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C1342 – December 18, 2013 – Malachi 1:1-5
God's Loving Election Of Israel

Last time we worked with the Introduction and Background to Malachi, the last book in the Protestant OT canon, the last book in the prophets of Judaism's OT canon. Both agree that Malachi was the last prophet of the OT period and that with the close of his message came the close of the OT canon. We said the authorship is doubted by many since the Hebrew *mal aki* simply means "my messenger." However, it seems that since every other OT prophet is named and not pseudonymous then it would be strange indeed that *mal aki* was not the proper name of the prophet. We said the audience is the southern kingdom composed of the house of Judah and Benjamin who had returned to the land in three waves; first under the decree of Cyrus with Zerubbabel, second under the decree of Artaxerxes with Ezra and third under the second decree of Artaxerxes with Nehemiah. We said the date of the book is likely in the same time of Nehemiah around 430BC since they both address the same issues concerning laxity in the priesthood, not paying the full tithe and intermarriage with foreigners. These problems that had crept into the nation needed to be corrected so the nation could be relieved of divine discipline and restored to blessing in the land. We mentioned that the book follows a question/answer format in order to convict the nation of their sin. This method of engaging your audience always has three elements; first, God states a truth, second, the nation questions the truth and third, God proves the truth. The method was developed by Rabbinic Judaism and explains the prevalence of the question/answer format in the NT. But the greatest contribution of Malachi to the canon of Scripture is the revealing of the messenger Elijah who would come and clear the way before the Lord by restoring the nation to covenant obedience. Therefore, for the kingdom of God to come into history Elijah must return and restore the people. The question in the NT with the introduction of John the Baptist is whether or not John is Elijah. The short answer is that Jesus said, "If you receive Me John is

Elijah.” But the nation did not receive Him so John is not Elijah but John is John. In conclusion we mentioned that Malachi is the last sound we hear from God for over 400 years. This means His message is aimed at preserving a sufficient degree of obedience for the Jews to remain in the land so that Messiah could be born in the land of Israel in the city of Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy.

Tonight we want to delve in starting with 1:1 and look at the first oracle. The Scripture says, **The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.** The prepositions give us as fine a statement of the process of inspiration as any in the Bible. The source of this **oracle** is **the word of the LORD**, the audience is the nation **Israel** and the human instrument is **Malachi**. Divine inspiration is not sole but dual and does not occur directly but indirectly through means. This means that God spoke through human prophets and apostles, superintending the process in order to secure perfect accuracy but at the same time maintaining the human author’s vocabulary, style, background and personality.

Verse 1 tells us this **word of the LORD** is an **oracle**. The Hebrew is *massa* meaning “a burden, a heavy message.” This sets the tone of the letter as a threatening, foreboding situation. Other books that are oracles of the LORD are Nahum and Habakkuk and the contents of both books are threatening. So upon reception of the message the nation Israel would immediately be struck with a fear of the unknown. What did the message contain? Who knows but it’s not good.

The **oracle** was given by **the word of the LORD**. This may sound like a simple way of saying God spoke these things but there are two views as to the identity of **the word of the Lord**. First, some think that it is simply an expression of God speaking something. Second, others think that **the word of the LORD** is a reference to the Hebrew concept of the *memra* as a word issuing forth from YHWH but distinct from YHWH. Those who think this claim this expression refers to a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ. This would mean that Malachi had an encounter with the pre-incarnate Christ and received direct revelation from Him. Proponents of this view point to Christ in John 1 as the *memra* “become flesh.” If this is the case then it supports the truth that Christ is God but also distinct from God, a Trinitarian concept.

Also the Hebrew for **LORD** is all caps signifying it is the divine name YHWH. This name of God was used in connection with Moses at the Burning Bush in the Sinai and at the giving of the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai. Since this is a threatening message connected with the God of the Mosaic Covenant and directed against the nation **Israel** then it implies that there has been a breach in the contract and a rebuke is about to follow. The fact that Malachi is the one chosen to issue the rebuke heightens the threatening nature since it was the priests who were supposed to instruct the people. The implication is that the priests were corrupt as well as the people.

