

Malachi Lesson 1: Malachi 1:1-5

Lecture

- As always, when we begin a new study on a book of the Bible, we want to know who authored the book, when the book was written, and why the book was written. For the latter, we seek to know the key themes of the book.
- The name Malachi means “my messenger” in its present Hebrew form. While that seems like an unlikely name for a child, the name certainly fits the prophet’s role as a messenger of God.
- Beyond his name, we know nothing else about Malachi. No one else with this name appears anywhere else in the Old Testament.
- When was the book of Malachi written?
- You can consult 10 commentaries and find 10 different answers to this question.
- Scholars studying the book must rely on indirect evidence to date the book.
 - Malachi 1:8 refers to a governor. The original word used for governor was “peha”, an Assyrian word adopted to refer to a governor during the Babylonian and Persian empires. We know that Judah was ruled by several governors named in the Bible. 3 examples are:
 - Gedaliah, appointed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:22)
 - Zerubbabel, ruling as governor during the reign of the Persian King Darius (Haggai 1:1)
 - Nehemiah, appointed by the Persian King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 12:26)
 - Malachi refers to the Temple, which was completed in 515 BC (Ezra 5-6).
 - The book of Malachi seems to reference a period of spiritual decline, because Malachi upbraids the priests and the people for offering inferior sacrifices to God.

- The traditional view holds that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BC and his memoir is dated circa 440 BC.
- The traditional view is that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC and his memoir is dated circa 430 BC. After his 1st visit to Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to Susa, Persia and then later returned to Jerusalem after an unspecified period of years.
- Both Ezra and Nehemiah dealt with Jews inter-marrying with non-Jews. Ezra instituted several reforms which seem to have been short-lived, as Nehemiah had to deal with the problem again upon his 2nd visit to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13).
- Malachi also dealt with the intermarriage issue in Malachi Chapter 2.
- Upon his 2nd visit to Jerusalem, Nehemiah learned that the Jewish people were not bringing in the required tithes to support the Temple staff. Malachi chastised the people for this in Malachi 3.
- Taking all these indirect facts together, we can possibly date Malachi to the approximate period between Nehemiah's 1st and 2nd visits. This would be circa 433 BC.
- Other scholars propose an earlier date for Malachi. Since Malachi does not mention any of Ezra and Nehemiah's legislation, they would date the book circa 445 BC.
- There are 2 main themes of Malachi, according to commentator Thomas McComiskey:
 - The need to keep the law of Moses.
 - The need to be prepared for the coming Day of the Lord.
- In her commentary, Joyce Baldwin notes these themes:
 - God's covenantal relationship with Israel through the law of Moses
 - God's perpetual love for the people of Israel
 - The emphasis on Elijah, who represents all the prophets of the Old Testament
 - God seeks a relationship with people who will walk with Him.

- The themes are laid out in a literary form called a rhetorical disputation.
 - Each disputation consists of 4 parts: an assertion; questioning; a response; and an implication.
 - In total, there are 6 disputations in Malachi.
 - Disputation 1 (Malachi 1:2-5) is an oracle against Edom.
 - Disputation 2 (Malachi 1:6-2:9) is an oracle against the Jerusalem priests of have profaned the sacrificial system.
 - Disputation 3 (Malachi 2:10-16) is an oracle against the people of Judah for intermarriage with pagan women and divorcing their first wives.
 - Disputation 4 (Malachi 2:17-3:5) is an oracle against the people of Judah for unrighteous and unjust behavior.
 - Disputation 5 (Malachi 3:6-12) is an oracle against the people of Judah for failing to provide tithes and adequate offerings to God.
 - Disputation 6 (Malachi 3:13-4:3) is an oracle against the people of Judah who no longer fear or honor God.
- This week we studied Disputation 1, an oracle against Edom.
 - Israel had many enemies among the foreign nations and the Old Testament is replete with oracles against Ammon, Arabia, Aram/Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Elam, Egypt, Moab, Philistia, Sidon, and Tyre.
 - Why then does Malachi begin with an oracle against Edom?
 - Most of the nations in the list above had been conquered by Babylon and Persia.
 - Thomas McComiskey says that Edom is used as a figure of speech to stand for all of Judah's and Israel's enemies.
 - Further, Edom was the earliest, latest, closest, and most consistently hostile of all Israel's enemies.

