

A Course

In

**MALACHI & JOEL,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

Pineland, Florida 33945

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INTRODUCTION

As you study the Scriptures you will find that it is of the greatest importance to approach the Bible in a reverent attitude of mind, looking upon it as the inspired Word of God, and not just an ordinary piece of literature. If the Bible is studied in the same manner as one studies Shakespeare, Milton or some historical work, it may be found interesting and profitable. But by this approach, the Bible student, persistent though he may be, will never find its rich treasures. The Apostle Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14) For the profitable study of the Word of God, the right spiritual attitude is indispensable.

The Scriptures should be studied as eagerly as a hungry person seeks for food. The formal reading of a portion of the Bible may have some worth as a religious exercise, but in order that the complete benefit may be obtained from its truths, they must be appropriated to personal needs. A milkman may deliver thousands of quarts of milk each day and yet go home thirsty. The Bible student may read large portions of the Bible with little benefit, unless he makes it his own by personal appropriation and feeds upon it.

In your studies of the Bible, will you appropriate the

riches thereof to your own personal use, or will you read as you would read a book of fiction, a mystery, etc. In order to make full use of the pearls of wisdom contained in the Bible readings, it is suggested you reread them. Go into its wonderful fields of truth; go down into its valleys; climb its mountain peaks of vision; follow its streams of inspiration; enter its halls of learning. Many Bible truths do not appear on the surface; they must be dug up and be brought into the light by toil and effort.

There are various methods of Bible study, such as the topical method, the study of books, the study by chapters, the study of important passages, and the biographical method. In this course we approach the text in the expository-exegetical method. In this way each verse will be interpreted by explaining the major words in their context in order to gain an over-all perspective as well as a contextual understanding.

Although the American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, this method of study allows the writer to occasionally condense a passage in his own paraphrase. This should not be construed to imply that A. B. C. is correcting God's Word.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Malachi ten times.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The compiler of this course is using by gracious permission the EXPOSITORY NOTES OF DR. THOMAS CONSTABLE of Dallas Theological Seminary as the basis for this course. Dr. Constable is a fundamental/evangelical Bible scholar who compiled these commentary notes over years as a pastor and seminary professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Constable holds to the verbal, plenary and infallible inspiration of the Word of God. We encourage our readers to further study Dr. Constable's other commentary notes found on the Internet at <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries>.

Also, the compiler of this course is using by gracious permission, MALACHI, in the commentary series, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, Vol. 29, by David Sorenson. The American Bible College recommends our students purchase the complete set, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE from Northstar Ministries located at 1820 West Morgan Street, Duluth, MN 55811 or call (218) 726 0209. Dr. Sorenson, a pastor, seminary professor, church-planter and soul-winner, is an outstanding fundamental Bible scholar who holds to the verbal, plenary, infallible inspiration and preserved Word of God.

This course study will consist mainly of this text book with the inclusion of additional notes from other sources, unless otherwise noted. The scripture texts are altered to conform with the King James Version except where the authors are using their own rendering. This should not be construed to imply that the American Bible College is correcting God's Word. The American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, and this method of study allows the writer to accurately present the historical meaning in a relevant, current setting. It is our desire that this study will be enlightening and spiritually rewarding as you understand the Book of Malachi. All other references will be footnoted and bracketed.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Malachi ten times.

Respectfully your servant in Christ Jesus,

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

FOREWORD

APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THIS BOOK

MALACHI is one of the most profound of all the Minor Prophets. A lifetime of study would be too short to master it. The thoughts are deep, and the student who is not willing to do prolonged and patient thinking ought not to undertake the book. Each phrase and each verse is of value, and to get at the meat of the book it must be carefully broken down and analyzed into its component parts. Each part must be studied for itself and then in its relation to the other parts. Analysis is not enough. We must synthesize, or see the book as a whole.

Suggestions for Study

As we undertake these studies in Malachi, our primary effort should be to familiarize ourselves with the text itself. This we may do through careful reading and rereading. Following Dr. James M. Gray in his book, *How to Master the English Bible*, we suggest the following five rules for this reading:

- (1) Read the whole book at one time, ignoring chapter and verse divisions.
- (2) Read it continuously, right through at a single sitting, without break or interruption.
- (3) Read it repeatedly, over and over again; not twice, but ten or fifteen times.
- (4) Read it independently, without consulting other people's interpretations until you have direct contact and immediate acquaintance with the book itself.
- (5) Read it prayerfully, seeking your interpretation from the Holy Spirit who is present in the subject matter and also in the heart of the devout reader.

Reading is our First step, but mere reading is not study. Having read Malachi, we must study it carefully and purposefully, closing the book from time to time to summarize our study. We will use for our guide in this study the comments of Doctor Constable. Additional books should be consulted where available, and a comparative study made of the different interpretations.

Some Values to Be Sought

Closely connected with our purpose in reading and with the problems that we face are the values that we seek. First, we want a working knowledge of the *content* of the Book of Malachi. Then, we want to know its *aim* and *purport*. Finally, we want to lay hold of the message of the book both for its Old Testament and its present day readers. The final test of value will be not how much of the text we have mastered, but how much Christ has mastered our lives through these *Studies in Malachi*.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI¹

I. Personal Account. — The name Malachi is rendered by some “my angel”, but it is usually regarded as contracted from Malachijah, “messenger of Jehovah,” like Abi (2 Kings 18:2) from Abijah (2 Chronicles 29:1). The traditionists regard the name as having been given to the prophet on account of the beauty of his person and his unblemished life. The name means an angel, angels being, in fact, the messengers of God; and, as the prophets are often styled angels or messengers of Jehovah, it is supposed by some that “Malachi” is merely a general title descriptive of this character, and not a proper name. ... A tradition preserved in Pseudo-Epiphanius (*De Vitis Proph.*) relates that Malachi was of the tribe of Zebulun, and born after the captivity at Sopha (𐤍𐤏𐤃𐤓,? Saphir) in the territory of that tribe. According to the same apocryphal story he died young, and was buried with his fathers in his own country....

