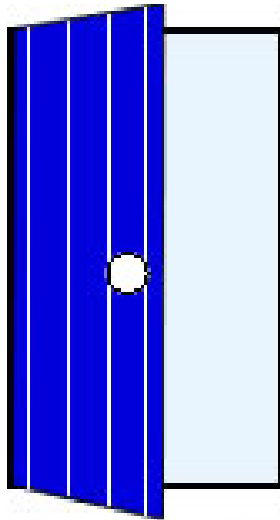


BIBLE STUDIES



Mill Lane Chapel

Malachi

(2) "I have loved you, saith the Lord"

Read Chapter 1: 1-5

Malachi Chapter 1 can be divided into two sections: **(1)** Unappreciated love, V1-5, and **(2)** Unacceptable sacrifices, V6-14. The first is addressed to the people generally, and the second to the priests particularly.

1) UNAPPRECIATED LOVE, V1-5

There are five leading thoughts in this section: **(A)** The Lord's word, V1; **(B)** The Lord's love, V2; **(C)** The Lord's hatred, V3; **(D)** The Lord's indignation, V4; **(D)** The Lord's glory, V5.

A) THE LORD'S WORD, V1

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi." We should notice **(i)** **From** Whom it came: "The burden of the word of the Lord"; **(ii)** **To** whom it came: "To Israel"; **(iii)** **By** whom it came: "By Malachi."

i) "The burden of the word of the Lord." Whilst it has been the fashion to render the Hebrew 'massa' as 'oracle', more recent scholarship suggests that the AV 'burden' conveys the meaning more accurately. 'It lays stress on the prophet's sense of constraint in giving the message that follows.....It has been placed on him, and like the loadbearer, he has to accept it and discharge his duty.' J.G.Baldwin. Compare Acts 18: 5, "Paul was pressed in the spirit", AV. 'Paul was pressed in respect of the word', JND. 'Paul was constrained by the word', RV. See also 1 Corinthians 2: 4. How much do **we** feel the weight of God's word? Let's remember that it **is** "the word of the **Lord**."

ii) "To Israel." God addresses the entire nation: not Judah alone. His love (V2) was not confined to Judah. He was deeply concerned for **all** His people. Like Paul, we ought to be able to say, "I long after you **all** in the bowels of Jesus Christ", Philippians 1: 8. Beware of assembly 'cliques!' We should also notice that whilst they were so unworthy of the name, God addresses them as "Israel", meaning 'ruling with God', or 'prince with God.' We must never 'downgrade' God's people. Remember that every child of God is an 'heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ', Romans 8: 17. Staggering, isn't it!

iii) "By Malachi." As we have already noticed, his name means 'my messenger', and he is the first of five messengers in the book: **a)** Malachi himself, 1: 1; **b)** The true priest: "He is the messenger of the Lord of hosts", 2: 7; **c)** John the Baptist: "Behold, I will send My messenger", 3: 1; **d)** Messiah Himself: "The messenger of the covenant", 3: 1; **e)** Elijah: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet", 4: 5. Malachi, like Haggai before him, was "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message", Haggai 1: 13.

B) THE LORD'S LOVE, V2

"I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I **loved Jacob**, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." We should notice the following. **(i)** God's love was unchanging; **(ii)** God's love was unrecognised; **(iii)** God's love was unfathomable.

i) Unchanging love

"I have loved you, saith the Lord." Malachi commences by emphasising God's **love** for His people. God stated His love for Israel at the beginning of their history. Notice the following passages in Deuteronomy. "And because he **loved** thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt", 4: 37. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people.....But because the Lord **loved** you", 7: 7-8. "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to **love** them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day", 10: 15. "Yea, He **loved** the people", 33: 3. Their existence as a nation was proof of His love. See also Hosea 11: 1-4. Compare Jeremiah 31: 3, "Yea, I have loved thee with an **everlasting love**." Their chequered history had not diminished his love for them, and this is still true: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are **beloved** for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance", Romans 11: 28-29. God's love for His people is unfailing, even when it is unrecognised. See Isaiah 49: 14-16, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me."

The Lord's love for us is equally unchanging. "Unto him that loved us (present tense, 'loves us', JND) and washed us from our sins in his own blood.....to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen", Revelation 1: 5-6.

ii) Unrecognised love

"Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" Their recent history, with captivity and loss of territory, evidently led Israel to doubt God's love for them. Compare Gideon in Judges 7: 13, "And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, **why** then is all this befallen us? and **where** be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." However, the situation here is infinitely more serious. Gideon could not understand why God should deal with His people by allowing the Midianites to

dominate them. After all, we are all perplexed at times. But quite clearly, something is terribly wrong when God's people actually query His love for them. Failure to appreciate God's love will effect every part of our lives, and the question and answer pattern which follows makes this abundantly clear. It is vital to 'keep ourselves in the love of God', Jude 21.

