

Malachi

Warning of Judgment for Hypocrisy

Rebuke of Seven Sins			Blessing by Heeding Elijah		
Chapters 1–3			Chapter 4		
Present			Future		
Pollution of the Nation			Promise to the Nation		
1:1–3:18	Israel's 7 Questions	God's 7 Responses	Day of Judgment	Obey Law	Heed Elijah
1:1-5	"How have you loved us?"	Election	4:1-3	4:4	4:5-6
1:6–2:9	"How have we despised Your name?"	Unacceptable sacrifices			
2:10-16	"Why do You despise our offerings?"	Divorce			
2:17–3:7a	"Why aren't you just?"	Messiah will judge			
3:7b-8a	"How can we repent?"	Stop robbing Me			
3:8b-12	"How have we robbed You?"	Withholding tithes			
3:13-18	"How have we blasphemed You?"	Materialistic motives			
Jerusalem in ca. 425 BC					

Key Word: Hypocrites

Key Verse: “You have wearied the LORD with your words. ‘How have we wearied him?’ you ask. 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?’ ‘See, 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” (Malachi 2:17–3:1).

Summary Statement:

The LORD rebukes the hypocrisy of postexilic Jews by answering their defensive questions so they will prepare for the coming judgment and blessing by leaving their sin and returning to Him.

Application:

Fear God by repenting of superficial religion so you won't get disciplined.

Malachi

Introduction

I. **Title:** The name Malachi (מַלְאָכִי *mal'aki*; BDB 522b) literally means "my messenger."

II. Authorship

A. External Evidence: The name Malachi appears nowhere else in the Hebrew canon.

B. Internal Evidence: The only mention of Malachi is in the first verse of the prophecy (1:1), and nothing is known of his family background (not even his father's name), although a Jewish tradition says that he was a member of the Great Synagogue (*TTTB*, 295). However, most scholars do not believe it to describe a historical name of an author (LaSor, 501). The Targum adds a phrase to make the statement in 1:1 read: "by the hand of my messenger whose name is called Ezra the scribe" (Targum on Mal. 1:1; cf. 3:1; Talmud *Meg.* 15a), but scholarship in general does not identify Malachi with Ezra. Some suppose that "my messenger" in 3:1 is an anonymous designation, so the same ought to be true of 1:1. The LXX complicates the matter further with the translation "his messenger" (ἄγγελου αὐτου) in 3:1.

However, no legitimate reason exists for considering this author as the "anonymous prophet." All of the other prophetic writings which state the same or similar formula "the word of the LORD...through..." give proper names and no legitimate reason exists to interpret otherwise for Malachi. The traditions (above) are contradictory and 3:1 is better seen as a word play on the prophet's name (Blaising, *BKC*, 1:1573) or better, the forerunner of Messiah (3:1a; i.e., John the Baptist) and Messenger of the Covenant (3:1b; i.e., Christ). Even the priest is called a messenger (2:7) so it is least confusing to view Malachi as the author's name.

III. Circumstances

A. Date: Scholarly consensus dates the book approximately 450 BC, supported by points #1 and #2 below. However, a later date of 433-420 BC may have merit as well (point #3).

1. The mention of the Persian term for governor, *pechah* (1:8; cf. Neh. 5:14; Hag. 1:1, 14; 2:21), indicates that the book had to be written during the Persian domination of Israel (539-333 BC).
2. Sacrifices are offered in the temple (1:7-10; 3:8), which was rebuilt in 516 BC. It appears that the temple has been in operation again for enough time for the people to grow complacent (2:13).
3. The conditions in Israel may point to a date between 433 and 420 BC (*TTTB*, 295; cf. Blaising, *BKC*, 1:1573). This is because the situation is very similar to that encountered when Ezra (458 BC) and Nehemiah (444 BC) returned to the land: intermarriage with Gentiles (2:10-11; cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-28), neglect of tithes and offerings for the Levites (3:7-12; Neh. 13:10-13), corrupt priests (1:6-2:9; Neh. 13:1-9), and oppression of the poor (3:5; cf. Neh. 5:4-5). Nehemiah returned to Persia in 433 BC but came back to Palestine about 420 BC and dealt with the sins described in Malachi (Neh. 13). It could be that Malachi prophetically addressed these vices in this interim just before Nehemiah returned and set the people right.