- As Jacob's brother and the oldest of Isaac's 2 sons, Esau should have cared for his brother and shouldered the responsibility for the family upon Isaac's death. There should have been a natural alliance between the 2 brothers and the nations which sprang from them.
- As you read in Genesis 25:34, Esau despised his birthright and after Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau, due to Jacob's deceit, Esau wanted to kill Jacob. Even after the 2 were reconciled at the Jabbok River (Genesis 33), the 2 nations which rose from each man remained estranged throughout Israel's history.
- By the time Malachi wrote this disputation, the Edomites were in decline. Starting around 550 BC, the Nabatean Arabs began subjugating the Edomites.
- Eventually, by 400 BC, the Nabateans ran the remaining Edomites out of their territory to the east of the Dead Sea. The Edomites settled in what was once Southern Judah and made Hebron their capital.
 - At some point, the Edomites were called the Idumeans, a Greek form of their original name.
 - The Nabateans built their marvelous city of Petra in former Edomite territory.
- In 120 BC, John Hyrcanus, a Maccabean and Jewish High Priest, forcibly converted the Idumeans to Judaism. This is the first recorded forced conversion to Judaism.
 - King Herod the Great was an Idumean.
- During a civil war in Judea in 66 AD, called the First Jewish Roman War, the Jewish converts of Upper Idumea were attacked, bringing near complete destruction to the villages and countryside of the region.
- According to the historian Josephus, during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD, 20,000 Idumeans helped the Zealots fight for independence from Rome. After the Jewish Roman wars, the Idumean people are no longer mentioned in history.
- Thus, it took 500 years, but Malachi's oracle against Edom finally came to pass, and Israel saw it with their own eyes.

- Since the Edomites stood for all of Israel’s enemies, what then is the purpose of the 1st disputation?
 - At the time of Malachi’s writing, Judah barely had a population of 100,000.
 - Judah had been more depopulated than all the other Middle Eastern countries conquered by the Babylonians because Judah had fought back against Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion, and he had taken almost all the surviving population to Babylon.
 - The land had lain fallow for over 70 years, during the Babylonian exile.
 - Jerusalem’s buildings, the Temple, and its walls had been completely destroyed. One of Nehemiah’s first acts was to rebuild the city walls, to protect Jerusalem from its warring neighbors, who complained to the Persians that the city was being rebuilt.
 - Malachi speaks for God to encourage the Judeans. Despite their circumstances, God was still their ally.
 - Judah’s enemies would not prevail against it because “Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel.” (Malachi 1:5b)
 - And even though the Edomites were literally living in Judah’s backyard in Hebron, and they boasted that they would rebuild their empire, God promises to prevail and demolish whatever they build.
- Malachi 1:5b, “Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel”, could have been a statement addressed to both the Jews and to Judah’s enemies.
 - The statement is a reminder that Yahweh, unlike other foreign gods, was not a god of place.
 - God is universal in his sovereignty over his creation. God is everywhere.

Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Numbers 24:18

1. Malachi begins with these words, “The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi” (Malachi 1:1). The Hebrew word used here for oracle is “massa” (ma say). It can be translated as “load” or “burden”. What does this Hebrew word suggest about Malachi’s message in its entirety?

The use of the Hebrew word “massa” suggests that Malachi’s message will not be a light or refreshing one. We would expect him to bring a message containing a rebuke of God’s people.

2. Who is the recipient of Malachi’s message, according to Malachi 1:1?

Israel

3. Since the Northern Kingdom of Israel had long ago been destroyed and taken into exile by the Assyrians, which nation is then the recipient of the oracle of Malachi 1:1?

Judah

4. “I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have you loved us?” (Malachi 1:2a-b).

- a. Deuteronomy 7:8 gives one example of how the Lord loved his chosen people. What was it?

But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deuteronomy 7:8

- b. Can you think of other examples?

- God promised Abraham that he would be a great nation and that all the peoples of the world would be blessed through him.
- God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants.
- God gave Abraham and his descendants the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting possession.
- God gave the 10 Commandments.
- God saved a remnant of his people from the Babylonians and protected them in exile in Babylon.

