

Session 15 The Forerunner Message in Malachi 4

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of Malachi 4

Malachi 4	The Lord will heal and unify the remnant of Israel
4:1-3	The “day of the Lord” judgment and glory in Israel
4:4-6	Elijah will come to turn the hearts of God’s people

- B. Malachi 3-4 should be read together. These two chapters tell us how far the Lord is willing to go in the end times in releasing the power of the Spirit. As we draw closer to Jesus’ return, the Church will see a greater measure of the Spirit’s ministry (Rev. 11:3-6, 16:6; 18:20, 24; cf. Acts 2:17-21).

II. THE “DAY OF THE LORD” JUDGMENT AND GLORY IN ISRAEL (MAL. 4:1-3)

- A. Malachi elaborated on the day of the Lord from 3:17-18. The wicked spoke harsh words, saying it was useless to serve God (2:17; 3:14) and that it is better to be wicked than righteous (3:15) because God does not really care. The Lord will answer this on “the day” He openly rewards the righteous and judges the wicked. On that day it will be clear who embraced righteousness and who refused it.

- B. The day of the Lord will result in judgment on the wicked (4:1) and salvation for the godly (4:2). On that day all will clearly see that God deeply cares about how people respond to Him (3:14-15)!

¹“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...[it] will leave them neither root nor branch. ²But 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. (Mal. 4:1-2)

- C. ***Burning like an oven:*** In an oven, fire burns more intensely than it does in the open air.

- D. ***All who do wickedly will be stubble:*** All the wicked, including those who laid siege to Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2), will be like dry grass that is quickly and easily consumed by fire so that not even a root or a branch of the “burning tree” will be left. Thus, there will be no hope for it to be restored. John the Baptist made reference to 4:1 while preaching on God’s judgment in Matthew 3:10-12.

¹⁰“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees...every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire...¹¹He [Jesus] who is coming after me...¹²will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor...He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Mt. 3:10-12)

- E. ***The Sun of Righteousness:*** For those who fear Him, Jesus shall heal their people and land. Jesus’ bright righteousness is like the sun (Isa. 60:1-3; Rev. 1:16). The rising sun provides light and heat necessary for life to abound on an earth that would otherwise be cold and dark. Many agree that “the Sun of Righteousness” is a messianic title. Jesus is the source of light for the earth. This “Sun” has been arising since Jesus’ resurrection. He is called “The Lord our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

- F. **Healing:** Jesus will bring complete healing: physical, spiritual, emotional, societal, relational, agricultural, economic, etc. He promised to heal the land (2 Chr. 7:14). The source of the healing is Jesus' substitutionary death—"by His wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24).
- G. **His wings:** Malachi put together metaphors of "the wings" of a bird with "the rays" of the sun, comparing the rays of the sun to the wings of a bird stretching over the earth.
- H. **You shall go out:** The remnant of Israel shall go out victoriously from her confinement in vigor as a leaping calf freed from confinement in a stall. Israelis will leap for joy after being rescued from the siege around Jerusalem and from other places of difficulty, including prison camps.
- ²**...the Sun of Righteousness shall arise...and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. (Mal. 4:2)**
1. **Grow fat:** This speaks of receiving God's abundance as calves who are well provided for. Jesus will provide abundantly for Israel, causing her to prosper greatly as a nation (Isa. 60).
 2. **Like stall-fed calves:** This is a picture of energetic calves in the open pasture after having been confined in a stall. It speaks of exuberant joy that Israel will have on that day.
- I. The saved remnant of Israel will triumph over the wicked who sought to destroy them (4:3). After the wicked are burned to ashes (4:1), Israel will not tread upon the corpses of those who persecuted them, but upon the ashes after their bodies and military equipment are completely burned. They will trample over them in the very places where these wicked men were consumed by God's fire. This great role reversal will result from the healing that Jesus will bring on the day of the Lord.
- ³**"You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet..." (Mal. 4:3)**

III. ELIJAH WILL COME TO TURN THE HEARTS OF GOD'S PEOPLE (MAL. 4:4-6)

- A. Israel can be prepared for the day of the Lord (4:4-6) by remembering the Law of Moses (4:4) and embracing the end-time ministry of Elijah (4:5). This is the final message in the Old Testament.
- ⁴**"Remember the Law of Moses...which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel...⁵I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..."** (Mal. 4:4-6)
- B. Malachi 4 tells us what He is after and how far He is willing to go to achieve it. He will unify His people as He connects the fathers and children according to Jesus' prayer for unity (Jn. 17:21-23).
- ²¹**"That they all may be one...that the world may believe that You sent Me."** (Jn. 17:21)

