

Subject: *Doubting God's Love*

Scripture: *Malachi 1:1-5*

- Who was Malachi?

He was a prophet of God (spokesman for God). We don't know anything else about him outside of this book.

His name means "my messenger" (1:1) – Malachi brought God's message to Israel. He was a man with a message.

He is known as minor prophet. There are 17 prophetic books in the OT – 5 are considered Major Prophets (Isaiah—Daniel) and 12 called Minor prophets (Hosea—Malachi). The words "major" and "minor" doesn't mean that some are more important than others, but that some are bigger books than others.

- What is the historical background of Malachi?

The people had suffered because they had rebelled against God, forsaken Him and worshiped false gods like other nations around them. God punished them as He promised.

After the nation of Israel returned from captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, they rebuilt the temple in 516 BC and rebuilt the wall in 445 BC. Malachi prophesied around 430 BC. His preaching came after the work of Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah who encouraged the people to build the temple and the wall.

- What are the issues that Malachi addressed?

All of this rebuilding did not bring in the messianic age that many people expected. The glory of the rebuilt temple did not match the glory of Solomon's temple. The people were discouraged and disheartened. They were apathetic and indifferent. The people questioned God's love, the priesthood was corrupt, worship had become a weary routine, divorce was widespread, justice was being ignored, and tithing was being neglected.

- What is the nature of Malachi's prophecy?

The people have some questions that challenge God's authority and he answers them. He reminds the people how they were dishonoring God and calls them to repent.

His message was a "burden" (vs. 1). It was a weighty message for him to deliver and for them to hear.

1. God's love is declared – "I have loved you"

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 ⁶ For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. ⁷ The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: ⁸ But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your

fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:14-15 ¹⁴ Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. ¹⁵ Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

2. God's love is doubted – “How have you loved us?”

How could they ever question God's love? And yet, they did.
How can we ever question His love? And yet, we do.

Romans 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Love Divine All Loves Excelling

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (Isaac Watts)

*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.*

3. God's love is described

God chose Jacob (Israelites) and not Esau (Edomites).
God was committed to Jacob (Israelites) and not Esau (Edomites).
God condemned the Edomites to destruction, but He kept His covenant with Jacob.

Matthew Henry described it this way: The Edomites were the monuments of God's justice.
The Israelites were the monuments of God's justice.

- A. God's love for Israel was a special love – unlike the other nations
- B. God's love for Israel was a sovereign love – the love of God's choice
- C. God's love for Israel was a steadfast love – in spite of their constant rebellion

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*

Galatians 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

The Book of Malachi deals with the problem of God's people forgetting God's love and mercy and forsaking God's law. The same problem is still with us...we tend to forget God's love and forsake His law.