

Malachi 1-2

Bible Study

Background: Judah timeline

(520 BC) Haggai and Zechariah preach

(515 BC) Temple rebuilt

(458 BC) Ezra returns from Babylon with more exiles

(445 BC) Nehemiah returns and leads the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

433 BC Nehemiah returns to Babylon to serve the Persian King (Neh. 13:6)

During the time of Nehemiah (430's BC) Malachi preached

While Nehemiah was gone the Jews fall into spiritual lethargy

Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to discover

- 1) the priests were corrupt;
- 2) tithes were ignored;
- 3) divorcing wives and marrying foreigners

Background: Malachi

The last of the 12 minor prophets
(450-430 BC)

Malachi means: **“My messenger”**

During the time that Nehemiah was governor in
Judah

The message was primarily rebuke and condemnation
(of the priesthood)

A time of spiritual decline

The **attitude** of the people was reflected in the
statement: “In what way?” (OKJ) “wherein?”

Problems
addressed in the
book:

1. Corruption of the
priesthood

2. Neglecting tithes and
offerings

3. Foreign marriages while divorcing Israelite wives

Background, cont.

Five messengers in Malachi:

Malachi himself (Ch. 1: 1)

Priests (Ch. 2: 7)

John the Baptist (Ch. 3: 1)

Jesus Christ (1st coming) (Ch. 3: 1)

Elijah prophet (last messenger) (Ch. 4: 5)

Chapter 1

Verse 1

“The word of the Lord” (the important message)—**to Israel**

The Jews of Malachi’s day

End time descendents of Israel

Spiritual Israel: the Church

Verse 2

God begins the message declaring his love for his people

“Yet you say, In what way have you loved us?”**they challenged** God’s love to them

They did not realize God’s love for them

Nor did they recognize their sin

Verse 2 (last part)

God voices his love for Jacob rather than Esau

Esau= nation of Edom

Verse 3

“I hated Esau” (Esau= Edom)

Hated= **loved less**.....used here in a legal sense of accepting one and rejecting the other

Paul quoted this in (Romans 9: 13)

illustrating the point that God can call whom he wants to be his people

Romans 9:13

As it is written, “*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*”

Why the rejection of Esau?

Israel’s first opposition in the wilderness came from the Amalekites---descendents of Esau
(Ex. 17: 8-16)

Moses requested safe passage through Edom and was rejected...and the Edomite king blocked the way with an armed force (Numbers 20: 14-21)

Throughout Israel’s history Edom followed a course of opposition to them...were their **enemies**

V. 3 middle part
“laid waste his (Esau) mountains and his heritage”

Edom invaded by Babylon (580 BC)—
5 years after the destruction of
Jerusalem (585 BC)

Map of Ancient Near East



Verse 4
Esau= nation of Edom

Even though Edom tries to rebuild
after the invaders devastation



All of their attempts to rebuild will be
futile:
God says: "I will throw down"

Called "territory of Wickedness" —because
of sins

"Lord's indignation" against them=
Never to have position or power again

Edom's degradation is proof of God's love for Israel

Verse 5
"your eyes shall see and you shall say" ---Israel will see what God is doing around the world
(evidence of God's love)

(v. 5 last part)
"The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel"
(paraphrase) "Truly the Lord's great powers goes beyond our borders"

Verse 6 (Directed to the priests)
“Where is my honor?”

God says that he is not receiving the honor due
him as the nations father

Nor receiving honor as their Lord and
master

v. 6 (last part)
“Says the Lord of hosts”

“**To you priests** who despise My name”

“Yet you say, ‘In what way have we **despised your name**’”

God’s answer

Verse 7
They were despising God’s name by offering “defiled food”=**seconds** on the alter

Leviticus 1:3

'If his offering *is* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male **without blemish**;

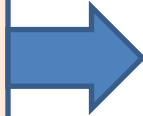
One should offer his best to God

v. 7 Middle part

The priests ask: How are we defiling you?

v. 7 last part

"By saying, The table of the Lord is contemptible"



In other words— "It does not matter what we offer"

Verse 8

The priests were offering "the blind" "the sick" as sacrifices (Deut. 15: 21; Lev. 22: 20-25)---Forbidden

"offer it to your governor"



Even human rulers would not accept "seconds"

Verse 9

(Paraphrase) "You recite: God be gracious to us! But when you bring that kind of gift, why should he show you any favor at all?"

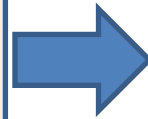
Verse 10

(Paraphrase) "Oh, to find one priest among you who would shut the doors and refuse this kind of sacrifice."

"I have no pleasure in you.....nor will I accept an offering from your hands"

Verse 11 (Points to the future)

"from the rising of the sun to its going down" = **all day long**



God's name will be great among the Gentiles

"a pure offering"

God's name will be great **among the nations**

After Christ's return and the kingdom is set up

Verse 12

(Paraphrase) "But you dishonor it, saying that my altar is not important, and encouraging people to bring cheap, sick animals to offer to me on it"

Verse 13

(Paraphrase) "You say, Oh its too difficult to serve the Lord and do what he asks"

Their service had become a burdensome chore

And so they bring blemished offerings.....God asks: "should I accept this?"

Verse 14

A curse pronounced on those who deceive

The best animal was promised for the sacrifice by vow

But an inferior, blemished animal is offered

"Who is a great King"

"And his name is to be feared"

But the priests were not fearing him

Their offerings were an insult to God

Applying the lessons to us today:

God views his people today as a special, chosen priesthood

1 Peter 2:5

you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a **holy priesthood**, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable** to God through Jesus Christ.

