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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 39

MALACHI



The Prophet Malachi, Notre Dame Cathedral

SUMMARY

The author of the Book of Malachi was the Prophet Malachi. The Book of Malachi was written between 440 and 400 B.C.

The Book of Malachi is an oracle: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. This was God's warning through Malachi to tell the people to turn back to God. As the final book of the Old Testament closes, the pronouncement of God's justice and the promise of His restoration through the coming Messiah is ringing in the ears of the Israelites.

Four hundred years of silence ensues, ending with a similar message from God's next prophet, John the Baptist, proclaiming, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Malachi wrote the words of the Lord to God's chosen people who had gone astray, especially the priests who had turned from the Lord. Priests were not treating the sacrifices they were to make to God seriously.

Animals with blemishes were being sacrificed even though the law demanded animals without defect. The men of Judah were dealing with the wives of their youth treacherously and wondering why God would not accept their sacrifices.

Also, people were not tithing as they should have been. But in spite of the people's sin and turning away from God, Malachi reiterates God's love for His people and His promises of a coming Messenger.

Malachi 3:1-6 is a prophecy concerning John the Baptist. He was the Messenger of the Lord sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. John preached repentance and baptized in the name of the Lord, thus preparing the way for Jesus' first advent.

But the Messenger who comes suddenly to the Temple is Christ Himself in His second advent when He comes in power and might. At that time, He will purify the sons of Levi, meaning that those who exemplified the Mosaic Law would themselves need purification from sin through the blood of the Savior.

Only then will they be able to offer an offering in righteousness because it will be the righteousness of Christ imputed to them through faith.

God is not pleased when we do not obey His commands. He will repay those who disregard Him. As for God hating divorce, God takes the covenant of marriage seriously and He does not want it broken.

We are to stay true to the spouse of our youth for a lifetime. God sees our hearts, so He knows what our intentions are; nothing can be hidden from Him. He will return and He will be the judge. But if we return to Him, He will return to us.

Chapter 1: I have loved you, the Lord says to Israel. Jacob has been loved, Esau hated, which is why Edom has been laid waste. Despite resolving to return and rebuild, Edom will become known as the Territory of Wickedness.

Sacrifices of defiled and blemished food (including blind, lame, or stolen animals) are condemned. The Lord's name shall be great among the gentiles.

SUMMARY Continued

Chapter 2: God will curse the wicked priesthood, and its descendants. The good example of Levi, with whom a covenant was made, is cited. There is a woeful failure to live up to Levi's good precedent. The priests offend by marrying foreign wives.

The neglected and divorced wives of the priests come and weep at God's altar. When their priestly husbands then offer sacrifice at the same altar it offends God. There is grumbling that the wicked prosper more than the godly.

Chapter 3: A messenger will come to prepare the way, then another messenger will come to his temple. Who can endure the day of his coming? He will purify the sons of Levi. The offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will once more be acceptable to the Lord.

Sorcerers, perjurers and other sinners will be witnessed against. Return to the Lord. God has been robbed by the withholding of tithes and offerings. The people have grumbled that the proud and the wicked prosper, and that it is therefore useless to serve God.

A book of remembrance is written for those who fear the Lord – they will be the Lord's jewels. The distinction between the righteous and the wicked will become evident.

Chapter 4: The day is coming, burning like an oven. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. The wicked shall be trampled.

Remember the law of Moses. Elijah will be sent before the day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

2:1 *And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.*

2:2 *If you will not hear, And if you will not take it to heart, To give glory to My name, Says the Lord of hosts, I will send a curse upon you, And I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, Because you do not take it to heart.*

2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers?

3:1 *Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, Says the Lord of hosts.*

4:2 *But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.*

4:3 *You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this, Says the Lord of hosts.*

4:4 *Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.*

BIBLE TIMELINE

CHARACTER Definitions

MALACHI - The final book of the Old Testament, Malachi received its name from its author. In Hebrew, the name comes from a word meaning “messenger,” which points to Malachi’s role as a prophet of the Lord, delivering God’s message to God’s people.

Malachi offered no other identifying information about himself, leaving out markers typical of other prophets such as his father’s name or the current leader of Israel.

However, based on the content of the book, it becomes clear that Malachi delivered his message of judgment to a Judean audience familiar with worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem.

