

PostExilicProphets 22-01-19b

We are ready now to resume our study in Zechariah chapter 12. This is the second and final burden. Although I say that with some qualification because there is a third burden.

If you flip two pages over in your Bible, look at Malachi 1.1, the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi, by my messenger. So there is a wonderful symmetry to the close of our Old Testament. It's different in the Hebrew collection, but in terms of the minor prophets, Zechariah and Malachi in both the Hebrew Bible and in ours are connected so much so that there are some commentators, some interpreters who think that perhaps the burdens were at one time of a piece.

There are very good reasons for not believing that. Or that maybe Malachi was the third burden in Zechariah and that it was split off because they wanted to have 12 minor prophets instead of 11. Yeah, nice try, but there are very significant differences.

In fact, you can solve this. Is Malachi the third burden of Zechariah or not? I can ask you two questions and you can solve this puzzle for yourself and you can save dead seas of ink that were expended in printing all of these commentaries and all of these debates back and forth. Whoa, could it have been this and the other? Two questions will answer this.

First of all, do you see any symmetry in the book of Zechariah? Any sort of significance of the number two? I have two staves and when I break them, I break them in two. The visions and the sermons and the burdens are all divisible by two. So does symmetry tell you anything at all? Do you get any clue from the structure? That's your first question.

Your second question is what is the timing of the books of Haggai and Zechariah? What is the, the occasion that brings forth their prophecies? The initial condition, the initial circumstance that causes God to send Haggai and then Zechariah, what do they both address that isn't happening and hasn't happened for 16 years that should be happening? What was that circumstance? The temple and God. Remember now that this principle I emphasized in our first session tonight that, and I'll just go ahead and say this. I'm thinking about actually doing a special along the lines of what we saw in first Corinthians nine, nine, where Paul says, do you think when God said don't muzzle the ox, it's because of his excessive concern for animal rights.

No, Paul says it's his concern for us. These things were written for us certainly so that we can draw a spiritual lesson and application from it. These seemingly arbitrary and sometimes questionable regulations in the physical realm for Israel have spiritual significance.

So let's just think about the law and the profits for a moment. The law designates various practices, various customs, various regulations. Uh, and I'm talking specifically about the, what they call the, uh, the legal code or the, the civil code, not the moral code.

Every, you know, the moral code is timeless. Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't covet,

et cetera. But I'm talking about, um, don't shave the corners of your beard.

Um, here's what happens if you injure a slave. And by the way, the cost to reimburse for injuring a slave, was 30 pieces of silver, 60 pieces for a free man. A free man's worth 60 pieces.

A slave is 30 pieces. So our 30 pieces of silver that we've seen over the last couple of weeks is the, is the price of a slave. But, uh, let's take, for example, we'll just use an illustration, something that came up this past week.

Somebody was poking fun, if you can believe it, uh, at the regulation in Deuteronomy that says, if you're going to eat seafood, you can only eat fish that have fins and scales. So this is why Jewish people do not eat shellfish. They don't eat crabs or crawdads because the only things you can eat that come from the sea have scales and fins.

What's up with that? This person smiles in jest. Really? We can't eat shrimp. What possible spiritual significance could that have? I'll give you, I'll give you 10 seconds to think up a spiritual significance for it's okay to eat tilapia, but it's not okay to eat shrimp.

Tilapia, the fish in the sea of Galilee. I like to think those are Jesus fish, those 153 fish that were on the shore when they pulled in the net after Jesus resurrection. Those fish have fins and scales, perfectly acceptable to eat under the law of Moses.

If there were any shrimp or any, uh, clams, can't make clam chowder, can't eat any oysters, uh, on the half shell or otherwise. Right? Okay. So you've got your spiritual application well in hand now.

See, see how yours compares to mine. I don't think there is any symbolic value in fins or scales. The Bible never says you will mount up with fins as fish.

You will swim and not be wary. That's not in there. There's no, no attachment of spiritual value to those.

So why does God tell Israel, if you're going to eat something you pull out of the sea, it's got to have fins and scales. And if it doesn't, it's an abomination. Mollusks, shrimps, and sea, you know, shell type animals right out, not just out an abomination.

And by extension, this same answer is going to apply to that that choose the cut and divides the hoof. Uh, so deer is okay. Goats are okay.

Cattle are okay. Horses are not okay. Um, swine are not okay.

What's up with this? Is it health reasons? People have tried to say, Oh, you're more subject. There's certain kinds of fish poisoning that come from a rare crab. No, no, no, no, no, no.

