

## BIBLE EXTENSION COURSE PROGRAM

### The Covenant of God

Lesson No.1

#### Required Reading

Malachi 1:1-5

### A Heart for God – AHFG Series

by Clifton H Carpenter

[Audio Bible](#)

#### The Love of God

- His Sovereign Love
- His Electing Love
- His Unconditional Love

**Key Verse:** Malachi 1:1 The BURDEN of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

**INTRODUCTION** – Malachi whose name means “*my messenger*” is the last Minor Prophet and last voice to speak to Israel in the Old Testament.

Historically, the heavens became silent when no voice spoke for God. No prophet came to Israel and no scriptures being written. Thus, a silent period of “*400 years*” separated the Old Testament from the New Testament.

**The Future Messenger.** There are no personal experiences to which the prophet referred, yet his style is straightforward, easy to understand and beautifully designed.

It is most suggestive that this last book of our Old Testament centers around the theme of two future messengers of God “*John the Baptist*” and “*The Lord Jesus Christ*” (his official title) Malachi 3 and Matthew 3.

**The Purpose.** The word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi was written to confront the people with their sins and to encourage them to pursue a life of holiness.

Malachi’s style is quite different from that of any other writing prophet. Instead of delivering messages to his audience, he charged them with various sins, at least four times. Malachi used the question and answer method as a teaching device.

**The Format.** After each charge, Malachi proceeded to back it up with evidence.

First, there is God’s charge against Israel, then follows the objection that questions the truth of God’s statement.

#### Seven Rhetorical Questions

- How have you loved us? (1:2)
- How have we despised your name? (1:6)
- For what reason? (2:14)
- How have we wearied Him? (2:17)
- How shall we return (3:7)
- How have we robbed thee? (3:8)
- What have we spoken against Him? (3:13)

**The Themes.** The book consists of several short paragraphs on various themes:

- Sacrificial Worship
- Priestly Ministry
- Marriage
- Divorce
- Tithes
- The Coming Messengers

**Last Three Books.** The books of “*Haggai*,” “*Zechariah*” and “*Malachi*” are the last books of the Old Testament, and were written after the return of Israel from Babylon.

[The First Temple](#) before its destruction.

## The Covenant of God – Lesson No.1

**The Return from Babylon.** The people did not come back from Babylon in one great group, but in two or three groups. While they were in Israel before the captivity, they had been “*sheep keepers*” for the most part. But in Babylon they learned to be “*shop keepers*” and they have been merchants and shop keepers ever since. Jeremiah 29:14-16

**The First Group** – 50,000 people. In about 535 B.C. a handful of Jews fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah. They came back to find Jerusalem “*desolate*” and “*stricken*”

The Temple Rebuilt. The temple foundations were laid, and it was Haggai’s ministry fifteen years later that stirred them up to continue that work and carry it through.

**The Second Group** – 5,000 people. Ezra the priest then led another group back from Babylon. The book of Ezra recorded the difficulties that faced the nation. The temple was completed during Zechariah’s ministry.

**The Third Group** – 42,000 people. Finally, the last return was accomplished under Nehemiah who in 445 B.C. led a group back to begin the laying of the walls of Jerusalem.

Therefore, Nehemiah is the conclusion of the historical section of the Old Testament.

**Spiritual Attitude.** After returning from captivity in Babylon, the spiritual attitude of the people had become “*skeptical, careless, indifferent, disobedient, adulterous, stingy*”

**Burden of the Word.** It is to this people that Malachi preaches the “*sovereign*” “*electing*” “*unconditional*” love of God.

The term BURDEN is descriptive of “*that which is heavy or weighty*” The Word of God is always serious and substantial.

**Personal Attitude.** A person’s attitude and relationship with God will determine the “*spiritual health*” and “*wholeness*” of the child of God.

Therefore, the theological issue of “*attitude and relationship*” is at the heart of the message from Malachi. The BURDEN has a two-fold implication. Malachi 1:1

- **The Message.** A burden as to the “*heaviness of the judgments being pronounced*”
- **The Messenger.** A burden as to the “*greatness of responsibility upon the prophet*” Jeremiah 23:26 let him speak my word faithfully.

**The Love of God.** The Lord’s first words to His people were short and sweet – **I have loved you.** These words are a “*positive motivation*” for devotion and service.

**How have you loved us?** Yet, because of their “*spiritual rebellion*” Israel was now questioning His love, implying that there was no evidence of it in their present situation. Malachi 1:2

**Charge One.** They **DOUBTED** His Love. Their response was a skeptical challenge, revealing a distrust, and lack of love and appreciation for God.

**A Heart for God.** The “*burden of proof*” as it relates to love does not rest with God, but with the people of God. God’s “*faithful love*” for his people should inspire greater devotion and service.

1. **His Sovereign Love.** God was under no constraint to love Israel. His love was free and flowed from his “*infinite grace*” Malachi now proceeds by using “*covenant language*” to explain this great truth.