The question, "Wherein hast thou loved us?", was the first stage in Israel's backsliding, and we have already noticed that the decline at the end of both Old and New Testaments, begins in the same place. In the case of Malachi 1: 2, it was their failure to recognise God's love for them. In the case of Revelation 2: 4, it was their failure to maintain "first love" for the Lord Jesus: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Spiritual decline is inevitable if we fail to appreciate God's love for us, with a corresponding failure to reciprocate His love.

iii) Unfathomable love

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob." In confirming His love for Israel, God cites His choice of Jacob. It has been said (by C.H.Spurgeon) that it was no wonder that God hated Esau, but a thing most wonderful that He loved Jacob! The best possible commentary occurs in the New Testament: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth", Romans 9: 11. As J.G.Baldwin points out, 'The Old Testament nowhere teaches that Jacob was more loveable than Esau, or more pleasing to God than Esau, though it was a fact that Esau so lightly valued his birthright as to sell it to his scheming brother (Genesis 25: 29-24). No further explanation of God's choice of Jacob can be found than that God delighted to love him (Deuteronomy 10: 15).' C.L.Feinberg agrees: 'The choice of Jacob was by undeserved love.'

We must notice two important things at this juncture. **(i)** The reference to Jacob and Esau **personally** is expanded to include the whole history of Jacob and Esau **nationally**. Hence the words that follow: "And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness." 'All that Jacob stood for, God loved: all that Esau (Edom) stood for, God hated' (Neil Dougal, writing in '*Counsel*'). **(ii)** The words, "I hated Esau", do not occur in the Bible before this. Over the centuries, the descendants of Esau had displayed their true character, and God pronounced His hatred of Esau with complete justification. More of this later.

Bearing in mind that God refers here to Jacob personally, and nationally (compare, for example, Isaiah 41: 8, 43: 22), it is most significant that the history of the **man** is paralleled by the history of the **nation**. This is clear from the following:

i) Before his birth. See Genesis 25: 23. "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." As we have seen, Paul refers to this in Romans 9: 11-13. Jacob was chosen by God before his birth.

What was true of Jacob, is equally true of the nation. See, again, Deuteronomy 7: 7-8. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people.....But because the Lord loved you."

ii) At Bethel. See Genesis 28: 13, which confirms the promise of inheritance made to Abraham and Isaac. "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed."

The promise made to the man involves the nation. We must notice that the promises made to the patriarchs are unconditional. See Genesis 12: 7, 13: 14-15 etc. God's people will ultimately possess their promised inheritance. See Obadiah 17 etc,

iii) At Haran. See Genesis 29-30. In these chapters, Jacob is out of the land, and in Gentile territory. Laban, a Gentile, says, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake", 30: 27.

This has certainly been the experience of the Western world. Think about the business acumen of the Jew. Tesco and Marks & Spencer will do for a start. So many of the big business 'barons' are Jews. History has proved the accuracy of the promise made to Abraham: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee", Genesis 12: 2.

iv) At Mahanaim. After living with Laban for many years, Jacob returns to the promised land. See Genesis 31: 2-3, "And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and behold, it was not toward him as before. And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers." 32: 1, "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."

Like Jacob, Israel has now returned to the land. The State of Israel was inaugurated in 1948, and whilst this does not fulfil the biblical promise of national regathering, which will be accomplished by divine power, it does set the stage for coming events. Notice what followed

v) At Penuel. See Genesis 32: 24-31. Penuel was the place where "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day", and "as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

The experience of Jacob at Penuel is a picture of the coming tribulation, which is

called, significantly, "the time of Jacob's trouble", Jeremiah 30: 7. It will be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book", Daniel 12: 1. But at the end of it, the "Sun of righteousness" will rise on the battered limping nation. See Malachi 4: 2. God will leave "an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord", Zephaniah 3: 12.

vi) At Bethel. See Genesis 35: 1-2. "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there.....Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments."

After the nation has passed through the dark days of the tribulation, God will cleanse His people. "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you", Ezekiel 36: 24-29.

vii) In Egypt. See Genesis 46-50. Jacob lived long enough to see his son, Joseph, become the means of blessing to the whole world. See 41: 56-57.

This speaks for itself. The Egyptians were told, "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do." One day, the whole world will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths", Isaiah 2: 3.

