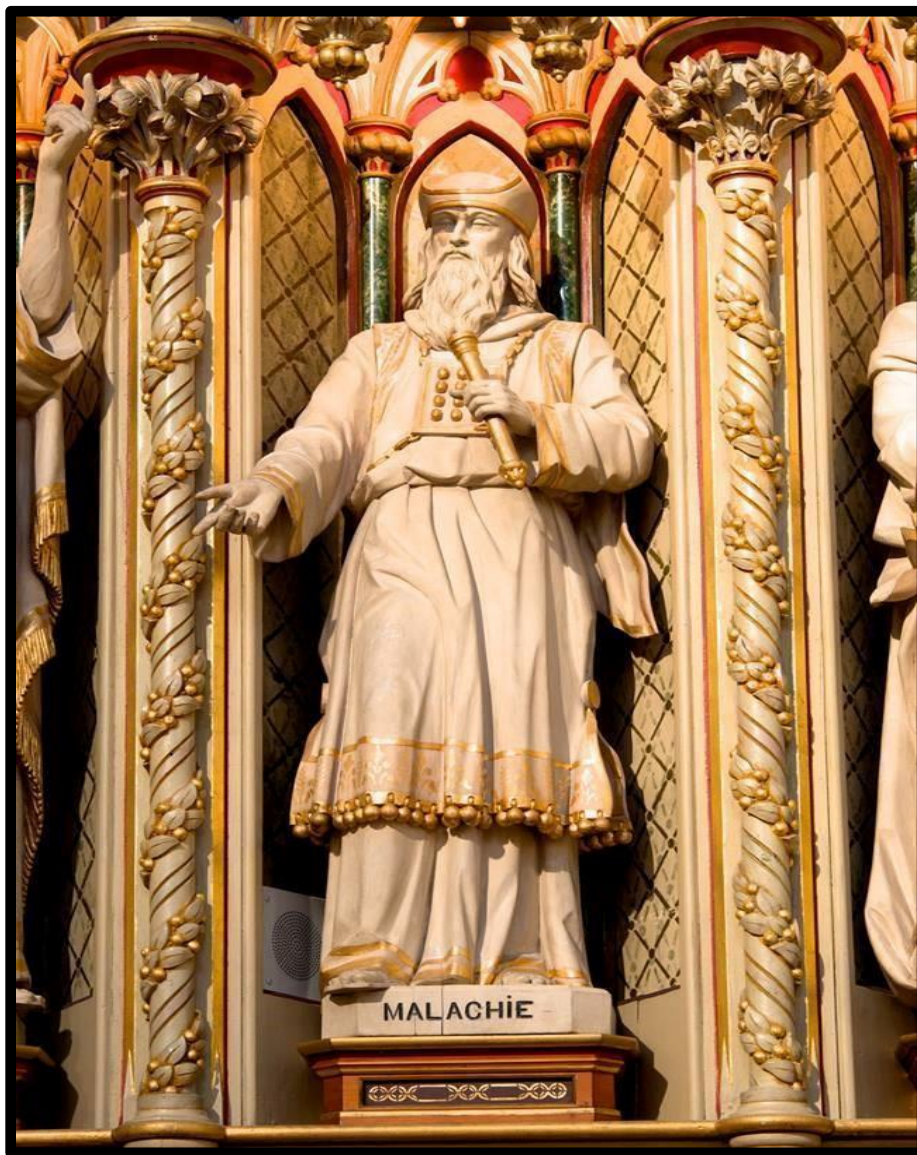


LIVING GODS WILL

Prophet of God

MALACHI



The Prophet Malachi, Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France

Born: Unknown

Died: Unknown

Malachi was the **last** of the **12 minor prophets (450 BC)**.

Malachi prophesied the necessity for proper worship to God.

Malachi authored the Book of Malachi.

Malachi prophesied the coming of John the Baptist.

So begins the last book of our Old Testament. In that verse we have the only indication of the person who actually wrote this prophetic message to the people of Israel. What's interesting is that the name "**Malachi**" likely isn't really a name as we might assume it to be.

Malachi is a Hebrew term that means "**my messenger**," which is an oddly self-referential designation for one who claims to speak an oracle of **God**. That, along with its isolated use in **Malachi 1:1**, has led some to believe that it refers to a priestly title rather than to a given name.

The Septuagint— a Greek translation of the Old Testament made a few hundred years before **Jesus**—lends credence to this idea. That ancient text renders the name in **Malachi 1:1** as simply "**his messenger**."

