



Background:

Because they constantly abandoned God to worship idols, eventually God sent Babylon to conquer the Southern Kingdom of Judah and carry them off into captivity.

READ: 2 Chronicles 36:15-21

But God's longstanding promise to send a Messiah included that he would come from Abraham's descendants. Around a hundred years before the Babylonian captivity, the **Prophet Micah** also predicted that the Messiah would be born in the city of Bethlehem. So a remnant of the people of Israel must return in order for God to fulfill his Word.

And so, the Persian King Cyrus decreed that the Jews were free to go back to their homeland and that they should rebuild the Temple of the LORD. The Jews returned in three waves from **538-432 BC**.

Zerubbabel led the first wave. The Jews rebuilt the altar and Temple even though their neighbors opposed them.

Later Ezra arrived and led the people to worship like the Bible says. Israel once again confessed its sins, and reviewed its history of unfaithfulness. The Old Covenant was renewed under Ezra.

Nehemiah served as governor of Jerusalem. Under him the walls were rebuilt in an astounding 52 days. Nehemiah also worked against slavery and helped the poor.

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. It comes as the last prophetic utterance sent from the LORD before a four hundred year period of silence from God's prophets.

One of the spiritual problems that Nehemiah battled against was the Israelites intermarrying with pagan women. This was strictly forbidden in the laws that God had given to the Nation of Israel. Sections in Nehemiah

and in Malachi are dedicated to addressing this issue. It appears that Malachi's ministry overlapped the Ministry of Nehemiah.

Addressing the Text of Malachi 1...

- V1-5 God's Love for Jacob/Israel
- V6-14 The Priests Dishonor the LORD
- V11 The Future Honoring of God's Name

Read: Malachi 1:1-5

Throughout the book of Malachi, the LORD accuses both the priests and the people of Israel of wrongdoing. Repeatedly they deny their guilt with question like "How have we done that?!" In this response we hear a sense of self-righteous and antagonism toward God.

This is seen immediately in **verse 2**. Yahweh says "I have loved you." And the people respond, "How have you loved us?"

God's response is to compare his treatment of Jacob, with his treatment of Jacob's twin brother Esau.

► **"I have loved Jacob, but I hated Esau"** might sound wrong to our ears. But for a better understanding of what God is saying, read the following...

Matthew 6:24. Only ONE can sit on the throne of the heart. The other will come second, or "be hated" in comparison.

Genesis 25:22-28, Romans 9:10-13. These were TWINS and yet God chose Jacob (the younger) over Esau (the older) even though that was not the typical arrangement that man would have chosen.

Luke 14:26. A Christian must "hate" his family in comparison to Christ. That is, a Christian must serve Christ the Savior above any other relationship. Other passages (like the one that tells us to love our enemies) make it clear that Jesus doesn't mean "hate" in the sense of extreme dislike, but only in the sense of "loving less than" or "receiving second priority to" Christ.

►

Esau's descendants are the Edomites. In ancient times these people inhabited regions south of the Dead Sea. These people were considered close relatives to the Jews, and were to be treated with care because of this connection.

However, when the Israelites were travelling from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Edomites refused Israel passage through their territories even though Israel had promised to stick to the highway and just move through (**Numbers 20:14-22**).

Later, the Edomites must have done violence against Jacob's innocent descendants—and God swore vengeance upon them (**Joel 3:19**. See also **Isaiah 34:13, Jeremiah 49:10, and Ezekiel 35:3-4**).

Around 550-400 BC the Nabatean Arabs forced the Edomites out of their homeland.

Conclusion:

- God chose to bless Jacob with the promise of the Messiah, not Esau.
- God protected the Jews, and avenged them against the Edomites.

If you compared God's treatment of Jacob vs. Esau, God had clearly loved Jacob. God...

- Freed Jacob/Israel from Egypt
- Was endlessly patient with Israel when they worshipped idols
- Gave Israel the privilege of having the Messiah come through them
- Brought Israel back from captivity in Babylon

Soul Searching Questions:

1. **How has God loved me?**

Read: **Malachi 1:6-14**

Here Yahweh calls out the priests of his Temple for offering, and condoning unfit sacrifices. True offerings were not to be made from what you happened to have left in your pocket. Offerings to honor the holy and glorious all powerful and gracious God of the universe shouldn't be stolen, lame, or damaged goods.

Their low regard for the LORD led them to speak badly of the LORD's Temple also. Its table is unfit, its food disgusting, and it is a nuisance to worship as God has commanded us to. The priest's low regard for the LORD and his house encouraged the people to devalue the LORD.

Soul Searching Questions:

1. **How might I put down the worship of God?**
2. **How might I bring an unacceptable offering to God?**
3. **How might I despise God's Name?**
4. **How have I polluted an offering to the LORD?**
5. **How can I change this so that my worship is acceptable?**

Read: **Malachi 1:11**

It is my understanding is that under the Old Covenant, offerings to the LORD were not to be offered on altars in places other than the Temple in Jerusalem. Synagogues existed in many towns to STUDY God's Word, but NOT to carry out priestly duties such as offering the many sacrifices the LORD had prescribed for the Israelite people to bring.

But here God speaks of incense and pure sacrifices being offered in many places in the future. Does this not foretell the change that would take place after the Messiah came? The Old Testament way of worship with all its sacrifices had foreshadowed the ONE sacrifice that counted—Christ's on the Cross. With that offering made, the old ways would fade away making room for a free way of worship that would correspond to the Gospel of Freedom (as opposed to restrictive laws) and bring in the Gentiles more fully.

Colossians 2:14-17, 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9