- God moved the heart of King Cyrus of Babylon to enable the Judean exiles to leave Babylon, return to Judah, and rebuild the Temple.
- c. How has God loved Christians?
- God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus.
 - God sent his only son Jesus to save us from our sins.
 - All those who believe in Jesus are promised eternal life.
 - Jesus will return.
 - God sent us the Holy Spirit.
- d. Do you think that the Jews really asked God “How have you loved us?”, or is Malachi speaking what is in their hearts?
Malachi is speaking what is in their hearts.
5. The balance of verse 2 and verse 3a speak of Jacob and Esau. Read Genesis 25:19-34 and Genesis 27.
- a. What was the relationship between Jacob and Esau?
Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Genesis 25:23 states that the older son would serve the younger. Esau was born first, so he was the older son.
- b. What do you think is meant by, “Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?”
This is a rhetorical question. The obvious answer is, “Yes, Esau was Jacob’s brother.” As sons of Isaac, weren’t both boys entitled to the love of their father Isaac and God, their spiritual father? Yet, God is about to make a distinction between why he chose Jacob and his descendants over Esau and his descendants.
- c. Who was the firstborn?
Esau
- d. What did the firstborn son receive as part of his inheritance?
A double portion
- e. Which son received the inheritance and Isaac’s blessing?
Jacob
6. According to Genesis 35-36, what 2 nations arose from Jacob and Esau?
Israel and Edom

7. “Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated.”

- a. Considering Jacob and Esau’s actions from Genesis 25 and 27, why is this statement surprising?
- Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew and some bread. Esau despised his birthright.
 - When Isaac was on his deathbed, Jacob, with the assistance of Rebekah, deceived Isaac into thinking he was Esau and thus receive the blessing meant for the firstborn son.
 - Esau held a grudge against Jacob and swore to kill him.

- b. How does Genesis 35:10-12 add context to the verses in Malachi 1:2-3?
After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. ¹⁰ God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.
¹¹ And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. ¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you. Genesis 35:9-12

- c. How does Numbers 20:14-21 add more context?
Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying:
“This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come on us. ¹⁵ Our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, ¹⁶ but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt.
“Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. ¹⁷ Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory. ” ¹⁸ **But Edom answered: “You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword. ”** ¹⁹ The Israelites replied: “We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot—nothing else.” ²⁰ Again they answered: “You may not pass through. ” **Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. ²¹ Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.** Numbers 20:14-21

- d. Finally, read Obadiah 1:10-14. What further distress has Edom caused Judah? Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. ¹¹ **On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.** ¹² **You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.** ¹³ **You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster.** ¹⁴ **You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.** Obadiah 1:10-14
8. Multiple passages in the Old Testament address judgment on Edom. Review these verses and note what you learn.
- a. Isaiah 34:5,9
- My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed. Isaiah 34:5
 - Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch! Isaiah 34:9
- b. Jeremiah 49:13-22
- I swear by myself," declares the LORD, "that Bozrah will become a ruin and a curse, an object of horror and reproach; and all its towns will be in ruins forever." Jeremiah 49:13
 - "Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. ¹⁸ As Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown, along with their neighboring towns," says the LORD, "so no one will live there; no people will dwell in it. Jeremiah 49:17-18
 - I will chase Edom from its land in an instant. Jeremiah 49:19
- c. Ezekiel 25:12-14
- "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because Edom took revenge on Judah and became very guilty by doing so, ¹³ therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill both man and beast. I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword. ¹⁴ I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with

Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Ezekiel 25:12-14

d. Ezekiel 35:15

Because you rejoiced when the inheritance of Israel became desolate, that is how I will treat you. You will be desolate, Mount Seir, you and all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the LORD.” Ezekiel 35:15

9. According to Malachi 1:3b, what has God done to Edom?

I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals. Malachi 1:3b

10. What does Malachi 1:4a say about Edom’s response?

Edom may say, “Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.” Malachi 1:4a

11. What is God’s response to Edom’s statement?

But this is what the LORD Almighty says: “They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD. Malachi 1:4

12. Read Malachi 1:5.

a. What is God’s promise to Israel?

You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!’ Malachi 1:5

b. Given all the Old Testament promises to bring judgment on Edom, what does Malachi 1:5 suggest about the fulfillment of those judgments up to this point in Israel’s history?

The judgments have not been completely fulfilled because Edom has not been wiped off the face of the earth.

c. Read Numbers 23:19. Why is this verse important, considering Malachi 1:5?

- God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Numbers 23:19
- God always keeps his promises. Therefore, Edom will be demolished, and the people of Judah will see it with their own eyes.

13. Malachi is the last prophet of the Old Testament. There will be 400 years of silence until the next prophet, John the Baptist. With this context, what message does “I have loved you” convey?

