



## **Malachi**

### **Scripture Text: Malachi 1:1–5:**

2 “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob 3but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert.” 4If Edom says, “We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins,” the Lord of hosts says, “They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called ‘the wicked country,’ and ‘the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.’” 5Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, “Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!”

### **Key Themes:**

- God’s covenant love
- Israel’s rejection
- God’s sovereign choice

### **Introduction:**

The opening verses of Malachi set the tone for the entire book, emphasizing God’s steadfast love for His people despite their failure to reciprocate. Through a series of questions and answers, God declares His unchanging love and contrasts Israel’s ingratitude with His faithfulness. This study examines the depth of God’s covenantal commitment, Israel’s response, and the implications of God’s sovereign choice for our lives today.

### **Context:**

The book of Malachi was written to a post-exilic audience in Jerusalem. The Israelites had returned from Babylonian captivity, rebuilt the temple, and resumed worship. However, their zeal for God had waned, leading to spiritual complacency and moral compromise. Malachi’s prophecy addresses their apathy and calls them back to a vibrant relationship with God.

Malachi 1:1–5 introduces the central theme of God’s love. God’s message through Malachi begins with an assertion of His love, which is met with skepticism by the people. This section also references God’s dealings with Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, to highlight His sovereign choice of Jacob’s lineage as the covenant people.

## Study Notes:

### 1. *God's Declaration of Love (v. 2a)*

- God begins with a profound statement: "I have loved you," declares the LORD.
- The Hebrew word for love ("hāḥab") conveys a sense of ongoing, covenantal commitment rather than fleeting affection.
- This declaration is not based on Israel's worthiness but on God's sovereign choice and faithfulness to His promises.

### 2. *Israel's Doubt (v. 2b)*

- The people's response, "How have you loved us?" reveals their spiritual blindness and ingratitude.
- They question God's love because of their hardships and unmet expectations.
- This attitude reflects a shallow understanding of God's covenant and a focus on material blessings.

### 3. *God's Sovereign Choice (v. 2c-5)*

- God's response points to His election of Jacob over Esau, a decision rooted in His divine will (cf. Romans 9:10-13).
- The Edomites, descendants of Esau, are portrayed as objects of God's judgment. Despite their attempts to rebuild, they face continual desolation.
- God's choice of Israel underscores His grace and unchanging purpose, not Israel's merit.

### 4. *The Broader Implication (v. 5)*

- God's dealings with Edom serve as a testimony to His sovereignty over nations and His ultimate plan for His people.
- "Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel" emphasizes that God's glory and authority extend to all creation.

## Study Questions & Discussion Questions:

1. How does God's declaration, "I have loved you," shape our understanding of His character?

2. Why do you think Israel doubted God's love despite their history?

3. What does the election of Jacob over Esau reveal about God's sovereignty?

4. How does God's love differ from human love?

5. What does the judgment of Edom teach us about God's justice?

6. In what ways might we, like Israel, question God's love in difficult circumstances?

7. How does God's faithfulness to Israel encourage you in your personal walk with Him?

8. Why is it significant that God's greatness is recognized "beyond the borders of Israel"?

9. How can understanding God's unchanging love impact our response to challenges in life?

10. What steps can you take to avoid spiritual complacency and rekindle your love for God?

**Practical Application:**

- Reflect on how you have experienced God's unchanging love in your life. Write down specific examples and thank Him for His faithfulness.
- Identify areas where you may have doubted God's love or struggled with spiritual apathy. Commit these areas to prayer and seek accountability.
- Spend time meditating on Romans 8:38–39, which affirms that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

**Take-Home Challenge:**

This week, intentionally demonstrate God's covenant love to someone in your life. Whether through an act of kindness, a word of encouragement, or a commitment to pray for them, let your actions reflect the steadfast love of God.

**Reflection**

End your week by journaling your thoughts on these questions:

- How did the study of Malachi 1:1–5 deepen your understanding of God's unchanging love?
- What did you learn about God's sovereignty and justice?
- How has this passage inspired you to trust God more fully in your daily life?