The statement, "I have loved you saith the Lord", is therefore substantiated by ***His sovereign choice of Jacob and his posterity.***

Do **we** ask, "wherein hast Thou loved us?" Our calling is one proof of God's love for us. We are "the called according to His purpose", Romans 8: 28. That "purpose" is described as follows: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate..... called.....justified.....glorified" (V29-30). It all leads Paul to say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" But there is more: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the **love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." V35-39.

C) THE LORD'S HATRED, V3

"And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons ('jackals', JND) of the wilderness." We must notice, again, that God's hatred for Esau is not mentioned until the close of the Old Testament. (Paul refers to Malachi 1: 3 in Romans 9: 13). It **was** foretold that the elder should serve the younger before they were born (see Romans 9: 12, "It was said unto **her**, The elder shall serve the younger"), and before they could have done either good or bad. But it was **not** foretold that God would hate Esau. Whilst God's **love** in electing Israel is stressed in V3, history proves the **righteousness** of God in hating Esau. God's hatred was justified. Whilst Esau is described as a "profane person.....who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12: 16), the Old Testament emphasises his hatred for Jacob. Personally, he **"hated"** Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him", Genesis 27: 41.

Esau's descendants continued the hatred. They displayed unrelenting enmity towards Israel, See Jeremiah 49: 7-22, "But I have made Esau bare.....Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart." See Ezekiel 35: 5, "Thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity." (Ezekiel 35 deals with mount Seir, the territory of Esau). See Obadiah 10-14, "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." (We must remember, as well, that Jacob did not escape the government of God in his life: the man who deceived his father, was deceived by his sons).

This raises the question of divine hatred. The Scripture says quite categorically, "Esau have I **hated**." In some places, the word is used relatively, rather than absolutely. That is, in the sense of rejecting a rival claim. See Genesis 29: 30-31, "And he (Jacob) went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the Lord saw that Leah was **hated**, He opened her womb." See Matthew 6: 24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will **hate** the one, and love the other." See Luke 14: 26, "If any man come to me, and **hate** not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and, sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." See also Deuteronomy 21: 15-16; Proverbs 13: 24. But it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, here, the word is used in the absolute sense. We must remember, however, that God hated Esau with a **perfect** hatred. Compare Psalm 139: 22.

In the absolute sense, it is important to hate what God hates. See Revelation 2: 6. Compare Proverbs 6: 16-19, "These six things doth the Lord **hate**; yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." See also Jude 23, "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; **hating** even the garment spotted by the flesh."

D) THE LORD'S INDIGNATION, V4

"Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but *I* will throw down; and they shall call them, The border ('territory', JND) of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." It was **God's** prerogative to do this: see Romans 12: 19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

There would be no recovery. No nation can withstand God. No man can build where God has cursed. Any attempt to rebuild would therefore be doomed to failure. J.M.Sinclair, writing in *The Believer's Magazine*, comments as follows: 'Historically, we may note that just five years after the fall of Jerusalem, the supposedly unassailable fortress of Edom was over-run by the very same Babylonian forces. In 312 BC, Antigonus, a general of Alexander the Great, crushed Edom and despoiled Petra. In 2 BC, the Maccabees almost wiped out the Edomites, and the small remnant perished in the AD 70 slaughter at the hand of the Romans.' See also M.C.Unger: 'The fury of the Chaldean conqueror, who was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, apparently desolated Edom (see Jeremiah 25: 9, 21); and later the Nabatean Arabs ousted the Edomites permanently from their mountain fastness. That desolation was the purpose of the Lord of history and the Architect of prophecy, and could not be reversed.' This, in itself, was further evidence of God's love for Israel as opposed to Edom. Israel's return from captivity, at that very time, testified to God's unchanging love for them, but there was no mercy for Edom.

Edom (also known as Idumea) is now partly in southern Israel, and partly in southern Jordan. It lies between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba. It is evidently a future battleground: see, for example, Isaiah 63: 1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?"

God's judgement on Edom, Israel's long-standing and bitter enemy, reminds us of His judgement on another long-standing and bitter enemy. Edom was related to Israel, and this particular enemy is related to us! The Bible calls it "the flesh." This expression does not refer to our physical bodies of flesh and blood, but to our old, fallen, sinful nature. The "flesh", like Edom, is condemned by God (Romans 8: 3), and we must make sure that it stays that way in our lives. See Colossians 3: 5.

E) THE LORD'S GLORY, V5

The section begins with the words, "I have loved you saith the Lord, Yet **ye say**, Wherein hast thou loved us?" It ends with the words, "And your eyes shall see, and **ye shall say**, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel." JND, 'And ye shall say, Jehovah is glorified beyond the border of Israel.' This anticipates 1: 11. Israel will not say **then**, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" His love for them will be beyond doubt when His glory, centred in Israel, radiates throughout the whole world.

22.12.2000