II. Date of his Prophecies. — Although there has been a faint disposition to regard Zechariah as the last of the prophets (Lactant. *De Velra Sapent.* 4:5), the received opinion decides for Malachi. Accordingly Aben-Ezra calls him “the end of the prophets,” Kimchi, “the last of them;” and not seldom he is distinguished by the rabbins as “the seal of the prophets.” Cyril makes him contemporary with Haggai and Zechariah, or a little later. Syncellus (p. 240 B) places these three prophets under Joshua the son of Josedec. That Malachi was contemporary with Nehemiah is rendered probable by a comparison of Malachi 2:8 with Nehemiah 13:15; 2:10-16 with Nehemiah 13:23, etc.; and Malachi 3:7-12 with Nehemiah 13:10, etc. That he prophesied after the times of Haggai and Zechariah is inferred from his omitting to mention the restoration of the Temple, and from no allusion being made to him by Ezra. The captivity was already a thing of the long past, and is not referred to. The existence had still a political chief (Malachi 1:8), distinguished by the same title as that borne by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:26), to which Gesenius assigns a Persian origin. Hence Vitringa concludes that Malachi delivered his prophecies after the second return of Nehemiah from Persia (Nehemiah 13:6), and subsequently to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (B.C. cir. 420), which is the date adopted by Kennicott and Hales, and approved by Davidson (*Introd.* p. 985). The date B.C. 410 cannot be far from correct.

It may be mentioned that in the *Seder Olam Rabba* (p. 55, ed. Meyer) the date of Malachi’s prophecy is assigned, with that of Haggai and Zechariah, to the second year of Darius; and his death in the *Seder Olam Zuta* (p. 105) is placed, with that of the same two prophets, in the fifty-second year of the Medes and Persians. The principal reasons adduced by Vitringa, and which appear conclusively to fix the time of Malachi’s prophecy as contemporary with Nehemiah, are the following: The offenses denounced by Malachi as prevailing among the people, and especially the corruption of the priests by marrying foreign wives, correspond with the actual abuses with which Nehemiah had to contend in his efforts to bring about a reformation (comp. Malachi 2:8 with Nehemiah 13:29). The alliance of the high-priest’s family with Tobiah the Ammonite (Nehemiah 13:4, 28) and Sanballat the Horonite had introduced neglect of the customary Temple-service, and the offerings and tithes due to the Levites and priests, in consequence of which the Temple was forsaken (Nehemiah 13:4-13) and the Sabbath openly profaned (ver. 15-21). The short interval of Nehemiah’s absence from Jerusalem had been sufficient for the growth of these corruptions, and on his return he found it necessary to put them down with a strong hand, and to do over again the work that Ezra had done a few years before. From the striking parallelism between the state of things indicated in Malachi’s prophecies and that actually existing on Nehemiah’s return from the court of Artaxerxes, it is on all accounts highly probable that the efforts of the secular governor were on this occasion seconded by the preaching of “Jehovah’s messenger,” and that Malachi occupied the same position with regard to the reformation under Nehemiah as Isaiah held in the time of Hezekiah, and Jeremiah in that of Josiah. The last chapter of canonical Jewish history is the key to the last chapter of its prophecy. See Noel Alexander, *De Malachia Propheta*, in his *Hist. Eccles.* 3:642 sq.; Vitringa, *idem*, in his *Observationes Sociae*, vol. 2; Hebenstreit, *Disp. in Malachi* (Lips. 1731 sq.).

III. Contents of the Book. — The prophecies of Malachi are comprised in four chapters in our version, as in the Sept., Vulgate, and Peshito-Syriac. In the Hebrew the 3d and 4th form but one chapter. The whole prophecy naturally divides itself into three sections, in the first of which Jehovah is represented as the loving Father and ruler of His people (Malachi 1:22:9); in the second, as the supreme God and Father of all (Malachi 2:10:16); and in the third, as their

¹ John McClintock and James Strong, *CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE*, Vol. 5, pp. 256-261. Hereafter referred to as [MCCLINTOCK].

righteous and final judge (Malachi 2:17end). These may be again subdivided into smaller sections, each of which follows a certain order: first, a short sentence; then the skeptical questions which might be raised by the people; and, finally, their full and triumphant refutation. The formal and almost scholastic manner of the prophecy seemed to Ewald to indicate that it was rather delivered in writing than spoken publicly. But though this may be true of the prophecy in its present shape, which probably presents the substance of oral discourses, there is no reason for supposing that it was not also pronounced orally in public, like the warnings and denunciations of the older prophets, however it may differ from them in vigor of conception and high poetic diction.