B. Recipients: Those addressed by Malachi are the second to fourth generations of the Jews who returned from Babylon about 110 years earlier.

- C. Occasion: After living in the land again for over a century, the people certainly knew they were experiencing anything but the messianic age. The temple and houses had been rebuilt, but Persia still has political domination over the people (1:8). Harvests are poor and locusts have eaten what was left (3:11), little respect for the Law exists among the people and even the priests (1:6-14), intermarriage and divorce is commonplace (2:10-16), and the loss of heart is evident in either the people's tears (2:13) or skepticism (1:2; 2:17; 3:1, 10). Malachi therefore writes in an attempt to alleviate this sense of hopelessness among the people that the kingdom would not be restored to Israel.

IV. Characteristics

- A. Malachi marks the end of Old Testament prophecy, closing up the divine utterances until the time of John the Baptist four hundred years later.
- B. Malachi is only one of two books in Scripture that employs a question-and-answer style in its entirety (the other book is Habakkuk).
- C. Malachi and Isaiah are the only prophets who end their books with judgment.

Argument

Given the deplorable conditions in post-exilic Israel, the average Jew probably doubted whether God would indeed fulfill His covenant promise of a new, messianic kingdom. Malachi prophesies that God will indeed bring in this time of future blessing, but it must be preceded by a repentant nation. The author accomplishes this by introducing the book as God's "burden" (1:1 NASB; "oracle" NIV), thus indicating that God would be rebuking them. First, however, God initiates with a statement of His love for Israel (1:2a), beginning an interchange between the nation and God. Israel responds with seven questions posed to the LORD that God answers in seven responses backed by His evidence that Israel has sinned (1:2–3:18). The final section (Ch. 4) shows that while the day of the LORD is coming for punishment, those who revere God and heed the ministry of an "Elijah" will find this "day" a time of blessing (4:2-3). Therefore, Malachi's purpose is to rebuke Israel's sin to exhort the people to leave their sinful lifestyle in exchange for blessing in the kingdom.

Synthesis

Warning of judgment for hypocrisy

1–3	Rebuke of seven sins	God's Responses
1:1	Title: Burden	
1:2–3:18	<u>Israel's 7 Questions</u>	
1:2b-5	"How have you loved us?"	"I have loved you" (1:2a)
1:6–2:9	"How have we despised your name?"	"I chose you but you despise me."
2:10-16	"Why do you despise our offerings?"	"You offer lousy sacrifices."
2:17–3:7a	"Why aren't you just?"	"You divorce your wives."
3:7b-8a	"How can we repent?"	"Messiah will judge—so repent."
3:8b-12	"How have we robbed you?"	"Stop robbing me."
3:13-18	"How have we blasphemed you?"	"No tithe—that blasphemes me." "Your motive to give is to get."
4	Blessing by heeding Elijah	
4:1-3	Day of judgment/blessing	
4:4	Obey Law	
4:5-6	Heed Elijah	

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The LORD rebukes the hypocrisy of postexilic Jews by answering their defensive questions so they will prepare for the coming judgment and blessing by leaving their sin and returning to Him.

- I. **God rebukes the Jews for their seven self-defensive questions so they will leave their lifestyle of sin and return to the LORD (Chs. 1–3).**
 - A. The book title (“burden” or “oracle”) shows that the LORD is about to rebuke His people Israel through Malachi (1:1).
 - B. God answers seven self-defensive questions of the Jews so they will leave their lifestyle of sin and return to the LORD (1:2–3:18).
 1. Israel questions God's love, so he affirms that he chose Israel over its neighbor Edom so they would stop rebelling against his love (1:2-5).
 2. Israel questions despising God, so he shows that the priests offer unacceptable Levitical offerings to encourage the nation to honor God (1:6–2:9).
 3. Israel questions why God rejects its offerings, so God says they divorce Jews to marry pagans rather than be faithful in their present marriage covenant (2:10-16).
 4. Israel questions God's justice, so God promises to send the Messiah to justly judge them (2:17–3:7a).
 5. Israel asks how it can repent, so God says to quit robbing Him so the people might ponder how they might be cheating God (3:7b-8a).
 6. Israel questions how it robs God, so he says they have withheld his tithes and offerings to encourage giving again so that God could bless them (3:8b-12).
 7. Israel doubts it blasphemes God, so he shows they give only to get and promises security to the obedient to set the righteous apart from the wicked (3:13-18).
- II. **The epilogue helps Israel to prepare for Tribulation judgments and millennial blessings by obeying the law and heeding two “Elijahs” before that day (Ch. 4).**
 - A. God prompts His people to fear Him by declaring that the future day of the LORD (Tribulation and Millennium) will exclude the wicked but heal the righteous (4:1-3).
 - B. God commands obedience to the Mosaic Law to prepare for the day of the LORD (4:4).
 - C. God promises that an "Elijah" (first John the Baptist, then Rev 2 witness) will precede the day of the LORD to help Israel repent that they may escape the judgment (4:5-6).

