

The Messenger of the Covenant: Identification, Meaning, and Implications (Malachi 2:17-3:6)

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Abstract: The focus of study in Malachi 2:17-3:6 has been the identification of the characters enumerated in Malachi 3:1. However, the significance of the phrase “messenger of the covenant” is not dealt with. So what does this phrase mean? Why is the word “covenant” attached to “messenger”? What is the significance of this phrase in the book of Malachi and in the Scripture as a whole? What is the implication of this phrase in Malachi’s time and in the 21st century? This paper which employed exegetical and hermeneutical principles of the Old Testament as well as intertextuality or inter-biblical interpretation explored the Messenger of the covenant, its identification, meaning, and implications. It is significant as covenant theology is embedded in the Old Testament. While some books have only implied covenant concept, the book of Malachi explicitly contains this concept. Understanding this phrase “messenger of the covenant,” will have an impact in OT covenant theology. This research found out that the “**בְּאֵלֹהֵי תְּרֻבָּהּ**” of Mal 3:1 means “heavenly” messenger of the covenant which differs from the “earthly” messengers (prophet and priest) in Mal 1:1 and 2:7. It also shows how both the terms were heavily used in Malachi. Messenger is used from the beginning up to the end whether expressed implicitly or explicitly. The same is true with the word covenant. The peak of the use of both terms is found in Mal 3:1 showing that the answer to the unfaithfulness of both the priests (messengers) and the people with their covenant relationship with God is the “Messenger of the Covenant.” The term “messenger of the covenant” is found only in Malachi, not only the apex in Mal 2:17-3:1-6 but also in the whole book. It may signify God’s commitment to fulfill His covenant promises with His people from the beginning up to eternity.

Keywords: Malachi, messenger, covenant, theology