1. The first section of the prophet's message consists of two parts; the first (Malachi 1:1-8) addressed to the people generally, in which Jehovah, by his messenger, asserts his love for them, and proves it, in answer to their reply, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" by referring to the punishment of Edom as an example. The second part (Malachi 1:6-2:9) is addressed especially to the priests, who had despised the name of Jehovah, and had been the chief movers of the defection from His worship and covenant. They are rebuked for the worthlessness of their sacrifices and offerings, and their profanation of the Temple thereby (Malachi 1:7-14). The denunciation of their offense is followed by the threat of punishment for future neglect (Malachi 2:1-3), and the character of the true priest is drawn as the companion picture to their own (Malachi 2:5-9).

2. In the second section (Malachi 2:10-16) the prophet reproves the people for their intermarriages with the idolatrous heathen, and the divorces by which they separated themselves from their legitimate wives, who wept at the altar of Jehovah, in violation of the great law of marriage which God the Father of all, established at the beginning.

3. The judgment, which the people lightly regard, is announced with all solemnity, ushered in by the advent of the Messiah. The Lord, preceded by His messenger shall come to His Temple suddenly, to purify the land from its iniquity, and to execute swift judgment upon those who violate their duty to God and their neighbor. The first part (Malachi 2:17-3:5) of the section terminates with the threatened punishment; in the second (Malachi 3:6-12) the faithfulness of God to His promises is vindicated, and the people are exhorted to repentance, with its attendant blessings; in the third (Malachi 3:13-4:6) they are reproved for their want of confidence in God, and for confusing good and evil. The final severance between the righteous and the wicked is then set forth, and the great day of judgment is depicted, to be announced by the coming of Elijah, or John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ (Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13).

V. Canonicity and Integrity. — The claim of the book of Malachi to its place in the canon of the Old Testament has never been disputed, and its authority is established by the references to it in the New Testament (Matthew 11:10; 17:12; Mark 1:2; 9:11,12; Luke 1:17; Romans 9:13). Philo, Josephus, Melito, Jerome, and other ancient authorities, mention it, and quote from it as in accordance with our present copies. Nor is there anything, either in its language or the circumstances of its time, the manners and customs touched upon, or its topographical and geographical allusions, that could give rise to the slightest critical suspicion.

INTRODUCTION²

Malachi was the last of the great writing prophets and apparently exercised his ministry some time prior to the arrival of Nehemiah in 445/444 BC (he indicates that animals were still being presented to the governor (Malachi 1:8), a practice stopped by Nehemiah - Nehemiah 5:14-16) and possibly on into that period. There is no reliable external information about him, but Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira) in around 180 BC mentions 'the twelve prophets', which suggests that at that date Malachi's contribution was fully recognized. It matters little whether it was a pseudonym, a name he took on becoming a prophet or whether it was his actual given name, although there is no good reason linguistically for denying that it is a good Hebrew name.

Approximately a hundred years previously the first of the exiles in Babylonia had returned to Palestine under the decree of Cyrus in 539/8 BC, and had eventually, as a result of the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, rebuilt the Temple, something which was completed in 515 BC.

But while the Temple was clearly now itself active, Jerusalem itself was still not fully restored, and indeed seems to have been in fairly poor condition. While an attempt had been made to rebuild its walls, this restoration had been forbidden by Artaxerxes before it had been completed (Ezra 4:7-24), and had seemingly been to some extent reversed by their enemies. A deterioration in its condition is suggested by the fact that Nehemiah received a report that stated that, 'the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach, the wall also of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire' (Nehemiah 1:3).

The community were beset with problems. Their determination to keep the worship of YHWH pure, which was in itself to be commended, had upset the people round about who had wanted a part in the new Temple so that they could introduce into it their own syncretistic Yahwism. The present state of Jerusalem was something which had partly caused the above problems. It would seem that the successors of the returned exiles were also disillusioned because there did not appear to be any sign of God's fulfillment of His earlier promises made to Haggai and Zechariah. Nevertheless in spite of their discontent they were, unlike YHWH, clearly very satisfied with their own religious state.

But the truth was that the first zeal demonstrated by the original returnees had lapsed as the people had settled down, (as we would have expected), and Malachi has therefore to point out a number of ways in which the present people were displeasing to God. This included the fact that they were marrying wives outside the community, thus introducing the very syncretistic ideas that they had outwardly resisted, and were divorcing their ageing wives so that they could marry younger ones (Malachi 2:10-11; Ezra 9:1-2; Nehemiah 13:1-3; Nehemiah 13:23). The priesthood were considered to be corrupt, and careless in their offerings (Malachi 1:6 to Malachi 2:9; Nehemiah 13:7-9), and the people were also failing to pay their tithes to the sanctuary (Malachi 3:8-10; Nehemiah 10:32-39; Nehemiah 13:10-14). Furthermore they were being careless in their attitude towards the poor (Malachi 3:5; Nehemiah 5:1-5). Overall things were not good.

Nevertheless Malachi opens with the assertion that God loves them (Malachi 1:2), a love which is emphasized by the fact that, in contrast to Edom, God has restored them to their land and has a good future in store for them if only they will truly respond to Him. It is a response, however, that He only expects a certain number of them to make (Malachi 3:16-17; Malachi 4:3).

As we shall see, Malachi constantly uses a question and answer method in order to bring out his points. While a similar method is occasionally found in other prophets, it is not used as systematically by them as it is by Malachi. It is thus distinctive to his prophecy and distinguishes him from those who have gone before. We are not to see the answers given as literally being on the tongues of the people. Rather he puts the answers in their mouths so as to clarify the picture. He was not seeking to portray them as petulant, merely seeking to bring out how they were really behaving.

