The book is believed to have been written around 450 BC.
- Genre:** Prophecy
- Audience:** Israel
- Purpose:** The purpose of Malachi was to assure God’s people that he still loved them, but He demanded honor, respect, and faithfulness from them. Malachi pointed out religious and social abuses and warned that judgement would come to purge the people of sin unless they repented. Chapter four announces that God would send another messenger to the people of Israel in the future.
- Related:** Matthew 11:13-14, Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 1:2-4, Luke 1:17, Luke 7:27

Structure

The book of Malachi consists of six disputes and two appendices. The disputes have the following pattern:

1. The prophet states a premise.
2. The people challenge the statement.
3. God and the prophet present the supporting evidence.

Malachi talks about being faithful – reflect as you read on what being faithful means for us as Christians today.

Outline:

1. A dispute about God's love (1:1-5)
2. A dispute about God's honor and fear (1:6-2:9)
3. A dispute about faithfulness (2:10-16)
4. A dispute about God's justice (2:17-3:5)
5. A dispute about repentance (3:6-12)
6. A dispute about speaking against God (3:13-4:3)
7. Two Appendices (4:4-6)
 - a. A reminder to remember the law of Moses (4:4)
 - b. An announcement of the sending of Elijah (4:5-6)

Challenge Yourself:

1. Identify the six disputes, challenges and evidence.
2. If Malachi were writing to the Christian Church today, what practices do you think he would point to as evidence of 'unfaithfulness' and which ones would he applaud for their 'faithfulness'?
3. Malachi has a lot to say about what the priests in the temple should or should not do. What can we learn from what he says about what Christian leaders (of all sorts) might be expected to do and be? Should these expectations apply just to leaders or to all Christians?
4. Malachi 2:5 says that the covenant with God was a covenant of 'life and peace' – what do you think this might mean in practice?
5. Does Malachi relate to the instructions given in the book of Ephesians?
6. Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?