Our service must be acceptable to God...it gives glory to his name

We must give our best to God....not seconds

Our service must not be a burdensome chore

Chapter 2
(v. 1-9 directed at priests)

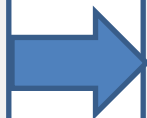
Verse 1

A “**commandment**” (admonition)= a warning of punishment directed at the priests “is for you”

Verse 2

God tells them directly: if they **do not “hear”** “**take to heart**” “give glory to his name”

He will curse them and curse their blessings
(Deut. 28: 15-68)



He has already cursed them for not taking his admonition to heart

Verse 3

“**Rebuke** your descendents” (the tribe of Levi where the priests came from)

“refuse”= dung---from the sacrificial animals (on festival days) that was to be removed

“spread on your faces”—an insult to the priests because of their behavior

“take you away with it”—captivity for their **corruption**

Verse 4-9

Shows the contrast how the priest **should be....** compared to the corrupt ones

Verse 4

(first part) “that I have sent this commandment (admonition) to you”

“That My covenant **with Levi** may continue”

“covenant” appears six time in the book:

Ch. 2: 4-5, 8—Covenant with Levi

Ch. 2: 10—the marriage covenant

Ch. 3: 1—the new covenant

Numbers 25:12-13

¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him **My covenant** of peace;
¹³and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because **he was zealous for his God**, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”

Levi proved faithful at Sinai at the golden calf incident...
and for his loyalty, God made a covenant to him and his descendents

...the priests of Malachi’s day were admonished to show that same faithfulness to God

Verse 5

God's covenant with Levi guaranteed life and peace---(salvation)

Given so that Levi would fear God



And Levi did walk in fear and reverence in those early days

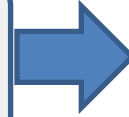
Verse 6

Description of Levi's faithfulness--- He spoke:

True instruction-- "the law of truth"

Righteousness-- "no injustice found on his lips"

"Walked with Me" = an intimate relationship



"in peace and equity"

Results: "turned many away from iniquity" (sin)

Verse 7
(how the ministry of the priest **should be**)

“Keep= (preserve) knowledge”
(God’s word)

The people **seek** to be taught by them

“he is **the messenger** of the Lord of hosts”

Verse 8
(description of the corrupt priests of Malachi’s day)

“Departed from the way”—
(walking with God)

“caused many to stumble at
the law”—(to sin)

“corrupted the covenant
of Levi”

By their bad
example

Nehemiah 13:29-30

²⁹Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the
priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the
Levites.

³⁰Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan...”

Verse 9

The verdict on the priests given:

Just as they had made the worship and service to God contemptible...they would be base and contemptible.... "Therefore I also have made you"

"shown partiality in the law"



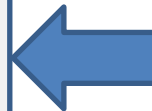
By bribery and unjust administration of the law

God through Malachi **introduces another problem** by asking a question

Verse 10

"Have we not all on Father?"

God is the creator of all



Ch. 1: 6

God declared himself as the nation's father

"dealing treacherously...By profaning the covenant of the fathers"

That they would walk with God

Verse 11-12

The subject of intermarriage with foreign pagan wives introduced

God warned Israel and Judah throughout their history against intermarriage with pagans

Because they would influence them into adopting the pagan religion

Verse 11

“Treacheroously” — ‘used of faithlessness to the marriage bond’ (Companion Bible)

Judah, Israel and Jerusalem (the whole nation) have committed abomination in regards to their wives...to marry foreign wives

“profaned The Lord’s holy institution”.... (OKJ) “the holiness of the Lord”

By wrong treatment of their own wives

Refers to Israel themselves:

Jeremiah 2:3

“Israel was holiness to the Lord...”

Verse 11 (last part)
“daughter of a foreign god”= an idolatrous woman

Nehemiah 13:27
27Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?”

Verse 12
This is so serious God that God says he “**will cut off**”:

“from the tents (community) of Jacob (Israel)



“the man who does this”

(OKJ) “The master and scholar”

“being awake and aware”

i.e. teacher

“yet who brings an offering”



Cannot clear himself of the guilt of mistreating his wife

(Hypocrisy)

Verse 13

A second sin is brought to their attention

God says they make a hypocritical show of repentance...and he will not accept that kind of worship

Verse 14

“For what reason?”---they ask why God does not accept their sacrifice

Answer: “Because God was a witness to their legally contracted marriage where God was called to witness the covenant” (Feinberg)

But they were dealing treacherously with their wives (“your companion”)

→ By divorcing their wives

“the wife of your youth”

(Expositors) “The referenced to ‘wife of your youth’ suggests that men were divorcing their aging wives in favor of younger women”

Verse 15

“did he not make them one”—reference to original marriage institution making two into “one flesh” (Gen. 2: 24)

“having a remnant of the Spirit”



(OKJ) “Yet he had the residue of the spirit”
(Companion) “And therefore could have made more than one wife for Adam”

“And why one?
He seeks godly offspring?”

Polygamy and divorce can devastate families
Often leading to children not raised to fear God

Verse 15 (last part)

(paraphrase) “Therefore guard your passions! Keep faith with the wife of your youth”

Verse 16
“He hates divorce”

“it covers one’s garment with violence”= does violence to people’s lives

Repeated: “take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously” (divorce)

Verse 17

(Paraphrase) “You have **wearied** the Lord with your words. ‘Wearied him?’ you ask in fake surprise. ‘How have we wearied him?’

By saying that evil is good (1), that is pleases the Lord! Or by saying that God won’t punish us—he doesn’t care (2)”

(1) Doing evil is good...it pleases God

(2) Where is the God of justice?

God will answer this skeptical question in chapter 3