

Malachi

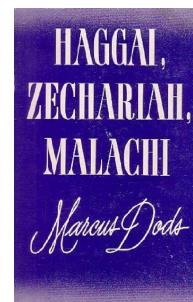
The decline to ritualism

The steadfast love of YHWH never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. LAM.3:22,23

'The lips of a priest should guard knowledge'

Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? The insensibility of the people to their own spiritual condition is regularly exhibited in this book by the form of dialogue, the people being represented as asking in astonishment how they have shown the sin with which they are charged ... If expanded, the querulous question of the people would run thus: Is it evidence of love, that after being 70 years subject as slaves to a cruel people, we should be suffered to return to freedom only that we might more keenly feel our own feebleness? Is it evidence of God's love that we have been left for well-nigh a century exposed to the scorn, violence, and robbery of troops of Ammonites and Samaritans? When our harvests are swept away by armed bands of marauders, when our seed is washed out of the ground by unseasonable rains, or rendered useless by mildew or drought, when we have to hear our children crying for bread we cannot give, and see their lips blue with famine, are we to find in these things evidences of God's love? God's reply is to point them to the much more calamitous condition of the nation nearest them in blood ... The frequent introduction of dialogue in Malachi indicates at once moral insensibility and intellectual activity on the part of the people. A questioning spirit had grown up among them which threatened to subvert and confound even fundamental moral distinctions. [Marcus Dods Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi p.135]

'Surrender of the intellect,' indeed! This is to bury the talent in the napkin, and still preached and practised by the men of one talent. Religion needs all the brains we mortals can put into it. There is a priesthood of knowledge, a priesthood of the intellect, says 'Malachi,' and he makes this part of



God's covenant with Levi. Every priest of God is a priest of truth; and it is largely by the Christian ministry's neglect of their intellectual duties that much irreligion prevails. [Smith 353]

Chapter 1

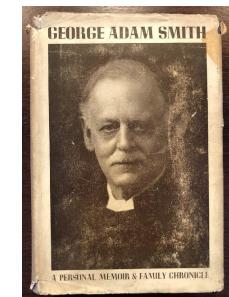
THE STATE OF THE NATION AND THE FATE OF THE NATIONS

(1:1-5) What is the state of the nation? Yet how does doubt poison Israel's perception? The Decline: deliverance, disappointment, disobedience, depression, doubt

The political history of the Jews at this time was inseparably bound up with the Persian empire. Under the same Darius I (522-486) who gave the Jews permission to rebuild the temple (2 Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:3; 6:3-12), the Persian empire obtained its vastest extent, stretching from the Indus Valley in the east to the Aegean Sea in the west, from the Jaxertes in the north to as far south as Libya. The magnitude and vastness of this empire certainly posed a great temptation to the people of God. Jews who were scattered far and wide in this empire made themselves at home, while the Jews in Palestine disclosed their openness to this world empire by a loss of their theocratic consciousness and by a failure to acknowledge and maintain the spiritual secret of their existence as the treasured possession of the Lord. [Pieter A. Verhoef Haggai and Malachi (NICOT) p.160]

Between the completion of the Temple in 516 and the arrival of Ezra in 458, we have almost no record of the little colony round Mount Sion. The Jewish chronicles devote the period but a few verses of unsupported tradition. After 517 we have nothing from Zechariah; and if any other prophet appeared during the next half-century, his words have not survived. We are left to infer what was the true condition of affairs, not less from this ominous silence than from hints which are given in the writings of 'Malachi,' Ezra and Nehemiah when the period was over. Beyond a partial attempt to rebuild the walls of the city in the reign of Artaxerxes I, there seems to have been nothing to record. It was a period of disillusion, disheartenment and decay. The completion of the Temple did not bring in the Messianic era. [George Adam Smith The Twelve Prophets Vol 2. p.333]

Whereas most of the prophets lived and prophesied in days of change and political upheaval, Malachi and his contemporaries were living in an uneventful waiting period, when God seemed to have forgotten His people enduring poverty and foreign domination in the little province of Judah. Zerubbabel and Joshua, whom Haggai and Zechariah had indicated as God's chosen men for the new age, had died. True the Temple had been completed, but nothing momentous had occurred to indicate that God's presence had returned to fill it with glory, as Ezekiel had indicated would happen (Ezk.43:4). [J.G. Baldwin Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi (Tyn) p.211]



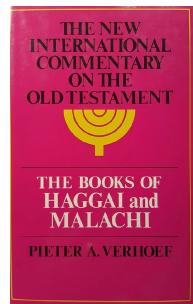
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(1:11-14) The fate of the nations. Why will Yahweh hate Edom forever (Obadiah 10)? Yet what will the Lord's Kingdom mean for the Gentiles ultimately? (Psalm 96)