OT vs. NT Prophecy

Other Names: Prophecy, Inspired Utterance

In NT Lists: Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 29; Ephesians 4:11

Greek: **propheteia** (προφητεία) comes from **pro** "forth" and **phemi** "I speak" i.e., speak forth.

"In the Septuagint [the 250 BC Greek translation of the Hebrew OT], [**'prophetes,'** the noun form of **'propheta'**] is the translation of the word **'roeh,'** a seer; 1 Sam 9:9, indicating that the prophet was one who had immediate intercourse with God. It also translates the word **'nabhi'** meaning either one in whom the message from God springs forth or one to whom anything is secretly communicated" (Vine).

Prophets spoke a message of God without interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20-21), some OT prophets not even fully understanding what person or time their message indicated (1 Pet. 1:10-12). NT prophets spoke divine revelation on the impulse of sudden inspiration to exhort the church (1 Cor. 14:29-31), as contrasted with teachers, who systematically instructed hearers in a better understanding of the Scriptures (Acts 28:30-31).

Definition: "The special ability...to receive and communicate an immediate message of God to His people through a divinely anointed utterance" (C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, 228).

Characteristics of those with the gift of prophecy:

1. Spoke both predictively ("fore-telling," Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-14) and proclamation or preaching ("forth-telling," Acts 15:32; 1 Cor. 11:4-5), but always from divine origin (2 Pet. 1:21).
2. Received messages by divine revelation (1 Cor. 14:26, 29-30; Eph. 3:5).
3. Did not interpret God's message, but just declared it (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
4. Declarations were 100% accurate, totally free from error (Deut 18:14-22)—the implication is that after weighing it for truth, it should be rejected if any error is taught (1 Cor. 14:29).
5. Generally directed messages to believers (1 Cor. 14:22) for exhortation (1 Cor. 14:3), edification (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 26), consolation (1 Cor. 14:3), and teaching (1 Cor. 14:19, 22, 31).
6. Could have evangelistic results for unbelievers in a church service (1 Cor. 14:23-25), though not its main emphasis (1 Cor. 14:22).
7. Served as the second most important gift in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), to be emphasized especially over tongues (1 Cor. 14:1, 5, 29).
8. Differs from *non*-inspired proclamation by teachers (Rom. 12:8) or pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11).

Scriptural Examples: Agabus (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11), Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, Paul (Acts 13:1), Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32)

Temporary Nature: Prophecy was foundational to the Church (Eph. 2:20). Revelation 22:18-19 closes the Scripture with a warning to never add to His completed revelation. Jude 3-4 also seems to indicate that the canon is closed and that God no longer speaks prophetically. However, two future witnesses are yet to come during the Great Tribulation who will both prophesy (Rev. 11:3). If true prophecies that add to God's revelation do not exist today, the warning "do not despise prophetic utterances" (1 Thess. 5:20) cannot be disobeyed except in reference to disobeying biblical commands. Prophecy is equal in authority to the Bible, for it is God's inerrant word in spoken form rather than written form.

Other Viewpoints:

1. Preaching: Revelational prophecy ceased with the completion of the canon, but today "prophesying [is] the proclamation of the written Word of God" (Leslie Flynn, 53; Earl Radmacher, "Spiritual Gifts" tape, CCC; Billy Graham, 139-141; John MacArthur, *The Church*, 139; Alan Redpath, *The Royal Route to Heaven*, 142-43; C. K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 316).
2. Exhortative Preaching: Non-revelatory prophecy exists today as powerful exhortative-type preaching (Gothard, "Understanding Your Spiritual Gift," 5).
3. Revelational prophecy exists today (Charismatics, Wagner—see definition above, 228).

