

Message #2

Malachi 1:1-5

To truly understand this text and this book of Malachi, we need to accurately understand the disaster God's people were. There is a reason God stops speaking to His people for the next 450 years. What was it that prompted God to go silent for over 400 years?

These were people regularly going to worship; regularly giving offerings; regularly going through motions of serving God. So what was the problem? **Israel was a spiritual disaster and Malachi clearly establishes that fact:**

As we examine the last book of the Old Testament which contains 55 verses, we count 27 realities, which is almost half the book:

- 1) They were questioning God's love. 1: 2
- 2) They did not honor God. 1:6
- 3) They did not respect God. 1:6
- 4) They despised the name of God. 1:6
- 5) They gave defiled offerings to God. 1:7-8
- 6) There was not one person who realized their worship should be shut down. 1:10
- 7) They were weary of giving God offerings. 1:13
- 8) They gave God blemished offerings. 1:14
- 9) They did not revere God. 2:5
- 10) They did not stand in awe of God. 2:5
- 11) They did not want true Biblical instruction. 2:6-7
- 12) They would not respond to true Biblical instruction. 2:8
- 13) They profaned God's covenant by hating their brother. 2:10
- 14) They profaned God's covenant by divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying godless, idolatrous foreign women who worshipped foreign gods. 2:11-16
- 15) They called those who do evil good and those who do good evil. 2:17
- 16) They got involved in sorcery. 3:5
- 17) They were involved in adultery. 3:5
- 18) They were involved in a life of falsehood. 3:5
- 19) They did not pay proper wages. 3:5
- 20) They did not care about the widow, the orphan or the alien. 3:5
- 21) They did not fear God. 3:5
- 22) They turned away from obeying God's word. 3:7
- 23) They robbed God of the offerings they should have given to God. 3:8
- 24) They spoke arrogant words against God. 3:13
- 25) They said it was vain to serve God. 3:14
- 26) They said there was no profit to serving God. 3:14
- 27) They were saying that arrogant wicked people are blessed by God. 3:15

It was to these people that God raised up Malachi, His man to communicate His word.

We may observe four facts from **verse 1**:

- 1) This is an **oracle** (massa) - this book will confront and convict. This will not be a light book. This will be a book that will put the burden and responsibility on the people to respond.
- 2) This is an oracle of the word of the **LORD** - the words of this book are inspired by the self existence I AM, the sovereign covenant God of Israel.
- 3) This is an oracle to **Israel** - this book is for national Israel, the people of God.
- 4) This is an oracle given through **Malachi** - God speaks His word through a chosen prophet.

The point of the book is to get God's people to turn away from their ritualistic and formalistic religion and get their hearts right with God.

Now the first message that Malachi actually presents to motivate the people to get away from ritualistic religion and their despicable lifestyle and back to a real relationship is God's love for His people.

That is how Malachi begins this. This is staggering to think that God would love these pathetic people, but He did. What Malachi writes here is this:

THE THING THAT SHOULD MOTIVATE GOD'S PEOPLE TO NOT BE DEVOTED TO PHYSICAL, RITUALISTIC RELIGION BUT TO A REAL, RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS THE LOVE THAT GOD HAS FOR HIS PEOPLE, WHICH IS PROVED BY HIS ELECTION AND PRESERVATION OF HIS PEOPLE.

Only God could love people this deranged. **When we analyze what these people were doing, we certainly conclude the love God has for His people is unconditional because there was nothing in this group that would merit you loving them.** There are three parts to this opening point:

PART #1 – God's declaration to His people that He loved them. **1:2a**

Malachi begins in **verse 2** by speaking in behalf of God and starts out with an amazing grace statement from God: "I have loved you." It is something to consider the love of God here in view of what these people were doing.

Someone said when we are thinking right about ourselves and about God, our thought should be "Smile and be amazed that God loves you; after all you have put Him through that is really something."

This is the first of nine statements between God and Israel that take place in the book in which God makes a statement and then elaborates on it by saying here is the way it is, but this is what "you say": **1:2, 6, 7; 2:14, 17; 3:7b-8; 13b-14**

The people may not have been going around saying this, but they were saying this in their hearts and God was seeing it. So regardless if they were saying it verbally or spiritually, God saw it and God knew it.

Now when you read a verb like “I have” loved you, it is one that prompts us to ask a couple of questions. In Hebrew the verb “I have loved you” is Qal Stem, Perfect Tense.

- 1) Does this mean that God loved them in the past tense but no longer loves them?
- 2) Does this mean that God has loved them from the past and continues to love them in the present?

William Gesenius emphasizes the Hebrew Perfect Tense tends to denote action of the past, but it may be continued on into the present and future (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 125). The Septuagint uses an aorist tense verb that would seem to look back to a point of time. Dana and Mantey suggest that it could be looking back to the point when the love started and still existed (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 195).

