

### ***XIII. Covenant Judgment***

25-Feb-07 Malachi 3:17-4:6

*Theme:* God's covenant judgment will consume the wicked but will preserve the righteous.

*Key Verses:* Malachi 4:1-2 <sup>1</sup>“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. <sup>2</sup>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.”

#### Review

Last week we looked at the sixth section of Malachi, where the prophet describes two ways in which we can rob God: through neglect of tithing, and through harsh words. In their self-righteousness, the Jews of Malachi's day were unable to see that the lack of blessing present in their lives was due to their own sin, not to a failure on the part of God. So God issues a challenge: if they want to see blessings in their lives, they must first correct their sinful tendencies to withhold their tithes and offerings. If they are faithful in this area, then God promises three wonderful blessings: sufficiency, security, and satisfaction. They tried to earn these blessings by withholding the tithe, but God says that financial blessings can only be achieved through giving to the LORD!

In addition to withholding tithes and offerings, the people of God also robbed Him of respect by their harsh and ungrateful words. In contrast to those who would sinfully test God through their complaining, Malachi reveals that a remnant remained who feared the LORD and meditated on His name. God accepts the words of the faithful as a sweet savor and as a pleasing aroma. He calls them His special possession, reminding us of His adoption of the covenant people at Sinai. Of course, all those who are in Christ are God's special treasure or people today.

How do we rob God today? Well, of course we can rob Him by not giving at least 10% of our gross income as a tithe. But we can also rob God by not giving Him our time in prayer, in worship, in Bible study, in Sabbath keeping. We can rob God by not giving Him the proper respect in our words, attitudes, and conduct. We can rob God when we roll Him up and put Him in a little box and only take Him out on Sunday mornings. We can rob God when we don't have a thoroughly theocentric outlook, an outlook which mediates on Him as the center of our life. In summary, we rob God whenever we do not give Him completely of our time, resources, words, and hearts. After all, God has given us everything; He is only asking for a little bit back. Don't be cheap with your time and resources – God loves a cheerful giver!

#### Introduction

Today we will cover the final section in Malachi's short prophecy. According to our chiasmic structure of the entire book, this seventh section of Malachi is parallel to the first section. In the first section (1:2-5), Malachi talks about the separation between Jacob and Esau, between Israel and Edom. What is the difference between these two patriarchs, between these two nations? Malachi says that the only difference is God's covenant love – God loved Jacob and hated Esau.

As Malachi closes his prophecy, he once again turns to this theme of separation in the seventh section (3:18-4:6). The separation that Malachi describes here is not based on God's covenant

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love; rather it is due to God's covenant judgment – God separates those that fear Him from those that do not. In reality, God's covenant love and covenant judgment are two sides of the same coin: God loves some and chooses them for salvation, while those whom He does not choose are destined for judgment.

The book of Malachi ends on a very somber note – the last word in both Hebrew and English is “curse.” Through this unexpected ending, Malachi is warning readers of every generation to take his message seriously. Malachi reminds us that God's judgment will consume the wicked but preserve the righteous. Therefore, take heed, guard your spirits, ensure that you fear the LORD, worship Him properly, and keep your covenant commitments, lest you be cursed by the covenant judgment of God.

### Exposition

#### **A. Covenant Separation (3:18)**

<sup>18</sup>Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him (Malachi 3:18).

When I was outlining Malachi in preparation for this class, I struggled on the decision where to include Malachi 3:18. At first glance, it seems connected to the end of the previous section. The connecting word “then” in our English translations links it to what precedes it. Thus, verse 18 appears to be a consequence of God's possessing the remnant in verse 17. However, after careful consideration, it makes more sense in context to treat 3:18 as an introduction to the section which follows it, rather than append it to the section which precedes it. For this verse introduces the theme of the final section – God's covenant judgment that separates the righteous from the wicked.

Remember the earlier complaint of Malachi's listeners in 2:17? They complained that God rewarded evil doers and punished the righteous. Furthermore, they were looking for the God of justice to come and right the wrongs they observed around them. Of course the problem with their position was that they could not discern right and wrong, evil and righteousness. They thought that they were righteous, but they were deluded. Their blemished sacrifices, their robbery of God in tithing, their contemptuous words, their covenant-breaking habits – all of these things demonstrated beyond doubt that they were not righteous, but full of sin and hypocrisy.

But God says the day is coming when they will be able to discern clearly between the righteous and the wicked. They will be able to identify the one who serves the LORD faithfully and the one who does not. That day, says the LORD, is the final Day of Judgment, when God will clearly separate “the sheep from the goats” (*cp.* Mt. 25:31-46).

#### **B. The Day of the LORD (4:1-3)**

##### *1. The Burning Oven (4:1)*

<sup>1</sup>“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” (Malachi 4:1).

“Behold, the day is coming.” Again we have “day of the LORD” language here in the book of Malachi. We saw this same type of language in Malachi's description of Jesus' first advent: “Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (3:2).

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Remember, the “day of the LORD” refers to any time in history when God draws near to His people. There are general days of the LORD, such as each Sabbath day, but there are also specific instances in history when God intervenes to save His people and pour judgment upon His enemies. There are always two sides to the “day of the LORD” – salvation and judgment – and both of these appear here in Malachi’s prophecy. So we see that Malachi is again describing a “day of the LORD,” but to when is he referring?

T. V. Moore applies the “principle of successive fulfillment” to this and other similar prophecies. Essentially, his point is that the prophetic books often telescope events such that one description can have successive fulfillments. Thus, God’s visitation of wrath upon sinners on the day of the LORD can refer to multiple successive events in history, including the first advent of Christ, ultimately culminating in the second advent of Christ. In this case, it appears that Malachi is looking forward to that great and final day when Christ comes in His second and last advent to judge the nations. However, if you look ahead to verse 5, you will see another reference to the “great and dreadful day of the LORD,” which seems to be referring to Christ’s first advent. So as we read these prophetic words, we need to be aware of the multiple layers of fulfillment.

In describing the Day of Judgment that comes upon the wicked, Malachi once again uses the imagery of fire. We’ve already seen that the LORD our God is a “consuming fire” (Dt. 4:24; Heb. 12:29), and this fire is connected with His jealousy (Dt. 29:20; Ps. 79:5; Ez. 36:5; 38:19; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8), that is, His desire for covenant loyalty from His bride, the church. We’ve also seen how God’s jealous fire is connected with the reforming and refining of His covenant people (3:2-3). But the same fire that can purify the godly can also be used to burn up the wicked.

Thus, Malachi morphs the metaphor of God’s refining fire into a consuming furnace or burning oven. The purpose of this oven is not to purify God’s people; rather it is to burn up the wicked, symbolized by chaff or stubble (*cp.* Ps. 1:4). Remember, in the Bible, chaff and stubble are the useless parts of the wheat. After the grain has been harvested, the good wheat is separated from the worthless chaff, and then it along with the stubble is burned. The prophets frequently talk about fire consuming chaff and stubble (*e.g.*, Is. 5:23; 33:11; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Ob. 18).

God’s burning fire of judgment will completely consume the wicked. Nothing is left – not a root, not a branch, nothing. We need to be careful as we interpret this text; this passage is not talking about annihilation – the utter destruction of the wicked, so that their soul ceases to exist. Rather, it is talking about the works of the wicked, which have no value and are utterly consumed.

Jordan points out that if the wicked are stubble or chaff, by analogy, the righteous are the valuable kernels of harvested wheat. What must be done to the wheat? Just like gold or silver, it needs to be refined, but this time into fine flour. What happens when you mix the wheat with oil (the Spirit), incense (prayer) and salt (covenant faithfulness) and put it into God’s oven? It bakes into a fine loaf of bread (*cp.* Lev. 7:4), which can then be used as a grain offering or *minachāh*, symbolizing the works of your hands. Thus, while the righteous are baked into an acceptable offering, the works of the wicked are burned up like the stubble.

Remember, when the righteous go through God’s refining fire, the dross is removed and what is left is pure metal reflecting God’s glory. When the wicked go through God’s consuming oven, the outcome is different. The chaff is like the dross – it is the unwanted part which is discarded and destroyed.

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Malachi's message here is simple: fire ultimately awaits all those who are not found in Christ Jesus. The Book of Revelation describes this final judgment and the fiery fate of the wicked:

<sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books....<sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12, 14-15).

### 2. The Sun of Righteousness (4:2-3)

<sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>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 (Malachi 4:2-3)

In 4:2-3, Malachi continues using the imagery of fire. However, the metaphor has changed once again; no longer is it a refiner's fire or a consuming oven. This time, Malachi describes God's fire by invoking the image of the sun.

Here we see the other side of the “day of the Lord.” God's presence not only brings judgment upon His enemies, but also salvation to His people. To those “who fear My name” – that is, worship God in reverence – God's fiery presence is not destructive like the burning oven. Instead, God's presence is like the warmth of the sun which invigorates and brings refreshment. “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” The metaphor is extended by comparing God's people to well-fed calves. As the sun brings warmth, they respond by capering about their pasture in joy.

