

Malachi 4:1-2a "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. ² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."

Dear Christians Patiently Watching and Expectantly Waiting:

"It's coming!" That can be a pretty ominous statement! I understand that when some hear *"It's coming!"* they envision the "zombie apocalypse"...which, apparently, some people actually believe is a real thing! But today Malachi prophesies something more intense than any other major event, real or imagined: When he says, ***"Surely the Day is coming!"*** he's talking about the Day of Judgment (Last Day). We'll focus on two things Malachi tells us: (1) ***"It will burn like a furnace,"*** and (2) ***"The sun of righteousness will rise."***

1

We don't know much about Malachi. We do know his name in Hebrew means *"My Messenger,"* and that his book, the last of the OT, is the last recorded prophecy from God until more than 400 years later when John the Baptist and Jesus would arrive on the scene in Palestine.

As a prophet, Malachi really laid it on the line for what was left of the nation of Israel. His message was not easy on the ears. He warned Judah about several things. For example:

- He warned them about disrespecting God by bringing crippled and diseased animals to the altar for sacrifice. Rather than giving their best, they brought their worst. They offered God what they didn't want for themselves in the 1st place. In other words, their skimpy offerings were cheating God and showed selfish, stingy, ungrateful hearts.
- He warned their priests and rabbis about teaching junk theology. He said God would spread the intestines of their worthless sacrifices in the priests' faces because they caused unsuspecting people to stumble and be led astray by their false teachings. You can't read those words without seeing that what churches and pastors teach really does matter. Doctrine *is* important.
- He warned Judah especially about their spiritual infidelity and adultery. They had divorced themselves from their Savior-God by running after false gods who could do nothing for them.

The result? Judgment!! ***"Surely the day is coming! It will burn like a furnace! All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble..."***

So who is included in the ***"arrogant"*** and ***"evildoers"*** Malachi talks about here? Well, certainly those who have openly rejected the Lord, for one. But the Bible teaches that there are plenty of people who **call** themselves followers of God who are included. Here's what Jesus said, ***"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"*** (Matt 7:21).

Now, we all admit we don't always do ***"the will of the Father."*** That's called sin -- and we confess that we sin all the time! What the Lord is talking about here is **impenitence**. Penitent sinners sin in weakness every day but, in sorrow, they admit their sins and they seek God's forgiveness, asking him to help them overcome their sin. Impenitence is when we sin and don't care, or come up with excuses and rationalizations to keep on sinning rather than to turn away from what I'm doing. So, e.g., let's say I gossip about someone. I know it's wrong, but it's an adrenal rush and it makes it look like I'm better than they are. So I do it again and again, in effect thumbing my nose at God. That's **arrogance** when I pit my will against God's Word. And if I continue on, my professed faith in Christ becomes a sham. That's true with all other un-repentant sin as well: hatred, sexual immorality, stealing, and all others.

After continuing in a sin, our consciences become dull and we figure God doesn't really care about it. But God absolutely cares! Have you seen those commercials for **"Ring"** home security sys-

tems where a camera sees people approach the door and notifies the homeowner on their phone? Our lives are seen every day, every moment by our holy God. He has an ever-watching eye and an ever-listening ear. As Paul wrote to the Galatians (6:7): ***“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”***

If I’ve relegated my relationship with God to just going through the motions on Sunday mornings and saying meal prayers, and my Christian faith doesn’t affect the way I live and speak each day, I am in great danger. Christian Author Patrick Morley writes (*I Surrender*) that one of the big lies about the faith is ***“that we can add Christ to our lives (like an insurance policy), but not subtract sin. It’s a change in “belief” without a change in behavior.... It’s revival without reformation, without repentance.”*** As James says, ***“Faith without works is dead.”***

Before the death of actor W.C. Fields, a friend visited him in the hospital and was surprised to find him thumbing through a Bible. Fields looked up at the friend and said, ***“I’m looking for loopholes.”*** Deep down we all know we are accountable to God. We all know there is a day of reckoning. God says, ***“Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”*** (Heb 9:27). That Day of Judgment is on the way.

When the **Great Flood** came, suddenly Noah’s ark was worth more than anything else in the world. The day before the Flood, his ark was a joke, a laughing stock. He could have sold it for fire wood. But then the heavens and geysers of the deep opened up -- and then everybody wanted in. Nobody was laughing anymore. Yet, the ark saved only 8.

2

So when the Last Day comes, is there hope? There will be no second Noah’s ark. Jesus says many will try to hide from God: ***“They will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!””*** (Luke 23:30). How will we miserable sinners not be ***“stubble”*** burned in the fire? Malachi wonderfully answers: ***“But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”***

We need to be emptied of self before we can be filled with Christ. A heart filled with arrogance and pride has no room for God -- like the inn in Bethlehem had no room for the Savior. The humble, penitent heart, however, is a heart that ***“reveres God’s name.”*** It knows that without Jesus we are ***“lost and condemned creatures.”*** Only Jesus’ sinless life can negate our sinful lives; and only Jesus’ sacrificial death can rescue us from the fires of hell.

So believing in him by grace, we can breathe easy. We can face the Last Day with confidence and joy: ***“The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.”*** When the dawn of the Last Day arrives, we will not have to run and hide and shake in our boots in fear. It is the day of healing. We will see the glow break through the darkness and we will experience the warmth and splendor of the true Son who heals and restores and gives joyful, peaceful life. As Jesus said, ***“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”*** (Luke 21:28).

Friends, ***“It’s coming!” “Surely the Day is coming!”*** Yes, the dead will rise, but it won’t be zombies. It will be the beginning of our new and wonderful eternal life with our beautiful Savior Jesus!

Amen.