² Pett, Peter, PETER PETT'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, Introduction to Malachi, [www//studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view](http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pet/view). Hereafter referred to as [PETT].

OUTLINE

1. Heading (Malachi 1:1).
2. YHWH declares His love for His people. They ask, 'How have you loved us?' (Malachi 1:2-5).
3. YHWH declares that the priests have despised His Name. They ask, How have we despised Your Name? (Malachi 1:6 to Malachi 2:9).
4. The people assert their oneness because God is their Father. They ask 'How then are they faithless to one another, and profaners of the covenant?' (Malachi 2:10-12).
5. Malachi declares that the people weep because YHWH no longer accepts their offering. They ask, 'Why does He not do so?' (Malachi 2:13-16).
6. Malachi says that they have wearied YHWH with their words. They ask 'How have we wearied Him?' (Malachi 2:17 to Malachi 3:6).
7. YHWH says that they have violently robbed Him. They ask, 'How have we violently robbed You?' (Malachi 3:7-12).
8. YHWH says that they have spoken against Him. They ask, 'How have we spoken against you?' (Malachi 3:13 to Malachi 4:3).
9. Final Exhortation (Malachi 4:4-6). [PETT]

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF MALACHI

1

*Overview of Malachi 1: The first chapter of Malachi deals on the one hand with God's demonstrable love for His people and their demonstrable contempt thereof. The focus is primarily upon compromise and sin of the priests and Levites in restored Jerusalem.*³

I. INTRODUCTION 1:1

Verse 1

This title verse explains what follows as the oracle of Yahweh's word that He sent to Israel through Malachi. The Hebrew word *massa'*, translated "burden," occurs 27 times in the Prophets (e.g., Isaiah 13:1; Isaiah 14:28; Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Zechariah 9:1; Zechariah 12:1; et al.). It refers to a threatening message, a burden that lay heavy on the heart of God and His prophet. "Pronouncement" and "utterance" are good synonyms.

"The word of Yahweh [Jehovah]" refers to a message that comes from Him with His full authority. "Yahweh" is the name that God used in relationship to Israel as the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. What follows is evidence that Israel was in trouble with Yahweh because the Jews had not kept the Mosaic Covenant. Yahweh, of course, was completely faithful to His part of the covenant.

"Malachi" means "my messenger" or "messenger of Jehovah." The prophet's name was appropriate since God had commanded him to bear this "word" to the people of Israel. The prophet was not the source of the revelation that follows; he was only a messenger whose job it was to communicate a message from Yahweh (cf. Malachi 2:7; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21). As many as 47 of the 55 verses in Malachi are personal addresses of the Lord. [Note: Clendenen, p. 205.]

Verse 2

The Lord's first word to His people was short and sweet. He had loved them. He had told His people of His love for them repeatedly throughout their history (cf. Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Deuteronomy 7:7-11; Deuteronomy 10:12-22; Deuteronomy 15:16; Deuteronomy 23:5; Deuteronomy 33:2-5; Isaiah 43:4; Hosea 11:1; Hosea 11:3-4; Hosea 11:8-9). Yet they were now questioning His love and implying that there was no evidence of it in their present situation in life. This is the first of seven such dialogues in Malachi (cf. Malachi 1:6-7; Malachi 2:14; Malachi 2:17; Malachi 3:7-8, Malachi 3:13-14). Yahweh had promised them a golden age of blessing, but they still struggled under Gentile oppression and generally hard times (cf. Malachi 1:8; Malachi 2:2; Malachi 3:9; Malachi 3:11). Their question revealed distrust of Him and hostility toward Him as well as lack of appreciation for Him. Israel should have responded to Yahweh's love by loving Him and keeping His commandments (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Verses 2-3

In replying to the people's charge, the Lord asked them if Esau was not Jacob's brother. The implication of the question is that these twins were both the objects of God's elective love. Yet God had loved Jacob, the younger, and hated Esau, the older. The evidence of God's hatred for Esau was that He had made the mountains of Seir, the inheritance that God gave Esau and his descendants, a desolate wilderness. Unstated is the fact that God had given Jacob a land flowing with milk and honey for his inheritance, which proved His love for that brother.

"It was not a question of selecting Jacob for heaven and reprobating Esau to hell." [Note: Harry A. Ironside, *Notes on the Minor Prophets*, p. 187.]

It is remarkable that God loved Jacob in view of the person Jacob was, and it is equally remarkable that God hated Esau, because in many ways he was a more likeable individual than his brother.

"Someone said to Dr. Arno C. Gaebelin, the gifted Hebrew Christian leader of a generation ago, 'I have a serious problem with Malachi 1:3, where God says, "Esau I have hated." Dr. Gaebelin replied, 'I have a

³ David Sorenson, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, Vol. 39, MALACHI, (Northstar Ministries, Duluth, MN., 2011), pp. 503. Hereafter referred to as [SORENSEN].

greater problem with Malachi 1:2, where God says, "Jacob, I have loved." [Note: Warren W. Wiersbe, "Malachi," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Prophets*, p. 479.]