The people of Judah had turned away from the true worship of the Lord, leaving themselves under judgment and in need of salvation.

Malachi certainly wrote to the people of Judah, but the historical setting becomes clearer in Malachi 1:8. Here the prophet used the Persian word for governor, indicating a time period between 538–333 BC, when the Persian Empire ruled the Promised Land.

Malachi also wrote about the corruption of the temple sacrifices, meaning that he likely delivered his message many years after the Israelites rebuilt the temple in 515 BC.

The prophet’s concerns mirror those of Nehemiah’s, suggesting that Malachi prophesied to the people while Nehemiah left the city for several years, beginning in 432 BC.

Malachi’s unique position as the final book of the Old Testament offers a glimpse into the hearts of Israelite men and women, members of a nation that had been specially chosen by God, descendants of Abraham, and inheritors of the rich tradition of the Jewish people.

Their history told of glories like the exodus from Egypt and the faithfulness of God to King David. But they had also experienced the judgment of wandering in the desert and the shame of exile from the Promised Land.

At the time of Malachi, well over a thousand years after Abraham’s era, the Israelites had the advantage and weight of history on their side; they could see the shining rewards of faithfulness and the punishments associated with judgment, even to the point of being uprooted from their land.

But even then, with all that perspective, the book of Malachi teaches us that they still strayed from the Lord’s path. They needed God’s intervention as much as ever, so this book, as a final statement of judgment in the Old Testament, anticipates God’s saving work through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The people of Judah began to be exiled from the Promised Land in 605 BC, returning from Babylon seventy years later. By the time of Malachi, they had been back in the land for more than a hundred years and were looking for the blessings they expected to receive when they returned.

CHARACTERS Continued

Though the temple had been rebuilt, the fervor of those early returning Israelites gave way to a thorough apathy for the things of God. This led to rampant corruption among the priesthood and a spiritual lethargy among the people.

Malachi came along at a time when the people were struggling to believe that God loved them. The people focused on their unfortunate circumstances and refused to account for their own sinful deeds.

God pointed the finger back at them, and through Malachi, God told the people where they had fallen short of their covenant with Him. If they hoped to see changes, they needed to take responsibility for their own actions and serve God faithfully according to the promise their fathers had made to God on Mount Sinai all those years before.

Throughout Israel's history, the nation failed and God called His people back to Himself. Each time, Israel would fail again, prompting the cycle to begin again. God's final word of the Old Testament concerns judgment for sin and testifies to our inability to love Him without the help of His grace.

Do you struggle to follow God consistently? Malachi's call prompts us to live faithfully before God and offers hope that God is not yet through with extending mercy to His people.

MAP REFERENCES

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

PUTTING THE PROPHETS IN THEIR PLACE

THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE OF BIRTH:

*"Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the Lord, and they testified against them, but they would not listen."
(2 Chronicles 24:19)*

The Mediterranean Sea

Sea of Galilee

Salt Sea

PLACES WHERE SAMUEL MINISTERED: MIZPAH, BETHEL, GILGAL

THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE IN TIME:

- I. *The Pre-Exile Prophets*

Joel	c. 850-700 B.C.
Jonah	c. 800 B.C.
Amos	c. 780-755 B.C.
Hosca	c. 760-710 B.C.
Micah	c. 740 B.C.
Isaiah	c. 740-680 B.C.
Nahum	c. 666-615 B.C.
Zephaniah	c. 630-620 B.C.
Habakkuk	c. 627-586 B.C.
Jeremiah	c. 626-580 B.C.
- II. *The Exile Prophets*

Daniel	c. 604-535 B.C.
Ezekiel	c. 593-570 B.C.
Obadiah	c. 585 B.C.
- III. *The Post-Exile Prophets*

Haggai	c. 520 B.C.
Zechariah	c. 520-518 B.C.
Malachi	c. 450-400 B.C.

THE PROPHETS BY THEIR PLACE OF MINISTRY:

- I. *To Israel*
 - Hosea
 - Amos
 - Jonah (also to The Nations)
- II. *To Judah*
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - Joel
 - Micah (also to Israel)
 - Habakkuk (also to The Nations)
 - Zephaniah
 - Ezekiel
 - Daniel
 - Haggai
 - Zechariah
 - Malachi
- III. *To The Nations*
 - Nahum (also to Judah)
 - Obadiah