

## Mid Week • Malachi 2:10-4:6

### INTRO

There are some interesting parallels between the prophecy of Malachi and our own day.

For instance . . .

This all takes place after the nation of Israel had suffered a terrible catastrophe.

After years of idolatry and a gross kind of negligence in their duty to God, God brought judgment down on them in the form of the Babylonian armies who ravaged their land, laid waste to their capital, and then en masse, deported them from their land.

After 70 years of exile, they were allowed to return to rebuild their land and lives.

As we come to the time of Malachi, the work of rebuilding is mostly done and they are once again enjoying a measure of safety and prosperity.

But it seems their waywardness of heart had not been fully purged!

Though they'd been cured of idol-worship, the spiritual apathy and rebellion that had marked their past began to reappear.

They maintained an *outward form* of religion – but their hearts were cold toward God.

And what this meant is that while they brought their offerings to the temple and made a *show* of worship – in their private lives, they were growing more and more corrupt.

Our nation has recently suffered a devastating catastrophe – albeit, not as monumental as the Exile of an entire nation, but still, the events of Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> have shaken our nation to its core.

Like ripples on a pond, we continue to see the effects of the terrorists attacks of 2½ months ago in the deployment of troops in Afghanistan, our frantic attempts to work some kind of peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and in the dramatic way daily life has been effected via the economy and so many industries.

Immediately following the attacks, there was a mighty

groundswell of response in people turning to God for solace and comfort.

There seemed to be a general recognition that as a nation, we'd turned our back on God and that it wasn't really right to lay the blame for what had happened on Him. While there were a few voices who cried out in mild hostility at God, most people seemed to accept Anne Graham Lotz's explanation when she was asked how God could have allowed this – her reply, in essence was that for years now we've told God we did want Him in our public life – that we've banned Him from our school and city halls – and so now we are seeing Him give answer to our request!

This eloquent answer seemed to supply many with a handle for understanding, and in an apparent heartfelt response, many thousands turned in repentance to the Lord. Churches filled and prayer meetings were held all over, even in schools and in other public places.

God Bless America signs started popping up all over.

But only 2½ months after the attacks, things seem to be getting back to normal.

People are returning to their routines, and the interest in God is already dimming.

The parallels between Malachi's day and our own are not dramatic, but they are interesting.

And what's a bit disconcerting is to realize that Malachi's word to Ancient Israel is pretty dark and dour – there isn't too much joy in this.

The Prophets seeks to raise them from their spiritual apathy and coldness of heart by sternly rebuking the sarcastic attitude they'd developed toward the Lord.

You see, their basic attitude was this – “What good is it to seek and serve God? Where's the pay-off in being godly?”

Malachi is a fitting book to end the OT because we see here a portrait of *dead religion* – the very kind of thing that ruled the day when Jesus came.

## CHAPTER 2

In the first half of chapter 2, as we saw last week, the prophet rebukes the priests for corrupting their office.

Instead of standing up for the Law of Moses and representing the holiness of God, they had sought to garner the affection of the people by lowering the requirements for worship.

The overall impact of this had been a devaluing of God in the sight of the people.

So after some very harsh words to the priest, Malachi turns in a moment of tenderness and asks . . .

### **10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another By profaning the covenant of the fathers?**

Malachi is calling them to remember the unique relationship they had with God.

They alone, of all the people of the earth had been made the objects of God's covenant grace.

Their original forefathers had entered in to a unique agreement to be God's people:

Under that covenant – God would bless them and they would obey Him.

Don't think that this passage somehow teaches the universal Fatherhood of God and so the Universal Brotherhood of man – it does not.

Malachi is speaking specifically here about God's Covenant with Israel.

And based on that covenant, Malachi challenges the people to take a good hard look at how they are treating one another!

If God has promised to bless them and make them His special people, how is it that they are treating each other so wickedly?

Malachi has a specific example of their treachery in mind and moves now to rebuke them about it.

### **11 Judah has dealt treacherously, And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned The LORD's holy *institution* which He**

## **loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god.**

The holy institution he's referring to is marriage!

Take careful note here of how Malachi describes marriage – it is. . .

### 1) The Lord's

Marriage is not merely a social convention – a temporary paring of the lovesick until boredom do they part.

Marriage is a special covenant relationship ordered and ordained by God!