Here's my suggestion to you. This is my, this is my take and therefore my takeaway. If you have ever seen the movie, The Karate Kid, you got the old guy that is the master.

You know, he can move things with his mind. He's just a Jedi of martial arts. And there's this young kid who wants to learn.

And so he goes to the master and then by, I haven't seen the movie in a couple of decades, but my recollection is after, after some histrionics on one side and the other, they finally get together and he says, okay, uh, I will be the master. You will be my disciple. So you do what I say.

And, and you're going to learn all of these martial arts. The kid says, okay, fine. And so the master hands him a thing of soap and, and a rag and says, go wash my car.

And now that you've washed it, wax it. And the kid is saying, what has this got to do with martial arts? And if you remember the movie, this is the, this is the line. That whole movie makes is worthwhile because of this line.

When he finally understands why he did this senseless car waxing for days and days and days, you remember it wax on wax off wax on wax off. And by the repetition and the practice in this seemingly unconnected area, he learns movements and he learns trust ultimately in the master who knows what he's doing when he gives them these senseless tasks. My recollection is he also does some watering and some other things, but what I remember is wax on wax off.

When you pull in a bunch of stuff out of the sea, because I ask you to, because I am your God. And because this will distinguish you from the nation as those who will do something that seems to cost you. Why wouldn't you eat these wonderful, delectable creatures because my God has said we will only eat this.

And that's good enough for me. Why would you not eat the swine that are being nurtured over there in Gurgissa, Garassa, Gadara? Why would you be horrified when they all rush off the cliff into the sea and demand that the master depart from your region? Why do you think demons live in your region to begin with? Your head is wrong. Your heart is wrong.

And you don't understand that the prohibition is wax on wax off. He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much. Now there is that.

I think there is also a symbolic value, not in the fins and the scales that are mentioned, but the kinds of animals in general that are clean and acceptable for eating. And then a subset of those that are acceptable for sacrifice. Nobody went down to the tabernacle or the temple and said, well, you know, uh, like David, I was guarding the sheep and here came a lion and I killed it.

And, uh, it was a wonderful victory. I trusted the Lord. I'd like to offer this lion on the altar.

Uh, see this big bear. Boy, you priests are going to love eating this bear meat. You can get the hinder quarters and have wonderful bear steaks.

And let me offer this on the altar. And then you guys can divide up the priestly portion. Think

about that description of the cloven hoof and chewing the cud in terms of identifying animals that are herbivorous when they are land animals.

And they are, it's what they are not. The animals that are clean and, and declared to be, uh, good for food by God are not carnivores and they are not scavengers. No carnivorous animals are on the Israeli diet.

No scavengers are on the diet. And this has symbolic value. We are going to be like what we eat.

Why does Jesus say, eat my flesh and drink my blood? He's not talking in literal terms. What does the flesh and the blood of the Lord symbolize? And what does partaking of it represent in the spiritual realm? Does he have a physical body and does he have flesh and blood? Yes. And there has to be a reality somewhere to launch the metaphor, to launch the figure.

It can't all be outer space. It can't all be imaginary and abstract, but the eating is the metaphor, the partaking, the entering into and becoming like, and becoming identified with a thing. So Israel as a people unto God, separate and distinct from the surrounding nations that are going to ultimately be judged by God when they come and surround Jerusalem, they're going to do it in the tribulation.

And they're going to do it one more time. When Satan's released out of the bottomless pit 10 centuries later, surround the camp of the saints. Conveniently, Satan is going to fall right into God's, don't listen.

He's going to fall right into the trap. Let's get all of our people in one place so that God can just send one issue of fire and they're all gone. Well, think about these animals.

Israel is noted for their restrictive diet and that diet identifies them. They do not imbibe carnivores. And so they are not people that are carnivorous, that are lustful, that are destructive and violent in their operations.

Nor are they garbage collectors eating what is dead, eating what is foul, cleaning up. Do you need carnivores? Do you need scavengers? Absolutely. But God's people do not need to be carnivores or scavengers.

Think about seafood, fish with fins and scales don't feed off of the bottom. What kind of fish feeds off the bottom? That's common in Oklahoma. Catfish.

Does catfish have scales? No, no scales. It's a bottom feeder. Jews don't eat catfish, no scales.

It's a garbage collector. It eats what is dead. God is not the God of the dead, God of the living.

So what do you lose when you dismiss Deuteronomy because of its nonsensical regulations? Oh my gosh, you lose everything. You lose the Christology. You lose wax on, wax off.

