

# Malachi chapter 3:1-4:6

Sunday evening, 2nd May 2021 | Deal Christian Fellowship | Simeon Forder

Reading: Malachi 3:1-4:6

Good evening. **Let's pray.**

## Introduction

Tonight, we are going to conclude our verse-by-verse study of Malachi, the Italian prophet. I joke of course, for Malachi, not Malarchi, was a Jewish prophet that delivered this message from God to the people of Israel around 2500 years ago.

In these 2 remaining chapters - 24 verses in all - we'll cover at least 2000 years of history in terms of the prophecies contained in them. But as with the whole book, we should look to apply it to our lives now. And as we get started, let's take one last look at the breakdown of these four chapters:

### Chapter overview

1. Israel is loved by God, but has despised God
2. Corrupt priests, broken relationships
3. The coming messenger, we must not rob God
4. Justice will be done - the day is coming

Zooming in, here's what we have ahead of us in chapters 3 and 4 this evening (we'll come back to these at the end of tonight's study):

### Summary of chapters three and four

- God will send two messengers - John and Jesus
- Jesus will return a second time - as judge
- But we should be living right, now - giving God what he is due
- Wrong will be put right, justice will be done
- How will you approach God on that day?

## Chapter 3: Verse by verse

So, as we begin chapter 3, we'll see it really records God's answer to the question raised by the people of Israel in the last verse of chapter 2 - that is, "Where is the God of justice?"

And God continues by saying through Malachi:

### **Malachi 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.*

So, in the first sentence we read of John the Baptist. How do we know? Well, Jesus said so in Matthew chapter 11...

### **Matthew 11:10**

*For this is he of whom it is written:  
Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,  
Who will prepare Your way before You.'*

But the in second sentence we read...

### **Malachi 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.*

"And the Lord, whom you seek..." talking of the Messiah that Israel desired, that is, Jesus. It is He that is the messenger of the covenant - the better covenant as we read in Hebrews 8:

### **Hebrews 8:6**

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

And that is God's answer to Israel... The people of Israel are a mess, but there is a way out of this. He will send Jesus first as Saviour, because He is gracious, and He wants to save them. But He will return again as judge to execute justice and judgment on this earth... Just as Jesus Himself said in John chapter 5...

***John 5:22-27***

*For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.*

And there is a dividing line between verse 1 - which is fulfilled prophecy, fulfilled in Jesus first coming. And verses 2-5 that are unfulfilled prophecy, speaking of His second coming. We read...

***Malachi 3:2***

*"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.*

Again, this is now speaking of the second coming whereas verse 1 was talking of Jesus' first coming. And we'll see this clarified in verse 4 which talks of the restoration of Israel into a nation that loves Him - something we know has not happened yet.

But take note of what else we read here - He is like a refiner's fire, and launderers' soap. And the next verse builds on this...

***Malachi 3:3***

*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.*

Purity is very important to God, for impurities have the same source - sin. And God wants us to be rid of sin completely. And this analogy of a refiner's fire is an important one to understand - for a refiner will intentionally heat up a precious metal until it melts, and only then, under this intense heat, do the impurities either burn away or gather as dross - as impurities - on the

surface. At that point, and not before, the refiner is able to scoop these away from the surface until only a pure metal remains, ready to be moulded into whatever shape he desires.

What an illustration that is. And God uses it intentionally, I believe, to help us understand the purifying effect of trials in our lives. For as we wrestle with our jobs, our insecurities, our health, our wealth, our pride, our selfishness, our deceit, our tempers, our attitudes to others are exposed. Does God send every trial? No, we're perfectly capable of putting ourselves through trials through stupid decisions too - but will God use those trials? Yes, so long as we let him.

A trial will either leave you better, as God removes these impurities from you. Or a trial will leave you bitter, as you grow into a stone-cold solidified mess, holding onto all your impurities.

But can't we just offer something to God and be done with it? No. For we read in 1 Samuel that *to obey is better than sacrifice*. And as I have said before, as Christians we should replace the work success with the word obedience. That will get us close to where we need to be to truly please God. And this purification will get Israel where they need to be. We read...

***Malachi 3:4***

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

So as for Israel, this is speaking of **then** - that is, at the second coming of Christ, where justice will be done. And things will once again return to how they should be - Israel being a nation that loves God. Just as they were in the former years.

