

The Last Word to Malachi

Malachi 1:1-4:6

Introduction

Forty-nine years had passed since 453 BC when Artaxerxes issued the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Other decrees had been issued by Persian kings since Cyrus, but Artaxerxes' decree encompassed everything in Jerusalem. Daniel's prophecy covers the first 49 years of the 434 until the Messiah is cut off or crucified.¹ Malachi is the fulfillment of that portion of Daniel's prophecy; it consists of the Lord's last words to His people before He is silent for 400 years. In 30 AD, the Messiah was crucified, thereby fulfilling the second part of Daniel's prophecy.

The year was 404 BC and Malachi was the last man through whom the Lord sends a message until He had a message delivered to Zachariah, the priest, to tell him about the birth of John the Baptist. That message was delivered in 6 BC while he was serving in the temple in Jerusalem. John the Baptist's life and ministry was to be a fulfillment of the last prophecy spoken in Malachi's book.

With that as the background, the last word from the Lord begins with the age old battle between Jacob and Esau, one that began in Rebekah's womb and continues today.²

Edom Destroyed but Rebuilt

Malachi 1:1-5

Malachi 1:¹ The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. ² "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; ³ but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and *appointed* his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." ⁴ Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and *men* will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." ⁵ Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"

By the time Malachi's prophecy reached the ears of the Israelites, they had been conquered and dominated by Assyria in 722 BC, Babylon in 606 BC and Persia in 536 BC. In the following years they were controlled by Greece, and Rome. During the last part of the Eastern Roman control they were religiously dominated by the faith of the majority of Esau's people, Islam. From 1453 AD until 1917 AD, Islam controlled Israel. Britain began to oversee them after WWI. In 1948 AD, Britain established Israel as an independent country 2,554 years after losing the last part of it to Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC.

As stated earlier, most of Esau's descendants became followers of the Islamic faith and that is why God hates Esau. Since the deaths of Jacob and Esau, Esau's children have done everything possible to harm Jacob's offspring. Throughout every book that deals with the

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¹ Daniel 9:25-26

² Genesis 25:21-34

nation of Israel, Esau is there to obstruct their lives. Even in the prophecies, which deal with Israel's tribulation, Esau is there.³

Throughout time, the Lord has continued to love Israel, even when she has continued to be unfaithful to Him.⁴ At the time of this prophecy, the Israelites were very angry with God because of their circumstances. They expected the Lord to bless them even when they continued to sin against Him. Shamefully, they asked Him, "How have you loved us?" He answered by letting them know He will keep His promise to them and He will destroy their evil cousins, Esau, once they have returned to Him.

Here we find the same prophecy delivered in Obadiah. The Edomites, Esau's descendants, were run out of the country in 1404 BC by Joshua when they began their conquest of the Promised Land. Except for a few Bedouin tribes, the Promised Land has been desolate from that day until now.

In Malachi's day, it was nothing but ruins but the Edomites vowed to rebuild there, on their land one day. Sometime in the future when they rebuild, this prophecy and those of Obadiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Malachi and others will be fulfilled. The Lord will make their land desolate again on the Day of the Lord, but the next time, He will eradicate all Edomites from the world. When that occurs, Israel will expand its borders into their land.⁵

God Wants Israel to Honor Him

Malachi 1:6-8

Malachi 1:⁶ "A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' ⁷ "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.'
⁸ "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts.

At the time of this prophecy, the people were still obeying the Mosaic Law by making their sacrifices and giving their offerings but the quality of their gifts were inferior to that which is required by the Lord. They were giving defective animals instead of the best.

The Lord's Questions

Malachi 1:9

Malachi 1:⁹ "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts.

The spiritual problem began with the priests who were just going through the motions of serving the Lord although their hearts were not with Him. The standard had been lowered and no one even tried to do what was right in the Lord's eyes. The priests simply did not care.

³ See notes on Obadiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Revelation and others.

⁴ The Story of the book of Hosea

⁵ The Story in the book of Zephaniah

Just One to Shut the Gates

Malachi 1:10

Malachi 1:¹⁰ "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on* My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you."

The Lord cried out, "Oh that there were one among you." He was looking for one priest to stand up and say, "Stop! These offerings do not meet God's standards." Not one priest was willing to do that in Malachi's day.