Polishing this car is stupid. You're never going to arrive. You're never going to be a true disciple of the master if you don't trust him to know what he's doing and to look past the immediate and the earthly and the shallow.

In my view, and I've told you this before, this is, this is Sam talking. People move along. They like the ground to be flat and level.

Here's an obstacle. Here's a bump. Here's some kind of a hillock.

Here's a weird mound in the middle of my path. Well, mounds are bad. I'm just going to go around it.

What do we do when we see a mound in the middle of flat ground? Get out the entrenching tool and start digging because that's treasure. That's there for a reason. God put that difficulty, that obstacle there as a blessing, not an impediment.

It's a place where we can learn. Sometimes we've got to climb the hill. Sometimes you dig into the hill and you find this hidden treasure.

There's always a reason for what God does. And if you start from a position of faith and trust and confidence, I may not know what's going on here, but I know God knows. I know whom I have believed.

I am persuaded. He will keep what I commit to him. I don't have to understand all of his causes and conditions and successions and relations and purposes and plans and eternity past and eternity future.

I don't have to understand what every single element of every single broken seal and blown trumpet and poured out bowl means in the revelation. What I do know is God has a purpose in every single thing. And just because I don't understand it, that doesn't interfere with the outworking of God's plan.

My goal is to come to understand because as I enter into his thinking, as I come to understand the way his mind works, wouldn't you love to be able to say with Paul, we have the mind of Christ. Oh wow. What would you give for that? How would you like to walk out after this class is over and say, you know what? After that study, I have the mind of Christ.

Well, we, we can have the beginnings of that mind by recognizing every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God is meaningful. It is not trivial. It is not useless.

It's not what people want to say it is. It just makes you want to cry. I am beginning to understand more and more why Jesus stood on the brow of the hill and wept over Jerusalem all day long.

I would have gathered you under my wings like a hand gathers her chicks. You couldn't see it. You didn't want it.

You didn't trust. You did not change your mind. Humility is teachability.

If we are not teachable from the old Testament, trust me, we will not be teachable from the new Testament. It is inspired by the same Holy Spirit and God. The Holy Spirit is going to take the inspired word that God chose to have set down, preserved for his people and he is going to draw it in and use it to cleanse us and to renew us and to enable and empower us and to thoroughly equip us for every good work.

This is the means. Faith is the means. Love is the outworking.

You cannot skip faith. You can't skip hope and just jump to love. It's going to be a shallow, superficial, human, emotional love, not the love of God.

Where does the love of God come from in our lives? You've heard me quote this. I bet there's probably more Bible classes than not that I haven't quoted. Romans five, five, Romans five, one through five.

If you haven't looked at it lately, I'm not going to quote it this time. Look it up. Five, one through five, the five is the punchline.

Well, back to our passage. And this is, there's, there's a couple of fun facts we're going to look at before we're done here. So Romans chapter, I'm sorry, Romans, Zechariah chapter chapter 12 strike the horses with confusion.

The riders with madness, verse five, the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength. You should remember this. We've been here fairly recently in our Kings and Prophets study.

Remember how Jerusalem is going to be populated by those who know what's going on. And so the rulers in Jerusalem are going to say, the inhabitants are my strength in the Lord of hosts, their God. In that day, I will make the governors of Judah like a fire pan in the wood pile and like a fiery torch in the sheaths.

They shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left. Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, Jerusalem. In case you're trying to spiritualize this, excuse me, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is going to be an irritation. It's going to be a stone. It's going to be a cup.

Jerusalem in this chapter is mentioned 10 times, 10 different times. Don't spiritualize it. Don't wave it away with your self indulgent, self-sufficient, self-interested hand.

This is the real Jerusalem 10 times in that day is mentioned seven times. It's a specific day in that day. This is the day of the Lord, the end of the tribulation period and the beginning of the millennial kingdom, the day of the Lord in that day, seven times Jerusalem, 10 times all the nations of the tribulation are going to march against Jerusalem.

They're going to surround it as they will 10 centuries later. But if you look at verses four through nine here, confusion verse seven, the Lord will save the tents of Judah first so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah in that day. Verse eight, the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David. The house of David shall be like God, like Elohim, like the gods. This is not God himself.

Capital G. This is, this is the regular plural of Elohim used in the sense of like these action heroes they have with superpowers. The, the house of David is going to be, you know, pick your, your, I hate to trivialize the house of David by comparing them to the X-Men or the Avengers or whatever. But there is this fantasy in the unbelieving world.