Still, other scholars have suggested that **Malachi** is a shortened form of the proper name, **Malachiyahu**, which means "**Yahweh's messenger**." If that's the case, then it'd make more sense as a person's name rather than a title.

Regardless of whether **Malachi** was the prophet's personal name or not, he may as well have been anonymous because the man himself is still mostly a mystery to us.

The Time of Malachi

What we do know about **Malachi** is the time during which he lived. The book that bears his name makes several historical and cultural references that can be traced to a specific time period in biblical history, even if not to a specific year. For instance:

The practice of making sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem had been reinstated (**Malachi 1:7-10, 3:8**).

The Jews of Jerusalem at that time were living under a Persian governor (**Malachi 1:8**).

Intermarriage with non-Jews was commonplace, even though it had been explicitly forbidden by Mosaic Law (**Malachi 2:10-12**).

Religious observance by temple priests was lax at best, with standards far below what **God** had required (**Malachi 1:7**).

The practice of tithing into the temple treasury was routinely neglected (**Malachi 3:8-10**).

From these clues and the similarity of themes in the books of **Nehemiah** and **Ezra**, it's commonly accepted that this preaching of **Malachi** occurred in Jerusalem sometime around **450 B.C.**

This was after Hebrew exiles had been allowed to return home from captivity in Babylon, and about 65 years (a generation or so) after the temple had been rebuilt in Jerusalem.

As such, it's actually possible that **Malachi** knew Nehemiah and/or Ezra because he lived in Jerusalem during the same period they did.

The Messages of Malachi

The importance of **Malachi's** messages in light of history and theology—and even Biblical literary style—are hard to overlook. Still, the way our biblical canon has been organized can make understanding the book of **Malachi** somewhat confusing.

Chronologically speaking, **Malachi** should be much earlier in the Old Testament, somewhere alongside the books of **Nehemiah, Ezra, and 2 Chronicles**.

But our Old Testament is organized by literary style, and so **Malachi** is grouped with the books of "**Minor Prophets**" that finish out the Hebrew Bible.

Within that collection, then, this book is placed as the last entry of the Old Testament. Many Christians see that placement as fitting, but we'll talk more about that in a moment.

There are two broad messages covered in the book of Malachi:

1. Israel must remember and observe Old Testament law, and
2. Israel must remember and take hope in the coming **Messiah**.

Within those categories are six specific accusations of Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

They're presented in a form that theologians call "**disputations**." Each disputation in **Malachi** follows a similar literary style:

1. **God** states a truth;
2. The Israelites question **God's** truth;
3. The prophet restates the truth forcefully, and
4. The prophet gives proof of **God's** truth.

For instance, look at this breakdown of the familiar passage of **Malachi 3:8-10**:

- 1. God states a truth:** "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me."
- 2. The Israelites question God's truth:** "How have we robbed you?"
- 3. The prophet restates the truth forcefully:** "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you."
- 4. The prophet gives proof of God's truth:** "Bring the **full tithe** into the storehouse"

In this manner, **Malachi's** prophesies dealt decisively with a specific time and place in history that's now ancient to us. Yet, he also did much more, perhaps without even knowing it.

What has kept **Malachi** relevant throughout the Christian era is this simple statement he made in **Malachi 3:1**:

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me..."

Jesus quoted this verse directly when identifying **John the Baptist** as the prophesied forerunner of **Christ** (**Matthew 11:7-15**).

It was a promise of hope—and a promise kept some 400 years after **Malachi's** lifetime. As such, many Christians see almost a poetic design in the fact that **Malachi's** "prepare the way" prophesy is in the last book of the Old Testament, followed immediately by the histories of **John the Baptist** recorded in the gospel accounts of the New Testament.

Book of Malachi Summary

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 (**Deuteronomy 15:21**).

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 (**Leviticus 27:30, 32**). But in spite of the people's sin and turning away from **God**, **Malachi** reiterates **God's** love for His people (**Malachi 1:1-5**) and His promises of a coming Messenger (**Malachi 2:17-3:5**).

Malachi 3:1-6 is a prophecy concerning **John the Baptist**. He was the Messenger of the **Lord** sent to prepare the way (**Matthew 11:10**) for the **Messiah, Jesus**.

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 **Jesus** Himself in His second advent when He comes in power and might (**Matthew 24**).

