



MALACHI, PROPHET TO THE REMNANT OF JUDAH

Malachi

The Book of Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. This book records the end of God's communication between the Old Testament prophets and the birth of Jesus Christ nearly 400 years later. The time between the Old and New Testaments saw no revelation of God to the people through human prophets. The name *Malachi* means "My messenger," and this book focuses on the message Malachi delivered.

Malachi's prophecy came at the latter end of the fifth century BC when Persia still ruled the ancient near east and the exiles had returned from Babylon. Temple worship had been restored and excitement likely abounded in Judah. It appears from the text that while the people had returned to their temple worship, they were again beginning to drift into rote worship and deteriorating moral obedience. The themes of Malachi's preaching suggest the people had again been intermarrying with pagan residents of Jerusalem, and failing to bring tithes for God. This led to significant inflation which greatly hurt the economy.

Malachi methodically approached the people with a well-planned attack. The prophet began by identifying the people's sin, often using their own words against them. The priests had failed the people and led them to view the Lord as something other than the one true God, worthy of honor and respect. After identifying their sin, Malachi led the people to obey his message and turn from their sin and follow God. Third, Malachi warned of coming judgment for those who did not completely follow God. This word, not far removed from the return from the exile, should have awakened the people to the dangerous habit of sin. Finally Malachi offered hope for the future. Malachi reminded the people of God's faithfulness in leading them out of exile, and encouraged them to look forward to a future blessing.