Wouldn't it be great if man had superpowers and had Godlike abilities to call down fire and move things with their mind and you know, get big like the whole can do all, you know, stretchy man and all the rest of it. The house of David is going to literally on this earth in this time be like that they are going to have supernatural enablement. They're going to be like gods, gods with inexplicable power and ability.

I don't think it's going to literally be like these superhero things. I think that's to demean, trivialize and make it shallow. They are going to have Godlike wisdom.

Remember the council of Ahithophel in the days of David and you know, the who, which counselor is going to win between Absalom and David and David's council is wiser than the council that informs Absalom. Well, that's what the house of David is going to be like. They're going to have supernatural insight, supernatural wisdom, supernatural preternatural tactical and strategic sense.

God is going to, he, God could just wipe the enemies out with one, with a word, but he doesn't want to do that. Why? In the same, for the same reason, he didn't wipe out the Canaanites and just tell Joshua and the Israelites cross the Jordan and just step over these corpses. You may want to bury them.

They're going to smell bad after a few days. Why did God use Israel to fight their own battles and win their own victories in his power, under his guidance, by his strength, aided by fire from heaven and you know, supernatural hail and so on. But God had his people go in and fight their own battle, kill the men, kill the women and kill the children.

Why? This answers the question. Oh, the God of wrath that can't, Jesus never killed a baby. He put up in his lap and this is the kingdom.

And why would God send the people of Israel? Why didn't God just gently, now I lay me down to sleep, but I'm a Canaanite and I'll never wake up to weep. Why didn't God just gently waft them away on, on cloudy words of comfort and had the Israelites come in and hack them in pieces

with swords? Why? If you can't answer that question, you say, well, I just don't believe God did that. And you know, I just start, now I'm, now I'm going to use my sword to chop up scripture instead of chopping up children.

Why would God do that? Over and over again. We talked about this on Sunday. God told his people, if you will adhere to the covenant, if you will remember and honor the God of your creation, the God of your fathers, the God of your deliverance from Egypt, if you will remember me, you are going to have all of the blessings that are pronounced from Mount Gerizim.

But if you don't, all of the curses of Mount Ebal up to and including the judgment with which I judged the Amorites is going to fall on you. How long did it take the Amorites to become so evil that God had to wipe them out in a similar fashion to the flood generation? All must go in this area. How long did it take him? What did God tell Abraham? How long would it be until the iniquity of the Amorites was full? 400 years from the time of Solomon, David and Solomon to the time of the Assyrian takeaway of the 10 Northern tribes.

How much time did Israel have to reach the Ahab and Jezebel, Jezebel Manasseh fullness of wickedness? 400 years. David is about 1050 and you get down to 721 and, and they're out. Judah is going to go out in 586.

So split the difference between 721 and 586. Where are you at about 650, 400 years. Judah lasted a little longer, Northern kingdom, a little less, but basically the 400 years it took the Amorites to fill up their iniquity is how long it took God's people to fill up their iniquity and end up getting judged.

So, uh, the first incursion, if you want to start at circa 1000 BC, which is right around the time of Solomon and the peaceable kingdom and all of the blessing that came as a result of David's warfare and the building of the temple, the first temple is completed right around a thousand BC. That's roughly, that's roughly Solomon's time. When does Nebuchadnezzar March on Judah for the first time? 605 then 597 and then 586, those three waves almost exactly 400 years after the time of Solomon.

So why does God send his people in to execute all of the living inhabitants regardless of their age in the land of Canaan? These Amorites have had 400 years to get a clue like Rahab and her family did to read the record on the whitewashed rocks to hear the stories of God's deliverance as his people are making God's name for himself in the wilderness over those 40 years, the supernatural provision, the supernatural protection, the supernatural victory over enemies. And as Joshua comes across, these people could have laid down their weapons and said, there is no God, but your God. And God would have relented from the judgment.

What happened when he said yet 40 days in Nineveh will be destroyed. He didn't say unless they repent. He said 40 days, Nineveh is going to be wiped out to the last person.

But what happened? Jonah delivered that message. Y'all are going to be gone in 40 days and

the people repented. When people repent, the people repented and God relented.

Ninevites relented from their wickedness and God repented of the evil that he was about to do. Relent and repent. Do you think if everybody in Jericho had done what Rahab did and said, we believe in your God, we're not going to oppose you here.

We're throwing the gate open. We'd rather join you than fight you. What would have God told Joshua? You know what God would have said.

God has a consistent policy of grace before judgment. And when people respond to his grace, he relents of the judgment that he was about to inflict. He doesn't say, well, sorry, but I already said I was going to destroy you.