4. Any Christian is a prophet who is “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind” (Wayne A. Grudem, “Why Christians Can Still Prophecy: Scripture Encourages Us to Seek this Gift yet Today,” *Christianity Today* [16 Sept 1988] 29; cf. Grudem’s 1988 book, *The Gift of Prophecy*). His article is reproduced in my Eschatology notes on pages 124-28.

Since Grudem’s view has gained the greatest following recently in both charismatic and non-charismatic settings it deserves closer scrutiny. His main points are dangerous—if you believe Grudem then you must believe the following:

- a. OT prophets have their counterpart in NT apostles (not NT prophets) in their authoritative function of writing Scripture.

Response:

- 1) It is true that both wrote Scripture, but this does not lower the value of NT prophets. It only affirms that NT apostles received revelation directly from God. It does not indicate the NT prophets also did not receive divine revelation.
 - 2) NT prophets are ranked second only to apostles (1 Cor. 12:28) and thus had very high status. In fact, they formed the foundation of the church along with apostles (Eph. 2:20).
 - 3) Continuity between OT and NT prophets is affirmed by Peter who noted that NT prophecy was of the same nature (Acts 2:17-18; cf. Joel 2:28).
- b. OT and NT prophecy are different in nature. OT prophets spoke with absolute divine authority but “this ordinary [NT] gift of prophecy had less authority than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church” (p. 30). There exist two kinds of NT prophecy: infallible “apostolic” prophecy and fallible “congregational” prophecy.

Response:

- 1) Grudem’s argument begins with a broad, *secular* definition of prophecy, meaning “one who speaks on the basis of some external influence” (p. 30). Scripture often uses secular Greek terms but attaches more specific meaning (e.g., for *logos*, *agape*, etc.). We do not determine the nature of OT prophecy based upon secular usage but only Scripture; the same authority is to be used in determining the nature of NT prophecy.
- 2) Identical terms for OT and NT prophecy are used (cf. LXX), so we should assume these are of the same nature unless good exegetical grounds can be shown for a difference. Would God use the same terms with completely different meanings, leading to confusion?
- 3) We should test and not despise prophecies (1 Thess. 5:20-21), but this hardly argues for less authority than OT messages. In fact, it is *identical* to the OT requirement that true prophecies must be tested to make sure they come true under penalty of death (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-22). Only the death penalty is not reiterated in the NT. The parallel of “Thus saith the Lord” is still used in the NT as “The Holy Spirit says” (Acts 21:11).
- 4) Paul disobeying the Spirit’s warning not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4) does not indicate “fallible but inspired” prophecy, as Grudem claims. It may indicate a fallible Paul. Paul felt that the Holy Spirit compelled him (20:22-23) but maybe he was mistaken. Perhaps God wanted him to live longer than he did. Other apostles also erred in practice (e.g., Peter withdrew from Gentiles in Galatians 2), though they did not err in doctrine.

- 5) Grudem says, "If prophecy had equaled God's word in authority, [Paul] would never have had to tell [the Thessalonians] not to despise it" (p. 30); but this statement shows great ignorance of the massive rejection of OT prophets (Matt. 23:37; Heb. 11:33-40). People reject God's inspired word even today despite His warnings.
 - 6) The stipulation that prophets were to "weigh what is said" (1 Cor. 14:29) is interpreted by Grudem as "sift the good from the bad" (p. 31). But is this the intent of Paul? The discernment was to judge whether the *message itself* was from God, not to pick and choose which parts were good and bad. This is why God gave the gift of discernment (1 Cor. 12:10), for false prophets were in their midst (12:3).
 - 7) The stipulation that prophets were allowed to interrupt one already speaking (1 Cor. 14:30) does not indicate fallibility in their messages as Grudem claims (p. 31). Why can't God stop one person from declaring a message when enough has been said? "A prophecy which is truly from God is evidenced by an orderly and rational manner of presentation" (Farnell, 86). True prophets remained in control of their mind in contrast to pagan ones.
 - 8) The idea that early church prophets had less authority than teachers is erroneous (cf. Grudem, 34). True, elders were to teach, but even this emphasizes the *high* standing attributed to prophecy, with which few (if any) elders were gifted. In fact, prophecy appears first when listed with teaching (Acts 13:1), indicating prophecy's prominence. The spiritual gifts are listed in order of importance in 1 Corinthians 12:28 with prophets *ahead* of teachers. Surely if the gift included erroneous material inspired by the Holy Spirit it would not be given such priority! The high place ascribed to prophecy is clear in that it is the only gift mentioned in each gift list in the NT (cf. p. 6).
- c. God is the author of error since He brings things to believers' minds but they mess it up in the transmission of the message.