"Hate" Hebrew שָׂנְאָה , to regard with a passion contrary to love...When the Hebrews compared a stronger affection with a weaker one, they called the first love, and the other hatred, meaning to love in a less degree — "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13); i.e. on Jacob have I bestowed privileges and blessings such as are the proofs of affection; I have treated him as one treats a friend whom he loves; but from Esau have I withheld these privileges and blessings, and therefore treated him as one is wont to treat those whom he dislikes. That this refers to the bestowment of temporal blessings, and the withholding of them, is clear, not only from this passage, but from comparing Malachi 1:2, 3; Genesis 25:23; 27:27-29, 37-40. Indeed, as to hated, its meaning here is rather privative than positive. So, "If a man have two wives, — one beloved and another hated" (Deuteronomy 21:15); i.e. less beloved. When our Savior says that he who would follow him must *hate* father and mother, he means that even these dearest earthly friends must be loved in a subordinate degree. [MCCLINTOCK, Vol. 4, pp. 285-86]

Normally in the ancient Near East the father favored the eldest son, but God did what was abnormal in choosing to bless Jacob over Esau. God's regard for individuals does not depend ultimately on their behavior or characters. It rests on His sovereign choice to bless some more than others (cf. Romans 9:13). This is a problem involving His justice since it seems unfair that God would bless some more than others. However, since God is sovereign, He can do whatever He chooses to do (cf. Romans 9).

Another problem that these verses raise concerns God's love. Does not God love the whole world and everyone in it (John 3:16)? Yes, He does, but this statement deals with God's choices regarding Jacob and Esau, not His affection for all people. When He said here that He hated Esau, He meant that He did not choose to bestow His favor on Esau to the extent that He did on Jacob (cf. Psalms 139:21). He made this choice even before they were born (Genesis 25:21-34; Romans 9:10-13). To contrast His dealings with the twins, God polarized His actions toward them in this love/hate statement (cf. Luke 14:26). God loved Jacob in that He sovereignly elected Him and his descendants for a covenant relationship with Himself (Genesis 29:31-35; Deuteronomy 21:15-17), as His special possession (cf. Deuteronomy 4:37; Deuteronomy 5:10; Deuteronomy 7:6-9). Often in Scripture to love someone means to choose to bless that person. Not to love someone means not to bless him or her.

"Modern studies of covenant language have shown that the word 'love' (... *'ahab*, or any of its forms) is a technical term in both the biblical and ancient Near Eastern treaty and covenant texts to speak of choice or election to covenant relationship, especially in the so-called suzerainty documents." [Note: Merrill, p. 391. See also Stuart, p. 1284; William L. Moran, "*The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963):77-87; and J. A. Thompson, "*Israel's Haters*," *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979):200-205.]

The fact that God gave Mt. Seir to Esau as his inheritance shows that He did love him to that extent. But He did not choose to bless Esau as He chose to bless Jacob, namely, with a covenant relationship with Himself. Similarly a man might love several different women (his mother, his sisters, his daughters, et al.) but choose to set his love on only one of them and enter into the covenant of marriage with her alone. His special love for the one might make it look like he hated the others. Again, eternal destiny is not in view here; God was speaking of His acts in history toward Jacob and Esau and their descendants.

Did not God choose to bless Jacob because Jacob valued the promises that God had given his forefathers whereas Esau did not (cf. Genesis 27)? Clearly Jacob did value these promises and Esau did not, but here God presented the outcome of their lives as the consequences of His sovereign choice rather than their choices. Clendenen believed God's love and hatred of Jacob and Esau was His response to their respective regard and disregard of His covenant promises. [Note: Clendenen, p. 251.] Their choices were important, but the choice of God before and behind their choices that resulted in the outcome of their lives was more important (cf. Ephesians 1; Romans 9).

Some of God's choices, the really important ones (His decree), determine all that takes place to bring those choices to reality. If this were not so, God would not be all-powerful; man could override the power of God with his choices. Some of God's choices are stronger than others, as reflected, for example, in the words "will," "counsel," or "purpose" (Gr. *boule*) and "desire," "wish," or "inclination" (Gr. *thelema*). In some matters God allows people to influence His actions, even to cause Him to relent or change His mind from a previous course of action to a different one. Yet in the really important things that He has determined, no one can alter His will. [Note: See Thomas L. Constable, "*What Prayer Will and Will Not Change*," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, pp. 99-113.] Yet God's choices do not mean that man's choices are only apparently real. Human beings have a measure of freedom, and it is genuine freedom. We know this is true because a just God holds human

beings responsible for their choices. How humans can be genuinely free, to the extent that we are free, and how God can still maintain control is probably impossible for us to comprehend fully.

The bottom line is that God chose to bless Jacob to an extent that He did not choose to bless Esau. This decision lay behind all the decisions that these twin brothers made. They were responsible for their decisions and actions, but God had predetermined their destinies (cf. Ephesians 1:3-5; Romans 8:28-30).

A. Positive motivation: the Lord's love 1:2-5

Verses 2-9

II. THE PRIESTS EXHORTED NOT TO DISHONOR THE LORD (THE THEOLOGICAL ANGLE) 1:2-2:9

"Malachi's first address is governed by the ironic exhortation in Malachi 1:10, 'Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors.' It is directed against the priests of the postexilic temple. Despite their responsibility under the covenant of Levi (cf. Malachi 2:4; Malachi 2:8) to be the Lord's messengers of Torah (Malachi 2:7), they were dishonoring the Lord (Malachi 1:6), particularly in their careless attitude toward the offerings (Malachi 1:8). Failing to take their responsibilities to the Lord seriously, they had become political pawns of the influential in Israel who used religion to maintain respectability (Malachi 2:9). The priests are here exhorted to stop the empty worship and to begin honoring the Lord with pure offerings and faithful service. As motivation the Lord declares His love for them (and for all the people; Malachi 1:2-5) and threatens them with humiliation and removal from His service (cf. Malachi 2:1-3; Malachi 2:9)." [Note: *Ibid.*, p. 244.]

