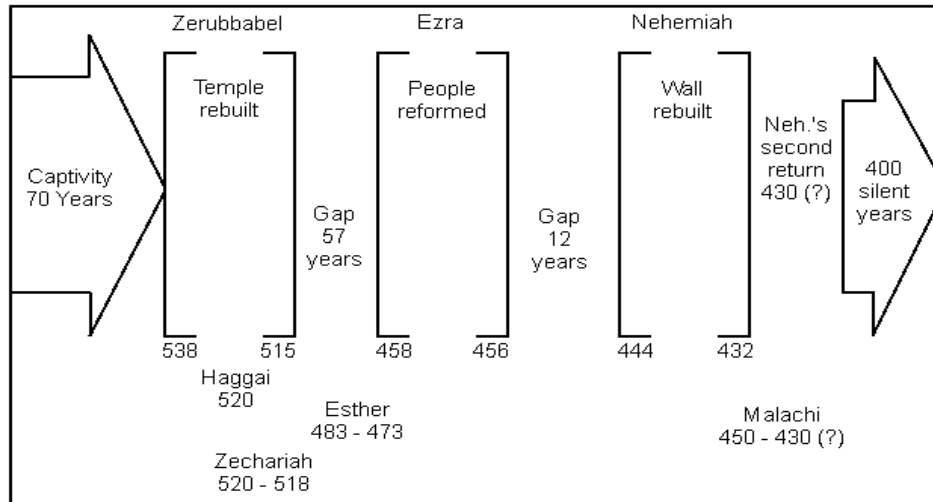


Malachi: *Questions and Answers*

Introduction



The Three Returns from Exile

I. The Author— The name of the book is taken from the author whose name means “my messenger.” The name may be an abbreviation of *Malak Yah* which means “messenger of Yahweh.” Nothing is known of Malachi’s ancestry, tribal roots, geographical location, or vocation. All we know is that he received and communicated the word of Yahweh to the Jews of his day. Some believe he may have been a priest because of his focus on the priests in 1:6-2:9.

II. The Audience— Chronologically, about one hundred years had passed since the remnant had returned from the exile in Babylon. The people had returned to the land, rebuilt the temple, and restored worship, but they were still experiencing many difficulties. They were still under Persian sovereignty, harvests were poor, and locust plagues were a problem. The people were wondering why God wasn’t keeping His promises, and why they weren’t experiencing all the blessings promised through the prophets. As a result, the people were characterized by spiritual lethargy, self-righteousness, sarcasm, unfaithfulness, apathy, skepticism, arrogance, lackluster mechanicalism, resentment, and outright wickedness. The people had sunk to a state of nominal religiosity. For these reasons, the 5th century BC in Israel has been called a “Dark Age.”

III. The Aim— To call the returned remnant to repent of their spiritual indifference and honor the name of God by living godly lives.

IV. The Arrangement—In the original Hebrew OT Malachi is composed of three chapters. In the English translation there are four chapters with a total of 55 verses. Forty-seven of the fifty-five verses are first-person addresses of the Lord to Israel. This book presents a vivid encounter between God and His people.

One of the most notable features of this book is the disputational, Socratic, catechetical, or question and answer style. The message is constantly punctuated with questions from both the people and the Lord (1:2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13; 2:10, 14, 15, 17; 3:2, 7, 8, 13). The outline of the book centers around six disputations between the people and God.

1. Doubting God's Love (1:1-5)
2. Dishonoring God's Name (1:6-2:9)
3. Profaning God's Teaching about Marriage (2:10-16)
4. Questioning God's Justice (2:17-3:7)
5. Robbing God's Storehouse (3:8-12)
6. Despising God's Service (3:13-4:6)

V. The Analysis

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VI. The Application

