

## PostExilicProphets 22-03-23a

Greetings, welcome to the Wednesday evening Bible study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We are beginning a new book in our three-part series in Post-Exilic Prophets tonight. We launch into the book of Malachi, starting at Malachi chapter 1, verse 1. We have done Haggai, we have done Zechariah, and we start Malachi.

This is going to be a wonderfully pertinent study for us and will interleave nicely with our recent observations on current events, in particular the things that pertain in the spiritual realm, how are we doing as believers. And the introduction to this book is quite fascinating. We may spend the whole first session just on the first verse for reasons that will become clear once we get into it.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our time of encouragement and study of His Word, and we'll get started. Father, as always, we are privileged to be in Your presence, to know that because we are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, that He is in our midst, and hopefully the presence of Your Holy Spirit and Your own presence will bless us this evening as we look at this portion of Your Word together. We pray that our fellowship and our time of investigation will be profitable and will thoroughly equip each of us for every good work, that we can bear the fruit of the Spirit, that we can represent the Lord Jesus in this life, in our own sphere of influence, and that we can prepare for service and function both now and the ages to come.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Malachi, that's what it says at the top of the page that begins the last book of the Old Testament.

And verse 1 gives us the reason for that title, as is so often the case, the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. There is not a wasted word in this verse. Of course, we can typically say that about any verse, but there is a very succinct and powerful introduction here, and it is as important for what it does not say as for what it says.

When we compare this to the first verse or the introduction to other minor prophetic books, we say minor only because they are shorter and more numerous. We typically talk about the 12 minor prophets, beginning with Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. And when we look at them, there are commonalities in how they begin.

This book is unique in the way that it begins, because it begins with the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. And before we even get into the burden, we need to take a look at this verse and understand what it is we're getting into. Pop quiz.

I know it's early, but it's time for a pop quiz. The burden. Where have we seen this any time in the recent past? Think of the structure of the book of Zechariah.

Does anybody remember? It starts out with what? Eight visions, four sermons, and then two what? Burdens. Chapter 9, verse 1. Chapter 12, verse 1, right? Very same word. This is the word masa, M-A-S-A, masa.

And anytime you're saying this in public, you want to be sure and put the emphasis on the second syllable, the accent on the second syllable and not on the first, or you could be in all kinds of politically correct trouble. Masa, masa, burden. This word originally, if you look at its earliest occurrence in the Old Testament, it's found in Exodus 23, verse 5, where it talks about the burden, the literal burden, the load that would be on a donkey.

And the exhortation, the command in this part of the law is, if you see your neighbor's donkey flattened under a burden and you are tempted to pass it by, don't do that. Go and help that donkey out. It's being crushed under a burden.

Don't, even if it's your enemy, it doesn't matter. If you see a donkey that's under a burden, you go help regardless. That's the earliest use.

Exodus 23, verse 5. It came to mean anything that is born or carried, such as the tabernacle furniture. This is in Numbers 4, verse 15, and it talks about the responsibility of the sons of Kohath, what it is that they are to carry as Israel moves from place to place. And so it is more generalized to almost become responsibility.

It is their responsibility to carry, and it almost has a double entendre there. They are responsible for the furniture and they literally bear it from place to place. It comes to mean the burden, the load that is to be delivered by the prophets.

And you find this usage multiple times. I'm not even going to bother to give you all of the scriptures, but you find it used this way in Isaiah extensively, in Jeremiah extensively, in Ezekiel, in Nahum, in Habakkuk, and of course, our two most recent occurrences in Zechariah 9, 1 and 12, 1. So it becomes a metaphor for a heavy message. Almost always, if you get a concordance, find Masa, look up the Strong's number, see where it is used.

You will discover that when it is used in the prophetic context of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so on, it's not a happy message. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 1 doesn't say, comfort ye, comfort ye, my people bear this wonderful burden to Jerusalem. It's a heavy message.

It is usually a hard message. It is often a rebuke or a declaration of coming woe and judgment. So right off the bat, you can't get one word into the book of Malachi without realizing that this is not going to be a message of deer on the heights and blessings descending from heaven.

It's the burden. This is a sober warning message carried as a load and delivered by this individual who composed the book. This isn't just any old burden.

This is a burden of the word of the Lord. We tend to gloss over that because how many dozens and dozens and dozens of times does that phrase occur throughout the Old Testament? The

word of the Lord came to so-and-so. This is the word of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord. In various forms and ways, it is something God says. Jesus famously, in answering the temptation about turning stones into bread, says, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Interestingly, of the two available Greek words that could be used for word of the Lord, the one that is used is the one that means spoken word. It is the word from God's lips, not the one that is the written word. But Jesus, I am sure, originally spoke in Aramaic, and I am almost equally certain, if I had to speculate, that it is the Aramaic version of this word, *davar*, which is word, matter, subject.

If you look at a lexical set of definitions for *davar*, it's about 14 lines long. It translates into all kinds of related and overlapping terms. But don't underestimate, this isn't a burden of social commentary.

This isn't a burden of worry, fear, or human standards of condemnation. This is a burden of the word of the Lord. And this should immediately move from the fact that it is a sober and potentially negative message, to the fact that it has divine authority behind it.

The burden of the word, *davar*, then of the Lord. How many different ways do we find the Lord in the Old Testament, and how can you tell the difference? It's your second pop quiz question of the night. The Lord has two different configurations in the original behind it.

One of them is *Adonai*, the other is *Yahweh*. You can tell by looking at verse one here, in your New King James, which one it is. How is Lord printed in verse one here? What kind of letters are used? See how it's got a capital L followed by small caps, O-R-D? So you know what the original is behind this, and it is not *Adonai*.

It is the Tetragrammaton. It is *Yahweh*. This is the burden of the word of *Yahweh*, which is the covenant name.

It is a reminder of the relationship of God's people to Himself through covenant. So we should already be just as inclined forward in our seats to what follows as the original recipients Israel would have been. It is the word of the Lord to Israel.

We have in the past noted that while it's not a 100% hard and fast rule, it is quite often the case, I would say predominantly the case, that when you see God's chosen people in the Old Testament referred to as Israel, He is calling to mind the ideal mission and plan and purpose that He has for them. When they are falling short, He tends to call them Jacob or Yesharon or other less ideal names. So those in Israel who are part of the remnant, those who are actually seeking to walk by faith, to please God in their lives, who have a genuine heart for God, a genuine love for God, will perk up their ears.

This is the heavy message of the word of the Lord to Israel, calling Israel to be Israel, to be

fulfilling their potential that is made possible by their covenant relationship with God. Israel speaks of the people of God in view of their full potential. They're not always living up to it.

Sometimes they're called this and it is almost a sarcasm because you remember how Jacob got this name. I will not let you go until you bless me. I will no longer call you Yaakov, heel grabber, um, ambigator, uh, chiseler, swindler.

He who gets things by his own grasp, I will call you Yitzra'el, Prince Yetzar. This is where the Russians get the, get the name Tsar. It's, it's, it's a cognate, it's derivative.

And it's where the Romans got Caesar. If you just take out the vowels and smash everything together, Tsar, Tsar, Caesar, all come from this very ancient near Eastern word and word group. Uh, Yitzra'el, Prince of God, Prince of God.

So, well, we've made it most of the way through this. We're, we're doing well. Half my time has gone, but we're making good progress.

The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by, they have just egregiously left out a word here. If you have a Hebrew text or you've got an interlinear or anything else, this is not by, this is by the hand of, but Yad, Yad, hand. How can, why would you just leave a word completely out when it's a perfectly good word? How would you like it if they left it out of, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee by the right of my righteousness.

Right hand. You need hand. Hand is important.

What does hand stand for? What, what's the metaphorical value of hand in the Old Testament in particular? Hand, arm, strength, the right hand of my righteousness is how you have it. And sometimes they, they try to change it around and say my righteous right hand. No, God's power is, is expressed in and through his righteousness.

It's the right hand of my righteousness. Well, this message has been put into the hand of the author here, the, the conveyor. So this is the heavy burden of the word of the Lord.

And you get the idea in this spiritual sense, this metaphorical sense that this burden is being carried in the hand of the messenger. The word of the Lord is a heavy burden to Israel and it is being hand delivered. It's not being sent by Epistle.

It's not being conveyed second or third hand, heard it from a friend who heard it from a friend who heard it from a friend that you're messing around. This is personal. You have so many expressions of personal contact here.

The word of Yahweh to Israel, the name that God gave to the individual and to his descendants, the expressions of individual covenant in that name, this could have been the word of God. This could have been the Devar Elohim or, or some other the Lord of hosts or invoking some other area of God's majesty and God's divine power. But this is his covenant name.

This is a personal and individual hand delivered message. We have the privilege with the fulsome revelation of scripture that all of God's word is hand delivered to us. That's why we have God, the Holy Spirit.

That's why he is a comforter. He is a personal presence. He is the one called alongside.

That's what Paraclete means. The one who is alongside to lead us to accompany us into all truth. There were times when Israel got their revelation by proxy.

Think Mount Sinai. There has to be an intermediary. You're not qualified.

You're not ready. You cannot approach. You cannot come in contact with the holiness of God.

Think what a privilege it is that we have access to the very throne of grace by a new and living way through the veil, Hebrews chapter 10. To forget the awesomeness of that privilege and to fail to exercise it is just tragic. And it is frequent in our day.

And I'll more about that as we move through our passage tonight. So the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel, Prince of God nation by the hand of Malachi. You know, already that Malachi is the consistent Hebrew word that is translated angel in the old Testament, because the angels are God's messengers.

Gabriel, famously a messenger, Old Testament and new. But it is not always used as such. And the question comes, is Malachi this author's name or is it his title? And there's been a lot of scholarly speculation and opinionation going on about that.

My opinion is it is a title and it is not a personal name. Is that important? It's not nearly as important as other things. However, if it is a title and not a name, why would that be? That is important that we would not have an identified author.

Here are my reasons. And I just basically made these up out of whole cloth. I have no idea what I know that there are scholars who have come down on one side or another, but I didn't really delve into all of the arguments.

Here's what I think. Keep your finger in Malachi and flip back to Hosea. Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea.

We'll just start there. Do we know who Isaiah is? We do. His father is mentioned.

We know who Jeremiah is. His father is mentioned. We know who Ezekiel is.

His office and so on is mentioned. When you get to Hosea and look at the very beginning, the word of the Lord that came to Hosea, the son of Bere. He's an individual, right? We're given his father's name.

Flip forward to Joel. The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. Easy to know Joel is a name, that Hosea is a name.

Amos, we don't have his father, but we do have the words of Amos who was among the sheep breeders of Tekoa. And we've looked at that in a little bit more detail, looking at what Amos' actual occupation was. But notice he is further identified.

Every one of these prophets is further identified in some way so that we know his name is his name. Look at Obadiah, the vision of Obadiah. Now he is not further identified.

And so you could say, well, Obed, this comes from the word Ebed, which means servant. So couldn't this be kind of like Malachi, my messenger, this could be my servant or servant of Yahweh, Obed-Yah, servant of Yahweh. Well, that might conceivably be possible.

It is conceivably possible. However, there are 13 or 14 other Obadiahs who have this name in the Old Testament. You can look this up in a concordance all through Chronicles.

There's Obadiah, this guy, that guy, the other guy. We've seen several of them in our study of kings and prophets. You can't swing a cat without hitting an Obadiah somewhere in the Old Testament.

So it is a very common Old Testament name, and it is likely to be a name here. If it was going to be a title, you would expect it to be differentiated from the name by having the full Yahweh, servant of Yahweh, and have it be a genitive construction with an extra syllable. Jonah, you know, Jonah, his, Jonah, the son of Amittai.

You go to Micah, Micah of Moresheth and the days in which he lived. You go to Nahum and so on. You can check these out.

All of these guys are further identified. He is the Elkoshite. He's from Elkosh, and so it's his name.

Well, here's what's unique about Malachi. There is no person anywhere in the Old Testament named Malachi. The name never occurs.

If you go to a concordance, go to a Hebrew concordance and look up Malachi, there is one entry, and it's Malachi 1.1. The only time this phrase ever occurs, it is for a messenger. Just flip forward to chapter 3, verse 1 in this book. God says, Behold, I send Malachi.

And we see this as a prophecy of John the Baptist. In fact, it's explicitly quoted in the New Testament. My messenger will prepare the way before my face, right? This is the very same word in chapter 3, verse 1. Malachi, I send my messenger.

Well, nobody says Malachi was in the wilderness baptizing in the Jordan, right? It's, he is a messenger. He's the voice crying in the wilderness and so on. You can also find this in chapter 2, verse 7, in a slightly different form.

The lips of a priest should keep knowledge. People should seek the law from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord. Which kind of Lord is that? Adonai or Yahweh in 2.7? You can tell

it's Yahweh.

Very good. So messenger of Yahweh, this would be Malachi-Yah, if you shorten it. And there is some speculation that Malachi might actually be short, an extremely shortened form for Malachi-Yah or Malachi-Yahu.

In the same way that Uriah, which is a name that occurs several times in Old Testament Scripture, famously Uriah the Hittite. But then if you remember Bezalel of Bezalel and Aholiab fame, Bezalel, who was Holy Spirit filled and made accouterments for the tabernacle, his father was Uri. And there are three or four Uri's mentioned in Scripture.

It's just U-R-I. And the Yah seems to have been left off. Uri.

Ur, U-R, means flame or flaming. And so Uri would either be my flame or more likely Uriah is flame of the Lord. And it's interesting because Ur and Or are very similar.

It's just the way they're pronounced. But Or is light. Yahi-Or, let there be light.

And Ur, flame, flames were the source of light in the Old Testament. So Ur and Or are very close. But we have examples, and this is not the only one, it's just a convenient one, that sometimes Uri, which would be Ur with just the Y, is put for Uri-Yah or Uri-Yahu.

And it's possible that Malachi might be short for messenger of the Lord. And perhaps for stylistic reasons because you have the Lord in verse one and you have the Lord in verse two. And rather than repeat it three full times, it's left off possibly.

In either case, when you find Malach in the Old Testament, it is almost always talking about a messenger of the Lord who is an angel. And in those exceptional places, there's only two times in the Old Testament outside of here, before Malachi, where it is not referring to an angel. And this is once in Haggai and once in Isaiah.

So if you go to Haggai just a few pages back, chapter one, verse 13, Haggai 1.13, you have Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people. The Lord's messenger, messenger of Yahweh, Malachi, Yahweh, Malachi. And this of course is talking about Haggai, not an angel.

So in the recent past, it was used that way. It is also used similarly in Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 19, Isaiah 42.19, which says, who is blind, but my servant, or who is deaf as my messenger whom I send, who is blind as he who is perfect and blind as the Lord's servant. You remember we spent some time on this when we did Isaiah, but who is blind, but my messenger.

And of course, we're unaware that there's any such thing as a blind angel, but this is speaking in prospect of the messenger that God will send. And the nature of that blindness and so on is a fascinating study. So here we are, that's verse one, the burden sober, heavy message of the

word of the Lord.

It is authoritative from the covenant Lord of Israel to Israel by the hand of my messenger. This is in my view, God speaking in the first person, he sets up what is to follow and you will see the responses of Israel because they are going to speak back to God second person. How have we, in what way have you loved us in verse two? So the response when this message is delivered, in what way have you loved us as though God is speaking in the first person? So by the hand of my messenger is as close as you can get to God speaking in the first person.

And as is often the case with the angel of the Lord, the Malak of the Lord, right? Anytime you see angel of the Lord, this is Malak Yahweh. And you know, pre-incarnate Christ was for a long time and probably is still the prevailing theory of who that is. I personally don't believe it because of Hebrews one, one and two, but that is our introduction.

What can we conclude from this introduction? Number one, this is a personal authoritative message directly to the people of God as goes Israel in the old Testament. So goes the individual believer in the new. So what will we be looking for in this book? A personal hand-delivered message to me, a personal hand-delivered message to you.

God cares enough to make this personal. As you can see from the very next line in verse two, I have loved you. This is Ahav, Ahab, Ahav, I have loved you.

This is the deep and abiding love verb in Hebrew. So that's our first point. We are going to be looking for a personal, individual, hand-delivered message from God to me.

Fill in your name here in this book. Secondly, this is not likely to be a message of promise for prosperity, blessing, opportunity, golden streets, gates of pearl, because it is a burden. This is going to be a criticism.

Many times it is easier to take on board a criticism or a negative comment if we're warned ahead of time that this is the nature of the meeting. If the boss calls you in and you think you're going to get a raise and you suddenly get criticism instead, the shock can keep you from really digesting the content of the message. By setting it up front as a burden, we can prepare ourselves for the content of this message in an effort to take it on board in the spirit in which it is given, which is a spirit of love.

God loves the recipient of this message, which in the first blush is Israel, but by extension is us. But He loves us enough to speak truth to us and to point out our failure. And we should be prepared to have our failures and our shortcomings pointed out.

It is the only way they are going to get fixed, is to recognize, acknowledge, and access the grace and the power of God to overcome these failures. So, A, it's from God in person. B, this is going to be a sobering and perhaps unhappy message.

C, because God uses His covenant name and addresses His people as Israel, what is His

purpose in delivering this burden by hand and in person? His goal is to bring them back to the potential, the fulfillment of the potential of that covenant and that personal relationship with God that is unique among the nations. Only Israel can address God as Yahweh. He is Elohim to everyone else, but He is Yahweh to Israel.

So you can see, intrinsic to this message, God's hope that the message will be received, that there will be a response, recovery, restoration, and the fulfillment of all of the potential for which God made them His people and extended to them His presence and His power and His grace, His long-suffering, His forgiveness, His salvation, His promises. All of that is in the first verse. And so, the same applies to us.

If we can look at this message, not be put off by the content, not try to deflect it and say, well, that's others and not me. How dare He? In what way am I susceptible to this message? That's not me. That's those rascals over there.

We'll miss it. And we won't be the Israel of God in the abstract spiritual sense, the people of God who fulfill all of His potential. So this is what we have to look forward to.

We're going to pause here and take a break. When we come back, we are going to start verse two.