One's attitude toward and his or her relationship with God determine that person's health and wholeness as a child of God. They also determined Israel's national health and wholeness. This first address deals with this subject particularly: the theological issue of attitude toward and relationship with God.

Verse 4

Even though the Edomites, Esau's descendants, determined to rebuild their nation after it had suffered destruction by the Babylonians, they would not be able to do so. They could not because almighty Yahweh would not permit it. He would tear down whatever they rebuilt, so much so that other people would view them as a wicked land (cf. the holy land, Zechariah 2:12) and the objects of Yahweh's perpetual indignation. The "holy" land was holy, sanctified, because God set it apart for special blessing, as He had the nation of Israel. Edom, on the other hand, was wicked because God had not set it apart for special blessing.

"Israel needed to consider what her lot would have been if she, like Edom, had not been elected to a

covenant relationship with Yahweh. Both Israel and Edom received judgment from God at the hands of the Babylonians in the sixth century (Jeremiah 27:2-8). Yet God repeatedly promised to restore Israel (because of His covenant promises, Deuteronomy 4:29-31; Deuteronomy 30:1-10), but He condemned Edom to complete destruction, never to be restored (Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 35)." [Note: Blaising, p. 1576.]

"The Judeans had Persian permission and support in their rebuilding campaign (Ezra 1:1-11; Ezra 4:3; Ezra 6:1-15; Ezra 7:11-28; Nehemiah 2:7-9; Nehemiah 13:6). That was God's doing. The Edomites had no such help, which was also God's doing and which sealed Edom's fate as a people forever." [Note: Stuart, p. 1289.]


Verse 5

Observing Yahweh's dealings with Edom, the Israelites would learn of His love for her and His greatness that extended beyond Israel (cf. Malachi 1:11; Malachi 1:14; Malachi 3:12; Malachi 4:6). They would eventually call on other people to appreciate Him too.

"While Edom does not have the most space devoted to prophecies against it [condemnation] in total number of verses (Egypt has that honor, thanks to Ezekiel), it has the widest distribution among the prophetic books. From Isaiah 34 in particular it is clear that Edom can be used by the prophets to stand as a synecdoche for 'all the nations' (Isaiah 34:2)." [Note: *Ibid.*, pp. 1281-82. For a list of oracles against foreign nations in the Prophets, see *ibid.*, p. 1281.]

The point of this section was to get the Jews of the restoration community, who were thinking that God had abandoned them and forgotten His promises to them, to think again. Even though they seemed to be experiencing the same fate as their ancient enemy, the Edomites, God would restore them because He had entered into covenant relationship with them. He would keep His promises, both to the Israelites and to the Edomites, for better and for worse respectively. This reminder of the Lord's love provided positive motivation for the priests to return to the Lord, and it should have the same effect on all God's people who read these verses.

Verse 6

To prove his case, God makes His first charge through Malachi against backslidden, restoration Judah. He begins by stating the obvious: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." He then takes it a step further. If God was indeed their Father, where was the honor due Him? If He indeed was their Lord (the word translated as **master** { *adonay* or *adonai*) [a slavery term] is most frequently translated as 'lord' ['LORD' when translated from the Hebrew word, YHWH), where was the reverence due

Him. (The word translated as fear {פֹּחַד *morah*} has the sense of 'reverence.'). God then makes clear to whom He is addressing this charge: "O priests, that despise my name..."

The word translated as despise (בָּזְאוּ *bawzaw*) has the sense 'to hold in contempt.' The idea is that they had no respect for the Lord their God. God knowing their hearts therefore revealed their reaction to Malachi's preaching at this point: "Wherein have we despised thy name?"³

Speaking for the priests, Malachi gave their response. They denied having despised His name. Due to the sacredness of the name "Jehovah", the Jews commonly substituted "Adonai" ["LORD"] and the "name" for the person of Yahweh from early biblical times (cf. Exodus 23:21; Deuteronomy 12:5; Deuteronomy 12:11; Deuteronomy 12:21; Deuteronomy 16:2; Deuteronomy 16:6; et al.). It became a virtual title for Yahweh by the end of the biblical period and increasingly so after that. [Note: See Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:40-45.] By asking how they had despised His name, rather than saying, "We have not despised your name," the priests were claiming ignorance as to how they were doing this. However their question also carried a challenge; they resented the suggestion that they had despised His name. Jehovah, "LORD" is found sixteen times in Malachi chapter one.

B. Situation: the priests' failure to honor the Lord 1:6-9

The preceding section ended with a statement of Yahweh's greatness. The second one opens with a question about why Israel's priests did not honor Him. The theme of honoring or fearing the Lord appears several times in Malachi making it one of the major themes in this book (cf. Malachi 1:11; Malachi 1:14; Malachi 2:2; Malachi 2:5; Malachi 3:5; Malachi 3:16; Malachi 4:2). The first disputation (Malachi 1:2-5) is the simplest, and this one (Malachi 1:6 to Malachi 2:9) is the most complex.

Verse 7

The Lord responded through Malachi that the priests had despised the Lord by presenting defiled [blemishes on sacrifices] sacrifices to Him (cf. Leviticus 22:2; Leviticus 22:17-30; Leviticus 22:32). Defiled sacrifices were sacrifices that were not ritually clean or acceptable, as the Law specified.

