

# Malachi

James Halstead

## Context & Structure

Post-Exile: located alongside Haggai & Zechariah – home, but not great...

1:1

1:2-4:3      6 ‘disputes’ – all following the same pattern  
Statement  
Challenge  
Explanation  
Implication

4:4-6      The end of the book.

### First Dispute 1:2-5

1:2a    Statement    “I have loved you”

1:2b    Challenge    “How?”

1:2c-4    Explanation    “I judge Esau/Edom, but not you”

1:5      Implication    “You – and everyone – will see I am great”

## Second Dispute 1:6-2:9

- 1:6 Statement “You priests are disrespecting God”
- 1:6 Challenge “How?”
- 1:7 Statement “You put defiled food on my altar”
- 1:7 Challenge “How?” (*How have we defiled you*)
- 1:7-14 Explanation “You offer unacceptable sacrifices, and that denies God’s greatness”
- ✿ They’re unworthy of earthly rulers
  - ✿ It’s you, the *priests* who are doing this (and you’re the ones who should know best...)
- 2:1-9 Implication “You – priests – will be cursed”

## The Six Disputes

- 1 (1:2-5) How God has loved Israel (unlike Edom, they are spared judgement)
- 2 (1:6-2:9) Priests are cursed because they dishonour God (with sacrifices and mis-teaching)
- 3 (2:10-16) Broken relationship with God lead to broken relationships among humans (intermarriage, divorce)
- 4 (2:17-3:5) The God of justice is coming to refine and judge (which means division)
- 5 (3:6-12) The delay in his coming is so that people may repent and be blessed (restored relationship with God explored through e.g. of ‘tithe’ giving)
- 6 (3:13-4:3) Return to the LORD and be blessed.

## The Three Pairs

- 1 God's love for his people and desire that they be spared wrath
- 2 Improper offerings (sacrifices: what should be a blessing is now a curse)
- 3 Division/ separation (among humans)
- 4 Division / separation (which God will bring)
- 5 Improper offerings (tithes: you curse me, but test me and I'll bless)
- 6 God's love for his people and desire to bless them

Q: How does this help you get at the overall message of Malachi?

Q: What theological encouragements or challenges do you find in this message?

Q: You know the structure because James just showed you! How could you read the book to spot some of these things yourself?

## Message of Malachi

### First three disputes – looking hopeless

2:10 *Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another?*

Division among God's people comes from not 'remembering' God

(A short detour via Deuteronomy...)

### Second three disputes – interpreting first three, and offering hope

Day of the LORD:

3:1-5 God brings a different kind of division: refiner's fire, fuller's soap

Now between the faithful and the faithless...

...so it is possible to serve God rightly, this delay is the season to repent.

**Israel were always the faithful ones** (opening us up to a multi-racial people of God)

Q: How does the message of Malachi 'finish' the Old Testament?

## Finishing Up

### Finishing Malachi

4:4 Moses (Torah)

4:5 Elijah (Prophets – the story of Torah being lived/forgotten/restored...)

4:6 The promise of...

Forgetting God ⇒ Disunity among humans

God's Division ⇒ Loving unity with God and among humans

- ✿ The standard for Israel
- ✿ The standard for the Church

### Finishing Hopeful Words | Hurting World

Reading Slowly...

Reading in Context...

Reading the 'Style'...

...Finding Realism

...Finding Honesty

...Finding Hope

Q: What have you learned from this series about how to read unfamiliar texts?

Q: What encouragement have you found as you seek to live by God's Hopeful Words in this Hurting World?