

Background

What parallel's do you hear or see from Malachi's message for Christians today?

Keep in mind he is speaking to the faithful, believers who had been released from captivity, worked hard over many years, in faith to rebuild Jerusalem. They were waiting for God's Promises to appear from the teaching in the Torah and all the Post-exilic Prophets prophecies of God's return to restore the righteous and his Kingdom.

What can a believer do today to avoid this kind of internal attitude and behaviors toward God?

Malachi - means "my messenger", *mal'ak* in Hebrew. Scholars dispute who the actual author might be. Nothing is known about Malachi.

Historical Context:

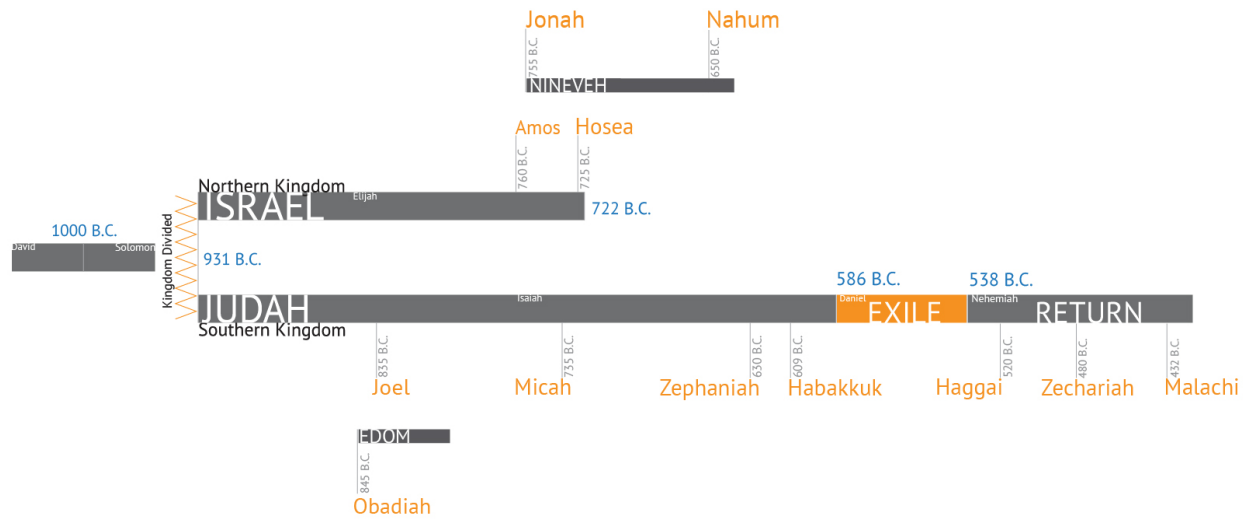
When was this written? Within the post-exilic period somewhere between 450-400 BC. Based on content in Malachi it is reasonable to think this was written after Nehemiah's first return 433 BC or second return to Persia, after 425 BC. Another way to look at it was one generation (~65-75 years) after rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem (516 BC).

Who is the audience:

The people in this period would be survivors of the second and third cohorts of faithful Hebrews, Judeans, who returned from Persia and the those born in Jerusalem in this time period.

Malachi

Timelines of Minor Prophets



	950	900	850	800	750	700	650	600	550	500	450	400
	Egypt		Assyria				Babylon		Persia			
	N. & S. Kingdoms			Judah Alone			Exile		Post-Exile			
	△ Solomon dies			△ Israel falls			△ Judah falls		△ Captives return			
Major Prophets					Isaiah		Jeremiah/Lam.	Daniel	Ezekiel			
Minor Prophets		Obadiah Joel	Jonah Amos Hosea	Micah		Nahum Zephaniah Habakkuk		Haggai Zechariah		Malachi		
Other Prophets & OT Books		Elijah Elisha								Esther Ezra Nehemiah		

Theological Themes:

These are discouraging times for the Jews who restored Jerusalem.