God's response was how they offered "polluted bread upon mine altar." It may be assumed the polluted is not noted. Most of the bread associated with the

Tabernacle was unleavened. It may be they did not go to the trouble of baking unleavened bread, but used ordinary, leavened, table-bread. It may be the bread was not properly consecrated through carelessness on the part of the priests. It may be they used old, stale bread through laziness and carelessness. The greater thought is that they were derelict, careless, and disrespectful in their prescribed service at the Temple...

The reaction in the hearts of the priests was, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" God's reply was that their attitude toward the table of the Lord was *contemptible*. The very priests held the service of God at the Temple in contempt. Their attitude was, 'what's the difference,' or 'so what.' [SORENSEN, p.506]

"What does this say to professed Christians who spend hundreds of dollars annually, perhaps thousands, on gifts for themselves, their family, and their friends, but give God a dollar a week when the offering plate is passed?" [Note: Wiersbe, p. 480.]

Verse 8

God offered His second evidence of their disrespect toward Him. They would offer blind, lame, and sick animals at the Temple. [SORENSEN, P. 506]

Furthermore the priests were offering blind, lame, and sick animals as sacrifices. These were unacceptable according to the Law (Leviticus 22:18-25; Deuteronomy 15:21). The Lord asked them if this was not evil. Of course it was. They would not offer such bad animals to their governor because they would not please him, but they dared offer them to their King. The governor in view would have been one of the Persian officials who ruled over the territory occupied by Judah. Nehemiah held this position for a while, but others preceded and followed him in it. The Book of Malachi seems to date from Nehemiah's leadership of Israel, but Nehemiah refused to receive offerings from the people (Nehemiah 5:14; Nehemiah 5:18). So the governor in view here was probably not Nehemiah. Elnathan, Yeho'ezer, and Ahzai were evidently the governors of Judah between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. [Note: N. Avigad, "*Bullae and Seals from a Post-exilic Judean Archive*," Qedem 4, p. 34.]

Anything second-rate that we offer to God is inappropriate in view of who He is. This includes our worship, our ministries, our studies, physical objects, anything. The Lord is worthy of our very best offerings to Him, and we should give Him nothing less. To give Him less than our best is to despise Him. Shoddiness is an insult to God. Shoddy holy is still shoddy.

Verse 9

How foolish it was to pray for God to bestow His favor on the priests when they were despising Him in these ways.

"This is irony. God will not hear the prayers of those who dishonor Him." [Note: Burton L. Goddard,

³ David Sorenson, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, Vol. 39, MALACHI, (Northstar Ministries, Duluth, MN., 2011), pp. 505. Hereafter referred to as [SORENSEN].

"Malachi," in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p. 915.]

"Over the years, I've participated in many ordination examinations, and I've looked for four characteristics in each candidate: a personal experience of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ; a sense of calling from the Lord; a love for and knowledge of the Word of God; and a high respect for the work of the ministry. Whenever we've examined a candidate who was flippant about ministry, who saw it as a job and not a divine calling, he didn't get my vote. Whether as a pastor, missionary, teacher, choir member, or usher, being a servant of God is a serious thing, and it deserves the very best that we can give." [Note: Wiersbe, p. 481.]

Verse 10

C. Command: stop the pointless offerings 1:10

The Lord ironically wished the priests would shut the temple gates and stop offering sacrifices since they had so little regard for Him. He was displeased with them and would not accept any offerings from them. They might continue to offer them, but He would have no regard for them. Obviously the Lord had ordained the offering of sacrifices under the Law, but He preferred that the priests not offer them rather than offering them when they were meaningless, simply as an obligation. "I am not pleased with you" is the opposite of "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

This verse is the chiasmic center and the heart of the first hortatory discourse dealing with the importance of the priests honoring the Lord (Malachi 1:2 to Malachi 2:9).

D. Situation: the priests' worship profaning the Lord's name 1:11-14

This is the second section that describes how the priests were dishonoring the Lord's name (cf. Malachi 1:6-9). It is one of the bookends that flanks the central command to stop the pointless sacrifices (Malachi 1:10).

Verses 11-12

YHWH [—most common transliteration of the tetragrammaton for the Hebrew word for *Yahweh*-Jehovah. The tetragrammaton (from Greek τετραγράμματον, meaning "four letters") is the Hebrew *theonym* יהוה, commonly transliterated into Latin letters as **YHWH**—taken from **THE FREE ENCYCLOPEDIA**] then looks ahead to the future. They are wondering why YHWH has not brought the Gentiles flocking to worship at their Temple as Haggai had suggested (Haggai 2:6-7), are they? Well let them now know this. In the future from one end of the world to the other YHWH's Name will be exalted as great among the Gentiles (His true greatness will be recognized), and everywhere incense will be offered to His Name, and a pure offering acceptable to Him will

be offered by them, because His Name is recognized as so great among the Gentiles (the greatness of YHWH is a feature of this chapter, see Malachi 1:5; Malachi 1:14). While in contrast they, His supposed priests, are profaning His Name because of the attitude that they have towards His Table, and His offerings and sacrifices. For they, instead of indicating that His Name is great, are profaning it, and indicating that His Table is a polluted thing and that its product is to be looked on as contemptible....

