

MALACHI

—prophet to Judah, second half of fifth century

1. The prophet Malachi

1:1, only time his name appears

Hebrew, “my messenger”

LXX, ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ, “by the hand of his messenger”

Targum: “by the hand of my messenger, whose name is called Ezra the scribe” (cf. 3:1 ?)

but probably a proper name; cf. all the other books

Still, a critic like Richard Hanson suggests that Malachi was written by II Zechariah (*Bible Review*, Dec. 1991, pp. 25-27). He speculates this mainly on the basis of Malachi being a *massa*, “a burden” (1:1); this burden follows immediately on the heels of II Zechariah’s two burdens in Zech. 9-14. Zechariah ends in the anticipation of the future glorious celebration of the pilgrim feast of Tabernacles, and then Malachi blasts the pilgrims for their negligent temple worship.

Of significance to the contrary is Malachi’s allusion (Mal. 3:7) to Zechariah’s theme (Zech. 1:3), “Return unto me and I will return unto you.”

perhaps a priest, since very concerned with priests, sacrifices, tithes

question and answer style; e.g., “but you ask” in 1:2, 6, 7; 2:14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13 = Legal interrogation: affirmation → interrogation → refutation

2. Historical background

later kings of Persia:

Darius I	521-486 BC	
Xerxes I	486-464	(Persian name = Khshaysarsha, OT = Ahasuerus)
Artaxerxes I	464-423	
Xerxes II	423	(murdered, end of legitimate line)
Darius II	423-404	(named in Neh. 12:22)
Artaxerxes II	404-358	
Artaxerxes III	358-338	
Arses	338-336	
Darius III	336-331	(on Neh. 12:22, see Whitcomb on Darius III, <i>ZPEB</i> 2:28)

516 BC, temple completed in 6th year of Darius I, under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:15)

486 BC, Xerxes becomes king

attack on Greece, 480 BC
Esther story, ca. 475 BC

464 BC, Artaxerxes I becomes king

son of Xerxes, who was assassinated
quelled stubborn rebellion in Greece, 460 BC and following
allowed Greek cities in Asia Minor independence, 449 BC

458 BC, Ezra returns to Jerusalem

allowed by Artaxerxes in 7th year (Ezra 7:1-10)
Ezra takes ca. 1500 Jews
Ezra initiates reforms, especially against mixed marriages (Ezra 9-10)

445 BC, Nehemiah hears walls are destroyed

allowed to return by Artaxerxes in 20th year (Neh. 1:3; cf. Ez. 4:12, 23)
takes group to Jerusalem to rebuild walls and city
governor for 12 years (Neh. 5:14)

433 BC, Nehemiah returns to Artaxerxes

in 32nd year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 13:6)
spends unknown amount of time in Persia (cf. Neh. 2:6; Whitcomb's chart says 13 years; Leon
Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 405, says only 1 or 2 years)

423 BC, Darius II becomes king (cf. Neh. 12:22)

ca. 420 BC (?), Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem

finds many moral problems, carries out reforms (Neh. 13:6-7)

407 BC, Elephantine Aramaic Papyrus 30 written, names the governor of Judea as Bigvai (Bagoas);
thus Nehemiah either not present or dead by that time

3. Date of Malachi

evidence for date:

under a governor (1:8)

Edomites expelled by the Nabataean Arabs (1:4; this occurred during the whole Persian period,
complete by ca. 400 BC)

temple and worship reestablished already

many of the abuses mentioned in Malachi were common at Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem after his temporary absence: intermarriage, no tithing, lax priests

suggested date, ca. 430 BC

EITHER between Nehemiah's two terms in Jerusalem (if he stayed in Persia a longer time) since Nehemiah calls himself the Emperor's *Tirshatha* while Malachi uses another term for "governor"

OR after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem (if he stayed in Persia only a short time)

4. Contents of Malachi

1) Encouragement to the faint, 1:1-5; 3:13-18

2) Sins of priests and people, 1:6 - ch. 2; 3:7-12

*This message shows that Israel had not lived up to the conditions required in Ezekiel.

miserable offerings and worship of God (1:6-14)

v. 6, possible neglect of using God's name Yaweh?

1:6 Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

v. 13, cheap religion is worse than none at all...

consequences of priestly disobedience (2:1-9)

divorces vs. godly design of covenant marriage (2:10-16)

2:14 ...the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make *them* one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his

youth. 16 "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

lack of faith (2:17; cf. the encouragements for the faint)

withholding tithes (3:7-12)

3) The coming judgment, 3:1-6; ch. 4

“the day” (3:2, 17; 4:1, 3, 5; cf. 1:11)

John the Baptist predicted as a covenant messenger (3:1; 4:5-6)

cf. Mt. 11:14 with Jn. 1:21

Mt. 17:11, to restore all things

cf. Acts 3:21

Acts 3:21 ...that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.