- C. Israel will repent and return to the Lord in the end times (Deut. 30:1-6).
¹“...when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations...²and you return to the LORD...³the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity...⁶The LORD...will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart...that you may live. (Dt. 30:1-6)
- D. **Remember the Law of Moses:** This was the standard way of calling people to obey God’s Word. This is not a call for Israel to live under the law instead of under grace (Rom. 6:14). There is no substitute for obedience even when God’s people are experiencing His power in Elijah’s ministry.
1. One primary emphasis of the Spirit in the end times is to honor God’s Word (Ps. 2:3). To survive and even thrive in the coming judgment, God’s people must walk in obedience.
 2. The mention of Moses and Elijah emphasizes the need to embrace the Word and the Spirit. Moses and Elijah both appeared to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 9:1).
- E. **Mt. Horeb:** Sinai and Horeb are two names for the same mountain on which the Lord gave the law to Moses. The name Horeb is associated with both Moses and Elijah (Ex. 3:1; 1 Kgs. 19:8).
- F. **I will send you Elijah:** The Lord promised to send Elijah *before* the coming day of the Lord (4:5). Elijah called people to repent and obey the Lord as he confronted Jezebel, idol worship, and the false prophets in Israel (1 Kg. 18). The end-time revival is characterized by Elijah’s ministry.
1. Elijah lived a fasted lifestyle, boldly confronted sin, and did great miracles as a prophet. He turned many Israelites back to God at the time of their worst national apostasy, when Ahab and Jezebel had made Baal worship the “official religion” of Israel.
 2. The messenger in 3:1 is identified as Elijah in 4:5 and later as John the Baptist (Lk. 1:17). The majority of Protestant interpreters throughout history see the men in 3:1 and 4:5 as identical.
 3. Jewish Bible teachers commonly see 4:5 as a promise that the actual man Elijah will return. At their Passover meals and wedding feasts, many Jews have a cup of wine or a chair reserved for Elijah to declare that they hope that he will “suddenly” reappear at any time (3:1).

- G. **The great and dreadful day of the Lord** (4:5): Malachi emphasized the day of the Lord (3:2, 17; 4:1, 3, 5). The day of the Lord is a prominent theme in the Old and New Testament prophets. The phrase, *the day of the Lord*, or phrases similar to it are found in Scripture nearly 100 times.

⁵***“I will send Elijah...before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” (Mal. 4:5)***

¹¹***For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)***

1. It is “His day” because He will openly display His sovereign leadership for all to see. It is a *very unique* time because both God’s blessing and judgments are manifested in great measure.
2. The twofold nature of the day of the Lord is that it is both great in power and blessing for the redeemed and dreadful or terrible in judgment for those who persist in rebellion. Isaiah refers to this time as the *acceptable year* and the *day of vengeance* (Isa. 61:2).
3. **Great day:** To the redeemed, it will be the time of the greatest manifestation of the power of God ever seen in history. The miracles seen in the book of Acts and the book of Exodus will be combined and multiplied on a global scale. The “great” aspect of that Day will include the outpouring of the Spirit with great miracles (Joel 2:28-32).
4. **Dreadful day:** To the rebellious, it will be the most severe time of God’s judgments ever seen in history. The *dreadful* or *terrible* aspect of “the day” speaks of His judgments against the Antichrist’s empire in the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16-19).
5. **Before:** Joel described the end-time revival “in the spirit of Elijah” (prophecy and power) without specifically naming Elijah. Elijah will turn the hearts of fathers to children *before* Jesus returns, in context to the end-time outpouring of the Spirit that Joel prophesied would come *before* Jesus returns (Joel 2:31). Joel highlighted the place of the sons and daughters.

²⁸***“...I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...***

³⁰***I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth...³¹before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.” (Joel 2:28-31)***

6. The whole body of Christ will operate in the prophetic spirit that will highlight the value of children (4:6). They will serve young people with affection and sacrifice. The children will respond with gratitude and honor. The result will be supernatural unity in the church. Unity will be the only safe zone from the spirit of lawlessness that characterizes the generation the Lord returns. Unity is the place of immunity from the Lord’s end-time judgments or the curse.
7. John described the end-time revival as operating in the spirit of Elijah (with prophecy and power) without specifically naming Elijah. The two witness are supposed by many to be Elijah and Moses (Rev. 11:3-6). Their ministry will be fulfilled just *before* Jesus returns.

³***And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy...clothed in sackcloth...***

⁵***And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth...⁶These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls...and they have power over waters to turn them to blood and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. (Rev. 11:3-6)***