At that time, He will "**purify the sons of Levi**" (**v. 3**), 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 **Jesus** imputed to them through faith (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).

God is not pleased when we do not obey His commands. He will repay those who disregard Him.

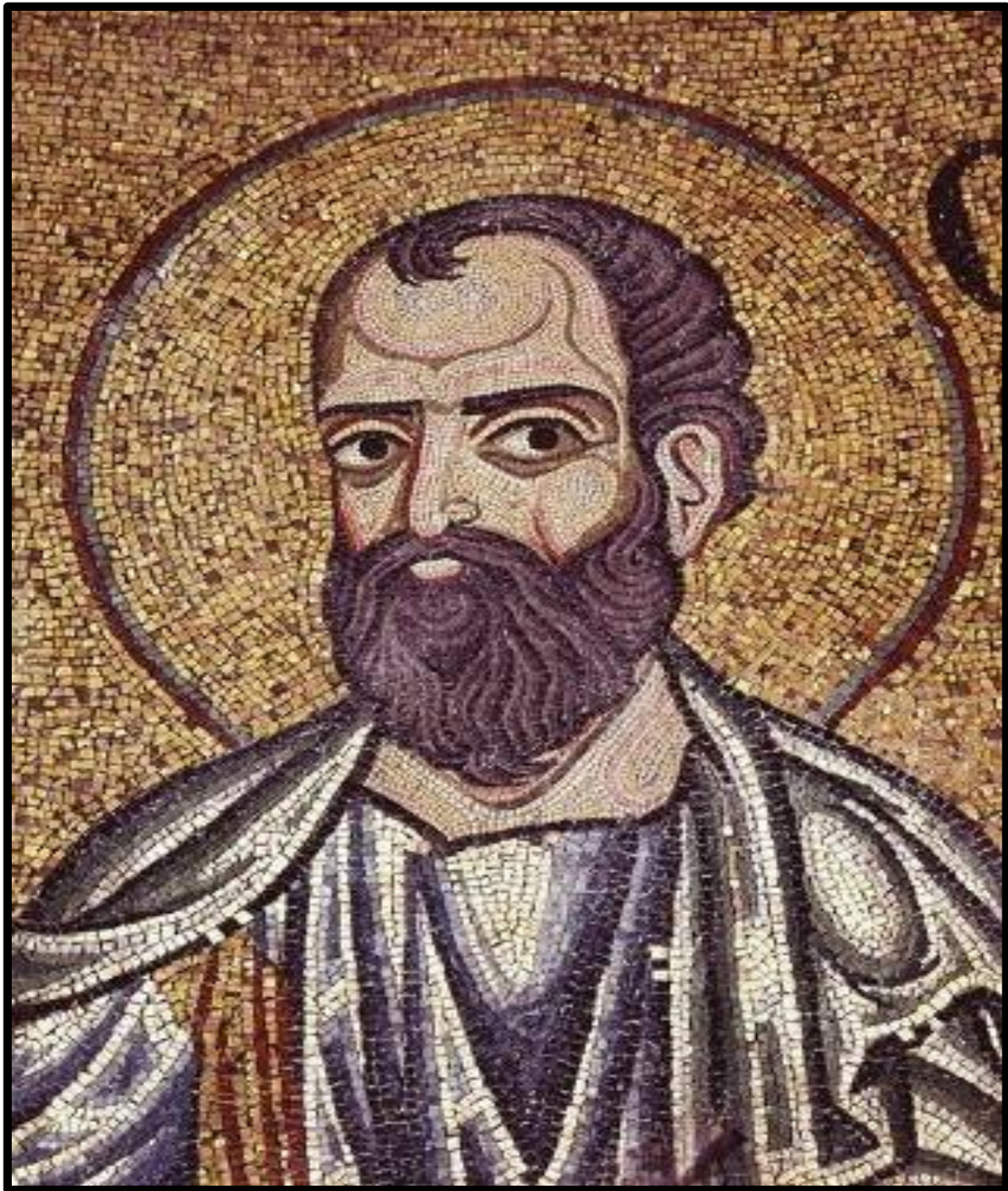
As for **God** hating divorce (**2:16**), **God** takes the covenant of marriage seriously and He does not want it broken. We are to stay true to the spouse of our youth for a lifetime.

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 (**Malachi 3:6**).

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Malachi 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.

Malachi 3:16-18 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.



**The Prophet Malachi (Mosaic)
at St. Mark's Basilica, Venice, Italy**