We see this in the story of Creation in Genesis 2!

### 2) it is holy

Of all the relationships that human beings can have, marriage stands out as uniquely ordained and blessed by God.

It's holy in that God gives the precise prescription for the role of the husband and the wife and determines the purpose and goal of their union.

### 3) it is an institution

It's something that's meant to be solid, with boundaries that make it exclusive and defined.

The trend we see today of redefining the marriage and bending and twisting it to mean anything anyone wants it to mean is a tinkering with the fundamental unit of society that can have no good results.

Society at large is merely a *reflection* of what it is at it's most basic level.

Society is merely the family writ large!

When marriage, which is the bedrock of the family, is defined as two or more consenting adults living in whatever arrangement they choose without regard to any kind of morality – then it's not long to chaos reigns.

Many corporations and government agencies are rewriting their policies to redefine what they consider marriage and family.

You may have heard recently about the *Salvation Army* and how their Western Region changed their policy on benefits to include domestic partners.

Fortunately, the National leadership vetoed the decision – but still, we see the erosion that's taking place in our culture as we turn away from God and make man the measure of all things.

God holds marriage as a holy INSTITUTION that involves one woman and one man – for life!

4) and He loves it!

Let me leave any comment on this till a bit later – why I want to wait, you will see when we get there . . .

As v. 11 tells us, the way the Jews were profaning the sacredness of marriage was they were marrying foreign women – not foreign *converts* to Judaism, but pagans!

In fact, as we read on, it was even worse than that – the men of Israel were *divorcing* their Jewish wives *so they could* marry these pagan women!

They were like the proverbial middle-aged man who has a mid-life crisis, dumps his wife of 20 years and the mother of his children, buys a red, two-seat convertible sports car and marries some little chickadee!

In Nehemiah, we learn that this was a fairly widespread practice! Nehemiah cracked down on it and applied some pretty stern remedies.

What's a bit shocking to realize is that it was the *priests* who were leading the way in this scandalous behavior.

Like so many other things, once Nehemiah left, the people slowly returned to the very same things he had led them in reform away from.

(Ezra 9:1-2, 10-12; Neh. 13:23-27)

God's command to the Jews was clear and well known – they were *not* to marry the worshippers of other gods!

(Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:3-4; Josh. 23:12-13).

It wasn't an ethnic issue so much as a religious one.

There were foreign women who married into Israel – but they were believers.

Moses' wife was foreign.

Ruth, King David's grandmother was a Moabite!

Rahab, another woman in Jesus lineage, was a Canaanite.

But all of these had come to faith in Yahweh before they were married.

Several times in the history of Israel intermarriage with pagan women had lead to grievous ruin.

(Numbers 25 1 Kings 11:1-10 1 Kings 16:29-33).

In the NT, the Apostle Paul applies this to Christians and says that believers and unbelievers should not be joined together.

(2 Corinthians 6:11-18)

Having described their treachery in specific terms, Malachi now utters a curse upon it . . .

**12 May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob The man who does this, being awake and aware, Yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!**

The phrase “awake & aware” is an inordinately difficult Hebrew idiom to translate but seems to convey the idea that these men who had divorced their wives so they could marry pagan women had done so with full knowledge and conviction that what they were doing was wrong and an abomination before the Lord – but had gone ahead and done it anyway!

Since under Nehemiah, not too long before, there had already been *one* reform of this evil practice in which the whole nation had participated, that they would return to it again was a sign of a reprobate heart that had nothing to look forward to but the judgment of God.

So Malachi pronounces a curse on the violators.

This sin, of divorcing a wife just to secure someone more attractive and exciting, though totally lost in their spiritual makeup, is a watershed decision and reveals a heart hardened by sin.

And yet – not the last part of the verse – these men were still thinking they were okay with God in that they continued to go to the temple and offer sacrifices!

This is Dead Religion – the kind that thinks as long as I go through the motions and throw God His occasional bone, I can live whatever way I please.

As long as I go to church a few times a year to renew my membership, drop a 20 in the plate, and live at a level of morality that stands with community standards, I qualify for heaven.

As for my personal life? Well, that’s between me and God and after all, God *loves* me.

As long as I’m true to myself and don’t hurt anyone – then God

will accept me.  
DEAD RELIGION.

