

## My Messenger – Malachi 1:1

### I. Introduction:

- A. What do you think it would be like, if you were the last servant of God on the face of the earth?
1. It **will never** be, and it **could** never be, because God's Word forbids it, but just think about it for a moment.
  2. If it was true, how would you feel?
  3. After you, never again will the voice of God be heard through any individual; no sermons; no witness.
  4. Would the weight of that special responsibility empower or devastate you?
  5. How would you look on your neighbors, knowing the foundations of the great deep would soon be broken up, and the windows of heaven would soon be opened pouring down fire and rain?
  6. How earnestly would you plead with your family?
  7. What would you do to make the most of those last few days of service?
- B. I have been reminded several times recently, that Elijah believed he was the last true servant of God on earth.
1. There is probably a psychological term for that, hidden away in some academic text somewhere.
  2. If there isn't, there should be, because I don't think Elijah has been the only one to fall victim to it.
  3. There seem to be a lot of fundamental Baptists who think there are none other besides themselves.
  4. If we were the last of the last, do you think God would tell us? Would that be useful knowledge?
- C. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament.
1. At least according to Biblical information, he was the last prophet of God until John.
  2. In the margin of my Bible, I read that this book was written at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century before Christ.
  3. For four hundred years Heaven appears to have been silent; there was a famine of Biblical revelation.
  4. Did the Lord tell Malachi that he would be the last preacher of righteousness for four hundred years?
- D. With last Sunday's message, we may have begun a study of this book.
1. I haven't determined if that is the way the Lord is leading.
  2. **Malachi** is not a book which I have ever studied in this way, but maybe it is time.
  3. What can the last Old Testament servant of God teach us?
- E. Verse one, gives us a brief introduction to this man and his ministry.
1. This is a simple verse, but there is enough here for us to chew on for a few minutes.
  2. *"The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi."*
  3. We see here: the burden, the bearer and the beneficiaries.

### II. Let's start with the last of these – the BENEFICIARIES.

- A. Notice that this book is addressed to Israel rather than to just Judah.
1. For some time before the two captivities, God's nation was divided into *"Israel"* and *"Judah,"* with the more righteous group being *"Judah."* But things are different now.
  2. Malachi was speaking to those people who once again lived in God's promised land after their parents and grandparents had spent seventy years in Babylonian captivity.
  3. Most of the people listening to his voice had returned with Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah after being given permission by Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes.
  4. God says in **Jeremiah 25:12** – *"It shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations."*
  5. That desolation began when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon.
- B. This means that the majority of the people to whom Malachi ministered were Judeans and Benjamites.
1. But apparently there were also other families who had escaped from the earlier Assyrian captivity – members of the other ten tribes.
  2. The Bible doesn't say that Malachi was preaching and prophesying only to Judah.
  3. It was to *"Israel"* – all the sons of Jacob.

- C. Other than the fact that in the land there were members of all twelve tribes, there is nothing special about the recipients of this prophecy.
1. Some of those people were trying to live in the tribal areas first given to their forefathers.
  2. But many had settled in Jerusalem, as we saw when we studied *Nehemiah*.
  3. Those who moved out of the city to occupy their ancient family properties were commended by the city folk.
- D. Malachi was addressing Israel.
1. This is not a New Testament book, penned by one of the Apostles or by Luke.
  2. So we must keep in mind that it was not given to us directly – Gentile saints of God.
  3. We can only borrow the blessings and instruction here.
  4. And the rebuke given to Israel, becomes ours only as we make general application to the sinfulness of human flesh.

### III. Malachi calls his message “*the BURDEN of the word of the Lord.*”

- A. The Hebrew word translated “*burden*” is found **sixty-six times** in the Bible.
1. **Fifty-seven** times it is translated just as we have it here. And it means just what you might think.
  2. **Exodus 23:5** – *“If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.”*
  3. But besides “*burden*” that word is also rendered “*prophecy*” and “*song,*” as well as in a couple other ways.
- B. With this in mind, we might consider and apply this word in a couple different ways.
1. Think about that translation “*song.*” How can a song be considered a burden?
    - a. **1 Chronicles 15:22** – *“Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful.”*
      - b. Was Chenaniah so moved by the Holy Spirit or something else that he couldn’t sit still until he had put his words to music? Was he burdened to write or compose?
  2. Or maybe even you have experienced the burden of music.
  3. Have you ever been aroused from sleep to find a particular song running through your mind?
  4. Hundreds of times I have gotten out of bed on a Monday or Thursday morning subconsciously humming one of the hymns we sang the day before.
  5. Was that song heavy? Did I stumble under its tremendous weight? Of course not.
  6. But it did go with me for several hours until I somehow replaced it.
- C. In a similar fashion, the Lord has given me messages to share with you, which I couldn’t shake for days.
1. And sometimes, you have shared with me your problems, and I have carried those problems in my heart for days and weeks.
  2. They had no physical weight; they didn’t make climbing stairs or doing my exercises difficult.
  3. But in a sense they did weaken my knees just a little bit, with a special kind of spiritual or emotional weight.
- D. Some of my commentators said that the word “*burden*” suggested a message of great importance.
1. Some pointed to Paul’s statement in **1 Corinthians 9** as an illustration – *“Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”*
  2. Every pastor will testify that from time to time something has made it difficult to preach on a particular day.
    - a. Sometimes, he is not feeling well or strong.
    - b. Sometimes, there is a disturbance in the congregation which significantly affects him.
    - c. Sometimes, it is a spiritual matter – there is a demonic presence in the service.
    - d. And sometimes, it is the content of the message itself – it is really deep and difficult, or there are people in the congregation who he knows will be severely impacted by that message.
  3. Certainly this was a part of the burden of Malachi.
  4. And having received this “*burden*” from Jehovah, he knows that he will have to give an account of his presentation and ministry – this certainly adds to weight of the message.