But as we should often note, we can all too easily look disapprovingly at Israel, and miss how we should apply this - for we too, must not forget our first love, and if we have, we should return to it. We should return to Him.

Verse 5...

***Malachi 3:5***

*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.*

So firmly answering Israel's question of "Where is the God of justice" – He **will** appear. But when He does, He won't just put right the specks they saw in others' lives, but will put right the plank in their own.

We saw last week how Israel had sinned by marrying daughters of foreign gods – and in doing so brought idolatry to the land. We saw how they were divorcing their wives, and in doing so committing adultery. And how they were calling wrong right, and right wrong. That is exactly what God is dealing with here. But also, injustice shown in any area of life. For God cannot overlook sin.

Yet we read...

***Malachi 3:6***

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

God is gracious. He is patient. And for this reason alone, Israel hadn't been consumed by Him. And that's the same in your life too. But likewise, you mustn't take God's patience as permission to sin. You see God's character does not change. However, God does, at least from our perspective, change his actions based on how we act, even though He knew how we'd act even before we were born. Consider Saul, and how he went from being anointed as king of Israel, to replaced. And in Israel's lives here, and perhaps our lives too, we need to return to Him. We read in verse 7...

***Malachi 3:7***

*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?'*

You see, Israel was so unaware of their unfaithfulness to God, they didn't know that they had walked away from Him. Don't let it be that way with you.

Finnis Dake comments on this verse saying:

This expresses the fact that many generations have gone away from God. "From the days of your fathers" takes us back to the days of coming out of Egypt, and even before then. After many generations of asking Israel to return to Him, God was still commanding their return. He promised here to return to them if they would turn to Him; but Israel could not see that they had left Him, so how could they see that they needed to return?

**Finnis Dake**

Verse 8 says...

***Malachi 3:8***

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

Again, just as we saw in chapter 1, Israel were failing to give God their best. They were giving him their lame and sick animals. They were giving what was left over.

And once more this should cause us to pause, and think of what do we give to God? What do you give of your time? What do you give of your finances? How much is too much? How much is too little? Well, as Kirk Cameron once said, “you can determine a man’s priorities by looking at his calendar and his chequebook”. Of course, today that’ll be your Google calendar and bank app. But you get the point.

Now, tithing, unfairly, gets a bad name. People hear about giving 10% and think, how can I give that? Well let’s note two things. First, even historically, tithing was not about giving 10% in total - for Israel were instructed to give more than 20% of what they had. And second, 10% should not be the measure of what you give - rather, given that Christ gave you His all, you should want to give your all to Him.

Does that mean you don’t feed your family? Not at all - that would be wrong. And indeed, if you cannot give 10%, then don’t. But give **as you are able** - that might mean a lot of your time. But if you are blessed with wealth, then also give as you are able, with a willing heart, not trying to justify giving only 10% as if that is all that God wants from you!

You see, God doesn’t want your money - He wants your heart. But in this case, the way the people would return to God **was** through giving of acceptable sacrifices, of acceptable tithes. Because their willingness to give was a demonstration of where their heart was at.

Another way of looking at this is that giving is not God’s way of raising money. It’s His way of raising kids. You see, because we’re sinners, each of us has the tendency to be selfish, greedy, and material. But God is a giver and He wants His children to be like Him. Therefore, we should be a giving and serving church. Not because we have to, but because we want to. Because we want to be like our heavenly Father.

We continue in verse 9...

***Malachi 3:9***

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

So, likewise, consider that you cannot expect God's blessing when you treat Him with contempt. Verse 10 instructs...

***Malachi 3:10***

*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.*

God repeatedly asks us to trust Him. But in the area of giving, He says "try me". In other words, "prove me". "Bring Me your tithes and offerings and see if I won't bless you in such a way that you can't even contain it."

If you've been a Christian for a while, this shouldn't be a new concept - but how much do we really apply this? I haven't as much as I could have. Yet I know this - where I have given to the Lord, He has abundantly given back. There are countless examples of how serving at church has provided me with skills and experience that have helped me in my job. Even the majority of my professional work over the last 18 months all hinged on experience that I gained learning how to live stream our mid-week Bible studies around 10 years ago.

But also note, this is NOT the prosperity gospel. You don't give to God because you want something out of Him! You give out of love, and because what He has ALREADY done for you!