This winter (2006-2007) has seemed longer and colder (for Houston, at least) than previous years. How many cold, wet, and windy days have we had in the past three months? It seems like way too many. After an extended period of cold, wet weather, how do you feel when you have a bright, clear, warm day? Isn't it wonderful? Don't you feel a bit like these capering calves, wanting to go outside and soak up the sunshine?

When the final Day of Judgment comes, when the heat of God's sun illuminates all of your deeds, will you rejoice in His righteousness, or will you be burned up in His fire? This picture of the Sun of Righteousness contains both the positive and negative elements of the “day of the Lord.” While the righteous rejoice, the wicked are trampled like ashes underfoot. The heat of the sun that brings warmth and healing to God's people burns up the wicked like stubble, so that nothing but ashes remain.

For many centuries, Christians have seen this reference to the “Sun of Righteousness ... with healing in His wings” as a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of our hymns make this connection. Perhaps best known is the third verse of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” by Charles Wesley:

Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.

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Some commentators (*e.g.*, Boice, Moore) discount this interpretation, seeing this passage as a general description of the impact of God's righteousness upon His people, although they do admit that the basis for our joy is the work of Christ. Like most Christians through the centuries, I prefer to read into this description of the "Sun of Righteousness" an explicit reference to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. After all, Jesus is the "light of the world" (John 8:12, 9:5), and He came in His first advent to bring healing, both physical and spiritual (Mt. 4:23; 9:35).

But this description of Christ's impact upon His people is particularly applicable to His second advent and the Final Judgment. The saints who are saved by faith in Christ will live in eternity, bathed in the light and warmth of Christ, healed forever of their sinful natures. In His first advent, Christ came to reconcile us to God; in His second advent, He will perfect us for all eternity!

The apostle John picks up on this language in his description of heaven:

<sup>23</sup>The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.... <sup>1</sup>And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup>In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Revelation 21:23, 22:1-2).

In eternity, there is no need of the sun, because the glory of Jesus Christ is all the light and illumination we need. Flowing out of His throne is the river of life which waters the tree of life that brings healing to the nations. Truly, Jesus Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness, ris'n with healing in His wings."

The people of Judah had complained, "Where is the God of justice?" (2:17). They felt that God had abandoned them, but here in Malachi, God has the last word: Jesus Christ is coming again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead (*cp.* 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pe. 4:5). And just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:32), all of humanity will be divided into one of two groups. Those who have feared His name, who have served Him, who have been baked into an acceptable grain offering, and have become His precious possessions will be warmed by the Sun of Righteousness and healed of their sin for all eternity. Those who come to God in their own righteousness, offering up the works of their own hands in an attempt to justify themselves, will be burned up in the fire of His just and righteous wrath, suffering an eternity of punishment.

The scariest thing about this dichotomy of fates is not that God justly punishes the unrighteous for their wickedness, rebellion, and sin. As Bible-believing Christians, we believe that to be true. What is truly scary is that this warning of judgment is directed toward the church, the covenant people of God. Malachi is warning the church of his day – and us as well – that just because you associate yourselves with God's people doesn't mean that you are automatically saved. Benton puts it this way:

The awful truth is that when Christ returns, He will come not only to judge the world, but also to judge the professed church. There were two kinds of people within Judah. There were those who gave God insincere worship with blemished, cheap 'sacrifices,' and there were those who did their best honestly to revere God's name because they loved him. Malachi is telling us that Jesus will return to judge between us all (*cp.* Mt. 7:21-23). Our name appears on the list of church members, but does it appear in the Lamb's book of life?

### C. The Two Witnesses (4:4-6)

The last prophet of the Old Testament ends his prophecy by invoking two covenant witnesses from the past to demonstrate the truth about the future: Moses, representing the books of the Law; and Elijah, representing the spirit of prophecy. Malachi invokes the witness of Moses and Elijah because it takes at least two witnesses to demonstrate the truth of a matter (Dt. 19:15; also Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). In essence, Malachi is saying, “If you don’t believe me, then go back to the Law and the rest of the prophets. You will see the same warnings there; the same condemnation of your sin; the same judgment if you do not repent.”

#### 1. Moses (4:4)

<sup>4</sup>“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4).