Response:

- 1) Grudem amazingly accuses the Holy Spirit of error (called "inaccuracies of detail") when Agabus prophesies that Paul would be bound by *Jews*, though it actually happened by *Romans* (Acts 21:10-11, 33). But the Jews *caused* the riot that resulted in the Romans binding Paul (21:27f.), so the Spirit was not wrong in His message through Agabus.
- 2) Agabus also prophesied that the Jews would hand Paul over to the Gentiles (21:11b). The fact that they preferred to kill him in no way argues for "inaccuracy in detail" by the Spirit as Grudem alleges, for in fact the Jews did hand him over, though involuntarily.
- 3) Grudem essentially teaches that a message can be inspired but erroneous, which is incredible to imagine. Will God really author verbal error? If he does, then does he author error in our Bible? This is similar to saying Scripture is inspired but not inerrant in the original manuscripts.
- 4) If NT "congregational prophecy" was "simply a very human—and sometimes partially mistaken—report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind" (Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy...*, 14), who can determine the authoritative (accurate) from the non-authoritative (mistaken) messages of God?

- d. Any Christian can prophesy. As defined earlier, this new view on prophecy is simply “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind” (Grudem, “Why Christians Can Still Prophecy,” 29). Since any Christian can share something that the Lord has impressed in his/her mind, any believer can exercise prophecy.

Response:

- 1) “Are all apostles? Are all prophets?” (1 Cor. 12:29). The obvious answer is “no” as God distributes gifts as He wills (12:11, 18), so has not given the potential of the same gift to every believer. Therefore, not every Christian should or can have the gift of prophecy.
- 2) “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:1; cf. v. 39) does *not* exhort each individual believer to prophesy. If it did, it would contradict the verses just preceding it (see above). Rather, this is written in the second person plural (“all of you”) encourage the church *as a whole* to promote prophecy over tongues—this is not a command to *each* believer. The context indicates that the church should emphasize prophecy rather than tongues.
- 3) Grudem supposes that any believer can even discern prophecy (*The Gift...*, 60-62; cf. 1 Cor. 14:29), but the most logical antecedent of “the others” is the “prophets” noted in the first part of the verse. Paul used *allos*, the word for “another of the same kind,” rather than *heteros*, meaning “another of a different kind” (i.e., not a prophet). Grudem notes, “Especially hard to believe is the idea that the teachers, administrators and other church leaders without special gifts of prophecy would sit passively awaiting the verdict of an elite [prophetic] group” (p. 62). But is this so hard to imagine? “Inspired spokesmen were in the *best* position to judge spontaneously whether a new utterance agreed with Paul’s teaching... The responsibility of New Testament prophets to weigh the prophecies of others does not imply that true prophets were capable of giving false prophecies, but that false prophets could disguise their falsity by occasional true utterances” (Farnell, 84-85, emphasis mine).

Summary of Prophetic Views

Grudem’s View	Biblical View
Prophecy is declaring anything (true or false) that the Spirit brings to one’s mind	Prophecy is declaring God’s inspired and inerrant revelation to others
The above definition was invented in 1988 by Wayne Grudem	The above definition has been the teaching of the church for 20 centuries
OT prophets are parallel to NT apostles	OT prophets are parallel to NT prophets
God changed the definition of prophecy from the OT to the NT	God kept the meaning of prophecy consistent between the two testaments
God gives some prophecies with errors	God gives all prophecies without errors (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
Any believer can prophesy	Only those with the gift of prophecy can prophesy (1 Cor. 12:29)
There’s two kinds of NT prophecy (fallible and infallible)	There’s one kind of NT prophecy (infallible)
Fallible prophecy can be inspired	Fallible prophecy is false prophecy (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-20)
God sometimes lies	God always tells the truth as He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)

