

## RELATED SCRIPTURES

Matthew 3:1–17 | Obadiah 1:1–21 | Proverbs 3:11–12

## STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 09.14.25

### SUMMARY

In one respect, the book of Malachi represents a time of transition—it is the last book of the Old Testament, which also anticipates the New. After Malachi, the voice of prophecy ceased in Israel until John the Baptist appeared 400 years later—a voice which Malachi foretold. Their perpetual unfaithfulness always marked Israel's history. The Lord responded to this unfaithfulness with discipline—which is always firm, yet done so in love—allowing the neighboring nations to conquer the Lord's people, and take them captive. Malachi's message was post-exile and aimed at the southern kingdom of Judah and opens with the Lord's proclamation of, "I have loved you." Judah's response here and then repeated throughout the book of Malachi is, "How have you loved us?" The disappointing response of God's people is rooted in their belief that they were doing quite well—that they were doing all the things that God asked of them, and were therefore surprised that God had not prospered them in return as they thought they deserved. However, their religiosity was formal, yet empty; their offerings were sloppy and half-hearted, unacceptable and not worthy of gaining God's favor. Despite everything they have been through, it seems the Lord's people have learned nothing. Mercifully, God still responds to their question of "How have you loved us?" and reminds them, "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated" (vs. 2–3). This response points to God's sovereign choice of Jacob—to bless his descendants over his brother Esau. Jacob's line then extended to Judah, and Esau's to the nation of Edom—a nation which the prophet Obadiah earlier chastised for taking advantage of Judah soon after their captivity, and then the Lord caused Edom to perish. The Lord's people failed to remember the blessedness of being God's chosen, even when they meet the Lord's discipline (Proverbs 3:11–12). This is a message the modern Church needs to hear as much as Judah; we tend to forget the immense love God has shown us, as a chosen people in Christ, and his holy, loving kindness towards us, despite our sinfulness. The Lord loves his own!

### GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Malachi 1:1–5.

How is the Lord's discipline of his people an act of his love? Is discipline different than punishment or judgment? How so?

What are the possible byproducts of the Church forgetting the Lord's love for them? What are ways we can be reminded of God's love for us?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

### CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.