The first witness that Malachi calls is Moses. God’s people are exhorted to look back and remember Moses, and in particular, the Law of Moses given by God at Mt. Sinai (Horeb). They are to remember the covenant that God made with them, and especially their covenant obligations. Throughout his book, Malachi has been calling God’s people back to their origins, back to their roots, back to their basic religious obligations. As he ends his prophecy, he returns to that theme.

Because God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Dt. 4:24), He demands that His people remain faithful to him. Moses was committed to this proposition: he executed judgment against those who committed spiritual adultery with the golden calf (Ex. 32:25-29). Moses, like his grand-nephew Phinehas, was zealous for the LORD and guarded the purity of God’s worship and the holiness of His name.

The Jews of Malachi’s day looked faithful on the outside, but inside they were corrupt and unacceptable. They failed at so many points: in worship, in tithing, in respect for God, in their marriage covenants. They were covenant-breakers who had failed in their basic covenant obligations. They needed to be reformed and refined, to be made acceptable to God. But how could the Law of Moses accomplish that? The Scriptures make it perfectly clear that no one can be justified before God by law-keeping:

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19-20).

The law of God does not justify us; rather it condemns us, because it exposes our sin and unrighteousness. So why does Malachi drive us back to the law, if it cannot reform and refine us, if it cannot make us acceptable in the eyes of God?

The answer is that the law reveals our need for another way of salvation. If we cannot become acceptable to God through our own efforts, then we need the righteousness of another, of a perfect Savior, applied to us. Only then can we become acceptable to God. Thus, the law of God ultimately reveals our need of a Savior and drives us to Jesus Christ:

<sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).

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<sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup>even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe (Romans 3:21-22).

In Romans 3:21, Paul brings us back to the same two witnesses as Malachi – the Law and the Prophets – a.k.a. Moses and Elijah! And these two witnesses testify to the need for a new righteousness, a righteousness apart from the law, the righteousness of God Himself, given to us through faith in Jesus Christ. If we are to heed the warning of Malachi, if we are to avoid covenant judgment that consumes the wicked, if we are to be grain-fed calves warmed by the Sun of Righteousness rather than chaff consumed in a burning oven, then the law of God must drive us to Jesus Christ.

### 2. Elijah (4:5)

<sup>5</sup>“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Malachi 4:5).

The second witness Malachi calls is Elijah the prophet. Elijah was another figure in Old Testament history who displayed jealousy for the LORD. His ministry was spent fighting against the wickedness of King Ahab, whose mixed marriage to the daughter of a foreign god, Jezebel, brought the evil of Baal worship into Israel. Elijah’s contest of fire on Mt. Carmel (1 Ki. 18:20-40) was another example of an ordeal of jealousy, this time against the prophets of Baal. In fact, the entire story of Elijah is an example to the people of Israel of what it means to be zealous for the Lord.

While Malachi looks back at the ministry of the prophet Elijah, he also looks forward to “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” when Elijah will reappear in Israel. The gospels make clear that this reference to Elijah was fulfilled by the forerunner, the messenger or *malachi* that announced the coming of the Messiah:

<sup>10</sup>And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” <sup>11</sup>Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup>But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” <sup>13</sup>Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10-12; *cp.* Matthew 11:10-15; Mark 9:11-13).

John the Baptist came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). He was a fitting messenger to wear the mantle of Elijah and be the forerunner of Jesus Christ, because John was zealous for the Lord and for covenant fidelity, just like Elijah. “The typological pattern of the Levites (Ex. 32), Phinehas (Num. 25), and Elijah (1 Ki. 18-19) repeats itself in John the Baptist” (Jordan). John confronted the ruler of Judea, Herod, with his illicit marriage to Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. Herod had put away the wife of his youth to enter into this adulterous relationship, and John spoke out against it. Just as Queen Jezebel pursued Elijah, so Herodias persecuted John the Baptist and eventually had him executed (Mark 6:14-29).

Although Malachi had been talking about the day of the Lord in terms of the final judgment in verses 1-3, here in verse 5 it seems as if the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” (*cp.* Joel 2:31) is referring to Christ’s first advent, not His second. Remember Moore’s “principle of successive fulfillment:” there are many days of the Lord, culminating with the final Judgment Day.

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Certainly Christ's first advent was a "day of the Lord" as God in the flesh drew near to inspect His people. It is through Christ's work on the cross in His first advent that the blessings of covenant salvation were secured for His people. Likewise, for those that have rejected or will reject His righteousness, covenant judgment has come to them.

Our fate on that final Day of Judgment will rest upon our response to the Savior that John the Baptist heralded. Will we like John, recognize Jesus as "the Son of God" (Jn. 1:34) and "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29), putting our faith in Him for all eternity? Or will we be burned up in the fire of God's covenant judgment because we trusted that we were good enough in our own righteousness?