**13 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands.**

The weeping and crying here was not by the people themselves, but by the wives they had divorced.

They had come to the temple by the hundreds to beg for the Lord's help because as divorced women, they had no one to turn to for support.

A divorced woman had two heavy burdens to bear:

- 1) A broken heart from being rejected
- 2) Her own care in a society that devalued women and where they had few opportunities for income.

These men brought their offering to the temple but the tears of their divorced and crushed wives were still wet on the altar.

God said, "How can I honor your gift when the altar is wet with the evidence of your wicked hearts?"

Over and over in the prophets we're told that God marks the tears of the poor and the needy, the weak and defenseless.

He says that He will rise up and give them justice because no man will!

I grow exceedingly tired of how the courts of our land pervert justice and render such unjust decisions in divorce cases.

I know men whose wives left them who got wiped out by some evil judge in a support settlement.

I've known women whose husbands left them and managed to get out paying anything but a pittance in support for them and their children.

I've seen the agony on the faces of those who are faced with a seemingly impossible situation.

When I read this – and realize that one day God will answer every wicked judgment – I feel a sense of relief, but I also ask – "How long, Lord?"

**14 Yet you say, "For what reason?"**

“Why doesn’t God regard my offering” they wonder . . .

**Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.**

There it is – the men were trading in their middle-aged and older wives for newer models!

But God said He’d been the Witness when they’d originally stood before the priest and been sanctioned as husband and wife.

He was there when they stated their vows and entered into the covenant of marriage.

He heard the promise – and held them both to the covenant they made that day.

There is more to note here about how God sees marriage . . .

1) God stands as witness over every marriage and holds the man and woman to account for the promise they make to each other. Actually, they make it to Him as much as to each other.

Now, notice something about the marriage vow – it is unilateral & unconditional.

No where is there an out-clause or caveat.

A man promises to be a husband; a woman promises to be a wife – without condition and without limit!

To The Groom: Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to love her as Christ loves the church and has given Himself for her, to honor and cherish her as you do your own self, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity; and leaving all others, to keep yourself only for her, so long as you both shall live?

To The Bride: Do you in like manner, solemnly agree to receive this man as your lawfully wedded husband, to love and respect him, and to live with him in all faithfulness and tenderness, to esteem him as God's appointed head in your home, in health and sickness, in prosperity and in adversity, and leaving all others to keep yourself for him, as long as you both shall live?

I have often thought, in performing a wedding ceremony, how fun it would be, if after asking this – the couple might pause



and say – “Wow! That’s quite a commitment. Let me think about that a bit. Read it one more time so I can make sure I’m fully behind what I’m committing to here.”

2) Marriage is a covenant of companionship!

In marriage, a man does not get a maid & plaything.

A woman does not get an open-ended credit account and endless shopping spree at Saks 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Marriage is meant to be the growing companionship of two people in an intimate relationship where we find our needs met by seeking to meet the needs of our mate, rather than angling to get what we want.

As a husband, I am a *companion* to my wife.

The only question I can ask is what kind of a companion am I?

Am I meeting her needs? Is her need for intimacy being met?

Anything we do that works against that companionship, that introduces an obstacle to intimacy, is harmful to the covenant we made to one another and the Lord 21 years ago, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, at the Baptist Church in Orange, CA.

**15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.**

All of the commentators are agreed that this verse is by far the most difficult to both translate and interpret.

The Hebrew here is archaic and convoluted and so difficult to unwrap.

But the basic idea seems to be this . . .

When a man and woman recite the vows of marriage, in the sight of God and in a very real spiritual sense, they become one!

Actually, they *begin* becoming one and that process of being one grows over the months and years to come.

Each new experience and challenge they encounter is ordained by God to help them move to a deeper level of companionship and oneness.

The union of believers is especially blessed, as Malachi makes

clear here when he says that they have the remnant of the Spirit.

People who share a common faith in God have far more potential of achieving the intimacy that is the goal of marriage *because* of their faith and so the presence of His Spirit.

It is from the oneness of marriage that a stable home is built – and from which godly children can be raised.

Therefore – God tells them they are to pay careful attention to their hearts and their attitude toward marriage – and toward their mates in particular!

**16 “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”**

It isn’t within the scope of our study this evening to do a whole bible study or theology on marriage & divorce.

Let’s simply review what we find here in its context.

The men of Israel were divorcing the wives of their youth and were marrying pagan women.

Then they were carrying on with life as usual, as if they’d done nothing wrong still bringing their offerings to the temple just as before ,even though when they entered the temple grounds they saw their ex-wives weeping before the Lord!

Malachi – using the most intense words he can muster, says into the faces of these hard-hearted and cruel men – “Hear what God says – ‘I HATE DIVORCE!’”

Why does God hate divorce – because it *covers one’s garments with violence*.

Part of the marriage ceremony in Bible times involved the husband covering his wife with his garment as a symbol of the protection he brought her.

In divorce, the man tears away his protection under which the wife has taken refuge.

Since they are one, what happens to her, inevitably comes back to haunt him.

This was Paul’s point in Ephesians 5:28 when he wrote

**So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

In Malachi, we're seeing the underside of this spiritual truth - when you deal treacherously with your wife, you harm yourself.

Over and over we've encountered the word "**One**" in this passage.

God is One, and His people are to be One with Him.

That *oneness* ought to have been most clearly demonstrated in the sanctity of their marriages.

But they were being treacherous by breaking their vows, their covenant with God and one another.

Marriage is a covenant of companionship in which two become one.

That oneness begins the moment the vows are recited and God places the seal of His Spirit upon them.

Divorce is a breaking of that seal, a violent rending and tearing of that oneness.

Divorce feels very much like a ripping.

If *both* partners aren't wounded in a divorce – then one of them will carry the hurt for the two.

I've talked with many folk who've been through a divorce and they say that it truly feels like a limb had been torn away – it is that painful – that violent.

And that is why God hates divorce – because of the inordinate PAIN it causes those He loves!

Earlier we saw that God *loves* marriage! Here we read that he hates divorce!

We ought to love what God loves and hate what He hates!

I realize that there are several people here tonight *or* who are listening to this tape who've known what it means to be in a really bad marriage.

Some of us here tonight have been divorced!

I know these words are painful – but I want to try and bring some comfort to those who are hurting by reminding all that God loves marriage and says that he hates divorce, not those who do divorce.

God hates divorce for the pain and sorrow it causes.

Where God sees pain, He longs to rush in and bring healing!  
When we read that God *hates* divorce, we ought not be crushed or condemned by that but rather take *hope* in it because it means that He cares about what happens to people.

God loves marriage – and if marriage has not gone well for you – then don't sour on it, but rather ask the Lord to renew your love for what He loves!

Maybe right now you're in a really difficult marriage and you just no longer feel anything hopeful or positive toward your mate. Don't try and work up feelings for them – rather, ask the Lord to help you love your marriage and re-invest hope in Him to raise it from the dead.

Both vs. 15 & 16 end with the much the same remark – “Therefore take heed to your spirit.”

This phrase is repeated because it is so important.

The reason why the people dealt treacherously with their marriages is because they didn't take heed to their spirit.

They had allowed their hearts to become hardened toward God.

It's important to realize that we can *change* our feelings towards our spouse.

If we do not feel loving or connected or caring about them, that can be changed if we will *take heed to our spirit*. (Guzik)

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Malachi now returns to the Comment and sarcastic reply format he introduced earlier . . .

**17 You have wearied the LORD with your words;**

**Yet you say, “In what way have we wearied *Him*?”**

**In that 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?”**

As the people looked around at the nations surrounding them and even in their own midst, it appeared that it was the *wicked* who prospered while the godly suffered.

They became discouraged and began asking – “What profit is there in serving God?”

Because their hearts toward God were wrong, they had begun to misunderstand Him and attributed things to Him that were unworthy of Him.

God tells them He’s weary with their charge that He’s unjust. This is such a patently false charge it not have ever occurred to them.

That they were charging God with being unjust shows how far from Him they had fallen.

The people of Malachi’s day thought they could be unjust and treacherous in their dealings because God was unjust.

It would come as a shock to them to realize that God was perfect in His judgment and would judge them for their sloppy theology and how it had impacted their behavior.

Speaking of judgment – Malachi now moves to speak of the coming Messiah . . .

### **CHAPTER 3**

**1 “Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.**

We have two messengers here – the first comes to prepare the way, the second is God Himself who comes with the Message and Mission of Redemption.