In verse 2 we move to the first question/answer dialogue. Recall that in each of these dialogues there are three elements; first, a statement of a truth, second, a questioning of the truth and finally a proof of the truth. The statement of truth begins with God as the speaker. **I have loved you, says the LORD.** The Hebrew has three words for **love**; *ahav*, *chesed* and *dod*. The word used here is *ahav* and *ahav* love is the kind of love that is exercised before a covenant is made. For example, before marriage. It's the love that a boy has for a girl and a girl has for a boy. And before you enter into a marriage covenant with this person you have an *ahav* love for them. It's an affectionate love, an elective love, a love that says, I have this strong affection for you and so I choose to love you. That's *ahav* love and it is that kind of love that leads to the second word used of love, *chesed*. *Chesed* love means I'm going to be loyal to you; it's a contractual love. It's the love that says I'm going to be loyal to the terms of the contract with you. The third word is *dod* and its love exercised after the covenant. So you have these three words for love in the Hebrew language and which word is used here? Well, it's that first kind of love, *ahav*. God is saying I have had an affectionate love for you and it was that love that resulted in God's loving them with a *chesed* love, choosing to enter a contract with Israel. He says, **I have loved you**, that is, I had an affectionate love for you that resulted in My choosing to enter into a covenant with you. That's the statement of truth and it applies to the nation Israel only. It does not apply to all nations or all people. There is a unique kind of love God had for the nation Israel that does not apply to all people. And He loved them with this kind of love before He entered into a covenant with them. It was this love for them that led to His sovereign and merciful election of her to be His special possession.

Now if you turn to Deut 7 you will see why God set this love on Israel alone. In verse 6 we have a statement of Israel's election, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." In verse 7 we have a negative statement of why God did not choose them. "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples," but, verse 8, why did God choose Israel? "because the LORD *ahav* you [that's affectionate love before the covenant] and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers [that is the covenant], the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." So because of the LORD's *ahav* love for Israel, His affection for her He chose to enter a covenant with Her and to keep that covenant. So why did God choose Israel? Why did He come into a covenant with that nation? Because He loved that nation. Why did God love them? Because He loved them. It has to do with Him. Verse 7 is saying it didn't have anything to do with them. God's love is not based on anything outside of Himself. It is based on Himself. It is not conditioned on any human element. It is rooted only in His sovereignty in doing what He wants to do. Why didn't He love other nations? Because He didn't love them. It didn't have anything to do with anything the other nations did. It simply has to do with the fact He didn't love them and so He didn't choose to enter a covenant with them. And if He had loved them as He loved Israel then He would have chosen them. But He didn't choose anyone but Israel because He only had an affection for Israel. Verse 6 says, you alone out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. So Israel alone is the recipient of God's *ahav* love and so Israel alone is God's elect nation. And that means that Israel alone is the covenant nation. Thus, verse 9, "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;" And the word there "lovingkindness" is the other Hebrew word for love, *chesed*, which means "loyalty to a covenant." God is loyal to His covenant with Israel.

Now we've established certain truths here that come out of the statement, "I have loved you." Now we want to go back to Mal 1:2 to see that the nation questioned these truths. Verse 2, **But you say, How have You loved us?** In other words, they doubted that God had loved them. Is doubt sin? Doubt is the opposite of faith. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So doubt is sin. It's

doubting what God says is true. And man was not created to doubt what God has said. Man was created to live by faith, to depend upon God's words as the absolute authority. But they have doubt and this is sin and sin breeds more sin, that's what the rest of the oracles in this book are about, other areas in which they had sinned.

Why did they doubt God's love for them? Because they were looking at their circumstances rather than the word of God. What were their circumstances? It had been over 100 years since the first return to the land under Cyrus and yet the kingdom of God spoken of by the prophets had still not arrived. Instead they continued to be ruled by Gentile powers. How, if God had placed His *ahav* love on them, could they be suffering under these conditions? Well, it's very simple. If they had read the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy they would have known that their suffering was not due to God's lack of love for them but their lack of love for Him! The Mosaic Covenant told them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind and soul. But they didn't love Him. They were in covenant disobedience and the consequences of disobedience are cursing. So their suffering was due to their own stubborn disobedience. They needed to repent, be restored to fellowship and obey the Lord in order to be restored to blessing in the land.

Third, the Lord gives proof of the truth that He had loved them by a rhetorical question in verse 2, **Was not Esau Jacob's brother? declares the LORD.** The answer of course, is yes. Esau and Jacob were actually twin brothers; they were conceived in the same woman, Rebekah, in the same womb and by the same man, Isaac. So they shared the same development and upbringing.

