The Book of Malachi – A Guided Overview

(Background, Context & Structure)

(Malachi is most likely not the personal name of the prophet. It is a Hebrew title meaning "My messenger." *The book is intentionally anonymous, reinforcing that the message — not the messenger — matters)*

Summary of the Book

Malachi was written to a post-exilic Israel that had religion but lacked reverence. Though the temple stood, hearts were cold; worship was routine, leadership was corrupt, covenants were broken, and God was blamed for human unfaithfulness. Through a logical, confrontational message, God reminds Israel of His past faithfulness, exposes their present sins, and warns of a future day of separation. The book ends by pointing forward to a coming messenger and the Day of the LORD—fulfilled first in John the Baptist and ultimately in the return of Jesus Christ to judge and reign (2nd coming).

---

1. Background: Why Malachi Was Written

Malachi was written about 100 years after Israel returned from exile in Babylon.
On paper, things looked positive:

- The Temple was rebuilt
- The walls of Jerusalem were restored
- Idolatry had stopped

But spiritually, things were worse, not better.
Israel:

- Had no king
- Lived under foreign rule
- Faced economic hardship (poor harvests, drought, locusts)
- Was deeply disappointed and disillusioned

The people were asking: *"Was it worth coming back?" "Where is God's promise?"*
That disappointment produced a dangerous attitude: "Why bother?"
Malachi is God's response to that attitude.
It is God's final prophetic word before 400 years of silence.

2. **The Big Message of Malachi**

Malachi is logical, direct, and confrontational.
God is saying: *"You stopped caring about Me — and now you're blaming Me for it."*

The book exposes: Casual worship, Corrupt leadership, Broken covenants, Lost fear of God

And it points forward to: Judgment, Repentance, The coming of the Lord & The Day of the LORD

---

3. **How the Book Is Structured** *(as per biblical teacher David Pawson)*

Malachi is built around three-time perspectives: (Past, Present & Future)

A. **PAST** – SURVIVAL (Malachi 1:1–5)
Theme: *God's Covenant Love Proven in History*

God begins with a declaration: "I have loved you." The people reply: *"How have you loved us?"*

God answers by pointing to history: (past 100 years)

- Jacob / Israel was chosen and preserved
- Esau / Edom was judged and brought low

Note: In the Bible
***Love**: means to care for someone and seek their highest good (not to feel good)*
***Hate**: means not to care for someone and not to seek their good (its <u>not</u> bitterness and resentment towards them)*

<u>Key Message</u>: Israel exists because God kept His word, not because Israel deserved it.

B. **PRESENT** – SINS (Malachi 1:6 – 3:15)
Theme: *Why God Is Offended Now*

God turns from the past to the present condition of His people.

1. The Priests (1:6 – 2:9)
Their Sins

- Cheap sacrifices – giving God leftovers
- Popular sermons – pleasing people instead of fearing God

<u>Key Message</u>: They treated God casually, not reverently.

2. The People (2:10 – 3:15)
Five Evidence of Covenant Breakdown

1. Mixed marriages – spiritual compromise
2. Heartless divorces – covenant treated as disposable
3. Doubtful questions – accusing God of injustice
4. Unpaid tithes – under the Old Covenant, robbing God
5. Slanderous talk – saying "It's useless to serve God"

The people believed: *"God doesn't reward good or punish evil."*
God replies: Judgment is coming — but it will begin with you.
<u>Key Message:</u> God's patience is not injustice. It is mercy.

A Turning Point: The Faithful Remnant (Malachi 3:16–18)
Not everyone ignored the message.

Some: Took God seriously, Met together, Repented, Changed their ways
God: Listened & Wrote their names in a Book of Remembrance

<u>Key Message</u>: God notices those who respond, not just those who hear.

C. **FUTURE** – SEPARATION (Malachi 3:16 – 4:6)
Theme: *The Day of the LORD Is Coming*

Malachi ends by looking forward. There is a coming day of final separation.

1. The Right Choice (3:16 – 4:3)
On that day, there will be only two groups: The righteous & The wicked

The Righteous: God's treasured possession, healed, restored, leaping like calves released from the stall & living under the Sun of Righteousness

The Wicked: Burned like stubble, no root, no branch, no future

Key Message: This points to resurrection, judgment, and Christ's reign.

2. The Last Chance (4:4–6)

Before that Day comes, God gives one final appeal:

- Remember Moses – return to God's instruction
- Watch for Elijah – a final prophetic call to repentance

This is fulfilled when:

- John the Baptist comes "in the spirit and power of Elijah"
- Preparing the way for Jesus the Messiah

Malachi ends where the New Testament begins.