As the gospels make abundantly clear, the 1<sup>st</sup> messenger was John the Baptist.

(Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2 Luke 7:27)

Whenever a royal procession was coming into a region, a duly authorized agent was sent as a messenger to proclaim the soon coming of the prince or king.

This messenger would then give advice to the locals about how to prepare.

If the road needed repair, he would point it out.

And special preparations the king would need were mentioned. John the Baptist said that he had come to do this in Israel.

He announced the arrival of the Messiah and informed the nation they needed to prepare their hearts.

The second messenger, here called the *Messenger of the covenant* is identified as the Lord Himself, who comes to the temple.

The people of Malachi's day longed for the Messiah – but when He came, He would not come as they expected and He would not be happy with what he found!

In John 2, we read about Jesus' first coming to the temple after he began His public ministry.

Remember what he did? He cleared it out of the money-changers and animal-sellers!

They were looking for a Messiah who would come and make things cushy for them.

When He came, He came in judgment!

**2 “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He *is* like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap.**

**3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.**

**4 “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years.**

**5 And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien— Because they do not fear Me,” Says the LORD of hosts.**

Again, they expected the Messiah to come and defeat their enemies. Malachi warns them that the Messiah's judgment will begin at the house of God!

Jesus partially fulfilled this in His first coming when he cleansed the temple – but it's final and full fulfillment will come at the Second coming.

While the picture of judgment here is fierce, it is not a judgment that destroys but rather, purifies and cleanses!

Soap cleans and the goal of refining is to purify, not crush.

It's said that ancient silversmiths only refined small portions of silver or gold at a time.

They would heat a small nugget in a special crucible until it was red hot.

The impurities and chemicals that occur naturally in silver and gold would not melt but would float to the surface of the molten metal.

The smith would then drive off this dross by blowing on it. He'd put it back into the flame once more and drive out more impurity.

Finally, he'd know the metal was ready to work when he could see his own reflection on the surface.

What a fitting picture of how God refines us, who are far more precious to Him than any gold or silver.

A master smith – He puts us in the furnace of trial – but every keeps His hand on us to remove us before the fire harms us.

Then He blows on us by His Spirit and drives away the junk that rises to the surface.

The whole time, His aim is produce His image in us!

God tells the priests that though they were corrupt – the day will come when he will purify them and restore them to right relationship with Him.

Malachi gives a list of the kinds of things the people were dabbling in and which God saw and would move to remove from them.

They were getting in to - sorcery, adultery, perjury, and extortion; and this . . .

**ALL THE WHILE THEY WERE MAKING THEIR  
DUTIFUL TRIPS TO THE TEMPLE TO RENDER  
WORSHIP TO GOD!!!!!!!!!!**

The end of v. 5 reveals how all this could be happening –

**“Because they do not fear Me.” Says the LORD of hosts.**

There's no real worship of God that isn't accompanied by a profound reverence for His holiness.  
A lack of the fear of God will result in all kinds of moral problems.

**6 “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.**

**7 Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” Says the LORD of hosts. “But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’**

Verses 6-12 are my text for Sunday so I will leave further comment on this passage till then.

Let's just read over it now.

**8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.**

**9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, *Even* this whole nation.**

**10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you *such* blessing That *there will not be room enough to receive it*.**

**11 “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts;**

**12 And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land,” Says the LORD of hosts.**

I'm sure many of you have heard numerous sermons on this passage because it's a favorite of preachers as they deal with the subject of *tithing*.

But a careful note of the context reveals that God deals with this



issue in the context of *returning to Him*.  
That's how we'll be examining it this Sunday, from the  
perspective of God's appeal to return to Him and the terms of  
the covenant He had made with Israel.

**13 “Your words have been harsh against Me,” Says the  
LORD, “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against  
You?’**

Well – the sarcasm right there is harsh!

But God now gives voice to the essence of everything we've read  
so far . . .

**14 You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; What profit  
is it that we have kept His ordinance, And that we have  
walked as mourners Before the LORD of hosts?**

**15 So now we call the proud blessed, For those who do  
wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go  
free.’”**

This returns to the same subject as v.17 of chapter 2, but now,  
Malachi gives voice to a question rarely spoken, but often felt:  
What good is it to serve God?

