

Old Testament Survey

Malachi

The Meaning of Malachi

Malachi's name means "my messenger." Malachi's theme is that a holy life is essential if one desires to please God. If Israel desires God's blessings, then the nation must remain faithful to the covenant.

There is a great deal of discussion as to whether the name of the prophet is actually Malachi or not. The LXX translates verse 1 as "by the hand of his messenger" (an allusion to Ezra) instead of "by the hand of Malachi." However, it is best to see the phrase as referring to Malachi as a name, since if it did not it would be the only prophetic book of the Old Testament where the author is omitted.

General Outline of Malachi

- I. Introductory Appeal: God's Love for Israel - Malachi 1:1-5
- II. Oracle Against the Priests for Dishonoring the Lord - Malachi 1:6-2:9
 - A. Neglect in liturgical functions - Malachi 1:6-2:4
 - B. Insincere, corrupt teaching of the law - Malachi 2:5-9
- III. Oracles Against the Laity - Malachi 2:10-4:3
 - A. Treachery toward God in divorce and mixed marriages - Malachi 2:10-16
 - B. Warning of judgment by the coming Lord - Malachi 2:17-3:6
 - C. Repentance in tithing will bring prosperity - Malachi 3:7-12
 - D. Vindication of the godly against sneers of cynics - Malachi 3:13-4:3
- IV. Concluding Admonitions: To Keep the Law and Wait for Christ's Coming - Malachi 4:4-6

Authorship and Date of Composition

1. Malachi is the author, and apart from that we know nothing of him.
2. Internal evidence would point to the date of composition as being the last half of the fifth century B.C., thus putting its date around 435 B.C.
 - a. The temple had been built.
 - b. A Persian governor was in power thus pointing to a time after Nehemiah.
 - c. The sins Malachi denounces are the same as those denounced by Nehemiah during his second term as governor.