

CONNECTING THE DOTS - JUST BEFORE THE SILENCE

*Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked,
between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Malachi 3:18*

God's Messenger

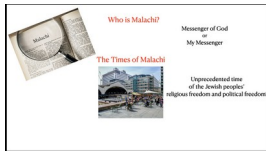
Do you remember how you felt the last time you had to say “good-by” to someone you loved as there would be a long separation?



When we lived in Scotland we had just such a parting as Faith, our daughter, left for college each August. We stood at the airport fence watching the plane going farther and farther way until it disappeared from view.

Remember how Ezekiel described God's reluctance to leave the Temple in Israel just before the Babylonian Captivity?

Who is Malachi?



The book of Malachi records one more occasion when God must say “good-by” to Israel. This separation would last 400 years, as prophesied in Daniel's 70 week prophecy.

God used the prophet Malachi to explain why He would become silent during this time. This was not the “End” of His His plan and purpose of history for Israel, but rather a “Pause.”

Malachi's name, “**Messenger of God**” or “**my Messenger**,” is very appropriate for this last Old Testament prophet.

Historically, we know very little about Malachi for he merely appears on the scene and is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

The Times of Malachi

Malachi wrote during an unprecedented time in Israel's history, a time when the Jewish people had religious freedom and a great deal of political freedom for 100 years.

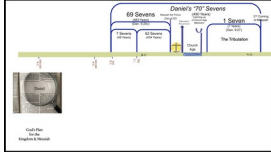
This time began when Persian King Cyrus decreed in 536 bc that the Jews were free to return to Israel to rebuild their Temple and resume national life and worship.

After a halt in the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezra and Haggai recorded that the Temple work resumed in 520 and was completed in 516 bc.

There are **two prime reasons for believing that Malachi wrote around 400 BC.**

The first is found in Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks in Daniel 9 verses 24-27.

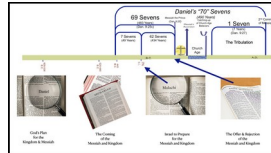
I have taught this here and in my video, Daniel's Seventy Weeks.



This prophetic “clock” began in 445 BC when King Artaxerxes decreed that Nehemiah, his cupbearer, could return to Israel to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall, just as Daniel 9:25 indicated.

You should recall that Daniel’s “prophetic week” symbolized a seven year time period, so that all would be fulfilled in $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. During that time, three significant events were indicated by dividing the 70 weeks into a period of 7 weeks (49 years), followed by 62 weeks (434 years – v 25.) until the Messiah’s death, and then following a gap of unknown years of the Church-Age, the last week (7 years), would be the Tribulation (v. 26, 27).

While both the Messiah’s death and the Tribulation are indicated in Scripture, there is no scriptural explanation for the first period of Daniel’s 7 “weeks” or 49 years. A study of Jewish history suggests only one significant event took place 49 years after the start of the 70 weeks, that event is the writing of Malachi’s prophecy in 396 BC.



The second prime reasons for believing that Malachi wrote in 400 BC is the chronological order of the writing of the books of Haggai and Zachariah, written between 520 and 490 BC, about 100 years before Malachi.

Both books focus upon and emphasized the coming of the Messiah.

This suggests that Malachi, also would be significant from a Messianic prophecy standpoint.

During the time between these prophets and Malachi, Israel changed their focus from the Temple and rebuilding Jerusalem to their own personal lives and neglected the God who gave them freedom from the Persians and brought them back to Israel.

As we will see in Malachi, this change of focus resulted in them giving up hope of the Messiah’s coming.

Nothing ever changes, for Peter had to remind people of his day and ours, - in 2 Peter 3:8, 9:

⁸ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

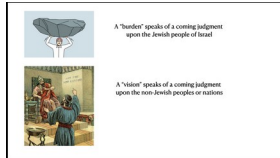
It is in this context that God spoke through Malachi before becoming silent for 400 years.

