



Title: Back Talking God

Date: January 9, 2026

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 36:15-23; Malachi 1

AI TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to Bible Insights with Wayne Conrad. God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path.

Today's topic, talking back to God. I want to direct your attention to probably the last words written in the first Testament, that is the Hebrew scriptures. I know that we're familiar with the outline in our English Protestant Bibles, and it ends with the prophet Malachi that I was speaking from. But if you open up a Hebrew Bible, the conclusion of that volume of God's word is found in what we call 2 Chronicles. Now, a difference between the Hebrew and the English or the Protestant version is that the Hebrew has one book of Kings and one book of Chronicles, but we've divided them into first and second Kings, first and second Chronicles. But this is the end of second Chronicles, beginning at chapter 36. It gives us sort of a summary that God, he deported those who escaped from the sword to Babylon. and they became servants to him and his sons until the rise of the Persian kingdom." He's talking about when Cyrus or the ruler of Babylon came in to Israel, to Judah, and he conquered the kingdom and he took the cream of the crop off to Babylon, which is modern day Iraq.

In the course of time, Iraq or Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian. And so, it says, this fulfilled the word of Yahweh through Jeremiah and the land enjoyed its Sabbath rest. All the days of the desolation and the 70 years were fulfilled. God sent his people into exile for 70 years, at which point, they were allowed to return. So, we read in verse 22. In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order to fulfill the word Yahweh, spoke through Jeremiah, Yahweh roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his entire kingdom, and also to put it in writing. This is what King Cyrus of Persia says, Yahweh, the God of the heavens has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and is appointing me to build him a temple at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up and may Yahweh his God be with him. Now, what happened then was a remnant of people, that is a small group of people, returned from captivity back to the old land, back to Israel. Well, when they came back, everything wasn't real easy. They had to rebuild. They had to rebuild houses, they had to cultivate the land, and they had to rebuild the temple. And all of that is taken up in the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah. But during this period of time after the return, a number of prophets arose and spoke the word of God to the people.

One of those prophets is Malachi, and that's in the last book of the Protestant edition of the Bible. And it's very interesting that Malachi is built on God having conversation with his people. It's a disputation really between God and the people. God makes a statement or a declaration, and they may question God's declaration and God gives a response. Now, we could go through the whole book of Malachi that way, but I only want to focus our attention on Malachi chapter 1. And I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible. It goes along pretty close with the ESV, which I usually use. And also, I will commend to you the World English Bible, which I will also possibly be quoting from. For instance, who speaks in the book of Malachi? Who is this prophet? Well, Malachi means my messenger. That's the meaning of the name. And so, who speaks in the book of Malachi? Well, God speaks, Yahweh speaks. Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, speaks through his messenger, Malachi. It's opening Malachi chapter one, verse one, World English Bible, an article, Yahweh's word to Israel by Malachi or by my messenger.

So, the first thing that God states is, I have loved you, says Yahweh. That's a wonderful declaration. God is saying to his people, you are the object of my love. And the object of the love is that they've been brought back. They've returned from exile back to the land that God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And now they can rebuild and the nation can once again be built up. But here's what the people say to God. They like sass Him. They talk back to Him. They say, yet you ask, how have you loved us? Do you see what they're doing? God declares his truth to his people, but the people respond to God's declaration of love by saying, how have you loved us? It's like they're questioning God's love for them. Now, why would they do that? Well, in the natural, we might say that the reason they do that is because it's not easy. They come back under his favor, but they must rebuild the society and their enemies around them. It's hard going. And they thought, well, if God blessed him, that he'd just make everything easy for them. But it wasn't easy.

And so, Here's how God answers their question. They say, how have you loved us? So, he says, wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? He's going back, you see, to the children who belong to Isaac. Isaac, you have Abraham, and then the promised son through Abraham is Isaac. And then Isaac had these two brothers, Esau and Jacob. It's found in the book of Genesis. And God says to them, wasn't Esau Jacob's brother? This is Yahweh's declaration. Even so, I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau. As a result of God's hatred to Esau, which means in the context, he is not loving them like he loved Jacob. Jacob was the one chosen by him to be the one who would carry the promise line all the way to the Messiah. Esau was not. We can read about that story in the book of Genesis. But God's love for Jacob makes his attitude toward Esau to be interpreted as hate. Even so, I hated Esau. I turned his mountain into a wasteland, and I gave his inheritance to the desert jackals." Now, one of those descendants from Esau was Edom. And Edom was a group of people, a nation. And though Edom says, God is speaking, we've been devastated, but we will rebuild the ruins. The Lord of hosts, Yahweh of armies says this, they may build, but I will demolish. They will be called a wicked country, and the people Yahweh has cursed forever. Your own eyes will see this and you yourselves will say, Yahweh is great even beyond the borders of Israel. So, God has taken the challenge that they threw in his face and he says to them, I loved Jacob. I rejected Esau. And I gave Esau's inheritance to a wasteland. And though a descendant of Esau, Edom, says, we were then devastated, but we will rebuild the ruins. God says, even though they rebuild them, I will demolish them.