- God is sending his people a prophet with words to tide them over until John the Baptist arrives to prepare the way for Jesus.
- God has not forgotten his promises to protect his people and to always keep a remnant of Abraham’s descendants.
- God will keep his covenant promise of the land. Judah will continue to exist.

Malachi Lesson 1

Malachi 1:1-5

The Prophet Malachi



The Prophet Malachi; Russian Icon, Kizhi Monastery, Karelia, Russia; 1st Quarter of the 18th Century

Who Wrote Malachi?

- Malachi Means “My Messenger” in Its Present Hebrew Form
- An Unlikely Name for a Child, But Certainly Fitting for the Role as a Messenger of God
- We Know Nothing Else About Malachi
- No One Else With This Name Appears in the Old Testament

When Was Malachi Written?

- 10 Commentaries Will Give You 10 Different Answers
- Scholars Must Rely on Indirect Evidence to Date the Book
- Malachi 1:8 Refers to a Governor, Using the Assyrian Word "Peḥa"; Adopted by the Babylonians and the Persians
- The Bible Names Several Governors of Judah
- 3 Examples: Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:22); Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:1); Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:26)

When Was Malachi Written?

- Malachi Refers to the Temple, Which Was Completed in 515 BC (Ezra 5-6)
- The Book Seems to Reference a Period of Spiritual Decline, As Malachi Upbraids the Priests and the People for Their Inferior Sacrifices
- Ezra Arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BC and His Memoir is Dated Circa 440 BC
- Nehemiah Arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC and His Memoir is Dated Circa 430 BC
- After His 1st Visit to Jerusalem, Nehemiah Returned to Susa, and Then Later Returned to Jerusalem After an Unspecified Period of Years

When Was Malachi Written?

- Both Ezra and Nehemiah Dealt with Jews Inter-marrying with Non-Jews
- Ezra Instituted Several Reforms Which Seem to Have Been Short-Lived, As Nehemiah Had to Deal with the Problem Upon His 2nd Visit to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13)
- Malachi Also Dealt with Intermarriage in Malachi Chapter 2

When Was Malachi Written?

- Upon His 2nd Visit to Jerusalem, Nehemiah Learned the Jewish People Were Not Bringing in the Required Tithes to Support the Temple Staff
- Malachi Chastised the People for this in Malachi Chapter 3
- Taking All These Facts Together, We Can Possibly Date Malachi to the Period Between Nehemiah's 1st and 2nd Visits; Circa 433 BC
- Other Scholars Propose an Earlier Date; Since Malachi Does Not Mention Ezra and Nehemiah's Legislation, They Would Date the Book Circa 445 BC

The Themes of Malachi

- Thomas McComiskey:
 - The Need to Keep the Law of Moses
 - The Need to Be Prepared for the Coming Day of the Lord
- Joyce Baldwin:
 - God's Covenantal Relationship with Israel Through the Law of Moses
 - God's Perpetual Love for the People of Israel
 - The Emphasis on Elijah, Who Represents All the Prophets of the Old Testament
 - God Seeks a Relationship With People Who Will Walk With Him

The Themes of Malachi

- Laid Out in the Literary Form Called a Rhetorical Disputation
- 4 Parts:
 - an Assertion;
 - Questioning;
 - a Response;
 - an Implication

