

An Outline of Malachi

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Trinity Church

Bible Teaching Outline

Malachi - Advent Series 2014

“A People In Need Of A Saviour”

Introduction to the Series

The beginning of the church year in the Western Church is known as *‘Advent’*, and covers the four Sundays before Christmas. Readings and themes are often related to the Second Coming of Christ as we build up to the celebration of Christ’s birth. This year we are going to be doing it a bit differently as we look at the last book of the Old Testament – *Malachi*. In order to do it justice we have pushed things back a week so that we have four weeks to cover the short Series.

Malachi significantly is the last recorded word from God to His people Israel before the 400 year *‘Intertestamental Period’* that preceded the birth of Jesus. The content very much reflects the title we have chosen for our Series: *‘A People In Need Of A Saviour’*

Introduction to Malachi

a. The Author

There is some debate over the authorship of Malachi. Some suggest it was written anonymously; this thinking is for two reasons: Firstly the name ‘Malachi’ appears nowhere else in the Old Testament and this suggests Malachi is not a proper name but rather a title = ‘My messenger’ or ‘The Lord’s messenger’. Secondly it is suggested the lack of any background to the

prophet – parentage, place of birth etc. supports this view. That said, it is a fact that we know little about many of the prophets and Malachi is no different in that, the introduction itself states that it is the Word of God to His people by God’s messenger - Malachi

b. The Date

Internal evidence dates the book around the period of Nehemiah and Ezra. There is some variance on this with some dating it earlier between the coming of Ezra in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah in 445 B.C. Others favour the period between Nehemiah’s two visits to Jerusalem between 433-424 B.C. It is clear from the text that sacrifices are being made in the second temple which was finished in 516 B.C. and the text appears to suggest this is some considerable time later.

c. The Occasion and Background

It is believed that only 50,000 exiles returned to Judah from Babylon (538-536 B.C.). The temple had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel (516 B.C.) and the sacrificial system restored. As indicated already Ezra had returned in 458 B.C. and Nehemiah in 445 B.C.

Having been back in Judah for only a hundred years the ritual of religious routine of the Jews had led to hardheartedness towards God and to the departure from God’s law by both the people and their priests.

Malachi rebuked these abuses forcefully and called the people to repentance and we see many similar threads here with both Nehemiah and Ezra’s condemnation including: marriage of heathen wives; failure to honour God with their tithes; disregard for the Sabbath; corruption of the priesthood and social wrongs in society.

John MacArthur observes that: *As over two millennia of Old Testament history since Abraham concluded, none of the glorious promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants had been fulfilled in their ultimate sense. Although there had been a few high-points in Israel’s history e.g. Joshua, David, and Josiah the Jews had seemingly lost all opportunity to receive God’s favour since less than 100 years after returning from captivity, they had already sunk to a depth of sin that exceeded the former iniquities that brought on the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations. Beyond this, the long anticipated Messiah had not arrived and did not seem to be in sight.*

As Malachi writes this ‘**capstone**’ prophecy of the Old Testament, he delivers a clear double-edged message of: judgement for present sin but also grace at a future point in time, when Israel will repent; the Messiah would be revealed and all of God’s covenant promises would be fulfilled.

There would follow some 400 years of divine silence before another prophet from God – John the Baptist would again preach: **Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand** (Matthew 3:2) – **The Messiah had indeed come!**

What can Malachi say to us today?

Firstly, a reminder that I shared with our leadership team last night before writing these notes – This is the word of God and as **Isaiah** reminds us in ch55:11 *“So shall my word that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I have sent it.”*

Secondly, we need to learn not to repeat for ourselves the mistakes that the Jews made repeatedly. **Thirdly**, our God is faithful and forgiving beyond our comprehension; and His silence for extended periods never means He has forgotten or deserted us.