

My Messenger – Part 1

Malachi 1:1-5: Introduction to Malachi

INTRODUCTION TO MALACHI

1. Historical Background: Returning from the Babylonian Exile

- 586 BC: Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Israel (southern kingdom), destroyed Jerusalem, and took captives into exile. Ref. 2 Kings 25:1-7
- 538 BC: Cyrus King of Persia defeated Babylon & allowed the exiles to return to Jerusalem. Ref. Ezra 1:1
- 520-516 BC: Zerubbabel & Jeshua (high priest) returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple Ref. Ezra 3-6
- 458 BC: Ezra returned to Jerusalem with a second group of exiles. Ref. Ezra 7-10
- 445-425 BC: Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. Ref. Nehemiah 1-7

2. Situational Setting of Malachi

- Malachi lived and prophesied during the time of Nehemiah (or immediately after.)
- The Temple had been rebuilt. The walls of Jerusalem had been restored. People had returned. But...

→ What was wrong?

- Lukewarm spirituality. Ref. Rev. 3:16. Indifference to moral and ceremonial aspects of God's Law.

3. The Context of Malachi in the Bible

- Malachi is a 'transitional book' between the Old and New Testaments. → A book of anticipation. WAITING.

MALACHI 1:1-5 AND THE MESSAGE OF MALACHI

1. God sent a "messenger" to speak to his people in their situation. v.1 Malachi = "my messenger"

- In Malachi, "messenger" is also used in reference to OT priests. **See 2:7**
-NOTE: OT Priests in NT = all believers. 1 Peter 2:5,9
- "My messenger" is used in reference to John the Baptist. **See 3:1; 4:5**. Ref. Matthew 17:10-13
→ John the Baptist fulfilled Malachi's prophesy for 'Elijah' to come before the Messiah.
- "My messenger is used in reference to Jesus the Messiah. **See 3:1; 4:1-6**

2. How the conversation started. v.2

- God's assertion. **v.2a** (He begins the conversation with "I have loved you.")
- God's people question God's love. **v.2b**: *But you say, "How have you loved us?"*
- Note: Malachi uses a particular style of writing. Question & Answer conversation between God & Israel.

→ aka. 'Didactic-dialectic method': a charge is made, the defendant objects, and the objection is refuted.

-1:2. God: "I have loved you." But you say, "How have you loved us?"

-1:6. God: "You have despised my name." But you say, "How have we despised your name?"

-1:7. God: "You have polluted my altar." [worship] But you say, "How have we polluted you?"

-2:17. God: "You have wearied the LORD with your words." But you say, "How have we wearied him?"

-3:7. God: "Return to me, and I will return to you." But you say, "How shall we return?"

-3:8. God: "You are robbing me." But you say, "How have we robbed you?"

-3:13. God: "Your words have been hard against me." But you say, "How have we spoken against you?"

3. God's answer. v.2c-5

→ Look what I have done for you that I have not done for the other nations. I have loved you, not them.

- In Genesis, twin sons were born to Rebecca and Isaac. 25:23: *And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."*
- The descendants of Jacob and Esau became two nations: Israel and Edom.
- Esau was born first (the older brother). Cultural expectations said Esau was to be primary. God said no.

→ Here's how you know that I love you: I have provided for you to be restored. (Edom never 'rebuilt' from the exile.)

- God's proof. **v.5**: *Your own eyes shall see this and you shall say, "Great is the LORD...!"*