

# **“Introduction To The Book Of Malachi”**

## **Malachi 1:1-14**

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**Teaching Aim:** To recognize the love God has for His chosen people Israel and to realize just how faithful He is to keep His covenantal promises, even when His people are unfaithful to Him. To understand, when a nation’s leadership is evil and disobedient to God, the rest of the people are not far behind. To realize God wants our best, not what’s left over after we have expended our resources on our own personal desires.

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)**

#### **Part I: God’s love for Israel defended and proved by comparing God’s grace towards Israel while demonstrating His divine judgment towards Edom (Mal. 1:1-5)**

1. What is your first thought when you hear the word “burden” (**vs. 1**)? Some Bible translations interpret the Hebrew word “*massa*” as “*oracle*.” According to the dictionary, what is an “*oracle*?” What kind of an image does the opening verse of Malachi set for what is to come in this book?
2. What affirmation did the LORD give to Israel in **verse 2**? Why do you think the post-exilic Israelites questioned the love God had for them? Have you ever questioned God’s love for you when life got tough? Why should **Rom. 8:28** be a comfort to every Christian? What can we learn from this verse? What can we learn about God from **2 Cor. 1:3-4**?
3. Although speaking of the twin brothers Jacob and Esau in **verses 2 & 3**, in the context, the brothers represent in these verses the nations that descended from them. As such, Jacob’s descendants would become the nation of Israel (*God’s chosen people*), while Esau’s descendants would become the nation of Edom (*the perennial enemies of Israel*). Following the Babylonian captivity, how did God demonstrate his “*love*” and “*mercy*” toward Israel while at the same time demonstrating His “*justice*” toward Edom? (See **Ezra 7:27-28; Obad. 8-10, 17-18**) According to **verse 3**, what would God do to Edom through the conquering nations that He would send? Did He send these nations? (See Commentaries)
4. What was Edom determined to do (**vs. 4**)? Is there any indication that Edom repented of her sins and returned to the LORD? Why is it so critical for each of us to repent when we’ve sinned against the LORD? (See **1 John 1:9**) According to **verse 4**, how did God respond to Edom’s rebellion and refusal to repent?

5. What is the significance of God's title "*the LORD of hosts*" (**vs. 4**)? According to **verses 4 & 5**, what will the Israelites witness? How decisive will this defeat be? According to **verse 5b**, what will the result be for the LORD's reputation? What will happen to everyone who does not repent of their sin and receive the Messiah (Jesus Christ)? (See **Matt. 13:47-50; John 14:6; Acts 4:12**)

**Part II: A father and his son, a servant and his master, and a priest and his God. (Mal. 1:6-10)**

1. Malachi listed three sets of relationships; how do each apply to one's relationship with God (**vs. 6**)? Discuss some ways that a son should honor his father. How does this relate to God? What could happen under Old Testament law if a son was rebellious and dishonored his father? (See **Deut. 21:18-21**) How were the people of Israel dishonoring their heavenly Father during Malachi's time?
2. What are some ways that servants should respect their masters (**vs. 6**)? How does this kind of respect relate to the employer/employee relationship? How does this illustration relate to your Master/servant relationship with God today? Was Israel being faithful to God or were they dishonoring God? How are you doing in your relationship with God today?
3. What is the role of the priest? How should he relate to God in this special calling? According to **verse 6**, were the priests of Israel honoring or dishonoring God? Why do you think these spiritual leaders became so hardened in heart that they didn't even realize they were sinning against God? What happens to our own hearts when we live in habitual sin?
4. According to **verse 7**, in what way did the priests despise the name of the LORD? The LORD asked the wicked priests a second rhetorical question in **verse 7** (*meaning a question with an answer so obvious that it doesn't deserve an answer*). What can we learn about the hearts of the priests through this question? What is meant by "*the table of the LORD*?" (See **Ezek. 41:22; 44:16**) How many times is this phrase used in the Old Testament (**vv. 7 & 12**)? (See Commentaries)