Yet, the Lord says, I have loved Jacob; 3but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the LORD of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever." 5Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!" Now this section has no doubt troubled many readers, particularly the statement in verse 2 and 3, **I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau.** The trouble is

that on one hand the Bible teaches that God loves all men but on the other hand teaches that he loved Jacob and hated Esau. The solution is what we said before about *ahav* love. God loved Jacob with an *ahav* love that led to a *chesed* love. He did not love Esau in this way. Essentially what it means is that God had affection for Jacob that led to Him choosing to enter into a covenant relationship with Jacob. He did not have this affection for Esau that led to Him choosing to enter a covenant with him. It does not mean that God didn't love Esau in some other sense. Often in Scripture to love someone means to choose to shower blessing on them whereas to not love someone means not to shower blessing on them. That is the case here. God chose to shower blessing on Jacob and not on Esau.

Now we hear that people don't like that. They don't like it that God elects one to blessing and not another. They think it means that God is not fair.

However, this only shows they don't understand God or the Bible. Turn to Romans 9. Romans 9 is rooted in Malachi 1. So if you have a problem with Romans 9 you have a problem with Malachi 1. What God is doing in Malachi is proving that He does love Israel. What Paul is doing is proving that God is not done with Israel. Both passages rest their answer on the affectionate love that God had for Israel that resulted in Him choosing Israel to be in a covenant relationship with Him.

As Paul is developing the argument you see in verse 3 he is concerned with his kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites. So the issue is Israel. In verses 4-5 he mentions all the blessings that Israel had over all the other nations. The question in light of Israel's rejection of Christ would be, what about Israel's covenant, what about Israel? Has God's word in the covenant failed? Verse 6 explains, "it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;" that is, they are not all heirs of the covenant promise by virtue of physical descent. The promise only went to certain individuals that God chose to give the blessing too. For example, verse 7, "nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants," Abraham had eight children from his flesh "but" only "THROUGH ISAAC" will "YOUR DESCENDANTS BE NAMED." "And not only this," verse 10, "but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; 11for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

12it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” The situation of Jacob and Esau is the ultimate example because they were twins. So you can’t argue they had a different conception and therefore this is biologically driven, you can’t argue they had a different womb and therefore this is environmentally driven and you can’t argue they had a different upbringing and therefore this is culturally driven. No, everything was the same. And yet God said he would bless Jacob and not Esau. It’s the ultimate example that God does what He wants to do regardless of an individual and what they do. Verse 12 is a tremendously significant statement because customarily it was the younger who served the older, not the other way around. But God reversed that. He stated that the older would serve the younger and He chose to do that before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad.

Why did God do that? Did He do that because he foresaw that Jacob would be good and Esau would be bad? What does the verse say? Before “the twins were born and had done anything good or bad.” So is foresight of morality the basis of God choosing to bless Jacob? No. What does the verse say? “So that God’s purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls.” In other words, the sovereign plan of God independent of any consideration of human birth, development, culture, behavior, choices, etc...It’s simply God’s choice independent of what He may have foreseen they would do. But someone will say, “Esau chose to sell his birthright to Jacob for a pot of stew and therefore the birthright went to Jacob because of Esau’s choice.” That would be wrong because it was God’s choice that stood behind Esau’s choice. God’s choice was made before the twins were even born. Esau’s choice to sell his birthright was merely the human choice that resulted in the outworking of God’s prior choice. But someone will say, “God foresaw that Jacob would be a better person and therefore He chose Jacob over Esau.” But this would be wrong because from the record Esau was a better person than Jacob. Jacob even deceived his father in order to receive the blessing. It’s true that Jacob valued the blessing and Esau did not but he stooped to the level of deception in order to receive the blessing. The fact is that God’s choice of Jacob and not Esau had nothing to do with any qualities of admiration in either of them. God had a purpose from all eternity for Esau to serve Jacob. That purpose would be established regardless of anything good or bad Esau or Jacob. This was revealed to show that God’s decision was not made on the basis of foresight. God did not look

