

## Prophecies Concerning the Lord and Elijah

### Malachi 4

**Malachi 4** - *“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. <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.*

*<sup>4</sup> “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, that I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.*

*<sup>5</sup> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. <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.”*

### Background Notes

Malachi 4 is the last chapter of the Old Testament. In the arrangement of the books in the Hebrew Bible, Chronicles is the last book, but Malachi is the last book chronologically. It's easy for us to remember the chronology, because in our English Bible Malachi is last in the arrangement of the Old Testament books.

Remember, there were three “post-exilic” prophets. Post-exilic prophets preached and wrote after the Jews’ 70-year exile in Babylon. The three post-exilic prophets are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Malachi preached and wrote about 100 years after the first group of Jews returned from captivity - maybe about 430BC.

A period of over 400 “silent years” followed the life and writing of Malachi. In the 400 years after Malachi, no prophet spoke for God until John the Baptist burst on the scene and announced the coming of our Lord. A prediction of the coming of John the Baptist was made in Malachi 3, and there is an indirect reference to John the Baptist in chapter 4, in the mention of the future “Elijah figure” (v5).

A final background note. The fact that the Jews accepted the book of Malachi as part of their sacred writings is a good indication of its divine origin and divine preservation. The book of Malachi did not praise the Jewish people - it rebuked them. Do you keep writings or letters that criticize or denounce you? Not likely! The fact that the Jewish people did not

throw out the book of Malachi, but in spite of the rebuke they have kept this book as Scripture – that is strong evidence that it is indeed the inspired Word of God.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Judgment and blessing are part of the coming day of the Lord.

The “*day*” that is mentioned at the end of chapter 3, and the “*day*” that is mentioned in Malachi 4:1 is “*the day of the Lord*” (v5). “The day of the Lord” is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi all mention the day of the Lord.

So “the day of the Lord” is a major theme in the Old Testament. In fact, it’s a major theme in the Bible because “the day of the Lord” is also mentioned in the New Testament.

What and when is “the day of the Lord”? Generally speaking, the day of the Lord could be said to be **any** time that the Lord intervenes in the affair of nations, either for judgment or for blessing. There is an **historical aspect** to the day of the Lord, because some prophecies about the day of the Lord have already been at least partially fulfilled in history - for example, when Judah fell to the Babylonians in the 6th Century BC.

But there is also an eschatological or **future aspect** to the day of the Lord, and it’s the future aspect of the day of the Lord that’s in view in Malachi. The future day of the Lord includes both the Tribulation period and the future Kingdom of Christ here on earth.

Verse 1 speaks of the future Tribulation period of judgment: “*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.*”

Verses 2-3 refer to the blessings of the Lord’s future Kingdom: “*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. 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” (v2) **may** be a reference to Jesus Christ. Some translations capitalize the “S” - but notice also that the word used is “sun,” not “son.” Still, it **may** refer to Christ, because it certainly mentions the righteousness that will characterize the coming earthly kingdom of our Lord.

As the sun sends out its rays everywhere around the earth, so there will be universal restoration of all things. All that man has destroyed will be healed, including the environment. There will be no terrorism in that day. The wicked will be judged, and righteousness will reign.

Judgment and blessing are part of the coming day of the Lord.

## 2. Elijah will appear before the coming day of the Lord.

*“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” (v5-6).*

Did you know that when Jewish people celebrate the Passover today, a place is set at the table for Elijah? And at a certain point during the meal a child goes to the door to see if Elijah has arrived? These traditions stem from the Elijah prophecy in Malachi 4:5.

Has this prophecy about the coming of Elijah been fulfilled yet? Not completely. When the angel announced the coming birth of John the Baptist to his father, Zechariah, the angel quoted this prophecy. The angel also said that John would *“go forth before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).*

And here’s what our Lord said of John the Baptist: *“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come” (Matthew 11:13-14).* Notice that our Lord said, **“if you are willing to receive it.”** What’s the *“it”*? That *“it”* is the kingdom that was at hand - the kingdom that John the Baptist and our Lord announced. *“If you are willing to receive it, he [the one who was predicted in Malachi 4] is Elijah who is to come.”* But the nation of Israel rejected their King and the kingdom that He offered. And John the Baptist himself denied that he was Elijah. *“They asked him... Are you Elijah? He said, “I am not” (John 1:21).*

So how do we put all this together? All of this explains what our Lord meant when He responded to the disciples’ question about the Elijah prophecy. Matthew 17:10-13: *“His disciples asked Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus answered, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. 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.” Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.”*

Referring to the Elijah prophecy, the Lord Jesus said that Elijah **is coming** - and yet Elijah **has already come**. This was not double talk! The Elijah prophecy is a **contingent prophecy**. A “contingent prophecy” is a prophecy that is dependent on or contingent on other circumstances. So - if Israel had received her Messiah and His kingdom at His **first** coming,

then John the Baptist would indeed have completely fulfilled the Elijah prophecy. But because they rejected their King when they rejected the Lord Jesus - the complete fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy awaits until the **second** coming of Christ.

We could even say that John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ's first coming, was a "type" or a picture of the future forerunner who will precede the Lord's second coming. Revelation 11 speaks of two witnesses who will precede the second coming of Christ to earth. They will come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and indeed one of them may be Elijah himself. Elijah will appear before the coming day of the Lord.

## Practical Application

**Let's pray for more "Malachi 4:6 families!"**

*"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" (v6).*

Malachi 4:6 is the last verse that was written in the Old Testament period. As we mentioned earlier, 400 years of silence followed after this final verse was written. And what was in God's heart and thoughts at the close of the Old Testament?

## Families!

Elijah's ministry was a call for the nation to turn back to the Lord, and John the Baptist's ministry was a call to repentance. That tells us what God greatly desires. He desired righteous families in Malachi's day - and He wants to see righteous families today!

He is looking for families where *"the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children and the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers."* God wants to see families in which parents lovingly care for their children - families in which children lovingly honor the Lord and their parents - families in which **biblical faith is taught and maintained** - families in which there is **repentance** - families in which the biblical authority structure is **lovingly honored and respected**.

The basic unit of any nation is the family. One of the best ways we can pray for our nation at this time is to pray for families. Pray for your own family. Pray for other families in your church. Pray for a godly outreach to the families in your community. Pray for repentance and turning to the Lord!

Let's pray for more "Malachi 4:6 families!"