



# Malachi

## Transcript

### Introduction

00:00-01:08

The book of the prophet Malachi. He lived about a hundred years after the Israelites had returned from their Babylonian exile, and his message was directed to the people who had been living in Jerusalem for some time now. The temple had been rebuilt a while ago, and things were not going well. Just remember the stories from Ezra and Nehemiah.

Now, when the Israelites first returned from exile, their hopes were high that they would return and rebuild their lives and the temple, all of the great promises of the prophets would come true, the messiah would come and set up God's Kingdom over a unified Israel and over the nations and bring justice and peace for all. But that's not what happened. The Israelites who repopulated the city proved to be just as unfaithful to God as their ancestors, resulting in poverty and injustice. And so in Malachi, we find out just how corrupt this new generation has become.

The book's designed as a series of disputes, and most sections begin with God saying something, making a claim or an accusation, and then Israel will disagree or question God's statement, and then God will respond and offer the last word. This happens six times.

### Chapters 1-2

01:09-03:10

In the first three disputes, God exposes Israel's corruption, and in the final three disputes, he confronts their corruption. And the overall impression you get from these arguments and disputes is that the exile fundamentally didn't change anything in the people. Israel's hearts are as hard as ever.

The first dispute starts when God says that he still loves his covenant people despite their failures, and Israel rudely objects, saying, "How have you shown us

any love?" And so God reminds them of how he graciously chose the family of Jacob, their ancestor, to become the carrier of God's covenant promises instead of Esau, his brother, and the family that came from him, who eventually came to ruin. Remember the stories from Genesis and the book of Obadiah. So right from this first dispute, Israel is exposed as suspicious, doubting God's love and faithfulness.

The second dispute exposes a problem with Israel's second temple. God accuses the people of despising and defiling the temple, and the people fire back, "How have we despised you?" And so God responds by focusing on the people, how they're bringing shamefully lame offerings of these sick, blemished animals that show that they don't value or honor their God. But it's not just the people, it's the priests, too, who run the temple. They not only tolerate, but participate in these corrupt forms of worship. From top to bottom, God's people have proven faithless.

In the third dispute, God accuses the Israelite men of treachery against him and their wives, which, of course, they deny. And God exposes the toxic combination of idolatry and divorce taking place. You have Israelite men marrying non-Israelite women and then adopting the worship of their wives' ancestral gods into their homes. Remember the story from Nehemiah chapter 13. And so Malachi connects this to a wave of men divorcing their wives for no good reason. And the people are all fine with this, and Malachi says, "No, it's a betrayal of your covenant with God." And so Malachi transitions into the second set of disputes that confront Israel's rebellion.

## Chapter 3

03:11-05:30

So the fourth dispute begins with the Israelites accusing God of neglect, saying, "Where is the God of justice?" They see injustice and corruption abounding, and God seems to do nothing. So God responds by saying that he'll send a messenger, who will prepare the people for God's personal return in the Day of the Lord. He will come like fire to purify his people and to remove idolatry and sexual immorality and injustice, so that only the faithful remnant is left to become his people.

In the fifth dispute, God calls the people to turn back to him, to which the people say, "How can we turn back?" And so God confronts their selfishness. He shows how they have stopped offering a tithe of their income to the temple. Now, that word "tithe" just means "one tenth." It's the amount of their income and produce that the Israelites were to annually donate to support the temple and its priests. The practice is laid out in different parts of the Torah. Now, we know from Malachi and

from the book of Nehemiah that the people were neglecting this responsibility, and so the temple was falling into disrepair. And so God confronts them. He says he wants to bless them with abundance, but only if they're going to be faithful.

In the final dispute, the people accuse God and say that it's pointless to serve him. They observe wicked, prideful people succeeding in life, and God does nothing. And God's response, for the first time in the book, is not a speech, but rather a short story about the faithful remnant in Israel, people who fear the Lord, and they love to get together and talk about how to honor God and serve him. And so God orders that a scroll of remembrance be written for these people, so that they can read the scroll and remember God's character and promises. Malachi, he's reflecting here on the divine gift of the Scriptures, how they point us to the past to remember what God has done in order to inspire faithfulness and hope for the future, which leads to the conclusion of the book.

It picks up and develops the imagery of the fourth dispute about the coming Day of the Lord, but it develops it further. God says that he's appointed a day of purifying judgment that will consume the wicked from among his people. But what the conclusion adds is the future of the faithful remnant because for them, the Day of the Lord is not a threat; it's a cause for joy. It will be like the rays of the rising sun that bring healing and life and hope for the future.

## Chapter 4

05:31-06:35

And so Malachi's disputes come to a close, but there's still a bit more to this book. The final three verses, they're not part of the disputes, and actually they function like a concluding appendix, bringing closure not just to Malachi but to the whole collection of the Torah and the Prophets.

So first, the reader is called to remember the law, or the Torah, of my servant Moses. This recalls the story and the laws of the covenant that you find in the first five books of the Bible. But then we hear this summary of the books of the prophets: "I will send the prophet Elijah before the Day of the Lord, who will restore the hearts of God's people." So this conclusion, it summarizes the Torah and the Prophets as a unified story that points to the future. Israel was redeemed by God, and then they betrayed him through their rebellion and hard hearts, breaking the laws of the Torah. But the Scriptures anticipate a future day when God's going to send a new prophet, a Moses, a new Elijah, who will restore God's people and heal their hard hearts. Remember all of the promises from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

## **Conclusion**

**06:36-07:09**

And so this concluding appendix presents the Scriptures as a divine gift to read and to ponder and to pray over. They tell the truth about the human condition, about our selfishness and our sin, but they also announced God's promise that one day he would send a messenger and then show up personally to confront evil, to restore his people, and bring his healing justice. And it's that future hope that Malachi and the Torah and all of the Prophets are about.