down through history and pick Jacob over Esau because of anything in Jacob or Esau. It had only to do with His affectionate love; He had affection for Jacob and not Esau. Verse 13, "Just as it is written," and here's the quotation from Malachi, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." The statement bothers people but as I explained earlier, the kind of love that God gave to Jacob alone was an affectionate love that led to God choosing to enter a covenant relationship with him and showering blessing on him. But even at that someone will say, "Well that's not fair of God. God is not just in choosing some and not others!" But Paul was centuries ahead in heading that one off at the pass. Verse 14, "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" *me genoito*, the strongest Greek negative. Proof, verse 15, "For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." In other words, God does what He wants to do! He does whatever He wants. And if He wanted to exercise only justice He would have no affectionate love for anyone but because God is merciful He showers His mercy on whom He wants to shower His mercy. In other words He's not obligated to have mercy on anyone but God will do what He wants to do. Verse 16 gives a conclusion, "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." In other words, God's mercy is not given to those who will to enjoy His mercy or those who live their life in a certain way. That is nowhere in the equation. What is the basis then of God's loving Jacob and hating Esau? It is solely God's mercy. Let me do my best to help you understand why God is not unjust choosing some and not choosing others by asking you a series of questions. In this way we'll kind of back into the issue.

First, were the twins Jacob and Esau innocent before they were born? No, they were conceived in sin. All men since the Fall of Adam are conceived in sin. Therefore before they are even born they are sinful. It doesn't matter what a person does after they are born. It's not what a person *does after* he is born that condemns him. It's what a person *is before* he is born that condemns him.

Second, is God unjust in condemning sinners? No, God is just in condemning sinners. All men are therefore born under the just condemnation of God. It doesn't matter what they will to do or how they live their life. Before all of that they are already justly condemned as sinners.

Third, what is it then that causes God to choose some? The end of verse 16 answers; mercy. It is “God who has mercy.” If God didn’t have mercy then He would have chosen no one. But God did have mercy and so He chose some. In this case He chose Jacob and did not choose Esau. That’s what it means Jacob I loved, Esau I hated. It is a statement of choosing to bless one and not bless the other. It is not an emotional anger at one because of something they did.

He goes on in verse 17 to say that He chose Pharaoh to fulfill a specific purpose, namely, to demonstrate His power and make His name known through the whole earth. This proves the point again by looking at a Gentile. God chooses Gentiles for certain purposes. In this case he chose Pharaoh to be the highest ruler in Egypt. God chooses many people for many purposes but in the end, what is the main reason God chooses anyone for any purpose? For His own glory. To demonstrate all the various aspects of His nature. By choosing Jacob it revealed His mercy, by choosing Pharaoh it revealed His power; and on the other side, by not choosing some, like Esau, it revealed His justice. All of God’s elections serve certain purposes or goals and all of them have as their intended aim or goal the revelation of His essence. God has this sovereign right.

If you say then that man has no choice then because no one can go contrary to God’s elective purposes then Paul again is hundreds of years ahead of you. Verse 19, “You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?” You are the clay and He is the potter. Clay doesn’t question the potter does it? Clay doesn’t say make me this way or why did you make me this way, does it? Are you, as the clay, in any position to ask such questions? No. Rather, verse 21 “Or does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” Of course He does. This is the proper way to think. He’s the Creator. We are the creature.

Now he explains a possible scenario as to what God is doing in vv 22-24. “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for

destruction?” Now the Greek seems to indicate that these vessels of wrath prepared themselves for destruction, middle voice, and it seems to be looking at the fall of Adam and how all men fell in Adam, all men therefore prepared themselves for destruction and God is being very patient all down through history not demonstrating His wrath and making His power known by destroying us. So this forms the backdrop for which we view men in history, they are evil and they prepared themselves for destruction. Verse 23, “And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.” The Greek here seems to indicate that He is the one who prepared beforehand certain vessels of mercy for glory. And the picture then is that all of us prepared ourselves for destruction but mercifully He planned ahead of time to prepare some of those vessels to be products of His mercy. This is for His glory!

