

PostExilicProphets 22-07-06b

Let's resume our study now in the book of Malachi. We have seen the first two issues that God raised in this book and we're going to look now at the other five. The first was the love of God to Israel expressed in contrast with those that God does not love.

And the salient feature is those whom God does not love have no future, no heritage, no restoration to blessing. Secondly, we saw that in return for God's love, Israel has failed to return it. They have failed to reverence God and to appreciate the opportunity for fellowship that God's love creates.

And this was chapter one, verses six through 14, where the first was chapter one, verses two through five. And there is a foreshadowing that when God does not find these things among the initial recipients, he will look elsewhere. And so in verse five, God said, the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever, your eyes shall see and you shall say the Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.

There is a mysterious anticipation that because they don't appreciate God's love, God's name is going to be magnified beyond the border of Israel. If it's not magnified within Israel, God will find those who will magnify it. So there is that portent that that sort of mysterious reference in verse five, it becomes more explicit in the second, failing to reverence God and give him his due and to appreciate the opportunity for fellowship that God's love and God's covenant affords.

God takes no pleasure in them, verse 10, and his name will be great among the Gentiles instead. And this is expressed in chapter one, verse 14. And this is going to be fulfilled.

If you keep your finger in Malachi and turn over to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 13, as I mentioned, Paul is going to explicitly make this point and flesh out this concept in addressing the inhabitants of Antioch of Pisidia. So chapter 13 of Acts, and you can begin really at verse 16, Paul stood up and motioning with his hand said, men of Israel and you who fear God, listen, the God of this people, Israel chose our fathers and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt. And with an uplift in arm, he brought them out of it.

And he goes on to rehearse their history. And as you get down to the ministry of John the Baptist from David seed, verse 23, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel, a savior Jesus. After John had first preached before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel, the message of Malachi change your mind.

Your mind does not match God's mind. Your viewpoint does not match God's viewpoint. Turn, repent, change your mind.

And the messenger who is to turn the hearts of the children back to the kind of heart that the fathers had and vice versa, uh, is embodied in John. So verse 24 of Acts 13, John first came preaching the baptism or repentance to all the people of Israel. As John was finishing his

course, he said, who do you think I am? I am not he, but behold, there comes one after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to lose men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, heirs of the covenant.

Those among you who fear God notice, Paul is already including the God fearers. Those who attend synagogue, who have joined themselves to Israel, even though they are not of Israel. He mentioned them, uh, in verse 16, men of Israel and you who fear God, listen in verse 26, men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you, who fear God to you, the word of this deliverance, this salvation has been sent.

And then he declares the career of the Lord Jesus who was crucified. God raised him in verse 30 seen by many, uh, during those days by those who came with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. Verse 32, we declare to you glad tidings that promise, which was made to the fathers.

God has fulfilled this for us, their children, verse 33. He has fulfilled it for us, their children, turning the hearts in that he has raised up Jesus as it is also written in the second Psalm. You are my son's dad begotten you and that he raised him from the dead.

No more to return to corruption. He has spoken thus. I will give you the sure mercies of David.

He says in another Psalm, you will not allow your Holy one to see corruption for David. After he'd served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his father's and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached to you, the forgiveness of sins.

And by him, everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you. Behold, you despisers marvel and perish for I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.

When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them. The next Sabbath congregation had broken up. Many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

On the next Sabbath, almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, there is jealousy. They feel their power beginning to diminish.

This is something that happens even in the present day. Those who have power and see it beginning to diminish will do anything to retain it, to increase it, to continue it. So Jews saw the multitude.

They were filled with envy and contradicting and blaspheming. They opposed the things spoken by Paul. Why did they oppose the things spoken by Paul? They saw the multitudes and they

were filled with jealousy.

So verse 46, Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first. But since you reject it, notice the word of God was spoken to you first. You reject it.

Judge yourselves unworthy. You judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. We turn to the Gentiles.

And you can read the rest of that. Verse 48, the Gentiles heard it. They were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.

The Gentiles glorified the word of the Lord. The Jews judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life and that word that was spoken to them first. This is a fulfillment of what is being spoken of in Malachi.

So the lack of appreciation for the opportunity for fellowship and relationship and blessing from God results in this opportunity being taken from Israel and given to others, those who will bear its fruit. The third message in Malachi, the third facet is in chapter two, verses one through six, O priest, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name, there is an opportunity and there is a responsibility among the spiritual leadership to possess and to inculcate glory, glorifying God's name.

If you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name, I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have cursed them already because you do not take it to heart. This is an extension and an expansion of number two, the lack of reverence, but the word of the Lord should be taken to heart by his people.

What is on the line in taking or not taking the word of the Lord to heart? The covenant to not take the word of the Lord to heart is to break the covenant and God is no longer obligated or inclined to hold up his end of the covenant. So if the covenant is going to continue, look at chapter one, verse 14, curse be the deceiver who has in his flock a male and takes a vow. Taking a vow to the Lord was a part of the covenant.

The law of Moses allowed for a special relationship to be established between an individual Israelite and God in the taking of a vow. This was a unique and individual connection between that man and God. But someone who took a vow and then sacrificed what is blemished, basically corrupted and despised the opportunity for the vow.

That's one 14. Look at chapter two, verse four. You shall know I have sent this commandment to you that my covenant with Levi may continue.

You've got to take God's word to heart for the covenant to continue. The truth is the same in the new testament, the new covenant, as it is in the old testament under the old covenant. God's covenant promise blessings do not come to those who take lightly God's word.

God's word is paramount. There are people who will accuse those who value God's word of bibliology. This typically is a charge from those who don't want to value all of God's word, who want to pick and choose and take the parts they like and dismiss the parts they don't like.

Well, if you take the entirety of the word of God, you're worshipping the Bible instead of worshipping God. You're valuing scripture instead of valuing Christ. The only people I have heard make this claim are those who really do not understand this concept.

You can't get to Christ and through Christ, you cannot get to God the father without the scriptures. All scripture is God breathed and profitable. All scripture.

God has magnified his word above his name. Anybody that raises a charge of bibliology really doesn't know what they're talking about. Anyone who enters into the treasures, the storehouse of manna, the living water, the cleansing and washing effect of God's word in the hands of God's Holy Spirit.

It is the voice of the Holy Spirit to say, well, when the Holy Spirit speaks, you're just making an idol out of his words, out of the mind of Christ. What are you talking about? You cannot get to God without his word. And I will stand by the claim that anybody that starts charging others with bibliology really and truly has never entered into what God uses in terms of drawing us to himself through his word.

This is why he calls his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the living word. John chapter one, the first several verses in the beginning was the word. The word was with God.

The word was God. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. You cannot over worship the scriptures.

You can misuse and abuse the scriptures. You can pick and choose. You can decide that parts of it are pertinent and other parts are not.

There are many ways to misuse the scripture, but to value God's word, which he himself values above his own name. You can't overdo that to over invest in scripture. If there is any error involved, it's a self-correcting error because the word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof and for correction.

Reproof and correction are inherent in the word. If you were to somehow become whatever they're thinking is a bibliolator, the word itself will fix you. It will straighten us out.

If you spend too much time, if you become so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good because and I've, I've tried this. I've dabbled in this. I would find good teaching and listen to six or eight or 10 hours of it on a weekend when I had no other obligations that was single and trapped somewhere.

Other people had transportation. I didn't. I would just start in the morning and listen to the

teaching of the word of God all day.

It never hurt me. Somebody could have said, well, you're a bibliolator. Sorry, but I treasure those opportunities too.

I felt like I was Elijah by the brook Cherith when the brook was full of water and the ravens were dropping food on my head, eat, drink and be merry. God has given you a rare opportunity to soak yourself in his word. How could you pet? Whoa, well, I don't want to be a bibliolator.

I'd better stop. If you ever, if you ever have that opportunity, maybe you're laid up and you can't do anything else. Uh, what an opportunity, what a provision I, this bibliolatory charge really, if you can't tell, it raises my hackles.

I don't know what they're talking about, but it's nothing I'm familiar with. It's God's word. The word of the Lord should be taken to heart to one through six of Malachi and you do not take it to heart.

This is why verse three, I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your feasts. Notice your upcoming feasts, your future people, the, the future. It's like the heritage that he talked about earlier.

Those who do not love God have no future, no heritage. Those who don't value God's word have no future and no heritage. Their descendants are going to be under a curse.

Their anticipated solemn feasts, uh, they're, they're not going to prosper. They're not going to enjoy. It won't be a blessing.

The, what is required for the covenant to continue is dedication to God's word, communication of God's word to one through six. But you find this emphasized all through chapter two. We saw it in verse four that my covenant with Levi may continue verse five.

My covenant is within one of life and peace. If you want life and peace, honor God's word, treasure God's word and take God's word to heart. Verse eight, you've departed from the way you have caused many to stumble at the law.

You have corrupted the covenant. If you aren't soaked and steeped in God's word, if you don't value it, if you twist it and corrupt it, if you chop it up, if you make it partial and incomplete, you're corrupting God's covenant. God's word is inextricably woven together with God's covenant.

The covenant is his word. His word is his covenant. You cannot extricate the two.

And if you disregard his word, you have corrupted the covenant. It's just that simple. Uh, verse 10, why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers, the covenant verse 11, Judah has profaned the Lord's holy profaning, the covenant in verse 10, profaning the holy, it is a holy covenant.

It's the same thing in verse 11 that it is in verse 10. And that's why in verse 14, the Lord has been witnessed between you and the wife of your youth with whom you have dealt treacherously yet. She is your companion and your wife by covenant.

And this picture of marriage is the relationship of Judah to God by covenant. It should be as inviolate and as sacred and as sanctified as the covenant of marriage and marriage is put as a metaphor for Judah's relationship to God. And they have profaned it.

And he has gone and, uh, married the daughter of a foreign God in verse 11, the daughter of a foreign God, this is breach, grievous, egregious breach of covenant. So the word of the Lord should be taken to heart. That is the third point illustrated in the priest.

What is the salient point Failing to honor God's word is a profaning of God's covenant, old Testament or new, new covenant can be just as profaned as the old covenant. When we do not take God's word to heart and our blessings will be cursed. Any blessings will be cursed.

Verses two and three, two, two, and three. I have cursed your blessings and they will continue to be cursed. Your future of life and opportunity is canceled.

Grievous. The fourth is in chapter two, verse 17. You weary the Lord with your words because you say everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and he delights in them.

Or where is the God of justice calling God's justice into question. Justice is one half of God's holiness. He is righteous and he is just.

And to call God's justice into question, where is the God of justice? People who do evil. God delights in them. This, this is an attack on God's righteousness and God's justice.

What is God's response? Reminds me of Jack Nicholson and one of his movies where when somebody is saying they want the truth, he's on the witness stand and he says, you can't handle the truth. You can't handle the knowledge of what we actually have to do so that you can sleep securely in your beds and so on. You may have seen that.

I think Tom Cruise was in that movie also, but Jack Nicholson famously says, truth, you can't handle the truth. God's response to this charge of calling his justice into question. God basically says, my justice, you can't handle my justice.

Look at chapter three. I'll send my messenger. He's going to come suddenly.

The messenger of the covenant in whom you allegedly delight. This is divine sarcasm. You claim to delight in my covenant that you defile, that you treacherously breach.

He's coming. But verse two, who can endure the day of his coming? The day of his coming is the day of my justice. You think you're going to be able to stand on the day when my purifying justice is expressed in the messenger of the covenant.

You've breached the covenant. You've defiled the covenant. You've treacherously broken and disregarded the covenant.

You haven't taken my word, my covenant to heart. You know what's going to happen on the day when the messenger of the covenant comes, who's going to be able to stand when he appears? He's like a refiner's fire, launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

He will purify the sons of Levi. You priests, he will purge them like gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord and offering in righteousness. The offering of Judah will, and Jerusalem would be pleasant as in the days of old, as in former years, I will come near you for judgment.

You want to talk about my justice. You're questioning my justice. What you don't understand is the difference between the present and the future.

The future is where vindication occurs. The future is where those who are patiently endure tribulation and hardship are vindicated where deliverance and heritage and restoration of blessing occur. All of these preceding points, the love of God, those who reverence him and who honor his name, those who take his word to heart are going to be vindicated in the day of God's justice.

And those who have corrupted and disregarded and little regarded God's covenant are going to be purged. They're going to be the dross. They're going to be the chaff that does not survive the fire of God's justice.

You better be careful talking about where is the God of justice? When the God of justice comes, you better be asking yourself, not where is the God of justice, but who is he who can stand on the day of God's justice? This in verses three through five, I will come near you for judgment. Verse five, I will be a swift witness against sorcerers. Those who appeal to other kinds of power than God's power against adulterers.

Those who choose other relationships than relationship with God and overturn and forsake their covenant relationship with God. Perjurers, those who lie and deceive and twist the truth, partial truth, those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, those who are self-interested and who aggrandize themselves at the expense of others who do not have God's love for widows, God's love for orphans and God's love for the stranger. Those who are disadvantaged because they don't have roots.

They don't have opportunities as a part of their heritage. They do not fear me. All of these horizontal expressions of selfishness and self-interest are rooted in the ground of no fear of God, no respect for God.

That horizontal and vertical relationship we've seen so many times. I am the Lord. I do not change.

That's the only reason you are not consumed. Oh, sons of Jacob. I have been keeping my end of

the covenant despite so many of you disregarding it.

There are a few, there is a remnant. Otherwise you would have been consumed. From the days of your fathers, you've gone away from my ordinances and not kept them.

Return to me and I will return to you. This one statement by God is a stake through the vampire heart of those who think that God foreordains human decisions. Return to me, I will return to you.

It's not the other way around. So this is the takeaway. This is the salient point.

What are our four salient points so far? Number one, those whom God loves are remembered and restored to blessing. That's the love of God. Number two, those who reverence God's name, those who honor his name are going to be honored by God.

Number three, the word of the Lord taken to heart. If we take God's word to heart, we have a future, we have a heritage, we have blessing. We will be remembered in the day of judgment.

If we do not take it to heart, we will also be remembered in the day of judgment, but our blessings will be cursed. And indeed they are already cursed. Number four, God's justice called into question.

God says, by way of promise, return to me, I will return to you. The only reason I am not near you now is you have departed from me. Return to me, meaning they were once with God, return.

You return, I will return. Change your heart, change your mind. This was the call of John the Baptist before the days of the Lord Jesus.

Change your ways, change your mind. Do works in keeping with change of mind, he told those who assembled at the Jordan. Number five, this is chapter three, verses eight through 12.

Will a man rob God? How have we robbed you? They say, taking to self what belongs to God. This is not just denying to God what is rightfully his, but they take it to themselves. If you rob someone, you don't take their stuff and burn it.

You don't take it and throw it in the sea. You don't take it and discard it. Will a man rob God? Robbing is taking to yourself what belongs to others.

God says, you have taken to yourself what belongs to me in tithes and offerings. Notice verse nine, you are cursed with a curse for you have robbed me. This whole nation.

Remember there was a curse in the third instance. There is another curse here in the fifth instance, taking to ourselves what belongs to God under covenant tithes and offerings. Everything on earth belongs to God.

Why do tithes and offerings specifically go to God? It is a part of the covenant. And this is another aspect of breach of covenant, not taking God's word to heart, not taking seriously the reverence and the honor that is due to God as the master, as the father, and as the great King, they take to themselves instead. What is the takeaway on number five? If we remember to render to God, the things that are God's, even as we render to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's.

God says, if you are faithful and obedient in rendering to God, what is his due? There will be overflowing blessings, overflowing blessings as a response to obedience. I will rebuke the devourer in verse 11. All nations will call you blessed in verse 12, and you will be a delightful land.

Number six, your words are harsh against me, says the Lord. What have we spoken against you? Notice the difference between the human viewpoint in Israel and God's divine viewpoint. They don't think that they have spoken harsh words against God.

They think their words are legitimate. I've got a legitimate grief, grief, legitimate gripe. They say it is useless to serve God in verse 14.

What profit to keep his ordinance and walk as mourners before the Lord of hosts or walk in obedience before the Lord of hosts. So it seems like the proud are the ones who are blessed, and those who do wickedness are raised up. They test God and go free.

God doesn't seem to be active. So the sixth one is beginning to believe that service to God, obedience to God, walking before God in faithfulness and obedience is useless and without profit. This thought has entered the mind.

I don't see how this pans out. What is God's response? Verse 16, those who fear the Lord speak to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them. Notice there is fellowship among those who fear the Lord and who reverence his name.

They are speaking to one another. Those who fear the Lord congregate, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some, the habit of some is. Cultivate fellowship, cultivate contact with believers who are like-minded in reverencing God and fearing him.

The Lord listened and heard where two or three are gathered in my name. Jesus said, there am I in the midst. The Lord hears and a book of remembrance was written before him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on his name.

And this circles and, and reflects and mirrors what we saw in the first two points that God makes. God remembers and restores those whom he loves, those who reverence him and honor him as father, as master, as great king. God remembers them.

You remember God, God remembers you. Return to me, God says, I will return to you. Honor

me, I will honor you.

Remember what God says through Samuel, I will honor those who honor me. Those who don't will be lightly esteemed. The last thing we want is to be lightly esteemed by God, given little consideration.

That's what happened to Edom. So what is the takeaway? There is a book of remembrance. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your labor of love, your patience of hope.

Think about second Corinthians four 17, our momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory. Hebrews chapter six, verse 10. God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward his name and that you have ministered to the saints and do minister.

We desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you be not slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. It is not useless, it is not profitless to serve God. It requires faith, it requires hope, and it requires love to enter into the fullness of God's expressions of love and to be on the proper side of his justice and his righteousness.

So they shall be mine. Chapter three, verse 17 of Malachi says the Lord of hosts on the days that I make them my treasure, my jewels. I will spare them as this man spares his own son who serves him.

You think about the parable of the prodigal son. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. The outcome, the ultimate end will manifest in that day.

Finally, in chapter four, verses one through six, the seventh emphasis that God brings in this great book, the contrast between present conditions and future judgment. The day is coming. Do you believe it or not? Judgment is coming.

Those who are on the wrong side of God's justice and who do not honor his name, they will be left neither root nor branch. But to you who fear my name, the son of righteousness shall arise. It returns to the very beginning.

God is able to express his love toward those who choose to receive it, who receive a love of the truth. You shall go out and grow fat like stall fed calves. You shall notice all of the future tenses here.

The day is coming. Look to the future. Be patient.

You have need of patience so that after you have suffered a while, you inherit the promises. Remember in verse four, remember the law of Moses, value the word of the Lord, treasure it, take it to heart. I will send Elijah the prophet.

He will turn the hearts otherwise occurs. You either will have the heart of the fathers that resulted in covenant blessing, the expression of God's love and faithfulness being entered into his book of remembrance, entering into those wonderful future blessings, or your future is a curse. Even your blessings will be cursed.

It is a simple matter of right at the heart of this. The word of the Lord should be taken to heart. This is the heart and soul of the book of Malachi.

His people were not doing so. The final warning, the closing exhortation of the old Testament is take the word of the Lord to heart. Take it seriously.

Value it because God's word is the record of God's name, his reputation, his promises, the covenants. What is our level of investment in God's word and the covenant that that word expresses? The Lord Jesus Christ, our savior revealed old Testament and new in that word, our future, our opportunities revealed in that word. Do we take it to heart in those areas where we are hard hearted, where we are not heeding the warnings? Does the word of God penetrate? Is it like a fire and like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces? If we don't occasionally feel our toes being stepped on and our rocks being broken, we need to pay more attention to the word of the Lord.

Find someone who teaches it explicitly because the word of the Lord is alive and powerful. It is that word that is alone able to transform us and to renew us in the image of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is by that word that we can offer ourselves living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.

This is how we escape conformity to the world. This is how we enter into transformation by the renewing of our minds so that we can understand the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12, one and two.

That is the message of Malachi. Are we entering into divine viewpoint or are we fooling ourselves, deceiving ourselves, satisfying ourselves, gratifying ourselves with a false view, a human view of rationalization, of questioning, of faithlessness, of hard heartedness. So many examples in Israel's history that should educate us.

This is how the author of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul starts that letter. Don't repeat the mistakes of those who dropped in the wilderness and failed to enter into his rest. When you think back on Malachi, take the word of the Lord to heart.

Everything depends on it. The present and the future depend on it. I send my messenger, Elijah.

Your heart will turn or the curse comes. Two options. Well, hope that's a helpful conclusion and summary for this great study.

It concludes both Malachi and our post-exilic prophets. And as I said in the first session, we will

begin a new study next Wednesday in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, fascinating letter full of wonderful spiritual food. And we will get our first helping next time.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how clear and compelling your word is separate and distinct from any human production in the hands of your Holy Spirit. We know that it has transforming, illuminating and effectual power to conform us more closely to the example and the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that as we reflect on what we've learned, that those things will take place. We pray that as a result, we can bear the fruit of the spirit. And in the time that remains to us, we can be thoroughly equipped for ever good work.

We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.