The message of Malachi in this connection is in accordance with the testimony of Isa. 34-35 and 63:1-6, and of Ezek. 35-36. In Isa. 34-35 the prophecy of Israel's restoration as a nation is connected with the eschatological depiction of Edom's destruction. God's vengeance on Edom and his deliverance of Israel are interrelated on his "day," according to Isa. 63:1-6. The same vision on the relationship between Israel's restoration and Edom's destruction is found in Ezek. 35-36 ... This prophecy concerning the permanent ruin of Edom and the Edomites has been fulfilled in the subsequent history. The Nabateans drove them from their territory, and the Maccabees added to their distress. In 185 B.C. Judas Maccabeus crushed their resistance (1 Macc. 5:3,65; 2 Macc. 10:15-23 ... and fifty years later John Hyrcanus caused them to be circumcised. The end came in the time of Simon of Gerasa ... [Verhoef 202-205]

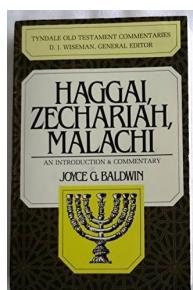


Chapters 2-4

THE SOURCE OF UNBELIEF – THE GLORY HAS NOT RETURNED

But who can endure the day of HIS COMING,
and who can stand when HE APPEARS? MAL.3:2

(2:1- 3:6) What attitude seems to feed the spiritual carelessness of the people?
(cf. Amos 5:18-24; Jer. 8:18-20; Hab. 1:1-4; 2 Peter 3:3-9)



Who is coming to HIS temple? What will happen when He appears?

Emphasis on the law of Moses (4:4) and on the figure of Elijah (4:5,6) summed up all that God's servants had stood for throughout the centuries. When the law and the prophets were put together in one collection of sacred texts, these twin references looked forward to the consummation of the purpose for which both were given. [Baldwin 214]

(3:7-4:6) Malachi's day, like ours, is a day of waiting for the COMING ONE. Why will some fall into arrogant unbelief, yet others thrive? (Eph. 5:15-21)

In connection with God the word kabod has the figurative meaning of both "glory" and "honor." The "glory" of God is himself. This implied in Ps. 57:6,12 (Eng. 5,11): "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let thy glory be over all the earth!" "God" and "glory" are synonymous. According to Vriezen "kabod is the radiant power of His Being, as it were the external glorious manifestation of His mysterious holiness." In this way God has revealed himself, both in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34,35; Num 14:10; 16:42) and in the temple (1 K. 8:11; 2 Chr. 5:14; 7:1-3). God's glory was evident in the overpowering might of his acts through the phenomena of nature (Exod. 24:16,17; Ps. 97:1-6). Human beings must be protected from the manifestation of his glory (Exod. 24:15,16; 33:22; 40:34,35), even though Moses wanted to see it (Exod. 33:18). In the great future the glory of God will manifest itself universally over all peoples and upon the whole earth (Num 14:21; Isa. 6:3; 66:18,19; Ezek. 39:21; 43:2; Hab. 2:14; Ps. 57:6,12 [Eng. 5,11]; 72:19; 108:6 [Eng.5]). [Verhoef 213]

**God's "glory" is
God himself
appearing – the
manifestation of
the *kabod***

Faith's Sure Foundation - the NAME. (3:16; 4:2)

Everywhere in the OT the expression "the word of the Lord" denotes the divine revelation. It is significant that the expression is mostly construed with the divine name Yahweh. There are only a few exceptions where reference is made to "the word of God" ... (Judg. 3:20; 1 Sam. 9:27, 2 Sam. 16:23; 1 Ki. 12:22; 1 Chr. 17:3). The point in question is, however, that the alternative expressions are substantially the same (cf. 1 K. 12:22 with 1 Chr. 17:3), that all bear witness to the fact that the Lord has revealed himself, and that the divine name Yahweh is especially connected with the *revelatio specialis*. By this name he has revealed himself to Israel (Exod. 3:14-16; 6:1,2) and has spoken through the prophets. [Verhoef 189]

Yahweh represents the *revelatio specialis*, El the *revelatio generalis*. [T.C. Vriezen Outline of Old Testament Theology rev. ed. p.145]

Fundamental to Malachi's teaching is the concept of covenant. It is implicit in the opening theme, the Lord's love for Israel (1:2-5), and the book ends with a call to fulfill the obligations of the covenant as expressed in the law (4:4). The Lord, who initiated the covenant, and on whose dependability it was established, is the central figure and chief spokesman. Out of a total of 55 verses, 47 record in the first person the addresses of the Lord to Israel (the exceptions being 1:1; 2:11-15,17; 3:16). This use of the first person presents a vivid encounter between God and the people, unsurpassed in the prophetic books. [Baldwin 216]

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