

Malachi 1:1-5 – God’s Love

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament and the last of the Old Testament prophets. Unlike Haggai, Malachi did not provide a date for when his prophecy was given. Based on the content of Malachi, it seems clear that he came after the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Malachi concludes the Old Testament while providing an introduction to the New Testament. In between the introduction and conclusion of Malachi are six assertions made by God. Each assertion is followed by the people’s objection to the assertion. God then gives a response to each of the objections. The first assertion lays a foundation for the book of Malachi.

Read Malachi 1:1-5.

Who were the recipients of this prophecy? Whom did God chose to deliver his word? What do we know about the prophet Malachi? What does “Malachi” mean? (1:1)

What is God’s assertion in the beginning of verse 2?

What is the people’s question / objection in the middle of verse 2?

When are some situations and circumstances when people question God’s love? Why did the people of Israel/Judah question God’s love? What did this question reveal about the people of Israel/Judah at that time?

God responded to the people’s question with his own question for them in verse 2. What was this question? God responded to the people questioning his love by reminding them of Jacob and Esau. Esau and Jacob were twin brothers. Esau was born first. What did God say about Jacob and Esau?

While the descendants of Jacob and Esau are primarily in view here, it is important to go back and look at the twin brothers. How did God love Jacob? How did God hate Esau? Some people object to the idea of God hating someone. Some commentators say that “hate” means “loves less”. What do you think “hate” means in this context? How did Paul understand this verse when he quoted it in Romans 9:13?

We saw in the book of Galatians how God chose Isaac, the son of Sarah, and not Ishmael, the son of the slave? In Genesis 21:12, quoted in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18, God said that “through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” God’s election is not just in the New Testament. It goes back to Genesis. What was the basis for God’s election of Jacob over Esau? See Genesis 25:23 and Romans 9:10-12. In general, what is the basis for God’s election? If God loves us because we have done something to deserve it then we can also do something to lose God’s love. But, if God chooses to love us based on his sovereign purpose then God’s love is not based on our performance.

There is a principle here that applies to us. How do we question God’s love for us? From the New Testament, how do we know that God loves us? See 1 John 3:16 and 1 John 4:19.

In verses 3 and 4, how did God show his “hate” for the descendants of Esau?

From verse 5, what is the result of God’s love of Jacob and his hate of Esau?

What was the difference between God’s discipline of Judah and his punishment of the descendants of Esau?

If God has chosen us to be his child but we doubt his love for us, what problems can result from this?

Esau was also known by the name Edom. His descendants were the Edomites. The Edomites lived in the hill country of Se’ir. Teman is also a name used for either the Edomites or an area where they lived.