For generations we've followed the commands of God and  
where's it gotten us?

While on the other hand – look at the heathen! They don't even  
know or worship God and they're doing great!

Malachi has already dealt with this and so doesn't bother to answer  
their sarcasm directly.

He moves instead to speak the promises of God to those who will  
return and seek Him once more . . .

**16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another,  
And the LORD listened and heard *them*; So a book of  
remembrance was written before Him For those who  
fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.**

**17 “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the  
day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them  
As a man spares his own son who serves him.”**

**18 Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.**

This is a precious promise that in the end, God will sort the wheat from the chaff, the wicked from the good.

It may seem confusing to us now why the wicked prosper while the godly suffer, but we ought not judge by mere appearances. There is a lot more going on than we can see from our puny human perspective.

Besides, this life is but a vapor – and it passes quickly.

God’s judgment comprehends all eternity!

Here the Lord comforts those who have remained faithful to Him, who have maintained their fear and respect for the Lord in the midst of a corrupt society.

He tells them that He was present when they gathered and encouraged one another to not fall into the status quo and start thinking like everyone else was.

Every time they stopped to meditate on His word and His name, He marked it down in His heavenly chronicle and on that day when judgment is rendered and the wicked are punished, they will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

Like a shining jewel, they will bring glory to God.

## **CHAPTER 4**

**1 “For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch.**

The sarcastic had become embittered toward God because they felt cheated by their feigned obedience to Him.

It hadn’t paid off, so they became bitter and denied God was just. Here He tells them judgment is indeed coming – a final reckoning – but they will be on the wrong side of it.

**2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings;**

**And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.**

- 3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*,” Says the LORD of hosts.**

The *Sun of Righteousness* refers to Jesus.

It is at His Second Coming that Judgment is initiated, and then consummated at the end of the Millennium and the Great White Throne.

- 4 “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, *With the statutes and judgments.***

Here’s the crux of the problem and the premise that all of Malachi has been built on:

The covenant God made with Israel was on that promised God’s blessing and their obedience!

God would bless – Israel would obey!

God kept His side of the bargain – but except for a short period of time under Moses, and David and a couple of the kings – the people turned their collective back on God and refused to obey.

God longed to restore the fullness of His blessing to them – but they remained hard-hearted and stiff-necked and refused to surrender to His Lordship.

- 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

- 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”**

Though we might miss it, there’s a subtle connection between verses 4 and 5; Moses and Elijah both met God at Mount Horeb or as we know it better – Sinai.

(Exodus 3:1; 1 Kings 19:8-18)

In the gospels, John the Baptist was Elijah in a figurative sense.

(Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17)

But John 17 and Revelation 11 make it clear that there is a more

literal fulfillment of this prophecy yet to come during the Tribulation when two witnesses will come to the Jewish people and the world and have a dramatic ministry.

One of these two is Elijah, while the identity of the other is hotly debated.

I know who it is but humility forbids me to say.

(John 17:11-12 Revelation 11:3-12)

In v. 6, Elijah's last day's ministry is described as reuniting families.

The children and fathers of verse six include not only literal families; but also a return of later generations to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – which is precisely what we see the Two Witnesses of Revelation doing.

Many commentators make the observation that the last line of the OT is a curse – but it isn't – it's a warning that flows from a promise of reconciliation.

Malachi has said that Elijah will come to work renewal and restoration of physical and spiritual families.

Those who reject the Lord's messenger and his mission will fall under judgment.

It's fitting the OT should close on this note because it sets the scene for the people of Jesus' day and the preparation the forerunner John the Baptist would bring.

From what we find Jesus said about John in Matthew 11:14 – if the people, all of them, but especially the religious leaders – if they had received John as the fulfillment of this prophecy – then Jesus would have been for them their Messiah, just as He was and is for all those who did receive Him.

But the rejection of John and Jesus by the leaders of the nation resulted in in God coming to strike their land with the curse of the events of 70 AD and the destruction of their nations once more.

The spiritual sickness that Malachi rebukes so stridently in these 4 chapters was never really driven from them and continued on in the days of Jesus and the Apostles.

Nevertheless – Israel is now back in their land – and the world stage is well prepared for the last great act of history to begin.

It won't be long now till Elijah comes and prepares the way for the glorious return of the Messiah!