5. According to **verse 8**, how did the priests defile “*the table of the LORD?*” (See **Lev. 22:20-24**) Why do you think the Israelites were not giving their best to God? Do you give your best to God on a regular basis or are you just giving Him your leftovers? (*Be honest*) Why do you think the priests accepted blemished animals from the people and sacrificed them to the LORD? In what way were these sacrificial animals to be a picture of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ? (See **John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:21**)
  
6. What challenge did “*the LORD of hosts*” issue to the priests in **verse 8b**? Why do you think these same priests might not have been willing to offer anything less than a perfect gift to the Persian governor? Do you think the priests were more afraid of God or of a human government? Why? Honestly, who do you fear more, God or man?
  
7. Have you ever asked God to bless you while at the same time living in a lifestyle of sin (**vs. 9**)? How would you expect God to respond to such disobedience? Did you feel closer to God while you were living in a sinful lifestyle or further away? We shake our heads at the arrogance of the priests and the Israelites in Malachi’s day, but do we as Christians treat God the same way today?
  
8. What would God rather have done, rather than receive these wicked offerings (**vs. 10**)? If the liberal churches of today will not stand for the truth of orthodox Christianity, what should be done to their doors according to **verse 10**? Will God receive our “*worship*” while there is “*cherished sin*” in our hearts? (See **Psa. 66:18**) What kind of worship will God desire? (See **Psalm 51:17; John 4:23-24**)

### **Part III: The name of “the great King” (God’s Name) is to be feared among the nations (Mal. 1:11-14)**

1. What broad scope is the LORD referring to when He says, “*For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down...*” (**vs. 11**)? How does this verse relate to the Gentiles being part of the Kingdom of God? (See **Isa. 49:6; 60:3-5**) Does this verse indicate that many Gentile nations will follow the LORD? When do you think **Mal. 1:11** will see its ultimate fulfillment?

2. What were the priests guilty of profaning in **verse 12**? According to **verse 13**, how did the wicked priests feel about God and the priestly duties they were to carry out? How do you feel whenever you are asked to help minister in your local church? Is the thought of Christian service a burden to you, or a delight? If it is a burden, are you currently serving in your area of spiritual giftedness, or are you serving in an area that is not within your giftedness? Do you know what your *"spiritual giftedness"* is? (See **Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; 1 Cor. 14:1-40; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11**)
  
3. According to **verse 13**, who allowed the *"stolen, the lame, and the sick"* animals to be offered? Why do you think they allowed these animals to be sacrificed while at the same time knowing that doing so was forbidden by God? (See **Lev. 22:20-25; Deut. 15:21**) Do you give to God the very best of your time, your service, and your finances, or do you give Him the leftovers, if anything at all?
  
4. How do you think God feels when *"His people"* cheat Him (**vs. 14**)? (See **Acts 5:1-5**) Who should have received greater respect, *"the Persian governor,"* or *"the Great King"* and Creator of the universe? Why? What does the Bible mean when we are instructed, *"to fear God?"* Do you feel that you give proper *"reverence"* and *"honor"* to God? How do you honor God in your own life? God gives you 180 hours every week. How many of those hours do you use to honor, serve, and worship God? Would you be comfortable encouraging others as Paul did in **1 Cor. 11:1**, *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ?"* Why or why not?

#### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- God's love for Israel never diminished, even during times when His chosen people did not reciprocate that love to Him.
- God is faithful to keep His covenantal promises, even when we are not.
- God wants our best, our firstfruits; not what's left after we've wasted our time, money & energy on other things.
- It is better to close a church down than to keep the doors open and defile the name of the LORD.
- Ministry should never be burdensome to the servants of God, but rather a joy.
- God will not tolerate it when we cheat and steal from Him; He is to be honored with *"reverence"* and *"the proper respect"* due His holy name.