536 BC	Cyrus’ decree – 50,000 return to Judea
534	The Temple foundation was laid – Ezra 3
520	Temple building resumed - Ezra 5, Haggai 1:15
516	Restoration/Zerubbabel’s Temple completed - Ezra 6:15
457	1800 more return with Ezra - Ezra 7
445	Nehemiah returns to rebuild the city and its walls – Nehemiah 2
???	Nehemiah returns to serve at the court of Artaxerxes I – who is the son of Ahasuerus the king and husband of Ruth.
430	Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem – Nehemiah 8:6,7
420-397 est.	Malachi proclaims his prophecy.

Malachi's Burden

Significantly, Malachi calls his message from God a “burden” and not a “vision” as Daniel did – Malachi 1:1

The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.



Biblically, a “burden” speaks of a coming judgment upon the Jewish people of Israel.

In contrast, a “vision” speaks of a coming judgment upon non-Jewish peoples or nations.

The book of Malachi is divided into two major divisions. The first division speaks of God’s judgment for Israel’s neglect of Him.

Apparently, the 400 years of silence itself is part of the judgment upon Israel required by God to prepare the nation for the coming Messiah, for the second division emphasizes the coming of the Messiah.

This book exemplifies God’s principle of the chastisement of His people – Hebrews 12:6

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

God wants them and us to know, that His love remains even in judgment.

Thus, in Malachi verse 2 of chapter 1

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? ... yet I loved Jacob,

This verse is much more emotional in the Hebrew than it is in the English.

It gives the idea that God says emphatically [sequential imperfect]:

I have loved you, I do love you, I will love you . . . ¹

Through much of Malachi, God uses His covenant name to emphasize that the covenant between them is an unconditional covenant and His chastening does not end their relationship with Him.

In Jeremiah 31:3 God promised:

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness [constant, abiding favour, kindness, and faithfulness] have I drawn thee.

Since a significant part of that covenant includes the coming Messiah and His kingdom upon the earth, God wants them to remember that the promise is still valid despite the chastisement. Thus, after the judgment of chapter 1 and 2, God speaks of the coming of the Messiah in chapters 3 and 4..

¹ G. C. Morgan, 373.

Their Pattern of Failure – Malachi 1:2-3:2:17

Verse	Accusation	Prime Reply	Response
1:2	I have loved you	Wherein hast thou	Godliness
1:6	Where is my honor	Have we despised you	Godliness
1:7, 8	You offer defiled food	In what way have we defiled	Godliness
2:17	You have wearied me	In what way	Godliness
3:7	You have gone away from ordinances	Wherein shall we return	Godliness
3:8	You have robbed me	In what way	Godliness
3:13	Your words against me	What have we spoken	Godliness

In these first three chapters, God states seven prime accusations against the Jewish people of Malachi's day.

verse	God's Declaration	Peoples' Reply	Name of God Used
1:2	I have loved you	Wherein hast thou	LORD OF HOSTS
1:6	Where is my honor	Have we despised you	LORD of Hosts
1:7, 8	You offer defiled food	In what way have we defiled	LORD of Hosts
2:17	You have wearied me	In what way	LORD OF HOSTS
3:7	You have gone away from ordinances	Wherein shall we return	LORD OF HOSTS
3:8	You have robbed me	In what way	LORD of Hosts
3:13	Your words against me	What have we spoken	LORD

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF THE FIRST 2 ½ CHAPTERS OF MALACHI

- Judah never recognized the correctness of God's charge.
- Notice God's emotions in these interactions.
- The people are callous, hard, and insensitive to their sin.
- Their chief sin was a form of godliness that hurt God's heart.
- The final and greatest sin was that they had lost sight of God's promised Messiah coming to establish His earthly kingdom.

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- Their final and greatest sin, dealt with in chapters 3 and 4, was that they had lost sight of God's promised Messiah coming to establish His earthly kingdom. [Malachi 3:1, 2, 5, 17; 4:1, 3, 5, 6]