The Three Elijahs

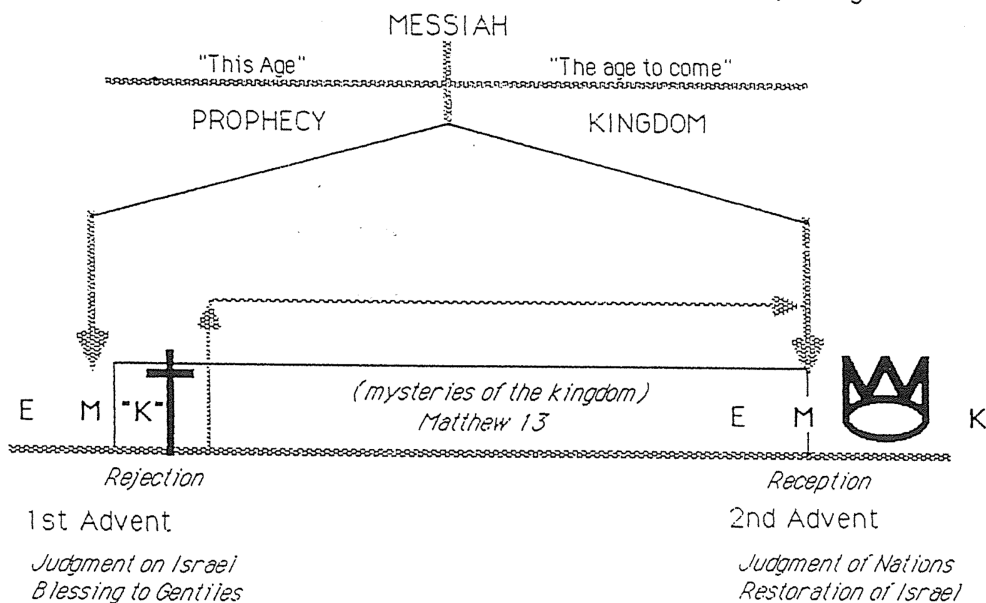
Chart from Mark L. Bailey, Dallas Theological Seminary