- Judah was a small province in the backwaters of the Persian empire
- prophecies of a glorious future from prophets had not happen yet, including Haggai's and Zechariah's
- God had not come back into the Temple (3:1) in majesty & power yet to exalt the God's kingdom in front of other nations.
- Began to doubt God's covenant relationship (1:2)
- No longer believe justice will be served (2:17)

These attitudes and loss of hope result in a pathetic, degenerated lifestyle, that is incredibly impotent, and insulting to God Almighty. It is amazing to me that fire was not called down to destroy the people. In one generation, hope in God's promises was lost, neglect and indifference had taken hold for many in almost everything the Jews did. From God's perspective he would not recognize this generation as His 'Chosen People'. The old zeal and fire to follow Yahweh per Moses instruction had almost disappeared.

The prophet Malachi addresses the horrible sins of the people in this time. He rebukes each major area of corporate sin and announces that God will judge His people first, he will purify His people separating the righteous from the wicked. God's mercy is revealed though in chapter 4 as he doubles down by promising to send a preparer, an "Elijah" before the coming of the Messiah.

Literary Structure

Malachi introduces a new structure not seen before in the Old Testament. A non-technical description is a collection of dialogues or 'disputations' between God and the Jews in Jerusalem. A literary technical description follows. Notable is how the structure is still used in modern day Jewish communities for instruction.

In Malachi we meet a new style of address known as the didactic-dialectic method of speaking. In this type of teaching an assertion or charge is made, a fancied objection is raised by the hearers, and refutation to the objection presented by the speaker. In the style of Malachi we have the beginning of a method of teaching that later became universal in the Jewish schools and in the synagogue...

Malachi's chiastic structure for the disputes. The more detailed disputations have layers of content or long assertions.

A "I have loved you"

B Says the Lord

B' But you ask

A' "How have You loved us?"

A I loved

B Jacob

B' Esau

A 'I hated

Assertion (1:2a)

Question (1:2b)

Question (1:2c)

Assertion (1:2d - 3a)

This gets complex in some of the passages of Malachi


From The Message of the Twelve, by Richard Alan Fuhr, Jr. & Gary E. Yates


Malachi's High Level Outline

1. God's Covenant Love for Israel Affirmed (1: 2-5)
2. God is Worthy of Honor in Offerings by the People & Priests (1: 6-14)
 1. Warning to the Priests (2: 1-9)
3. Covenant and Marriage (2: 10-16)
4. Injustice & God's Refining Judgement on Judah (2:17 - 3: 5)
5. God's Covenant Commitment Mal 3: 6-7 and The Tithe Mal 3: 8-12
6. God Blesses the Faithful Giver (3: 8-12)
7. God Remembers the Righteous (3: 13 - 4: 3)
8. Remember Moses Law and that Elijah is Coming (4: 4-6)


Malachi


Disputations	Verses & Commentary
1 God's Covenant Love for Israel Affirmed Mal 1:2-5	2 "I have loved you," says the Lord. " But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. " Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." <i>God chose Jacob (i.e. the nation of Israel) as part of the unfolding promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. This is God's 'love' action. Blessings on Israel and specific curse on Edom's land, and a constant struggle upon Edom as God's wrath is always upon them. Gen 36</i>

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>2 God is Worthy of Honor in Offerings by the People & Priests Mal 1: 6 - 14</p> 	<p>6. “A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’ ⁷ “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ “By saying that the Lord’s table is contemptible. ⁸ When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord Almighty.</p> <p>...</p> <p>¹⁴ “Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the Lord Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.</p> <p><i>Note: God does not accept their offerings and wants to shut temple access because they sacrifice in contempt of God, with defiled offerings. The clear standard for sacrifices (Lev. 22:17; Deut 15:21). God goes on to say how non-Israelites will make offerings and recognize his greatness. A sarcastic contrast to Judean’s behavior.</i></p> <p>observation: The disputation style allows us to see the mind of God in his anger. Earlier in OT such behavior by Israelites meant certain often instant death eliminating the person(s) point of view.</p>