His Name is Great in Other Nations

Malachi 1:11

Malachi 1:¹¹ "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the Lord of hosts.

Because Israel was not honoring the Lord, He prophesied that other nations would honor Him with pure intentions. The Lord is going to offer Himself to the Gentiles, or, in other words, anyone who is not a Jew, and they will receive Him with open arms. From the rising of the sun in the morning until it sets, the name of the Lord will be heard from the mouths of other nations.

Broken Vow Cursed

Malachi 1:12-14

Malachi 1:¹² "But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.' ¹³ "You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the Lord of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery and *what is* lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the Lord. ¹⁴ "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the Lord of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

The Israelites were saying one thing but doing another. They were promising the best as their offering to the Lord, but they were delivering the worst. They knew exactly what they were doing and the Lord despised it and viewed them as swindlers and cursed their evil intentions.

Priest Will Be Rebuked

Malachi 2:1-3

Malachi 2:¹ "And now this commandment is for you, O priests. ² "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the Lord of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart. ³ "Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it."

The Lord's command was directed at the priests who had allowed and fostered the defiled offerings. The process had become mundane to them. If they do not change their hearts and attitudes, the Lord will take away the whole system. In 167 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes stopped the sacrificial system. John Hyrcanus and his men conquered Antiochus' efforts in 124 BC and restarted the sacrifices; however, when the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the sacrifices ceased and have not been restarted to this day; it is a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy because the priests never changed their hearts about their jobs.

Covenant with Levi

Malachi 2:4-7

Malachi 2:⁴ "Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says the Lord of hosts. ⁵ "My covenant with him was *one of* life and peace, and I gave them to him *as an object of* reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. ⁶ "True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. ⁷ "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The true priest would lead the people in the ways of the Lord without wavering, without deceit, without iniquity and without unrighteousness. The instruction from the Lord was the instruction delivered to the people. The priests of Malachi's day failed to adhere to the same standards as the covenant made with Levi and they would lose their privileges because of that failure.

Married Daughter of Foreign Gods

Malachi 2: 8-12

Malachi 2:⁸ "But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the Lord of hosts. ⁹ "So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction. ¹⁰ "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹² "As for the man who does this, may the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob *everyone* who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the Lord of hosts.

Beautiful women have always tempted men. However, with the Israelites of Malachi's day, beauty was not to be the deciding factor as to whom they would marry - faith was. The Israelite men sought beautiful women throughout the ages, and when the women brought their worship of false gods into the marriage, the men embraced those gods in order to have the women. Israel was specifically instructed not to marry women who worshipped foreign gods. The Lord promised to punish them because of that sin.

Treacherous Dealings with the Wife of Your Youth

Malachi 2:13-16

Malachi 2:¹³ "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or

accepts *it with* favor from your hand. ¹⁴ "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Wives taken early in life are often dismissed in divorce as youthful mistakes, yet the Lord hates all divorces. Marrying the wrong person should never be considered a reason for divorce, even when they worship other gods, or fail to worship any god at all. In this case, when an Israelite took a wife in his youth who worshipped a foreign god, he did without the guidance of the Spirit; however, once he had her, he was not to divorce her. He was to love and care for her.

You Weary the Lord

Malachi 2: 17

Malachi 2:¹⁷ You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied *Him*?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

Israel's actions and beliefs wearied the Lord. They believed that any animal was a good offering and divorce was a good way to correct a poor decision. Both evils were seen to be good in Israel's eyes so they boldly asked the question, "Where is the God of justice?" He did not answer them because they were not honoring Him.

A Messenger Coming

Malachi 3: 1

Malachi 3:¹ "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.

Here is the prophecy of this Israelites' next opportunity to hear the Word of the Lord and change their hearts. A messenger was coming to prepare the way and announce the presence of the Lord on earth. They would reject both the messenger and the Messiah and have them killed.

The Day of His Coming

Malachi 3: 2-4

Malachi 3:² "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. ⁴ "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

The prophecy moves to the Lord's second coming which will be inaugurated with the burning on His great judgment day. The world will be purified on that day and only the righteous will

endure. The Jews who make it through the judgment will be the ones who have returned their hearts to the Lord.