I will tear it down again. because they are a wicked country and the people that Yahweh has cursed forever. His point to them is your own eyes will see this and you yourselves will declare this declaration of

faith. Yahweh is great even beyond the borders of Israel. God's electing love is not only for Israel. It will also include people from all nations. And that comes to pass in the new covenant with the coming of the Messiah himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. But the people question God's declaration of love. But God reminds them of his sovereign covenant choice. I loved Jacob. And God says, I have chosen you. Now, they're chosen by God to be the people by whom the Messiah will come. Meanwhile, God has constituted them a separate people from all other peoples on earth. And they have been given the law of God through Moses to mark them as his people and to establish true worship from him in the earth.

But now God comes with a second statement. His declaration though is in the form of a question. He makes this statement. A son honors his father and a servant his master. So, he's just talking about human relationships. Ordinarily, you see, a father is honored by his son. Ordinarily, a servant honors and obeys his master. But here's God's question. But if I am a father, he's the father of the nation, where is my honor? If I'm a master, he's the sovereign Lord. He's the God of choice. He's the sovereign king. He says, and if I'm a master, where is your fear of me? Where is your reverential awe? of me, says Yahweh of armies to you priests who despise my name.

" See God set up a whole system of worship in the tabernacle and with the sacrifices and appointed the tribe of Levi and among the tribe of Levi he appointed the household of Aaron to serve as priest before him on behalf of the whole nation. but now God brings a charge against these priests. They're despising his name, though they've been appointed to represent him. So, you say this, they talk back to God, they throw it back to him, he says, yet you ask, how have we despised your name? Do you hear that sound in my voice? How have we despised your name?

So, God gives him a direct answer, by presenting defiled food on my altar. So, he's answered their question. They are giving defective sacrifices, treating worship lightly. They're not following the commandment of how God told sacrifices were to be done in the worship manual of the old covenant, namely the book of Leviticus. He goes on, how have we defiled you, you ask? And so, God says this, when you say Yahweh's table is contemptible, do you notice this? God has established a worship for his divine name and the priesthood to honor him and to represent him before the people are saying that God's table is contemptible. And he goes on to support his statement to them. When you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is it not wrong? When you present a lame or a sick animal, is it not wrong? Bring that to your governor. Would he be pleased with you or show you favor, says Yahweh of hosts?

He uses the human analogy. You have rulers, you have a king, you have a governor, and would you bring him defective offerings? Will you bring him dishonor when you appear before him? And the answer to that is no. Well, if you won't do that to the human leaders, governors, why do you do it before the Lord God Almighty? Now, he says, you plead for God's favor. You turn your defective worship into prayer, expecting God to answer whatever you ask, though you have treated him with contempt because you have treated his worship lightly and you have given him defective offerings. Will he be gracious to us if you did that to a governor? No, he would not. Will God now be gracious to us when you plead for God's favor? Since this has come from your hands, will he show any of you favor, says Yahweh of armies? No, is the implied response. So, what does God say? I wish one of you would shut the temple doors so that you would no longer kindle a useless fire on my altar. I am not pleased with you, says Yahweh of armies, and I will accept no offering from your hands." Oh, you see, when we offer to God defective offerings, we are

treating God with disrespect. and he will not accept such worship. It's better not to do false worship before God that God despises.

Here's what he says in verse 10. My name will be great among the nations from the rising of the sun to its setting. incense and pure offerings will be presented in my name in every place, because my name will be great among the nations, says Yahweh of armies, the Lord of hosts." He's prophesying here of the reality of the new covenant, that when Christ comes and the good news of Christ in God's favor is spread among the nations, God's name will be great among the peoples of the earth, and he will be worshiped from the rising of the sun to its setting thereof. This is his promise, and this is what he's brought to pass.

But God says to him in verse 12, but you are profaning it. You're profaning my name and you are desecrating my worship. When you say, Yahweh's table is defiled and its product, its food is contemptible. You also say, look what a nuisance and you scorn it, says the Lord of armies, Yahweh of hosts. You bring stolen, lame, or sick animals. You bring this as an offering. Am I to accept that from your hands?" asked Yahweh. The answer is obviously no.

The deceiver is cursed, who is an acceptable male in his flock, and makes a vow but sacrifices a defective animal to the Lord. For I am a great king, says Yahweh of armies, and my name will be feared among the nations. God is speaking about how serious he regards his worship. God expects us to hold His worship in all, to hold Him in all, and to reverentially worship Him, not with leftovers, the leftovers of our time, the leftovers of our treasury, of our gifts, just bringing in the scraps from the table. He expects us to give him the best. That's what his law commanded in the Old Testament. Don't bring God sick animals, those that are not fit to be sold in the marketplace. Don't bring him defective things. Give him the best of your hands, the best of your time, the best of your gifts. Give him the first fruits, not the leftovers.

God is worthy to be worshiped, and he requires reverence and sincerity and honor, not careless religion. He demands that we give him love, love that's worthy of the great love that he has shown to us. We must love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, and with all of our strength. And our love for God is shown in how we worship Him. With what do you appear before God? When He looks upon your heart and my heart, what does He see? Does He see sincere reverence and love? Or does He see that we're just giving Him just a little requirement, just a tip of the hat, just to say we've done our religious duty? That's not the kind of worship that God's worthy of. He's worthy of the purest, of the most reverent, and the most contentful, and the most heartfelt worship that you can give to any being anywhere.

After all, He is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, He has chosen to be the father to those who love and embrace his son with saving faith. May God help us not to be talking back to God, but to be listening and obeying his sons who reverence him and who long to please him.

This has been Wayne Conrad with Bible Insights.