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>2a Warning to the Priests Mal 2: 1-9</p> 	<p>2 “And now, you priests, this warning is for you. ² If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name,” says the Lord Almighty, “I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me.</p> <p>Actions by the Lord on the Levitical priests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• rebuke your descendants• smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices• “...you will be despised and humiliated before all the people because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.” <p>The ‘covenant of Levi’ represents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a covenant of life and peace• a call for reverence and awe toward God and his name• providing true instruction to the people to follow God• avoiding false teaching• life of peace and uprightness• a call to turn many from sin <p><i>Note: ‘covenant with Levi’ There is no specific covenant to Levi in the OT. However in, Num 25:12, and Deut 33:8-11 the roles of Levi that get passed on to the tribe of Levi (priests). They were to teach, lead in the worship, and honor his name in all that they did for the Jewish community.</i></p>

Malachi

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>3 Covenant and Marriage Mal 2: 10-16</p>	<p>¹¹ Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god. ¹² As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings an offering to the Lord Almighty.</p> <p>¹³ ... You flood the Lord’s altar with tears...</p> <p><i>They wonder why God doesn’t responded with favor! God is witness to there bad behavior and unfaithfulness.</i></p> <p>¹⁶ “The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect,” says the Lord Almighty.</p> <p>So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.</p> <p><i>Note: The Judean’s have forgotten God’s covenant with one another, with a husband and wife in marriage and apparently unfaithfulness of Judean men was common.</i></p> <p><i>Unfaithfulness in the context of marriage is a profoundly terrible and profound activity from God’s Holy perspective. It is not just the act itself that is disturbing it is the total disregard for one’s vow’s before God, family and friends to love, protect and provide through life circumstances and challenges. To not repent and ask for God’s forgiveness is offensive. The Judean men don’t seem to think is a big deal. God says, don’t do it.</i></p> 

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>4 Injustice & God's Refining Judgement on Judah Mal 2:17-3:5</p> 	<p>¹⁷ You have wearied the Lord with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask.</p> <p>By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”</p> <p>³ “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.</p> <p>² 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. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.</p> <p>⁵ “So I will come to put you on trial. ... and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty.</p> <p><i>Note: Why bother serving the Lord if he blesses believe the evil doers. The Judean's have not seen justice served and can rationalize their behavior by holding to this belief.</i></p> <p><i>'... send my messenger' is a prophetic reference to pointing to Elijah (tied to Mal 4:5) the one who clears the way for Yahweh.</i></p> <p><i>“messenger of the covenant” is God and leads into the judgement, “...the day of his coming?”</i></p> <p><i>God's commitment to his Abrahamic covenant means he will stick with his chosen people. Even when they sin. Righteousness will be restored. A refiners fire will eliminate the dross so you have pure silver. The launderers soap was like a bleach making your clothes pure white.</i></p>

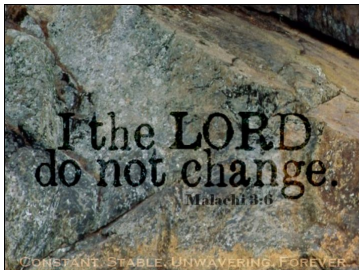
Disputations

Verses & Commentary

The Day of the Lord is more than just a display of God’s wrath. The ministry of the messenger is one of hope in the midst of judgement. To those who fear the Lord, that day will be a day of when Yahweh refines and purifies his elect in accordance with his covenant (3:3-4; see 3:1, 16-18; 4:2-3), But to those who do not fear the Lord, it is a dreadful day — a day when the wicked will not stand (3:2,5)

From The Message of the Twelve, by Richard Alan Fuhr, Jr. & Gary E. Yates

5 God’s Covenant
Commitment
Mal 3: 6-7
The Tithe
Mal 3: 8-12



⁶ **“I the Lord do not change.** So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord Almighty.

“**But you ask,** ‘How are we to return?’





⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

“**But you ask,** ‘How are we robbing you?’

