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## **1/2** Overview

There is a clue to the overall purpose of Malachi in 4:4 *"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.*

The prophecy is a call to return to the Torah. But not the Torah of the Pharisees with its emphasis on making sure you obey the rules. The themes of this prophecy are the answers to the 6 disputes God has with his people.

1. A dispute about God's love (1:2–5) starts with the statement

*"I have loved you," says the LORD.*

God loves us is fundamental to our understanding. It requires believing in him even if the

circumstances we are in seems to suggest the opposite.

2. A dispute about God's honour and fear (1:6–2:9)

Here there is a call, not to play worship, but worship in Spirit and in truth.

3. A dispute about faithlessness (2:10–16)

*So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.*

4. A dispute about God's justice (2:17–3:5)

17 Message: *By saying, "God loves sinners and sin alike. God loves all." And also by saying, "Judgment? God's too nice to judge."* But the prophet declares God will refine his people. Sin will be accounted for and removed.

5. A dispute about repentance (3:6–12)

True repentance involves a change of heart which must be reflected in a change of behaviour. In this case giving God what he deserves, not holding back.

**3.** 6. A dispute about speaking against God (3:13–4:3)

**4.** v16-17 tell us that God has a special interest in those who follow him. 4:1 tell us that there is a day of the Lord that will dawn very differently for those who trust him and are faithful to him.

We are going to pick up from 3:13 and read on. In Hebrew there is no chapter 4, chapter 3 includes the 6 verses that end the book, so we need to read it as one whole rather than bits.

## **5-9** Read passage

## **10** The Day of the Lord

What does the term 'Day of the Lord' conjure up in your imagination? Fear? Doubt? A reign of terror?

Think of early morning on a hot summers day. The prospect of the sun and the heat for the next 12 or more hours. You either want to get out and enjoy it or you dread it as it drains your energy. That is exactly what Malachi is wanting you to think.

Malachi says that if you receive the Good News and live by it, The day of the Lord is a beautiful sun-rise. But if you do not it is the beginning of a scorching hot day. It is a day of judgement or a day of blessing. Which do you believe it will be for you?

Your answer depends entirely on what you believe the sunrise will bring. If you only know God as a judgemental creator then the day of the Lord is a day of reckoning. Have you done enough to please him?

But if you have received Jesus as Saviour and Lord the day of the Lord is a day to look forward to. For every Christian who receives grace and forgiveness in Jesus, the day of the Lord is when Jesus descends from heaven and we will be caught up with him in the clouds. This is what we are waiting for.

The Old Testament – the history of Israel records some terrible days of the Lord. The flood, the fall of Jerusalem, the exile, for example. But also the crossing of the Red Sea, the building of the temple, the return from exile and so on. The two vision in 4:1-2 could not be more different. But they apply to the same event.

And what did that event look like? Well, not what you expected. It is what the 4 gospels tells you about. Surprised? Of course. We all expect a grand entry, but Jesus slips into history in a backwater of the Roman empire and brings righteousness and healing wherever he went. Ultimately that led him to be crucified for our sins so that we could be justified

– made righteous by him. Living this side of the Jesus story it is easy to misread this passage as the son of righteousness not the sun of righteousness. Enjoy the sunrise!

## **11.**The day in which we live.

But look at the day in which we live. 3:14-15 fit our generation. Where is God? There is no God?

Tough talking, loud mouths capture the headlines. Tax avoidance is one of the games we play. Evildoers prosper they are our celebrities, our politicians and our heroes until someone stands up to them and tells how they were abused, cheated, destroyed.

We applaud people for challenging God. We are told that following Jesus is at best a waste of time and the secularists have us believe we are actually bad for our community! Malachi could be writing for today when he says:

*<sup>14</sup> "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?' <sup>15</sup> But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape."*

## **12.** A call to fellowship

Verse 16-17 are very important to us. They call for us to meet together in Christian Fellowship, to pray and encourage one another. God did not create us in isolation. Even the most grumpy of us and anti-social are better for spending time in company. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest you can't survive on your own but loads to say we can thrive together. This bunch didn't just make 'small talk' they kept a record!

Enjoy the fellowship!

### **13.** An assurance of value

God hears and listens to his people. He declares they are mine. They are my special people. This word, translated as jewel in the AV is the word used throughout the Old Testament to describe the people of God. The song we teach the children is right on the money

*"I'm special because God has loved me,  
For He gave the best thing that He had to save me;  
His own Son Jesus, crucified to take the blame  
For all the bad things I have done.  
Thank You Jesus, thank You Lord,  
For loving me so much.  
I know I don't deserve anything.  
Help me feel Your love right now,*

*To know deep in my heart  
That I'm Your special friend.*

This is most important to understand. God does not just love you in a vague and feely way. He acts in history by sending his own Son to die on a cross and rise again for you. You may have had a difficult week last week, next week may have lots of difficulties and disappointments but you are safe in Jesus. You are special to God. As another song says

*“For each child is special,  
Accepted and loved,  
A love gift from Jesus  
To His Father above.”*

Enjoy being special to God

## **14.** The Day of the Lord

So when the Day of the Lord comes it will be very different for God's people, the followers of Jesus, or whatever you call those who are trusting Jesus for salvation and forgiveness and looking forward to eternity with him.

For those who reject the Jesus way, the Day of the Lord arrives without hope. The only prospect is destruction. It is from this verse that the English

expression “root and branch” comes. Everything will be destroyed.

But for those who are believers the day dawns like no other day.

*But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.*

*And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.*

The sun which is so destructive on the wicked is full of righteousness and healing. Jesus is the Sun. He is our righteousness, he is our healer, he is our life-giver.

This is important to get into our thinking. The reason we look forward to the day of the Lord has nothing to do with our righteousness. They are described as filthy rags. Instead of being judged by our righteousness, we are judged by Jesus' righteousness.

But there is more, there is healing in his wings. Quite a mixed metaphor, a sun with wings! But stay with it because we need to understand that Jesus death brings life, healing and therefore health. Not that we will be free of illness in this life, but we are. Being healed being regenerated, being readied for



eternity. Jesus is well known for his healings. He still heals those he chooses. But that is just a message to tell us what he is doing in our inner person. We have new life. And Malachi describes that in terms of calves being let out of a barn.

I have handled day old calves, with difficulty. They are amazingly strong. They will carry you round a yard if you are not careful. And leave the gate open, they will charge out and take a great deal of herding to get back.

You may not feel energetic in the physical sense this morning but be lively by the Spirit in the spiritual sense. Your worship, your prayers and your thoughts and your actions can be full of life and energy by the Spirit. You need to bask on the sunlight of Jesus. Come into the light as he is in the light.

## **15.** Moses and Elijah

The book of Malachi ends with two appendices which are frequently swapped round in the original texts. It is argued that they are the conclusions of the Old Testament rather than just Malachi. But they look backward and forward.

'Remember' is used 14 times in Deuteronomy. It is no accident it is used here. It is a call to return to the Law. That sets the 6 disputes into context. They are calls to remember the Torah. The Torah is about God's love, about proper reverence; about faithfulness; about justice; about repentance and about trusting God. Those were the key elements, not just a set of rules to obey.

Then we go on to Elijah, the prophet who was understood to be the archetypical prophet. Again it is no accident that Moses and Elijah are mentioned here. This is a prophecy and specifically looks back over the whole of the Old Testament and the Law and the prophets, and looks forward to the transfiguration where Moses and Elijah are seen talking to Jesus.

Further, Jesus identified John the Baptist as the second Elijah – the final prophet  
In Matthew 11: <sup>12</sup> *From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, <sup>[9]</sup> and violent people have been raiding it. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. <sup>15</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear.*

Jesus was the second Moses. In his words at the Last Supper : “this cup is the new covenant in my blood.” He identifies himself as the new covenant giver, the second Moses.

So in Malachi Israel is called to return to the Old Covenant or Testament. You are called to return to the New Covenant or Testament. A covenant of grace and new life and peace and joy, all founded on the finished and complete work of Jesus.

Enjoy the New Covenant this morning!

**16.** The Old Testament ends looking forward to the New Testament. Next stop: Christmas.

Enjoy the coming of the sun sun of righteousness!

We must not turn the new Covenant into a set of rules and regulations. We must live by faith in the sun of righteousness that has risen with healing in its wings. If we do not the Day of the Lord will be one of utter destruction. Choose life! Choose Jesus!

Enjoy the sunrise!

Enjoy the fellowship!

Enjoy being special to God!

Enjoy the new covenant and enjoy Christmas. The sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings!