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Dear Associates and Friends,

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“[The Book of Malachi](#)” is this month’s article by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. Malachi is the last of the Twelve Minor Prophets and it contains at its end the well-known prophecy about the Elijah to come. We know from Jesus that the prophecy about Elijah actually refers to two individuals (Matthew 17:10–13). One “Elijah to come” came some 420+ years after the Book of Malachi was written during the time of Christ. A second “Elijah to come” will be present in our near future and he will **“restore all things.”** By all indications, all three Elijahs, the original and the two prophesied “to come” by Malachi, were and will be very unique individuals with compelling and powerful personalities.¹

In fact, in the Book of Malachi several “messengers” are indicated in the text, some honorable, some disreputable. “Messenger” is what the name or title “Malachi” means.² Malachi is a messenger, the Elijah(s) are others, and the priests and Levites are disreputable messengers who were supposed to be teaching the people of God about Him, His Laws, and His teachings from Moses and from the other 21 books of the Old Testament. The priests and Levites failed as messengers of God. So God raised another “*malachi*.” He was

- (1) the last prophet of the “prophets” section (of the tripartite division: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings) of the Old Testament,
- (2) the last prophet of the Twelve Minor Prophets, and
- (3) the last chronological prophet and author in the entire Old Testament.

He is not the last author of the Bible of the proper Hebrew chronological order. That honor goes to the Book of Chronicles (1 and 2 Chronicles together are considered one book).

The Temple existed when Malachi was written, and the sacrifices were functioning, apparently for a long time. That is one of the problems discussed in Malachi. The sacrifices were not worthy of YHWH, a problem that long had been festering. James Nogalski understands that the problems discussed in the Book of Malachi indicate that international problems and threats were not an issue. The local problems of Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple are important.³

The Role of the Book of Malachi

“Malachi is uniquely conceived, and its placement at the end of the Book of the Twelve can hardly be accidental. ... Malachi also reflects on the past and warns about the future. In this respect, the disputations constantly challenge the reader to connect to the broader story — the failure of earlier generations to heed the prophets and change syncretistic [opposing] cultic practices on the one hand and to fear the coming day of YHWH on the other.”

• ***Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, p. 1002***

¹ See Dr. Martin’s presentation “[The Elijah to Come](#),” where all the passages are explained.

² The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the LXX, considered “Malachi” to be a title, not a name. Here is the translation by Brenton of the LXX of Malachi 1:1: “**The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of his messenger. Lay it, I pray you, to heart.**” Most rabbinic writers think Malachi was a name.

³ James Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), pp. 992–993.

Nogalski identifies themes in Malachi that are also present through several of the books of the Twelve Minor Prophets. They are,

“... five thematic elements that have also played a recurring role in the Book of the Twelve

- [1] cultic abuse by priests and people,**
- [2] infertility of the land,**
- [3] the theodicy problem,**
- [4] the day of YHWH, and**
- [5] the ultimate fate of both YHWH’s people and the nations).**

Malachi’s exploration of these themes makes it a fitting conclusion to the corpus [of the Twelve Minor Prophets], which helps explain why Zechariah [chapters] 9–14 was inserted after Zechariah [chapter] 8 and not after Malachi.”

• *Nogalski, Book of the Twelve, p. 1003*

This is a good summary of the issues in Malachi. With reference to [5] above, note that the ultimate fate of the nations is shown to be quite positive. The nations can worship YHWH with respect and with purity:

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, says YHWH of hosts. ...

But cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and vows, and sacrifices unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, says YHWH of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.”

• *Malachi 1:11, 14*

As is often referenced in Scripture, God will not tolerate his good name to be disparaged by anyone, especially His own people. Some commentators understand these two passages to say that the “heathen” (the *goyim*, the Gentiles) honor YHWH of hosts, even if His own people do not. God excuses the heathen’s worship of other gods because they do so ignorantly. God’s people do so knowingly, without excuse. In the preceding verse, Malachi 1:10, God says to the people and priests of Israel, **“I have no pleasure in you, says YHWH of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”** They are doing wrong, giving impure sacrifices. God rejects their offerings, but He accepts the ignorant but pure offerings of the Gentiles.

Thank You

Like the Israelites we need to mind our thoughts, words, and deeds. We do not want to be caught saying anything publicly against God, even when we may be angry with Him. He has a low tolerance to such expression about Him in public, not because He cannot endure it, but because it reflects upon Him to others. We are free to shake our fist at God, but do so privately. God does nothing wrong even though our perception is certainly wrong. However, when we are in pain — well, we hurt and we want relief, sympathy, we want to be held, perhaps we are just afraid. But we are never alone. In reality, we have never been alone. God and Christ are ever-present with us second by second; we simply cannot perceive them now.

They have been with you all your life, even if you did not know it. They will be with you when and as you die. They will be present when you rise up from the dead, either to spiritual or physical life. As I said, we will discover we have never been alone.

If ASK provides you with that single bit of comfort, we have done part of our job and purpose for existing as a small institution of very much “higher” education. Your prayers are important to us, your free-will contributions are important to us, and your encouragements are important to us. Thank you for allowing us to serve you. God bless you all.

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