

## OUTLINE OF MALACHI

Superscription . . . 1:1

- I. Denunciation of unfaithfulness . . . 1:2—2:16
  - A. God loves Israel . . . 1:2-5
  - B. The unfaithful priesthood . . . 1:6-2:9
  - C. God despises infidelity . . . 2:10-16
- II. The coming day of the Lord . . . 2:17—4:3
  - A. The Lord will send His messenger to prepare for His day . . . 2:17-3:6
  - B. If the people will return in devotion to God, He will yet bless them . . . 3:7-12
  - C. When the day comes, true worshipers will be spared . . . 3:13—4:3

Conclusion

Remember . . . 4:4-6

### CHAPTER XLIII

### INTRODUCTION

Jewish tradition says that prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet (Malachi) they call the *seal of prophecy*, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off.

The traditional Christian view is that Malachi is the link between the Old and New Covenants. Tertullian called him "the shirt and boundary of Christianity."

The authenticity of this writing is established by references to it in the New Testament. (eg. *Matthew 11:10, 17:12, Mark 1:2, 9:11, 12, Luke 1:17, Romans 9:13*)

Malachi's exact date we do not know, but it is probably about 460 B.C. Some have placed it as late as 424 B.C.

The remnant had returned from Babylon in 538 B.C. Haggai and Zechariah had succeeded in getting them to rebuild the temple in 520-516 B.C. In 457 Ezra had lent his assistance to Jewish national restoration. Fifteen years later in 444 B.C., Nehemiah had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

In all, about a century had lapsed since the return from captivity. There was no resurgence of the idolatry which had driven their fathers into such punishment, but indifference and lack of real commitment were the order of the day. The laxity of the priests in teaching and en-

forcing the law was evidenced in the people's lack of support of the temple services. Unacceptable sacrifice of the worst rather than the first of their flocks were brought to God. Tithes went unpaid and the practice of intermarrying with Gentile women again reared its ugly head. (cp. *Ezra* 9)

In this state the coming of the Messiah for Whom they waited was in reality a threat rather than a promise.

We do not know the name of the author of this last Old Testament writing. The word Malachi means "my messenger" and is the name of the writer's function. It is suggested that he is called Malachi because of his emphatic prediction of a personal Messiah. The term "Malachi" is actually translated "my messenger" in 3:1.

This primary prediction of the book (3:1) is applied to John the Baptist, also the Messiah's messenger. (cp. *Matthew* 11:10, *Mark* 1:2, *Luke* 7:17, *Matthew* 17:10-12, *Mark* 9:11-12, *Luke* 1:16-17)

Most commentators point out that Malachi's prophecy coincided with the first period of Daniel's seventy weeks (cf. *Daniel* 9:24). Thus the emphasis upon him as the Messiah's messenger seems fitting.

#### MALACHI'S MESSAGE . . .

Malachi's central concern is for fidelity to the covenant. (See the Covenant Theme in the Prophets, chapter III.) The priests have corrupted the worship which was designed to perpetuate covenant consciousness among the people. The men are marrying foreign women and so opening the door to idolatry as had Solomon of old.

In refuting this evil, Malachi rises to one of the heights of Old Testament prophecy in describing the purpose of the covenant in the ultimate worship of God among the Gentiles. His references to God as Father, the ideal priest, and the blessings of true obedience are equally striking in their Messianic overtones. He further clarifies, "the Day of the Lord," and points to the forerunner of the Messiah.

It is no doubt for these reasons that Malachi immediately precedes the New Testament in our English versions of the Bible.

The next word from Jehovah to His people is John's preaching.

### CHAPTER XLIV

## DENUNCIATION OF UNFAITHFULNESS

SUPERScription . . . Malachi 1:1

RV . . . The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi.