

Malachi 1:1–5

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 October 2018

Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 00] Well, I know you're not ready for this, but I'm going to tell it to you anyway. Seven weeks from this morning, you and I will gather here and celebrate the first Sunday of Advent.

Now, that's true. Christmas is closer than we realize. What better way to prepare for it than to spend the weeks in between looking at God's last prophetic word before it.

In the Bible that we read from, Malachi is the only book standing before the unwrapping of gifts and the tree's trimming.

It's the last thing God wants to say before you hear His Son cry out from His crib in Bethlehem.

This is it. God's long list in bringing His Son into the world finds the final marker checked off when Malachi has spoken.

[1 : 30] So, with seven weeks out of our own soul's preparation for the arrival for Jesus, it would be good to know what God has to say.

What is the final thing He has to say? What does He bring to the advance party? Verse 1 tells you. You can see it there.

The oracle. That's what He's bringing. More woodenly or literally, it's the word burden.

And although it's not picked up in the English translation, this burden, this weight, comes by the hand of Malachi.

In other words, Malachi is bearing in his hands the burdens of the Lord in preparation for Christmas.

[2 : 30] And that burden is equal to, verse 1, the word of the Lord to Israel. So, the book opens with this almost processional of the weighted word.

In the hand of Malachi. From God to the people. His gift is His word. I almost envisioned it this week.

Processing in before Israel. In the book of Isaiah. Chapter 46. It speaks about the idols that are carried.

They are carried by the hand. They are burdens. They are burdens. Born into the presence of their false temples. And they are set up.

But they do not speak. They have nothing to say. And it contrasts with God. Who has carried in His hand. And born Israel.

[3 : 43] All the way through from their very beginning. Imagine it today. If you would come in. When TJ said stand for the call to worship. And from the back comes a prophet.

Malachi. With a big old fashioned church Bible. Gold leaf. All the way through. Above His hands.

Above His head. In His hands.

Down the center aisle. The only thing you hear is His foot. Falling. The weight. Of the word. In the presence. Of the people.

That's the way it opens. I mean this is an unusual prophetic book. Most prophetic book opens by telling you who the prophet is. And under what kings he had his ministry.

But even the word Malachi here is all we get. Which means the messenger. And we're not even certain when you read it. Whether his name was Malachi. Or whether it's just this thing comes in.

[4 : 46] The word of the Lord. Which is God's weight. And He's got something on His mind. Which must be said. And it's born by a messenger. That's as simple as it gets.

Nothing here about temporal markers. Nothing in verse 1 about when it was written. It's almost as if the reader is to not be concerned at all.

With the people to whom it was written. When it was written. Why it was written. All He wants you to know is that the Lord is in His house. And He has something to say.

And what is it? What is this burden? What is it that's keeping God up at night? What's the angst of verse 1?

First four words of verse 2. I have loved you. Says the Lord. That's what He wants to say.

[5 : 57] I have loved you. It's a burden though.

Love is the Lord's burden. His burden is love. The burden of love is the Lord's. He wants His people to know.

I have loved you. I have loved you. I have loved you. I have loved you.

I mean it's like a call to worship. This is all He has to say. I have loved you. When God finds a voice. He says I love you. When He goes verbal. He says I love you. His burden. Is that you would know and hear. That He loves you.

[6 : 59] That's what He says. I mean this is a corrective. Is it not? To our entire understanding. Of the God. Of the Old Testament. We've been led mistakenly to think.

That the God of the Old Testament. Is an angry God. A wrathful God. An impatient God. A vindictive God. An unkind God. One who will not put up.

With any of our ongoings. And our wanderings. But here the final word. Of the Old Testament is.

Whoa, whoa. Time out. I've loved you. It's the God of the New Testament.

That's the God of wrath. It's the God of the New Testament. Where He put Jesus on a throne. It's the God of the New Testament. Where you now have a king in the world.

That requires repentance. How have we been led. To read the Bible so wrongly. The God of the Old Testament. Is patient. Steadfast.

[8 : 00] Incredibly abounding. In waiting. And all He keeps saying is. I have loved you. Look at their response.

I love it. No pun intended. But you say. How have you loved us? Well it's easy to.

Pick a bone with Israel here. It's easy to say. Well wait a minute now. We just had an incredible processional. Of God's word. Into the assembly. We've had the very voice of God.

Behind the pulpit. Indicating that He loves you. How dare you. As a congregation. Look back. And talk to God. In this way. But that is what happens here.

The congregation. Rather than opening up their service. With a song. Opens it up with a question. Of their own. In other words. They talk. Back to God.

[9 : 03] Questioning God's love for them. This vindicates. Everything you read in the scriptures. About the public assembly of lament. This. This validates.

Your entrance into church. When. When you really. Have something to say to God. Not merely coming to hear. What God has to say to you. This actually indicates. That there is a voice.

Among the people. That says. Wait. Before we go on in worship. How? My eyes do not see you.

I have not heard from you. The circumstances of the terrain. And the topography of my week. Have been abysmal. My life is.

In tatters. Not ready for worship. Tell me God.

[10 : 04] Let me put it to you. As cleanly as I can. God. If your burden. Is that I would know you love me.

Then prove it. Now. When we look at that. We go. Man. Someone ought to scold these people. Someone needs to tell them. To take their seat.

And listen up. Because God's behind the pulpit. But in actual fact. The fact that Israel can say this. Is an indication of the intimacy. And the relationship. That they have with God. Have you ever thought about that?

Have you ever thought. That the mark. Of your intimacy with God. Is reflected. In your question. Of God. In fact.

You're going to see. This whole book. Runs on this. Dialogue. In my mind. Not so much a. Disputation. By way of confrontation.

[11 : 00] Disputation. As it is. The most intimate. Of discussions. Within the family. Where we really need to hear.

And be heard. It's as if they say. Really? There was a time.

Where one of our boys. When he was young. Notice how I conveniently. Left out his name. I've got three. So I'm not telling you. Lisa.

His mother. Looked him in the eye. Called him by name. And said. I love you. And the response.

Without even looking up. Or looking toward her. Was simply. Kay. I love you. Kay. Kay.

[11 : 56] Kay. God's hard to see sometimes. Isn't he? We don't feel loved by God.

Let me give you some words. Distant. Absent. Uninvolved. And that's on a good day. Because it's joined to words like. Unkind. Against. Vindictive. And what I want to tell you now. Coming in today. That this is the place. Where we come. To have the conversation. Where we allow God to speak. I have loved you.

And we're allowed to say. How? But having had. Their say. Israel.

[12:58] Now. Listens. To God. It moves. In a sense. From the. Burden. Of love. To the. Proving. Of. Love. There it is.

Right there. The middle. Of verse two. Is. Not. Esau. Jacob's. Brother. Declares. The Lord. Yet. I have. Loved.

Jacob. Let's just stop. Right there. As God. Gets ready. To make an. Argument. That will support. His angst. He appeals.

To some. Family. History. He looks. Back. On. Israel's. History. To two. Brothers. Twins.

That were. Born. Of. Jacob. Their father. Whose own name. Had been changed. To Israel. So as he begins. To argue. A case.

[13:59] Lovingly. Tenderly. He says. Let's talk about our family. For a moment. Let's go all the way. Back to Jacob. Who had. Who had twins.

To Isaac. Who had twins. Jacob. And Esau. And. In that moment. When they were yet. In the womb. As twins. God. God. Determined.

Which of the boys. Would carry on. The promises. That had first been made. To Abraham. Both boys. Couldn't. Bear. The promise. Of God's blessing.

On the world. The seed. Would come through. One. Or the other. And of no. Choosing. Of their own. Of no distinction. Of one being. Better than the other.

Most certainly. Because as you read. The lives of these two. They are equally. In need of grace. And mercy. When they were yet. In the mother's womb. God says. The bearer.

[14:52] Of my promise. That will bring blessing. To the world. Is going to come. Through. Jacob. Not Esau. In other words.

With a first. Moment. Here. Is this mysterious. Choice. That he is now. Calling back. To the family. Descendants. And saying. Now wait a minute.

You're wondering. If I loved you. Let me put it to you. Simply as I can. Have you forgotten. That I married you? Have you forgotten. That out of all.

The world. I set my eyes. On you. And made a covenantal. Pledge. To you. That.

That. That. That. Covenant. Of love. Was put. Upon you. And now. As you begin to see. Then what happens. In these two families.

[15:50] The family of Esau. The family of Jacob. That actually played out. Esau.

The hairy. The hairy one. The red one. The red one. Actually. Becomes. A people. A clan. By the name of Edom. And.

And Jacob. Becomes. The clan. That comes. Be known as. As Israel. And so. These two brothers. Begin to emerge. As two. Peoples. And the scriptures.

Actually. Begin to indicate. That. Esau. Literally. Hated. His brother. For the fact. That God.

Decided. To allow the thing. To go through him.

He hated him. In fact. It goes on. And says. He made life. Bitter. For his parents. This is a son. Who intentionally. Embitters.

[16:45] His parents. By going. Against. Their. Way. With. God. In another place. It talks about. The perpetual.

Enmity. That began. To go. This is. Sibling. Rivalry. And. And what. Happens is. When Moses. Comes. And actually.

Delivers. Israel. From Egypt. And they're on the way. To the promised land. They come upon. Their own family. Edom. And Edom. Is living. Between Israel. And the promised land.

And Moses says. Can we. Can we get through. Your land. Can we. Can you build. A highway. For us. That will allow us. To go through. I promise you.

We will take. None. Of your produce. We will not. Be disrespectful. To any. Of your people. I'm just trying. To get from. Egypt. To the promised land.

[17:39] And you're. Sitting. Right in between. And Edom. Says. No. Go around. You're not coming. Through my land.

And so. Israel. Goes. Around. When the Babylonian exile came. When. When. When. When. When. Israel was finally pulled away. By Babylon. The scriptures say.

Clearly. That. That. Edom. Gloated. When their brother's family. Came to ruin. Think of it. I mean. We got the same thing going on in families today.

Do we not? The. The distinct. Perpetual enmity. Between brothers. And the gloating of the one. At the downfall of the other. And so. This was actually in play with these two peoples. In fact. Take a look. Just a couple pages back to Obadiah.

[18 : 35] Which is a prophetic word against Israel. I don't want to move you around in the Bible much today. But since it's just a few pages back. Earlier in the scriptures. Obadiah had a prophetic word against Edom.

And this is what he says in verse 10. Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob. Shame shall cover you. And you shall be cut off forever. On the day. On that day.

You stood aloof. On the day that strangers carried off Israel's wealth. And foreigners entered his gates. And you cast lots for Jerusalem. And you were like one of them.

But do not gloat over the day of your brother. In the day of his misfortune. Do not rejoice over the people of Judah. In the day of their ruin. Do not boast in the day of his distress.

Do not enter the gates of my people. In the day of their calamity. Do not gloat over his disaster. Or loot his wealth. Or stand at the crossroads. And cut off his fugitives. Do not hand over his survivors.

[19 : 32] In the day of distress. All of this had happened. And so the argument in verses 2b through 4. Is simply this. First.

How have I loved you? I voluntarily willingly married you. Second. I've gone.

I've gone through some battles for you. Now remember. And then it goes on here. And in verse 3. And says. And Edith. Even if Edith says.

Well we're shattered. But we're going to rebuild. He says. They may build. But they will not. But I will tear down. They may be called the wicked country. In other words. He says. I promised you.

That I'm going to keep working through you. I've actually brought you back from Babylon. Placed you in your own land. But believe me. I'm not doing that for them. How have I loved you?

[20 : 29] Simply like this. I married you. I committed to a life with you. And then it's almost as if he says. And I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.

Your enemies are my enemies. I pledge myself to you. Wow. What a backdrop.

In fact. It's actually the first hint. About when this book might have been written. Because Edom must have gone through. Something of their own demise. By this time.

So this is probably. Most definitely. A book that comes. After Israel. Has returned. To the promised land. Edom.

A neighbor to the south. Has already been waylaid. By outside. Geopolitical entities. And really. By 330 BC. A little bit beyond this book.

[21 : 29] They will be completely taken off the map. Forever. All the while. God's people. The promises continue. To go on. So that. That's it.

This. This is the argument for love. God says. I graciously. Chose you. I have placed my protective care. Over you. And I am pledged.

To continue. To continue. To go with you. Think of it then.

God is making a point. That I've tried to make. To us. God. God. The fact. The fact. That you're still standing. Is an evidence.

Of God's love. To you. The fact. That you're still in the game. Not taking off the map.

[22 : 30] Is. Proof. Of mercy. To you. The fact. That there is a future. For you. Is an indication.

Of his protection. Toward you. He has not. Been angry. With us. Forever. He has demonstrated. Steadfast. Love. God has been loyal. To you. And. Let's get it clean now. Because. We had our say. Earlier. In the service. But truth be told.

God's been loyal. To us. Even though. We haven't been. All that loyal. To him. God's been kind. To us. So let me.

Let me apply this. Do you doubt. God's love. For you today. Welcome to a book. Where the entire. Burden of the text. Is that. You will.

[23 : 32] End up. Feeling. Sensing. The truth. That God does love you. He's willing to hear from you.

In fact. He's going to hear from Israel. Six times. This intimate. Dialogue. The burden of the text.

That. That. That. You would hear. What God has to say to you. That you would know the truth. Of his love for you. That you would be encouraged. By his ongoing care for you.
To put it as simply. As I can. The one thing. God wants you to know. Before we celebrate Christmas. Is simply that. I love you. How? God. Let me remind you.
I married you. Let me recall for you. I've been in the game for you. Let me encourage you.
[24 : 32] I'm not going anywhere. I will be. With you. The burden of love. Having given way. To the. The proof of love. The angst of God.

Having given way. To the argument of God. Closes in verse five. Then. With the aim. That is in the mind. Of God. And what is his aim? Your own eyes.
Shall see this. And you shall say. Great is the Lord. Beyond. The border. Of Israel. That's God's aim. Let me put it to you. This way. Love. Wants to be loved.
Wow. That. I'm not a hugging. Kind of pastor. You already know that. But. But that's a hugging. Kind of verse. Love. Wants to be loved.
God is saying. I have loved you. And I long for the day. When you say. Oh God. You're great. And you're great. More than just by. What I see. You did outside.
[25 : 33] My borders. You're great. But what I've seen. You do in my own heart. That's the implication. Of verse five. Your eyes. Shall see this. Says Malachi. Says God.

In other words. In verse two. We're like. I haven't seen your love. For me. Prove it to me. But God's final word. Here is. I'm longing for the day. When your eyes. Will see it.
And you will respond. To my love. For you. By saying. Great. Oh God. Are you. More than merely. What you've done. In the world.
Outside. But by what you've done. For me. This is. This is. This is lament. That somehow moves. To worship. By way of meditating. On who God really is.
[26 : 30] And what he's really done. Reciprocity. Simeon was an old man. And I'm shutting it down.

He'd been waiting. For consolation of soul. He hadn't felt. That God had. Fulfilled his word. To his people. He kept going to church. Into his ninth decade. Probably. And he'd been going. For decade after decade. Waiting for consolation.
Waiting for comfort. Not finding it. Finally. This young girl. Walks her. Newborn. Infant son. With her husband. On her arm. And says. I'm coming today. To dedicate my child.
[27 : 25] In the temple. And Simeon. That old man. Congregation. Got old. Looked. Look.

At that boy. And said. My eyes. Have seen. The salvation. Of God. A blessing. To the Gentile. And the glory. Of Israel.
And the old man. Took him in his hands. The word of God. And said. I can finally. Leave church. In peace. I've been coming to church. All my life. Says Simeon. I can finally. Leave in peace.
[28 : 21] Because peace. Has come. The love of God. Into my midst.

The savior of my soul. The pride of our people. The glory of our name. Upon which children's children.
And children beyond their children. Will call out to. And find. God. Loves. Our heavenly father. We've seen your word. Come into the midst. Of your people. And we hear you.