- E. But if I may rob Peter to pay Paul, I turn to the words of the Lord Jesus.
1. In **Matthew 11:28**, Christ said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*
  2. Malachi may find the message of God a burden. But when a burden is shared, its weight is reduced.
  3. And when the Lord, Himself, is our partner, we may find that He shoulders far more than His half.
- F. Something else to consider in regard to this burden is the ministry of the priests and Levites in Jerusalem.
1. They were horribly backslidden and away from God. They were selfish and fleshly.
  2. When they spoke, their words were light as feathers compared to the substantive words of Malachi.
  3. In fact, what the priests, with their psychological pep-talks, gave the people was like chaff compared to Malachi’s wheat.
  4. In **Jeremiah 23** the Lord said, *“I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.*
    - a. *How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;*
    - b. *Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.*
    - c. *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.”*
  5. The message which God gave to Malachi was *“the word of the Lord,”* with substance and weight.
  6. The words of the heretics were like feathers in the wind; spoken in a moment and then gone.
  7. The people could be fed only if they dined on Malachi’s words, but they’d starve to death if they listened to the sinful priests of the day.

#### IV. With that we come to the BEARER of this burden – Malachi.

- A. There are some pseudo-experts who say that there was no actual person named *“Malachi.”*
1. They say that *“Malachi”* was a pseudonym, or pen-name, for someone else, but they can’t tell you who.
  2. They say that in all the lists of immigrants from Babylon there was no one named *“Malachi.”*
  3. While that is true, I point out he could have come from Assyria, or his family may have already have been in the land.
  4. They say that his name, *“Malachi,”* means *“my messenger”* as in God’s ambassador.
  5. While that is also true, it that neither proves nor disproves he was an actual preacher of righteousness.
- B. All of my sources tell me there are people who deny the existence of a man named *“Malachi,”* but most of them, in unison, tell me that there was such a man.
1. And that reminds us, once again, that personal notoriety in God’s work is not important.
  2. Whether the world knows your name is not as important as simply carrying out the commission which has been given to you by the Lord.
- C. And that brings us to the time of this man’s service.
1. I’m not going to bore you with the details; I’m just going to tell you what I have learned from my study.
  2. One reason this is the last book in the Old Testament is because his ministry falls within the service of Nehemiah.
  3. There isn’t any more after **Nehemiah** and **Malachi**.
  4. And there is internal evidence which let’s us get more specific than just saying he assisted Nehemiah.
- D. If, you will remember, when Artaxerxes gave permission to Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem, he asked for a timetable, and Nehemiah said he’d be gone twelve years.
1. During those dozen years, Nehemiah led the Jerusalemites to rebuild the city walls and the economy.
  2. He helped to cleanse the temple and to reestablish the proper service of God.

3. But then his mandate expired, and he returned to Shushan.
  4. We don't know how long he was away, but it was long enough for the leaderless people of Israel to fall back into their sinful, spirit-less, lethargic practices.
  5. When he returned, during chapter five of his book, he found the people in such a mess that he had to start many things over again.
- E. I'll try to point them out as we go along, but it is quite clear that Malachi's ministry occurred during Nehemiah's absence.
1. For example, Malachi deals with some of the same issues that we find in last two-thirds of *Nehemiah*, but he doesn't address the material in the first few chapters.
  2. And there is evidence in Malachi's preaching of Nehemiah's absence and the presence of a very weak, temporary governor.
  3. In *verse 8*, he seems to make reference to a governor who was not Nehemiah.
    - a. *"If ye offer the blind (animals) for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick (animals), is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts."*
    - b. In contrast to that Nehemiah testified in his *chapter 5* and *verse 14* of his book that for *"twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor."*

## V. Conclusion

- A. Did God tell Malachi that he would be the last prophet until John the Baptist and the coming of the Saviour?
1. I seriously doubt it.
  2. Would it have changed the man's ministry? I hope not.
- B. The lesson I'd like to leave with at this point is:
1. Even though we should expect to be replaced by good or better servants of God, we are **who** we are, and we are **where** we are by the will of the Lord.
  2. We, too, have been given the Word of the Lord, if not in the form of sermon outlines, then in the word written in pages of this book.
  3. We, too, should bear a burden to be about the Lord's work, if not in preaching to multitudes, at least in sharing the revelation of God with our friends and family.
  4. And it could very well be that we are the very last prophet some person may ever get to hear.
  5. May every one of us be a *"Malachi"* – God's *"messenger."*