“**In tithes and offerings.** ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ...¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

Note: God makes his appeal, return to me. Which exposes another sin of apathy. The complete breakdown in funding the temple and the Levites with their tithe which of course effects the welfare of the Levites as they depend on it. You can imagine it would fuel their contempt as well.

’... God asks for a 100% financial commitment and challenges the Judean’s to test him on this.

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>6 God Remembers the Righteous (3: 13 - 4: 3)</p>    	<p>¹⁶ Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.</p> <p>¹⁷ “On the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. ¹⁸ And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.</p> <p>4 “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. ² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. ³ Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.</p> <p><i>Note: In the midst of all the shortcomings, the sin, the negative/defensive and unrighteous behaviors appears this oasis of hope and all the is good in the Kingdom of God. There are some who have reference. This delights God. Notable is the fast action taken to record these people</i></p> <p><i>With vs.4 speaks of the day of judgement, a prophecy of what will happen to the arrogant & evildoer. There is no gray area in time of judgement. One will be completely annihilated by fire and the other be a new day, one where the faithful will bask in the sun of righteousness with healing. There will be sooooo much joy (agrarian culture metaphor) you will be jumping like well fed calves.</i></p>

Disputations	Verses & Commentary
<p>7 Remember Moses Law and that Elijah is Coming (4: 4-6)</p>   	<p>4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.</p> <p>5 “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.</p> <p><i>Note:</i></p> <p><i>“No OT prophecy is interpreted any more clearly in the NT than this one, which ap prophecy of John the Baptist, whose work was to proclaim the repentance from sin which Christ and His kingdom could not be received (Matt 10:10-14; 17:10-13, Mark 1:1-3; Luke 1:17, 76; and John 1:23;3:28)”</i></p> <p><i>The Minor Prophets for Everyman, Gary Henry</i></p> <p><i>Malachi draws everything together in this last chapter not only for the book, minor prophets but as the bridge to the NT.</i></p> <p>REMEMBER <i>He is reminding the Judeans to remember Moses and the law. Which ties in with Mal 3:16-18, where there exist faithful who remember to ‘fear the Lord’</i></p> <p>ELIJAH’s COMING BEFORE THE <i>Be ready for the great turn about</i></p> <p>OR ELSE A CURSE <i>total devotion to the land will result</i></p>
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Wrapup

Back to the original question.

What parallel's do you hear or see from Malachi's message for Christians today?

What can a believer do today to avoid this kind of internal attitude and behaviors toward God?

“It is crucial to note that these covenant-breakers in Israel were not in open rebellion against God. To read the horrible ways in which God said they had shown disrespect to Him, we might easily think of them blatant sinners who had departed from the Lord altogether. But that is not so! From God’s perspective, they were worse than blatant sinners? These were men and women, perhaps not totally unlike ourselves, who to borrow Paul’s words had “form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) but denied the power of it. They were shaving the corners bit, still they were continuing to go through most of the *outward* motions of public worship of God. Their sins were religiously “respectable”, and their problem was on the inside, where only God sees. Is it not possible that God at times sees in us the same shallowness of faith, the same selfishness, the same compromise, the same weariness with worship, in short the same basic lack of reverence that plagued Israel? If so, we need to hear Malachi’s warning.”

Minor Prophets for Every Man, Malachi, Gary Henry

JRG application thoughts : When I look at all the Judean behaviors the ‘root cause’ is a lack of real reverence for a Sovereign, Omnipotent, Everpresent loving God. In fact God is calling for this “Fear of Lord/ Reverance” through out Malachi. We must return to a healthy “Fear of the Lord” as a core posture/attitude. We cannot do this on our own, I think we need to seek the power of the Holy Spirit and ask for this mindset and remember like the faithful remanent of Judeans called out in Mal 3:16-17. Having the “Fear of the Lord’ combined with the knowledge that God “is for us and not against us” and based on the ministry of Jesus Christ, can go a long ways to helping us follow the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Let us start with ourselves.