

# My Messenger

The Fourth Week of Advent | December 22, 2024  
Malachi 2:17-3:4 | Pastor Tyler Williams

# Malachi the Prophet

"An oracle: The word of Yahweh to Israel through Malachi" (1:1).

- Malachi (מלאכי) – name lit. means "my messenger" in Hebrew (cf. 3:1).
- Not clear whether it is a personal name or a descriptive title (e.g., LXX).

# The Times of Malachi

The Persian Period (550–331 BCE)

- Book written after the rebuilding of the Temple (between 475 and 450 BCE?).
- A period of disillusionment and tenuous faith.

# The Times of Malachi

- 538 – Sheshbazzar led return & rebuilding under Cyrus
- 522-515 – Zerubbabel led 2nd return & temple finished under Darius
- 475–450 – **The Book of Malachi written?**
- 458 – Ezra led group that arrives under Artaxerxes I
- 445 – Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem to rebuild walls

## The Times of Malachi



## The Book of Malachi

Six Disputations between Yahweh and Judah:

1. Dispute about God's Love (1:2-5)
2. Dispute about the Priest's Contempt for God (1:6-2:9)
3. Dispute about Israel's Covenant Breaking (2:10-16)
4. Dispute about God's Justice (2:17-3:5)
5. Dispute concerning Repentance (3:6-12)
6. Dispute about Speaking against the Lord (3:13-4:3)

## The Book of Malachi

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## The Book of Malachi

4. Dispute about God's Justice (2:17-3:5)

- Introduction: Yahweh is weary of their words.
- Question: "How have we wearied him?"
- Answer: By accusing God of ignoring evil.
- Response: "I will send my messenger..."

## The Oracle

"Listen! I am sending my messenger, who will prepare a way before me. Then suddenly the Lord, who you are seeking, will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, indeed, he is coming — says Yahweh Almighty....

## The Oracle

<sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

## The Oracle

Then they will bring offerings to Yahweh in righteousness, <sup>4</sup>and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to Yahweh, as in days gone by, as in former years" (Malachi 3:1-4).

## The Messenger

"I will send my messenger... then the Lord will come... indeed, the messenger of the covenant is coming" (3:1).

- How many figures?

## The Messenger

“My messenger” is identified with John the Baptist.

- Messenger (מלאך) – mediator of a message, can be a human or angelic messenger.
- Identification is clear in the NT (Mark 1:2-3; Matt 11; Luke 1:16-17, 7:27).

## The Messenger

“The Lord” is identified as Jesus the Messiah (Luke 2:21-40; John 2:12-22).

- “Lord” (אדון 'adon; אדני 'adonai) – Lord, master. In context clearly referring to God.
- If John is the first messenger, then it implicitly understands the coming of the Lord as a reference to Jesus.

## The Messenger

The identity of the third figure, the “messenger of the covenant,” is more mysterious.

- Angelic messenger (cf. Exod 23:20).
- Jesus as “the messenger of the [new] covenant.”
- Or a second reference to the initial messenger.

## The Messenger

- A. Listen! I am **(A) sending (B) my messenger**
- B. Then suddenly the Lord, who you are seeking, will come to his temple.
- A. The **(B) messenger** of the covenant... **(A)** he is **coming** — says Yahweh Almighty.

## Prepare

He “will prepare a way before me” (3:1).

- The role of the messenger, like the role of the prophets, is to call the people to repentance and back to covenant faithfulness.
- (And this is precisely what John does)

## Purification

“For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap...” (3:2).

- The Lord is portrayed as a refiner who sits over a vessel containing silver ore until it is purged of every foreign substance and only silver remains.

## Result

“Then they will bring offerings to Yahweh in righteousness...”

- The result of the coming of the Lord is genuine worship offered to God by his faithful people.
- Jesus purifies us and makes us righteous (Heb 9:14; Rom 5:8-9).

## Conclusions

Understanding Delay

- The post-exilic community was questioning Yahweh’s supposed inactivity (“Where is the God of Justice?”).
- Yahweh assures them that he will come!

## Conclusions

At Christmas Jesus the Messiah did come!  
And Jesus will come again!

- God's delay is his patience, allowing his people to repent (see 2Peter 3:9).

## Conclusions

"The Messiah for whom John prepared the way is—always and in every way—for us and not against us. It is the love of God, in the end, that wins the day. The love of God is the blazing fire that purifies us, remakes us, and sets right all that is broken in us and in the world. The love of God brings us to repentance. The love of God sets the oppressed free and makes all things new. The love of God insists on truth and justice. The love of God reveals every hidden thing. And it is this love that is coming for us" (Tish Harrison Warren, *Advent: The Season of Hope*, 54).

## Conclusions

How do we prepare the way for the Messiah's coming?

- There's nothing we can do to make ourselves "more acceptable" to God.
- But we can have a posture of repentance and openness to God's grace and love in our lives.