

The Minor Prophets - Malachi (Part 1)

2-13-19

1. Malachi (meaning - "My messenger") is the last prophet of the Old Testament period before John the Baptist.
2. Nothing is known of his family line and he is not mentioned by name anywhere else in the Bible.
3. Malachi is dated in the fifth century B.C. - approximately 100 years after Cyrus had issued the decree in 538 B.C. permitting the Jews to return from exile to Judah.
4. However - life was not easy. The Jews were under the political dominion of Persia.
5. Harvests were poor and subject to locust damage. Most hearts were indifferent or resentful toward God.
6. Both the priests and the people were violating the requirements of the Mosaic Law regarding sacrifices, tithes, and offerings.
7. The people's hope in God's covenant promises had dimmed, as evidenced by their intermarriages with pagans, divorces, and general moral apathy.
8. The message of the final Old Testament book is addressed to "Israel." Since the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel - this name was used for the entirety of the covenant people.
9. The postexilic community was viewed as being comprised of former citizens of both Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom). (Malachi 1:1)
10. God's love for Israel had not ceased. The present trials apparently had caused them to forget all the past mercies of the Lord. (Malachi 1:2-5)
11. This was the inward feeling of the people at this time. They doubted God's love and faithfulness. Events had not turned out as they expected.
12. They had returned from captivity, and the temple was rebuilt; but none of the future things announced by the prophets had come to pass.
13. They were not great and victorious; Messiah had not appeared. They whined and murmured; they were ungrateful for past favors, and questioned God's power and providence.
14. Was not "Esau Jacob's brother?" God refutes their unjust charge by referring them to a fact - the different fate of the descendants of the twin-brothers, Esau and Jacob.
15. How miserable the destiny of the Edomites! how comparatively fortunate the condition of the Israelites!
16. Now the point: "Yet I have loved Jacob." God had treated the twin brothers very differently. By Esau and Jacob - Malachi means the nations which were descended from these men.
17. In verses 8-14 is the response to the question of verse 6.

18. The first problem was the brining of diseased or crippled animals to be sacrificed at the Temple.
19. The next problem is recorded in chapter 2 verses 1-9. The priests dishonor God by their false teaching.
20. Problem 3 is found in chapter 2 verses 10-16. The people were committing spiritual adultery.
21. Problem 4 - chapter 2 verses 17-3:5. The people act wrongly and then complain to God about injustice.
22. Refiner's fire and soap maker's lye describe the painful process of removing dirt and impurities - which render the vessels or objects useful once again.
23. Problem 5 - chapter 3:6-12. Not returning to the Temple to give God the full tenth of their voluntary offerings for the Levites. This was the same as robbing God.
24. Problem 6 - chapter 3:13-18. The people routinely complain and find fault with God.
25. The population comprised more than just the arrogant and their followers. A third group "who feared the Lord and honored his name" (see also 4:2) was also there.
26. God's evaluation of such words is implied by His having them recorded in a "scroll/book of remembrance." (3:16-18)
27. Not only will judgment be meted out to the wicked according to their deeds, but the deeds of the righteous will also be rewarded. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
28. Although God will not remember our sins (Isaiah 43:25), he will remember our righteous acts (including our speech) as well as our tears. (Psalm 56:8)