We continue...

***Malachi 3:11-12***

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

Now this is where we must be careful. We are not Israel. We can take the principles, but we don't take the promises. And here that principle is that if we are faithful to God, He will bless us.

Yet here, Israel had not been faithful. In fact, they had been complaining...

**Malachi 3:13**

*"Your words have been harsh against Me,"  
Says the LORD,  
"Yet you say,  
'What have we spoken against You?'*

Again, ignorant of their own reality, Israel answer-back.

In fact, following 10 of the 14 challenges from God in this book, Israel acted with insolence, as if they had not put a foot wrong. But God answers...

**Malachi 3:14**

*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?*

Israel had found it to be an empty thing to keep God's commandments, to serve Him, to give to Him. Why was it empty? Because their hearts were not in it - so God had not blessed them. Yet, they blame God for the situation.

**Malachi 3:15**

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

Everything was getting spun around. However,

**Malachi 3:16**

*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.*

What relief this is in chapter three - that there were still some who feared the Lord...

**Malachi 3:17**

*"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."*



I love the personal nature of this. And what a joy to know that, as we read earlier, God doesn't change. For He is still interested in making people His jewels. We read in Matthew 13 of the pearl of great price - which is the church that Jesus purchased with His own blood. We're the hidden treasure in the field, that Jesus gave all He had for.

And when God's people walk with Him, they grow in discernment of right and wrong. They are no longer numb to sin. Just as we read here...

***Malachi 3:18***

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

## **Chapter 4: Verse by verse**

Now as we move into chapter 4, the narrative changes back to focus on what is coming for those who disobey God. We read...

***Malachi 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.*

That is, when Jesus returns, He will do so as judge, and no unrighteousness will be permitted any more. In fact, we'll see the unrighteous consumed by His wrath - not speaking of eternity in hell, but of physical destruction at His return itself, as we read in 2 Thessalonians...

***2 Thessalonians 1:6-8***

*since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

How indeed, as we read in Hebrews 10:31, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! The alternative, however, is considerably better...

**Malachi 4:2**

*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.*

It certainly will be better to know the warmth of His healing than the heat of His wrath!

**Malachi 4:3**

*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.*

Again, this is specifically to Israel - speaking of how they shall be rescued at Jesus second coming. This will literally come to pass, referring to Israel at the battle of Armageddon who will literally tread on the ashes of those burned up by the fire and brimstone falling from heaven.

Indeed, justice **will** be done. But, what now? What are the people to do now?

**Malachi 4:4**

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

This is the last command given in the Old Testament - to look to the law that was to point them, and us, to Jesus. For as we read in Galatians, the law was our schoolmaster, that reveals our sinful nature, and thus, our need for a saviour.

But as for Israel, at least nationally, they turned away from the Lord. They did not heed these warnings. And we see in the gospels what a mess they had ended up in spiritually by the time John the Baptist, the first messenger in chapter 3, and Jesus, the second messenger, walked on the earth.

Yet God was and is not finished with Israel, as is made clear by scripture. And here we see some of how they will return to the Lord, ahead of His second coming...

**Malachi 4:5-6**

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

Elijah, along with Moses, will be one of the two witnesses spoken of in Revelation chapter 11, and they will be a witness to Israel, turning their hearts to the Lord.

And Israel will cry out to God. They will do so before it is too late. The question is, will you? If you don't know Jesus as your Saviour - you need to. Like Israel, we have all disobeyed God countless times, and like Israel God loves us, and wishes to save us, bring us near to Him as His dear children. But through choice, not force.

So, it matters a great deal whether you choose to have God as your saviour, or your judge. But how you approach Him on that day, depends on how you approach Him this day.

# Summary

In summary, looking back at what we've just studied, we see...

## **Summary of chapters three and four**

- God will send two messengers - John and Jesus
- Jesus will return a second time - as judge
- But we should be living right, now - giving God what he is due
- Wrong will be put right, justice will be done
- How will you approach God on that day?

As with our previous study, I want to leave you with some application questions to note, and to think through over this coming week.

## **Application questions**

- In what areas does God still need to refine you? Are you willing?
- How might you turn your heart toward God?
- Are you robbing God by hoarding that which He has given you?
- Will you face God as your Saviour, or your judge? You need to know.

**Let's pray.**