

Malachi (“My messenger”)

Introduction: thanks again to David Dorsey’s helpful resource. We have arrived at the last of the Minor Prophets. This book was written in between the completion of the temple (516 BC) and the time of Nehemiah (444-432 BC).

1) Overview

- a) **Yahweh is just:** he “loves” (the faithful remnant of) Israel but will utterly destroy wicked Edom (1:2–5)
 - judgment upon the *wicked* (*riš’ā*) country: Yahweh has destroyed Edom, and “though they rebuild, I will tear down”
- i) priests and people have cheated Yahweh in their offerings (1:6–14)
 - *unacceptable and inferior offerings* have been brought
 - *curse* upon those who have cheated Yahweh in their offerings
 - Yahweh wishes someone would *shut the doors* of his temple so that no more unacceptable offerings could be brought in (1:10)
- (1) in the past Levi served in righteousness, but *Levites have turned from Yahweh* (2:1–9)
 - Levi kept Yahweh’s *covenant* (*běrit*)
 - the priest is the *messenger* (*mal’āk*) of Yahweh
 - priests have turned aside from the *way* (*derek*)
 - look back upon a *time of Levi’s past righteousness* (2:5–6)
- (a) **FOCUS: stop being faithless!** (2:10–16)
- (2) in the future Yahweh’s messenger will come and *Levites will be purified* (2:17–3:6)
 - he will be the “messenger of the *covenant*” (*běrit*)
 - he will be the *messenger* (*mal’āk*) of Yahweh
 - he will “prepare the *way* (*derek*) before Yahweh”
 - look back upon a *time of past righteousness* (3:4)
- ii) people have robbed Yahweh in tithes and offerings; but if they change, God will bless them (3:7–12)
 - *unacceptable tithes and offerings* have been brought
 - “you are *cursed with a curse*, for you are robbing me” (3:9)
 - Yahweh exhorts the people to bring acceptable offerings for his temple, with the promise that he will *open the windows* of heaven (3:10)
- b) **Yahweh is just:** he will reward the righteous but will utterly destroy the wicked (3:13–4:3)
 - judgment upon the *wicked* (*rāšā*): Yahweh will bring them to an end, leaving them “neither root nor branch”
- i) **conclusion:** day of Yahweh (4:4–6)

2) Zoom in the focal point: 2:10-16

- The book's central unit features the book's call to repentance. Here Malachi appeals to the people to stop being faithless. The theme of this unit is the faithlessness of the people—in their social relations, their spiritual obligations, and their marital relations. The term *bāgad* (“be faithless”) ties this unit together; it occurs throughout the unit (2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16) and nowhere else in the book. (Dorsey)
- a) The question of Israel's unique origin as from God—2:10a
 - i) Cf. God's fatherhood over Israel—Deut. 32:6; Is. 63:16; 64:8
- b) The issue of Israel's primary sin—2:10b-12
 - i) They profaned God's covenant with them by their infidelity with false gods and marriage to women who served false gods (and who enticed them to do the same), and their sin deserves excommunication.
- c) The issue of Israel's second sin—2:13-16 (social injustice in the home)
 - i) They profaned their covenant with their wives by sinfully divorcing them, and their sin deserves God's hatred.
 - (1) Marriage was designed as a social blessing to continue the race, to develop people spiritually and emotionally and intellectually, to soothe and sustain them amidst the depressing and difficult circumstances of life, and to enable people to function as the image of God, especially now in a sinful world (Gen. 1:27–28). (Ross)
 - ii) They self-righteously weep because God does not listen to their prayers that were offered in hypocrisy.
 - (1) The sincerity of the praying is badly smudged by their lack of spiritual backbone to stand up and model integrity in God's will. (Rosscup)

3) Things we need to remember (think, feel, do):

- a) God expects people to pray with genuine holiness and faith.
- b) Divorce breaks the heart, destroys relationships, violates family integrity, damages the children's well-being, and makes for an uncertain future. (ZSB)
 - i) There seem to be 3 legitimate reasons to break a marriage covenant. This is permissible, not required. These include:
 - (1) Some form of sexual immorality (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)
 - (2) Desertion of the believer by the unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-16)
 - (3) Unwillingness to provide 3 things (food, clothing, sexual relations) for the wife (Exod. 21:10-11)
- c) We are to hold marriage between one man and one woman honorable because God does. It is His design for humanity. (Heb. 13:4)
 - i) The fundamental heart attitude behind rightly honoring Biblical marriage is the heart attitude of submission to God's authority.