So, you know, appreciate your repenting, but too bad. You know, away you go. But God used his people to sear into their memory, the consequences of unrepentant, rebellious opposition to God, searing into their minds.

So shall it be done for the man whom the King delights to honor with Mordecai elevated, wearing the King's robe led by a high official. Thus shall it be done for the man whom the King delights to honor. What happens to the one whom the King is extremely unhappy with for trying to attack his queen and her people? Gallows.

Sear this judgment into your minds because I watched it happen. I was a part of its execution. Why do you think we are going to be a part of Armageddon on white horses riding with the Lord Jesus? We need that judgment on the disobedient and the rebellious who would rather cry out for rocks to fall on them than repent.

We need that impressed on us. And if we do better than the old Testament saints at remembering that judgment and being chastened thereby, we don't have to worry about God, uh, taking away our free will lest we misuse it in the future. This is what we're doing now.

Uh, I, I read a real good book, um, where, uh, the author was explaining how the pattern of our decisions, uh, solidifies. And over time we eternalize our attitudes. If you have a consistent rejection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit coming to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and time after time, you say, no, no, no, you are less and less susceptible.

You are less and less interested. You are less and less, uh, persuadable and you eventually eternalize yourself as someone who's never going to accept God or any thing that is related to God. If we are amenable, if we are teachable, if we are those who repent, who ask and seek and knock, and we make a habit and a pattern out of that approach and that attitude.

And when we do screw up, we, as soon as possible, get back on that habituating path. We eternalize our chooser. We are those who always choose for God.

We are those who are faithful in what is least. And because we habituate and we eternalize that

attitude, he is faithful in that which is least is now going to be faithful in that which is much because a pattern of decisions hardens and firms over time. The potter can make something out of the clay while it's soft.

The best potter in the world can't take fired clay and shape a new vessel out of it. Though it on the wheel, all you're going to do is cut your hands. That clay has to yield while it is soft and the harder it gets, the less changeable it becomes.

And that's why we have the potter and the potter's field mentioned in this context. So I say all that to say this, this future view of the nations surrounding Jerusalem and the judgment that God is going to use Jerusalem to inflict on them. As I said, God could speak a word from heaven and these people's hearts would quit beating problem solved.

Why does God let them surround the camp in the first place? And why is he going to use the princes of Judah and the people of Jerusalem to be the answer? It's for their benefit. Somebody could argue, well, this is very inefficient. If God is omnipotent, then he should speak a word.

He should do this and he should do that. My expectation is he should save the people, the trouble. It might scare them.

They may worry. They may miss some meals in there and children are going to be in fear and cling to the leg of their parents and say, Oh, we're all going to die. And God could save them the trauma.

Why doesn't God just turn them all into daisies? We're just surrounded by fields of daisies now. So glad the nations came and turned into fields of flowers. Why does God let them congregate? Why does he use his own people to judge them? The same reason he's done it in the past, the same reason he is going to use us and woe unto you.

If you're not prepared for the nature of God's judgment and to learn the lessons there from, if you can't learn the lessons from God's past judgment, you're going to be not just in the darkness, which is outside. You're going to be locked in a closet in the darkest corner of the darkest place of the darkness, which is outside because you let no light penetrate. Now you've got no appreciation for light in the future.

It's, it just is grievous to miss the, the wonderful and necessary lessons of all of scripture from the index to the maps. There is no part of this Bible that is not profitable and necessary for us. Upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

These things were written for our instruction. Read first Corinthians nine, nine and its parallels. We have got to learn these lessons.

Well, much more to come. Um, I did not get to, uh, the, the fun tidbit. We'll look at it next time.

But, uh, let me just tell you that the details of what's going to happen in Jerusalem are exciting

and science is going to weigh in on what God says in affirmation, if you can believe that. So we'll see that next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for your paternal care for us, the patients you have, the wonderful variety of ways you use to, uh, train us up in the way that we should go to give us the constant companionship of your Holy spirit as encouragement, as motivation, as guidance and direction as, uh, rebuke and correction when we need it.

We pray that as we reflect on, uh, the way you work, uh, with your people, uh, Old Testament Israel and future Israel, that these, uh, lessons and examples will sink deep into our hearts and that we can be more closely conformed to the faithfulness and the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross despising the shame. And even as we speak is now seated at your right hand, representing us, interceding for us awaiting the word of command from you to come and retrieve us and take us to be with himself forevermore. We pray all these things in Jesus name.

Amen.