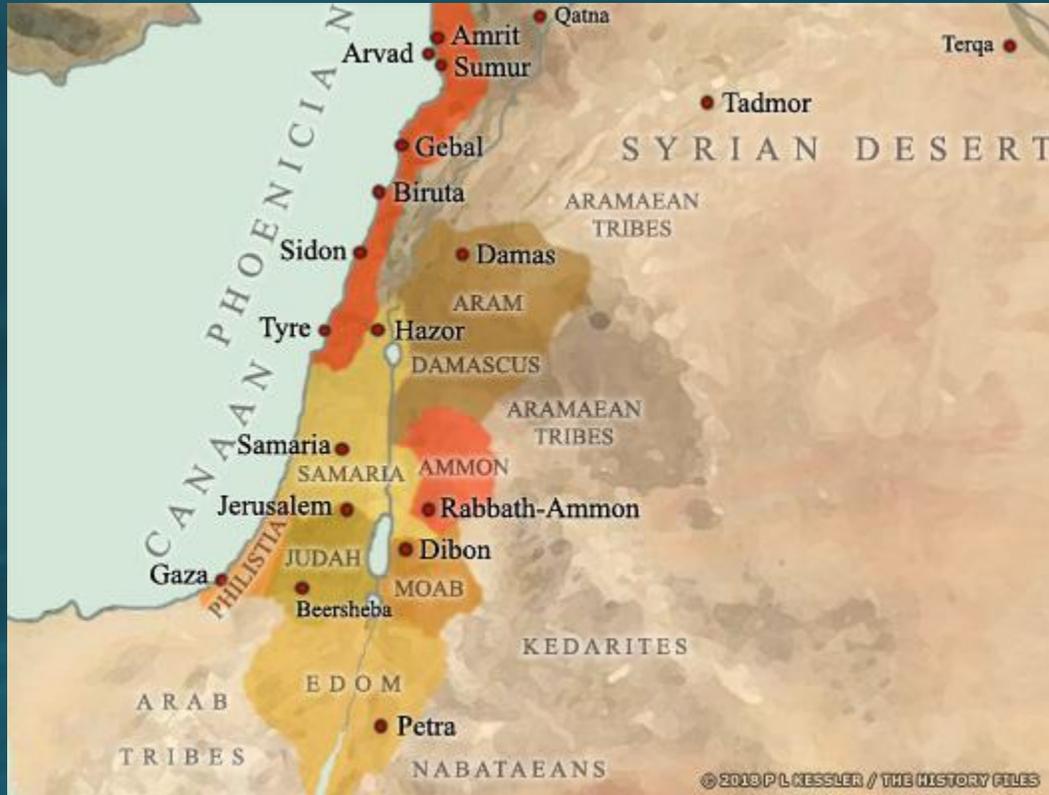
The 6 Disputations in Malachi

Disputation	Verses	Content
Disputation 1	Malachi 1:2-5	An Oracle Against Edom
Disputation 2	Malachi 1:6-2:9	An Oracle Against the Jerusalem Priests Who Have Profaned the Sacrificial System
Disputation 3	Malachi 2:10-16	An Oracle Against the People of Judah For Intermarriage with Pagan Women and Divorcing Their First Wives
Disputation 4	Malachi 2:17-3:5	An Oracle Against the People of Judah for Their Unrighteous and Unjust Behavior
Disputation 5	Malachi 3:6-12	An Oracle Against the People of Judah for Failing to Provide Tithes and Adequate Offerings to God
Disputation 6	Malachi 3:13-4:3	An Oracle Against the People of Judah Who No Longer Fear or Honor God

Disputation 1: Oracle Against Edom

- Israel Had Many Enemies Among the Foreign Nations
- The Old Testament is Replete With Oracles Against Ammon, Arabia, Aram/Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Elam, Egypt, Moab, Philistia, Sidon, and Tyre
- Why Does Malachi Begin With an Oracle Against Edom?

Edom



The Middle East, circa 853 BC; copyright:
<https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsMiddEast/CanaanCityStates.htm>

Disputation 1: Oracle Against Edom

- Most of the Nations in the Previous List Had Been Conquered by Babylon and Persia
- Thomas McComiskey: Edom is Used as a Figure of Speech to Stand for All of Judah's and Israel's Enemies
- Edom Was the Earliest, Latest, Closest, and Most Consistently Hostile of All Israel's Enemies