### 3. Curse (4:6)

<sup>6</sup>"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" (Malachi 4:6).

In this final verse of Malachi and of the Old Testament, we are given a description of the ministry of the "second Elijah" or John the Baptist: "and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." What exactly does this mean?

Many commentators describe these words as a rebuilding of the family unit, as a restoration of covenant relationships, as "bridging the generation gap" (Baldwin). While this interpretation feels good, does it fit the context? Although many Israelite men were guilty of breaking their marriage covenants, Malachi has not called them bad fathers as well. When we turn to the New Testament, we find that what Christ says of His own ministry contradicts this sentiment:

<sup>34</sup>Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; <sup>36</sup>and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' <sup>37</sup>He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me (Matthew 10:34-37).

Perhaps a clue comes from Luke's reference to this verse, applied to John the Baptist:

<sup>16</sup>And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16-17).

Instead of the clause, "the hearts of the sons to the fathers," Luke paraphrases it as "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." Moore points out that "this paraphrase indicates that the hearts of the devoted ancestors were to live again in the obedience of their repentant posterity, and that the backslidden sons were to be restored to the piety of their fathers. The piety of the fathers had been referred to repeatedly before, (see 1:2; 2:5-6; 3:4), and the promise is, that this piety should live again in the children, under the Elijah call to repentance."

In essence, then, this is a call of repentance and restoration, of covenant renewal. That was exactly the message of John the Baptist, who came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). John was calling the covenant people to be reformed and refined, through repentance and a return to covenant faithfulness. He was calling them back to the true faith of their fathers, not the legalistic perversion of Judaism espoused by the Pharisees.

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While it is true that some who heard the message of John the Baptist believed and repented, coming to faith in Jesus Christ, sadly most of that generation rejected the Son of God and Savior of the world. Thus, to them the final words of the Old Testament apply: “lest I come and strike the earth [land] with a curse.” This prophecy was so shocking to the Jews that they refused to let the book end with a “curse.” Instead, they repeat verse 5 after verse 6 and still do to this day.

The Hebrew word for “curse” is a special word – *herem* – which means something banned or devoted to God, usually for destruction. For example, the city of Jericho was *herem*, devoted for destruction (Jos. 6:17). The city of Jericho and everything in it (except Rahab and her family) were to be destroyed. That’s why the sin of Achan was so serious, because he stole of the things that were *herem* – devoted to God for destruction (Jos. 7:1).

Thus, God’s final warning in Malachi is a reminder that covenant judgment awaits those who do not repent. However, to those who serve the Lord and fear Him, the concept of *herem* has a different meaning – they are devoted to Him forever, in worship and glory.

While the sanctity of the Promised Land might have made this prophecy unthinkable to the Jews, it indeed happened. Within two generations of Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Temple was destroyed and the Jews scattered throughout the world. The Old Testament people of God were cursed, because they did not accept the Savior, and the covenant promises of God were carried over to His New Covenant people – the church of Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

As we live in these last days between the two advents of Christ, we have the two witnesses called by Malachi – Moses and Elijah – to point us to Jesus Christ. These are the same two witnesses that spoke with Jesus upon the mount of transfiguration about His exodus, or death that accomplished salvation for His people (Lk. 9:30; *cp.* Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4).

Moses points us to Christ because the law demonstrates the depth of our sin, our inability to please God by our own works, and the need for a righteousness apart from the law that comes only from a Savior. Elijah points us to Christ, because John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to call us to repentance and to herald the advent of the Savior, Jesus our Lord.

This final section of Malachi has been all about covenant judgment. God’s covenant judgment will consume the wicked but will preserve the righteous. Although we are given a beautiful picture of salvation through the “Sun of Righteousness” who rises with “healing in His wings” (4:2), the emphasis of the passage is on warning a hypocritical and covenant-breaking people that they need to be reformed and refined, or they will fall under God’s curse and be destroyed forever.

As we end this class, I, no more than the Jews, want to end with a “curse.” That’s why I will take you to the end of the story – to the New Testament – to remind all of us that Jesus “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). If you are in Jesus Christ, you are no longer under the curse – you have been redeemed and healed. Furthermore, a great and glorious future awaits you – an eternity of heavenly blessing! Let us thank our great God for saving us and for reforming and refining us into the image of Jesus Christ, our great God and Savior. Amen.

Next week: end of winter quarter – 2 new spring classes begin!

Close in prayer.