A perfect tense in Hebrew may be interpreted three ways:

- 1) It may refer to a definite past.
- 2) It may refer to a point in the past with continuing effect.
- 3) It may refer to the general present.

(Allen P. Ross, *Biblical Hebrew Handbook*, p. 98)

Now a determining factor will always be the context and since **verse 5** says, “your eyes will see this,” we conclude that the love of God started at a point of time in the past and has a continual effect at the present time and goes into the future.

So God begins by saying to Israel, “I have loved you, I still love you and I will continue to love you,” even though you are a complete disaster.

God does not say this about any other nation in existence; but He does say this about Israel.

We know the love of God is connected to us because Paul said in Romans 5:8 that God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. The Apostle John revealed the reason that we love God is because He first loved us (I John 4:19). So this love of God is not just for Israel, but also us.

PART #2 – The people’s response to God’s love by asking how have you loved us? **1:2b**

You would think God’s people would be overwhelmed with this realization. But not these people. They were a mess. God knew how these people thought.

They had the arrogant audacity to say to God, “How have you loved us?” It is clear from this that God’s people doubted the fact that God loved them. When they were told by God that He loves them, they were debating the point.

The nation Israel was like a confused wife or a spoiled child. A husband loves his wife, makes sacrifices for his wife, provides for his wife and is faithful to his wife and then the wife says, “Why don’t you show me you love me?”

A parent gives birth to a child, makes sacrifices for the child, provides for the child, takes care of the child and the child says you don't love me. That is what Israel was doing to God. So God begins by addressing that.

These people of God were a real piece of work. They whine and complain like little kids to God all of the time. Just by their responses to God would be enough to have Him say I am done with you:

“How have you loved us” (1:2); “how have we despised your name” (1:6); “how have we defiled you” (1:7); “how have we wearied you” (2:17); “how shall we return to you” (3:7); “how have we robbed you” (3:8); “how have we spoken against you” (3:13).

These people were either blind as bats or dumber than a box of rocks.

It is no wonder God stops speaking to these people for the next 450 years. It is amazing He didn't stop speaking to them forever.

The reason why they are probably doubting God and questioning God concerning His love is because their concept of God's love was distorted. Their thinking was if God loved us, why aren't we experiencing millennial bliss in life? If God loved them, why did they experience hardships? If God loved them, why was the political situation so lousy? Why did they suffer if God loved them?

They had been back in Jerusalem for about 100 years since the Babylonian captivity and yet their Kingdom had not been established because they were still under the dominant rule of the Persians. So they were questioning God and His love. They were, as Mignon Jacobs said, “skeptical or cynical” (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, p. 161).

Apparently the thought had never entered their minds that something might be wrong with them. They never considered the fact that they did not reverence God or stand in awe of God or honor God or esteem God, had something to do with this.

PART #3 – God's proof of His love by the doctrine of election. **1:2c-5**

God says okay, you want to know how I have loved you; I chose you. End of discussion.
God gives four elective proofs of His love:

Love Proof #1 - God's love was proved by His elective choice of an Individual. **1:2c-3a**

To prove His elective choice, God starts at the beginning in the choice He made between two individuals: He made this choice before they were born. He is God and He can and does choose. People say well His choice was based on His foreknowledge of the way Esau would turn out. If that were the case, why didn't He just prevent him from being born? Actually, Esau was the more likeable boy. He was an outdoor man. Jacob was a momma's boy.

Jacob was a liar and trickster and cheater, who stole a birthright. Esau wasn't. Paul says who is man to dare talk back to God about His election? Rom. 9:20

But God made a choice of individuals. God has mercy or compassion on whomever He wants (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:14-15) and God hates whomever He wants.

(Individual Choice #1) - I loved and chose Jacob. 1:2b

The point of this is My love is proved by the fact that I chose you like I chose Jacob. Dr. Ryrie said since the love of God is an elected love, the hate is opposite (*NASV Study Bible*, p. 1478).

(Individual Choice #2) - I hated and did not choose Esau. 1:3

Now God is a God of love and God is a God of hate. There are things God loves and there are people God loves. There are also things God hates and there are people God's hates. There are things God chooses based on His love and there are things God does not choose based on His hate. People don't like this about God, but His word is filled with statements about God that make this point very clear.

The actual Hebrew word hate (sine) is one that refers to a hatred that often views the object as an enemy (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 792).

In **II Chronicles 19:2**, God's word says His people should not love those who hate the LORD. In fact, God says if you love those who hate the LORD, you will bring wrath on yourself.

In **Psalms 52:3**, God says He will uproot and break people who "love evil more than good."

In **Proverbs 6:16-18**, God says He hates seven things which are an abomination to Him. He specifically aims His hatred not only at the sin, but the one doing it.

In **Proverbs 12:1**, God says one who loves discipline loves knowledge, one who hates reproof is stupid.

In **Proverbs 13:24**, the one who does not discipline a son hates him and the one who does loves him.

In **Proverbs 14:20**, God says that the poor are often hated and the rich are loved.

In **Amos 5:11**, God says, "Hate evil, love good."

In **Micah 3:2, 4**, God says He will not listen to those who hate good and love evil.

In **Romans 12:9**, God says, "abhor and hate evil and cling to what is good."

When we come to this statement in which God says, “I have hated Esau,” most people want to tone it down because their idea of God doesn’t allow for Him to hate something from the beginning.

So what they say is that the love/hate is a quantitative thing. By that they mean Jacob is loved more and Esau is loved less. It is quantitative.

In Genesis 29:30, in the episode with Jacob when he wanted Rachel and ended up with Leah, it is stated that “he loved Rachel more than Leah.” In Genesis 29:31 the text says, “the LORD saw that Leah was ‘unloved’” and the word used here is the same word translated hated here in Malachi.

At the core of this argument is the belief that God does not actually hate, but just prefers one person above another person. But the text here in Malachi says God hated Esau.

As we examine the rest of the context, it certainly would seem that this is more than just loving something a little less. God will appoint them a place of jackals and He will tear down what they build and He classifies them as wicked and He is indignant forever. That certainly is more than just loving one thing more than another.

God’s point here is My proof that I love you is the fact that I chose you and did not choose someone else. God chose Israel and He did not choose another nation, just as I chose Jacob and did not choose Esau.

Love Proof #2 - God’s love was proved by His elective choice of an inheritance. **1:3b**

The inheritance that God chose to give to Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey. The inheritance God gave to Edom was a desolate mountain region and desert land. God says to His people, you want proof of my love for you, look at the fact I chose you and look at the land I gave to you and the place I gave to Esau and his descendants.

Love Proof #3 - God’s love was proved by His elective choice of indignation. **1:4**

The name Edom is synonym for Esau (Genesis 25:30). This ethnic group today is known as the Arabs.

What God promises to do to the Edomites has never been completely accomplished anywhere in history yet. By virtue of what God will do to them does suggest a real, literal hatred. The description of what God will eventually do to the Edomites does prove a literal hatred and not just a quantitative dislike. These are the Arab people and God says I hate them.

When we study prophetic passages that deal with what God will do to Edom, she deserves it:

- 1) Isaiah 34:5-17 - Edom has persecuted Israel.
- 2) Jeremiah 49:7-22 - Edom has no wisdom about God.

- 3) Ezekiel 25:12-14 - Edom has been a nation of vengeance against Israel.
- 4) Ezekiel 35:1-15 - Edom has had a hatred of Israel.
- 5) Amos 1:11-12 - Edom has never had compassion toward Israel.
- 6) Obadiah - Edom has had an arrogant attitude against God and against Israel.

God basically says I will make their dwelling place a total and complete desolation. God says I will not bless or prosper anything they do. God says I will make them a waste place. I will tear them down. I will see to it that men call them a wicked territory and my indignation will be against them forever.

In **verse 4**, we learn that Arabs will attempt to return to the land and try to rebuild their places and God says I will tear them all down.

In Ezekiel 35:7-9, God predicts what He will do: "I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation and I will cut off from it the one who passes through and returns. I will fill its mountains with the slain on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain by the sword will fall. I will make you an everlasting desolation and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

This does not sound like a hatred that just loves something less than something else. This sounds like an actual hatred that God has that treats the object as if He does hate it.

Love Proof #4 - God's love will be proved by His elective choice of Israel's future inheritance.
1:5

In the end, Israel will understand this and testify of this and will magnify the LORD. She will have her inheritance and look beyond her borders and will see the great blessings of God that proved His love. One day the LORD will be magnified all over the world.

We learn from books like Isaiah that nations of the world will so recognize the election of God for Israel that they will travel to Israel to worship God (Isaiah 66). Zephaniah says, "all the peoples of the earth" will honor and praise Israel when God will restore her fortunes (Zephaniah 3:20).

God says you will see this with your own eyes. The nation Israel will see that I loved her and hated the Arabs.

His love is proved by His election, His care, His provisions and by what His people see He does to other nations He does not love.

So the question of how God loves us is answered by His election and love of us and His hatred and animosity toward others.

Esau became the father of Edom and Jacob became the father of Israel. God says Israel will one day see what I will do to the Arabs and when she sees that she will realize I truly love her.

God says there will come a day when you will see this and magnify Me for this.

Here is the point of all of this. God's people should fear God and honor God and worship God and give God their best because He has loved them, chosen them, provided for them, preserved them, and will forever bless them.