Now we’ve answered many questions but we have not answered one question and that is, what was Israel elect too? When God said in Mal 1:2-3 **I have loved Jacob; 3but I have hated Esau** we said He meant that He had an affectionate love for Jacob that resulted in Him choosing to enter a covenant relationship with him and shower blessing on him. This is mercy. God didn’t shower that mercy on Esau. But if you notice verse 3 God did give Esau an inheritance. God gave Esau a land, it’s just not a land flowing like milk and honey. He says, **and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.** Edom’s land is over in modern day Jordan and if you go there today it looks exactly like this depiction, it’s a mountainous desolation, a dry, desert wilderness. So God did love Esau in some sense, at least to the extent that He gave him an inheritance, it just wasn’t a very good one. On the other hand, God did shower his blessing on Jacob by covenanting with Him and promising a land flowing with milk and honey. So what was Jacob elect too? A certain land inheritance. It has to do with a destiny in a land with overflowing blessing. Interestingly the election did not have to do directly with salvation. Romans 11:4-5 shows, however, that there was an election within the election. That is, God elected the entire nation Israel to a covenanted destiny in the land. However, only those God elected by grace would enjoy that covenant destiny. The election by grace makes up what is known as the remnant. “I HAVE KEPT FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.” 5In the same way then, there has also come to be at

the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. 6But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." God's election is by grace both in the OT for individuals and in the NT for individuals. It's His election by grace that eliminates human merit. Election by grace is at the very heart of God's program for salvation. If God doesn't elect solely on the basis of factors internal to His own nature then human merit is the only basis for God blessing men. So if you hold to grace you have to hold to election. The two go hand in hand according to Romans 11:5-6.

But Malachi's point is simply that God had elected the nation Israel to a destiny in the promised land. This was evidence enough that God had loved Israel because in the times of Malachi He had already restored them to the land and was working toward the promised blessing in the covenant. This was sufficient to move them from doubting God's love to trusting God's love.

Edom, on the other hand, tried to recover from the desolations of the Babylonians but verse 4 shows that God frustrated their attempts. **Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the LORD of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever."** They would try to rebuild but God would frustrate their efforts because He did not choose them as His covenant people. Edom would rise and fall, never to rise again. Israel on the other hand, would rise and fall only to rise again. God was in the process of rising them again in Malachi's day. This was evidence that God loved them.

Verse 5, **Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"** The Israelites would see that Edom's efforts were frustrated whereas God had been working on their behalf to return, rebuild the Temple and complete the walls of Jerusalem. These works of God evidenced that God indeed did love them and was in the process of working toward the fulfilment of the covenant promises. The fact that the LORD was frustrating the Edomites from returning and rebuilding evidenced that God was at work **beyond the border of Israel**. Indeed, God is at work all over the earth. It is His sovereign plan that has written history.

In summary, in 1:1 the threatening burdensome message given by the pre-incarnate Christ to Israel through Malachi begins with a statement of the truth in verse 2 that God had loved Israel. But Israel quested the truth by asking how God had loved them. God responded by asking whether Esau was Jacob's brother and stating that of the two twins He loved Jacob but in verse 3, hated Esau. That God loved Jacob meant that He had an affectionate love for Jacob that resulted in His choosing to shower blessing upon him by covenanting him a promised land. That God hated Esau meant that He did not have an affectionate love for him that resulted in choosing to enter a covenant with him. Instead, the land God gave Esau was mountainous desolation. In verse 4, when Israel suffered in the destruction of Babylon they would be enabled by God to return, rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. On the other hand, when Edom suffered the same fate in the destruction of Babylon they would try to rebuild but God would not allow it, He would frustrate their attempts. This difference shows the difference between God's love for Israel and hate for Edom. In verse 5, the fact that God frustrated the attempts of the Edomites outside the land of Israel would demonstrate that God was great all over the earth. He is sovereign over all!

What conclusions can we come to? First, all men are fallen in Adam. This means people do not become sinners when they commit their first sin but they are conceived in sin and born in sin such that they are sin. Second, God is just in showering no blessing upon anyone. He is just in displaying His wrath and making His power known by judging all men. Third, God is merciful in choosing to place the one nation Israel in the place of blessing and guaranteeing them a land inheritance filled with blessing. This land inheritance promise will ultimately be fulfilled and history demonstrates that He is at work to bring it to pass. However, fourth, this did not mean that every Israelite would enjoy the land promise. God is gracious in electing some to come to faith and be justified so as to be legally declared righteous and raised to inherit the land promise. Fifth, God has aided Israel in coming back to the land multiple times. This evidences His covenant love for them. Sixth, God has frustrated other nation's attempts to be restored to their lands after they have been removed from their land. This is evidence that God is at work beyond the land of Israel, that He is sovereign over all, that He is the LORD of history! To God be the glory!

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