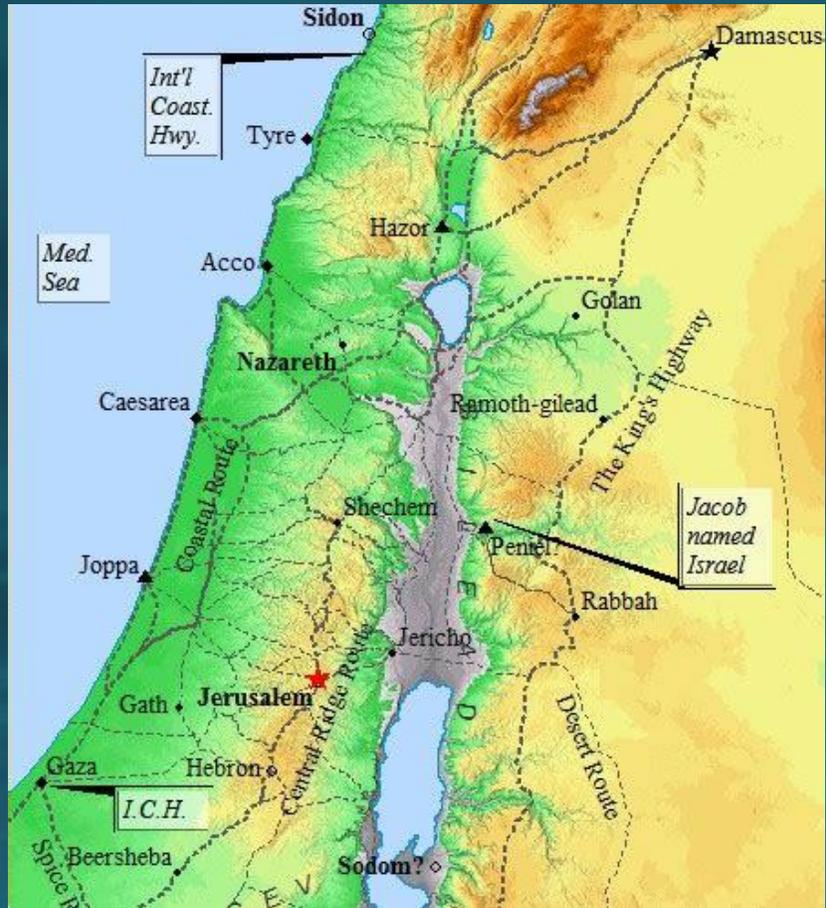
Disputation 1: Oracle Against Edom

- As Jacob's Brother and the Oldest of Isaac's 2 Sons, Esau Should Have Cared for His Brother and Shouldered the Responsibility for the Family Upon Isaac's Death
- There Should Have Been a Natural Alliance Between the 2 Brothers and the 2 Nations Which Sprang From Them
- Genesis 25:34: Esau Despised His Birthright
- After Isaac Blessed Jacob Instead of Esau, Esau Wanted to Kill Jacob
- Even After the 2 Were Reconciled at the Jabbok River (Genesis 33), the 2 Nations Remained Estranged Throughout Israel's History

Disputation 1: Oracle Against Edom

- By the Time Malachi Wrote, the Edomites Were in Decline
- Starting Around 550 BC, the Nabatean Arabs Began Subjugating the Edomites
- By 400 BC, the Nabateans Ran the Remaining Edomites Out of Their Territory; the Edomites Settled in Southern Judah and Made Hebron Their Capital
- The Edomites Became the Idumeans
- The Nabateans Built Their Marvelous City of Petra in Former Edomite Territory

Hebron



Judah Under Persian Rule



Petra



Disputation 1: Oracle Against Edom

- In 120 BC, John Hyrcanus, a Maccabean and Jewish High Priest, Forcibly Converted the Idumeans to Judaism; the First Recorded Forced Conversion to Judaism
 - King Herod the Great was an Idumean
- During the First Jewish Roman War in 66 AD, the Jewish Converts of Upper Idumea Were Attacked, With Near Complete Destruction
- During the Siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD, 20,000 Idumeans Helped the Zealots Fight for Jewish Independence from Rome; After the Jewish Roman Wars, the Idumean People are No Longer Mentioned in History
- It Took 500 Years; Malachi's Oracle Against Edom Finally Came to Pass; Israel Saw It With Their Own Eyes

What is the Purpose of the Edom Oracle?

- At the Time Malachi Wrote, Judah Barely Had a Population of 100,000
- Judah Had Been More Depopulated Than All the Other Countries Conquered by the Babylonians
- The land Had Lain Fallow For Over 70 Years During the Babylonian Exile
- Jerusalem's Buildings, Walls, and Temple Had Been Completely Destroyed; One of Nehemiah's 1st Acts Was to Rebuild the City Walls
- Malachi Speaks for God to Encourage the Judeans; God Was Still Their Ally
- Judah's Enemies Would Not Prevail Against It; "Great is the Lord"
- Even Though the Edomites Were Living in Judah's Backyard, God Promises to Prevail and Demolish Whatever They Build

Malachi 1:5b

- “Great is the Lord—Even Beyond the Borders of Israel”
- This Statement Could Have Been Addressed to Jews and to Judah’s Enemies
- It Is a Reminder that Yahweh, Unlike Other Foreign gods, Was Not a God of Place
- God is Universal in His Sovereignty Over His Creation
- God is Everywhere