## The Covenant of God – Lesson No.1

**The Sovereignty of God.** An expression that once was generally understood. It was a phrase commonly used in religious literature. It was truth which brought comfort and gave stability to the believers.

- He is the Almighty, the possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat “*His counsels*” thwart “*His purpose*” or resist “*His will*” Psalms 22:28; 115:3

But, today, to make mention of God’s sovereignty is in many circles, to speak in an unknown language.

**God’s Sovereignty Defined.** Sovereignty characterizes the whole Being of God. He is sovereign in all His attributes, “*absolute*” “*irresistible*” and “*infinite*” When we say that God is sovereign:

We affirm His right to govern the universe, which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases – As the right of the Potter over the clay. Jeremiah 18:1-6

- That He may mould that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of “*the same lump*” one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. Romans 9:20-22

We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature; and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to anyone. 1 Samuel 2:8

- God is sovereign in the exercise of **His power.** 1 Chronicles 29:11
- God is sovereign in the exercise of **His mercy.** Exodus 33:19
- God is sovereign in the exercise of **His grace.** Titus 2:11
- God is sovereign in the exercise of **His love.** 1 John 4:8-10

2. **His Electing Love.** Malachi now reminds them of God’s “*electing love*” as it relates to their status as the “*chosen people*” of God.

**The Story of Jacob and Esau.** Jacob and Esau were “*the first twins*” mentioned in the Bible. They were the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Malachi 1:2-5; Genesis 25:19-34

**The First.** Esau the first to be born was a “*cunning hunter*” a man of the fields and favored by his father. (a father’s boy)

**The Second.** Jacob was “*a plain man*” dwelling in tents and favored by his mother. (a mother’s boy)

**Sovereignty of God.** The Lord said unto Rebekah “*two nations*” are in thy womb, and “*two manner of people*” shall be separated from thy bowels.

**Two Nations.** Both Jacob and Esau were fathers of nations. The one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

- **The Israelites** – Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, the father of the Hebrews. Genesis 32:28
- **The Edomites** – Esau’s became the father of Edom. (Genesis 36:1)

**A Morsel of Meat.** Esau’s choice to sell his birthright for “*a morsel of meat*” is used as an example of “*a profane person*” when a person puts physical desires above spiritual blessings. Hebrews 12:15-17

**A Negative Example.** Esau teaches us “*to hold fast*” to what is truly important, even if it means denying the appetites of the flesh. The story of Jacob and Esau illustrates the importance of giving diligence “*to make our calling and election sure*” 2 Peter 1:10

## The Covenant of God – Lesson No.1

**The Language of Covenant.** A covenant is a sovereign pronouncement of God by which he establishes a relationship of responsibility between Himself and .....

- An individual.
- A Human family.
- Mankind in general.
- A Nation in particular.

**Human Responsibility.** Human response to the divinely announced purpose is always important, leading to blessing for “*obedience*” and discipline for “*disobedience*” Malachi 1:4

**Mainline Covenants.** The Covenants are normally “*unconditional*” in the sense that God obligates Himself “*in grace*” by the unrestricted declaration, “*I will*” to accomplish certain announced purposes.

- The **Edenic** Covenant.  
Genesis 1:28-30
- The **Adamic** Covenant.  
Genesis 3
- The **Noahic** Covenant.  
Genesis 8:21-9:17
- The **Abrahamic** Covenant.  
Genesis 12:1-7
- The **Mosaic** Covenant.  
Exodus 19:3-6 **Conditional**

3. **His Unconditional Love.** Often in Scripture to love someone means “*to choose to bless that person*” not to love someone means “*not to bless him or her*”

**Jacob – I have loved.** God loved Jacob in that He elected him and his descendants for a “*covenant relationship*” with himself.

**Esau – I have hated.** God did not choose to bestow His favor on Esau to the extent that He did on Jacob. God’s “*divine election*” was made before the twins were even born.

**A Great Mystery.** It is remarkable that God loved Jacob in view of the person Jacob was. It is equally remarkable that God hated Esau, because in many ways he was a more likeable individual than his brother.

**A Positive Motivation.** The point of this section was to get the Jews to think again, and reconsider what her lot would have been if she, like Edom, had not been elected to a “*covenant relationship*” with God.

- Observing God’s dealing with Edom, the Israelites would learn of His love for her and His greatness that extended beyond their boundaries. They would eventually call on other people to appreciate Him too. Malachi 1:5

**Praise and Worship of God.** Malachi’s BURDEN in this book is to unfold the love of God for us, in a way that makes us tremble before the majesty of God.

- To humble you.
- To take away your presumption.
- To remove your ground of boasting in yourself.
- To make you tremble with tears of joy that you belong to God.

Furthermore, in a similar way the Church can look back over human history to see how the love of God has been demonstrated to us.

- God **loved** us. John 3:16
- God **chose** us. John 15:16; Ephesians 1:11
- God **protects** us. Luke 21:13-15
- God **preserves** us. Matthew 16:18

When you begin to doubt the love of God, simply take stock of who you are and how you came to be – **It is the love of God.**