Lord's Judgment

Malachi 3: 5

Malachi 3:⁵ "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the Lord of hosts.

On the Day of the Lord, the events will happen swiftly beginning at noon and concluding by 6 pm. If an Israelite has not already changed his heart by that time, it will be too late. All Israel's swindlers and law breakers will be destroyed.

Lord Never Changes

Malachi 3: 6

Malachi 3:⁶ "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

The true sons of Jacob will fear the Lord and keep His commandments. They will accept the Lord and they will not perish. It is the Lord's promise and He never changes when He has made a promise.

Stop Robbing God

Malachi 3: 7-10

Malachi 3:⁷ "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you say, 'How shall we return?' ⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!* ¹⁰ "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

The Lord returns to the problem He has with Israel in this message. In Malachi 1:14, He had called them swindlers; now He calls them robbers. They robbed Him in their manner of giving their offerings to Him. He cursed them and they did not see His blessing because they were stealing from Him that which belonged to Him. But He did not leave them without hope. He gave them the great promise that He will not forget if they will change. If they will begin giving Him what belongs to Him, the best 10%, He will open the window of heaven and pour out His blessing on them. The history of the next 400 years proves that they did not change their hearts towards Him. They were as guilty of this sin when Jesus cleared the temple as they were in the days of Malachi.

See the Blessing

Malachi 3: 11-12

Malachi 3:¹¹ "Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the Lord of

hosts. ¹² "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.

He promises that if they will change their hearts in how they worship Him, He will defend them against all their enemies. He will not have to fulfill this promise until the 1,000 Year Kingdom begins when He has put all enemies under His feet and set the believing nation of Israel as the nation above every other nation.

Israel's Arrogant Words

Malachi 3:13-15

Malachi 3:¹³ "Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' ¹⁴ "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts? ¹⁵ 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.'"

Once again the Lord returns to a thought from an earlier part of this word through Malachi. Here He says that Israel is arrogant and expects to be blessed, but they are wicked and test God, expecting to be built up. They say it is futile to serve God because He does not answer their request. It's the same problem He addressed in Malachi 2:17. There He accuses them of doing evil and expecting it to be accepted as a good deed but both stem from the same problem. They do not care about their quality of work, nor do they do it with a right heart because they are busy fulfilling the requirements of the Law.

Book of Remembrance

Malachi 3:16-18

Malachi 3:¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. ¹⁷ "They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." ¹⁸ So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

A few of the men heard the message of the Lord through Malachi and a book of remembrance was written. In that book they wrote these words, the Lord's words given through Malachi, the prophet. They were penned with ink on paper so the next generations would read them, know them and react to them.

Day of the Lord

Malachi 4:1-3

Malachi 4:¹ "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." ² "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. ³ "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the Lord of hosts.

In Malachi 1:11, the sun is mentioned for the first time. It refers to the constant honor that will be given to the Lord one day. In the Malachi 4:1 passage, "the sun of righteousness" is mentioned, a phrase in the Bible used only here. In context, it will come with the Day of the Lord. It is a metaphor to show how His righteousness will spread throughout the entire world when He arrives. Just as the sun rises each day to shine on the world, the righteousness of the Lord will rise and cover it in order to restore and renew those who survive that day. The Lord's righteousness will bring a blessing for those who belong to Him and a curse to those who are against Him.

Elijah to Come Before the Day of Burning

Malachi 4:4-6

Malachi 4:⁴ "Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. ⁵ "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. ⁶ "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and its words point to the return of Elijah. Today, we have the advantage of looking back through the recorded gospels in which the Lord makes it clear that John the Baptist was the Elijah to come. He was the one who would prepare the way for the Lord's first coming as the Messiah.⁶

As the Old Testament ends with the expectation of Elijah's return, the New Testament opens with the announcement of his birth. It is a fitting ending and beginning for each.

Artaxerxes I issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem entirely.	The Last Words to Israel are delivered through Malachi. The Old Testament is complete.	The Messiah is crucified.	7 years of tribulation for Israel	The Day of the Lord
453 BC	404 BC	30 AD	???	
49 Years Daniel's - 7 Weeks of Years	434 Years Daniel's – 62 Weeks of Years	The Time of the Gentiles	7 Years Daniel's – 70 th Week	

⁶ Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:13;