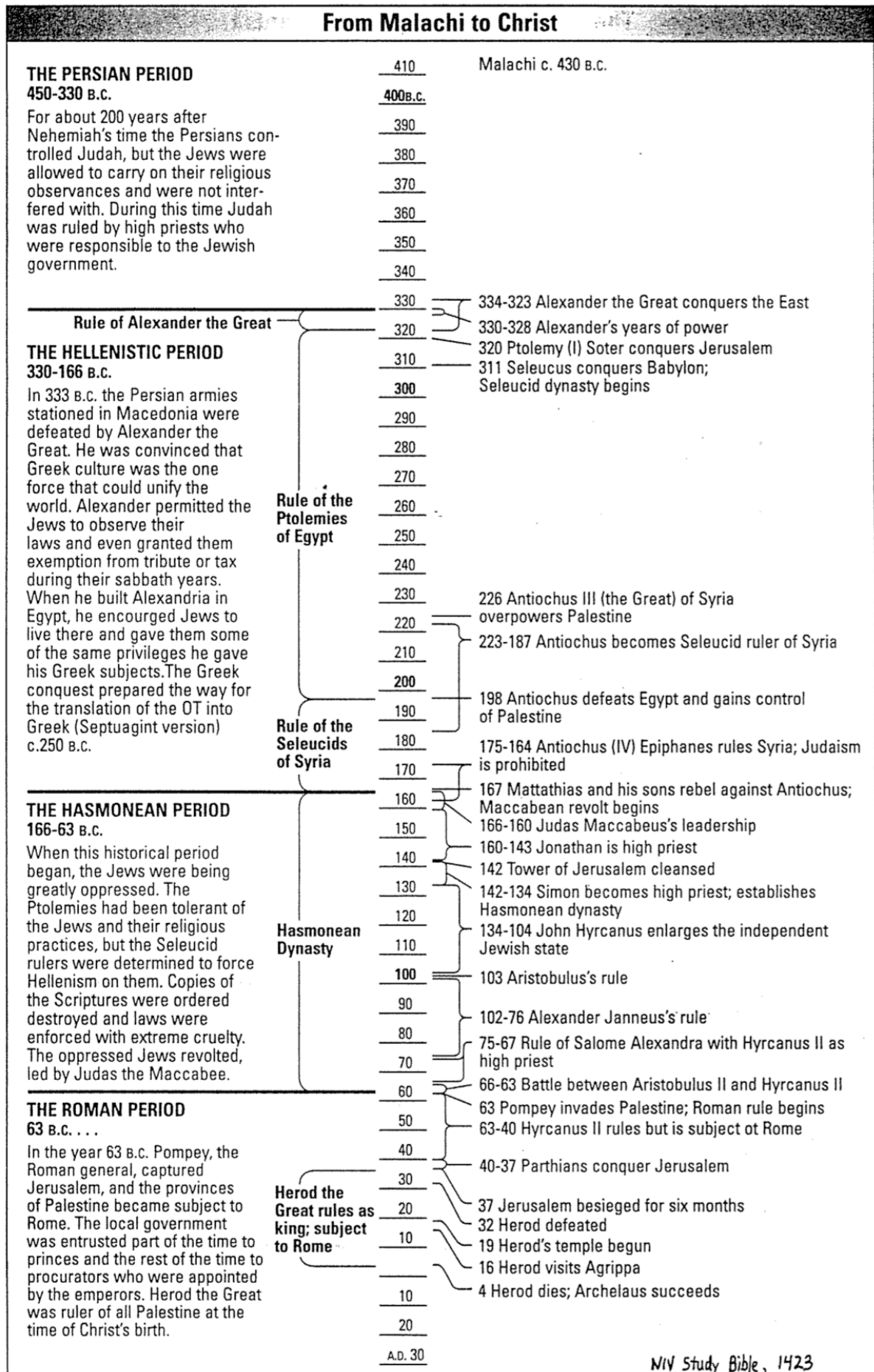
The word "Elijah" means, "My God is the LORD." Scripture records three men named "Elijah" who minister in three separate periods:

1. The first Elijah ministered during the dark days of the northern kingdom after Baal worship had been introduced by Ahab (1 Kings 17:1). He lived up to his name by withholding rain from heaven and defeating the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel to show the superiority of the LORD over Baal (1 Kings 18). He preceded the ministry of judgment and redemption by Elisha.
2. The second Elijah noted in Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 was promised before the day of the LORD arrived. John the Baptist was prophesied by the angel to "go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah" in the exact sense that Malachi notes (Luke 1:17). Jesus also referred to John as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecies (Matt. 11:10; 17:11-12; Mark 9:12-13). However, Christ also said that, had the Jews repented, John the Baptist could have been this "Elijah" (Matt. 11:14) and John expressly denied being Elijah (John 1:21-23). How can these be reconciled? One solution is that John denied being *the person Elijah* himself, and Jesus meant that if the nation repented then John could have been said to fulfill Malachi's prophecy *fully*. Since the Jews refused to repent, yet another Elijah will come to turn the hearts of children and fathers towards one another (which John did not do).
3. This third "Elijah" is probably the Elijah-like ministry of two witnesses in the yet future Great Tribulation (Rev. 11:3). They will have power to turn water into blood and create plagues (as did Moses), but also to shut up the sky for three and a half years—the same time period as did Elijah. Some think that these will be the actual (resurrected) Moses and Elijah sent back to earth, but the fact that they will be killed argues against this (Rev. 11:7). Nevertheless, the appearance of this "Elijah" will indicate that the coming of the Lord is very near.

Therefore, while Messiah's appearance will end the present age and introduce the age to come (millennial kingdom), Elijah must precede this. He came in Christ's first advent in the person of John but John did not convince Israel to repent, so the kingdom that followed came only in mystery form (Matt. 13). After the successful ministry of the future "Elijah" (Rev. 11:1-14), the Messiah will come a second time (Rev. 19). This time Christ will rule in the kingdom age in its ultimate sense with a believing nation (Rom. 11:26-27). See the chart below by Mark Bailey, Dallas Seminary:

The Expectation: EMK (Elijah the Prophet; Messiah; Kingdom)





NIV Study Bible, 1423