The verbs 'is/will be' are not in the Hebrew text so that the prophet may have in mind both the present and the future, the present in the fact that around the world synagogue worship was probably already causing Gentiles to worship YHWH in prayer and in obedience to the Law and by the offering of themselves and their gifts to Him, and the future in terms of the constant prophecies of blessing among the Gentiles that would both grow from such activities, and especially the blessing and worship that would result from the activities of the Messiah/Servant (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6; etc)....

However, the phrase 'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,' points to an eschatological and therefore Messianic interpretation. Compare Psalms 50:1; Psalms 113:3; Isaiah 45:6; Isaiah 59:19 which all have in mind great events. And thus the great stress is on what God will finally achieve through His Servant....

We may thus find here a remarkable prophecy of the way in which:

1). The majority of the priesthood will be rejected after the death and resurrection of Jesus, (but with some repenting), just as they are being here. Today, there are no Jewish "priests" because the Temple priesthood [performing various rites in the Temple] was no longer needed after the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.; they have been replaced by synagogue rabbis.

2). Large numbers of Gentiles will respond and acknowledge the greatness of YHWH and His Name by accepting the once for all offering of Jesus Christ, and then, through Him, offering true prayer to God as the equivalent of incense (compare Psalms 141:2; Revelation 5:8).

3). The resulting continual sacrifice of themselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2) on the basis of that offering of Jesus Christ made once for all (Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 10:14).

4) And all quite apart from the Temple.

YHWH's point is that He does not really need the Israelite sacrifices in view of the certainty of what is happening even now 'worldwide', and of what is to come in even greater measure. Thus their choice as to whether they heed His words or not, while it will

certainly affect their own future position, will have no effect at all either on the future worldwide worship of God or on the fulfillment of His intentions. Thus they are not to see themselves as necessary to the fulfillment of His purposes. Whether therefore they respond or not is up to them. If they want to be included in His purposes they will respond. Meanwhile He will be recording in His book of remembrance all the names of those who fear YHWH and think on His Name (Malachi 3:16)....

It is also a reminder that being a priest was of no advantage to a man unless his behavior towards God was genuine. They may have been anointed as belonging to YHWH but they should recognize that it makes not the slightest difference unless their response is true. Man may look at the outward appearance, and even be in awe of it, but God looks at the heart....

We should note here the contrast between Edom and the Gentiles. For Edom their brother tribe there is no future outside Israel (and indeed they would be absorbed into Israel). But as for the Gentiles, the word of God will reach out to them worldwide, and at that time all the world will hear of the Great God of Israel and will respond to Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). [PETT]

Verse 13

They were also saying that it was tiresome and distasteful to worship the Lord. Their worship should have been passionate and joyful instead of boring and burdensome (cf. Colossians 3:16-17). They were sniffing at it as something they despised and were bringing as offerings what they had stolen as well as lame and sick animals (cf. 2 Samuel 24:24). Did they expect Him to receive such sacrifices from them? How could He?

"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." [Note: John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, p. 26.]

Verse 14

And it is not only the priests who are guilty. The people too are cheats. For regularly, although they have a stout male in their flock, they make their vow and then sacrifice to their sovereign Lord one that is inferior and blemished. So almost the whole of Israel is caught up in the scam. It is clear that, to them, anything is good enough for God, while they keep the best for themselves. Note the change from YHWH of hosts to sovereign Lord (*adonai*) to emphasize the greatness of the crime. And this is even further emphasized by the perpetrator of the fraud being 'cursed'. In these extreme phrases YHWH incorporates all the people in with His casting off of the priests....

Their crime is then emphasized even more by pointing out that while He may not count for much in *their* eyes, He is in fact a Great King (a title usually

used by conquerors of themselves, compare Isaiah 36:4) with a huge reputation among the Gentiles. This may refer to His renown from past doings, the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 1-15, see Exodus 15:14-16); the conquest of Canaan (Joshua); the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:35-36); the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30-37) or it may have in mind the great Name that is to be His when the Gentiles in every place offer incense to His Name (Malachi 1:11). It is a reminder that Malachi has his sights set high. It is in the end YHWH's worldwide rule and worship that he has in mind (compare Malachi 1:12; Psalms 2)....

The idea of the kingship of YHWH occurs regularly throughout the Old Testament. Compare Numbers 23:21; Numbers 24:7; Exodus 15:18; Deuteronomy 33:5; 1 Samuel 8:7; and regularly in the Psalms (e.g. Psalms 22:28; Psalms 47:2; Psalms 48:2; Psalms 95:3; Psalms 103:19; and often). For 'YHWH has established His throne in the Heavens and His Kingship rules over all' (Psalms 103:19)....

What a warning we should read for ourselves from these words. How easily our worship become perfunctory, how quickly we forget the greatness of the One We worship, how carelessly we can treat our responsibilities on His service, how all too easily we can justify to ourselves the giving to him of second best. We need to wake up and recognize how in doing this we are profaning Him. [PETT]

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever." [PIPER, p. 11.]

"All of history is moving toward one great goal, the white-hot worship of God and His Son among all the peoples of the earth. Missions is not that goal. It is the means. And for that reason it is the second greatest human activity in the world." [Note: *Ibid.*, p. 15.]

Lack of true heart for the Lord and His service marked these leaders of God's people. They evidently thought He did not notice their actions and attitudes, but Malachi confronted them with their hypocrisy. The prophet's words should also challenge modern servants of the Lord and leaders of His people to examine our hearts.

END OF SAMPLE