- H. ***He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children:*** The Spirit will release prophecy and power in a great measure to inspire fathers to focus on the fatherless. It is rare for powerful men to turn their heart and resources to children who cannot give anything back to enhance their own resource base. The Lord will manifest His zeal for the fatherless on a global level with great signs and wonders.
1. Malachi added a significant element that was not seen in Elijah's original ministry (starting around 870 BC)—turning the hearts of fathers to children. God will use Elijah and the release of the prophetic ministry to redirect the fathers in the Church to value and rescue children. This is part of God's answer to the great injustice that the fatherless endure in the end times.
 2. One purpose of Elijah's coming is to establish a new unified social order for God's people.
- I. There are different expressions of how the fathers (men and women) will turn to the children. The fathers have to be living at the time that their hearts are turned toward children.
1. ***Natural fathers*** will turn their hearts to their biological children and their adopted children.
 2. ***Spiritual fathers*** will disciple young believers, adopt orphans, and/or rescue the fatherless (abortion, human trafficking, oppressive child labor or social institutions, broken families, etc.).
 3. ***Fathers in society*** (government, business, media, arts, military, etc.) will mentor young people.
- J. God will reveal Himself through Elijah and others like him as a Father to the fatherless (Ps. 68:5). God will inspire spiritual fathers (men and women) to take initiative in showing humility and investing more time, affection, and money to bless children. This will be one of the most glorious works of God in history that will deeply unify believers to live as one family. It is increasing now.
- ⁵***A father of the fatherless...is God in His holy habitation. (Ps. 68:5)***
- K. ***He will turn the hearts of the children to their father:*** The Spirit will inspire children to respond to the love given to them by the fathers who turned their heart to embrace them. This will result in believers walking together in deep unity and affection as members of God's family.
- L. There are different expressions of how the fathers (men and women) will turn to the children.
1. Children will turn their hearts to their ***natural fathers***.
 2. Children will turn their hearts to their ***spiritual fathers*** in the Church and in society.
 3. Children will turn their hearts to the ***Jewish fathers*** like David, the prophets, and the apostles. (The apostles and prophets who wrote Scripture give us understanding into God's purposes.)
 4. They will turn to the fathers/mothers in ***Church history*** who were used powerfully by the Spirit. (They will be inspired by the biographies of how God used people in historic revivals, etc.)

- M. The acceleration of lawlessness in the end times is deeply related to fatherlessness (Mt. 24:12). Fatherless children are more vulnerable to becoming lawless because of pain, abuse, and a sense of abandonment. This is the first generation in history in which children (particularly in the West) are influenced more outside their home than inside it.
- ¹²“***And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.***” (Mt. 24:12)
- ²¹“***...and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.***” (Mt. 10:21)
- N. One of Satan’s primary end-time strategies is to kill or greatly wound children so that they do not grow up to extravagantly love and faithfully serve Jesus and people and so advance His kingdom.
1. The Lord is now raising up children who will one day be anointed delivers. Thus Satan seeks to kill them. In the generations in which Moses and Jesus were born, Satan slaughtered children.
 2. Tragically in America, over 60 million children have been killed in their mother’s womb since abortion was legalized in 1973. Today over 50 million babies are aborted each year globally —totaling over one billion abortions since 1920.
- O. John prophesied merchants would sell the bodies and souls of human beings in human trafficking (Rev. 18:13). There were over 20 million victims of human trafficking worldwide as of 2012.
- ¹¹***The merchants of the earth weep...no one buys their merchandise anymore: ¹²merchandise of gold and silver...¹³and bodies and souls of men.*** (Rev. 18:11-13)
1. Some 300,000 Americans under 18 are lured into the commercial sex trade every year. The average age a victim enters trafficking is 11- to 14-years old.
 2. The average lifespan of a victim is reported to be 7 years (found dead from abuse, HIV or other STDs, malnutrition, overdose, suicide, etc.)

IV. LEST I COME AND STRIKE THE EARTH WITH A CURSE (MAL. 4:6)

- A. The response to Elijah’s ministry that unifies fathers and children will impact the measure of blessing and/or judgment released in various areas of the earth. The response of godly people in each area of the earth may increase God’s blessing and minimize His striking of that land.
- ⁶“***...[Elijah] will turn the hearts of the fathers...lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.***” (Mal. 4:6)
- ⁵***The earth is defiled under its inhabitants...they have transgressed the laws...⁶Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate.*** (Isa. 24:5-6)

V. GOD’S PROMISE TO SEND ELIJAH: A 2-FOLD FULFILLMENT

- A. Many prophecies related to Jesus and the end times have a dual fulfillment. Many have a partial fulfillment related to Jesus’ first coming and an ultimate fulfillment at His second coming.
- B. The coming of Elijah will be the ultimate fulfillment of three prophecies related to the Lord sending His messenger (Isa. 40:3-5, Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). John partially fulfilled all three of these prophecies. John was a voice in the wilderness preparing the way for the Lord (Isa. 40:3; Mt. 3:3; Jn. 1:23), he was the messenger who prepared the way “before Jesus” (Mal. 3:1; Mt. 11:10), and he ministered in the spirit of Elijah to turn the heart of the fathers to children (Mal. 4:5; Lk. 1:17).

³*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD...” (Isa. 40:3)*

¹*Behold, I send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he will prepare the way before Me [Jesus]. (Mal. 3:1)*

⁵*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the...dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers...” (Mal. 4:5-6)*

- C. In Luke 1:17, Gabriel prophesied John the Baptist would fulfill three prophecies as the Lord’s messenger—he would “prepare the way of the Lord” (Isa. 40:3), “go before Jesus” (Mal. 3:1), and would operate in the spirit of Elijah “to turn the hearts of fathers to the children” (Mal. 4:5-6).

¹⁷*“He [John] will also go before Him [Mal. 3:1] in the spirit and power of Elijah [Mal. 4:5], ‘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” [Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1]. (Lk. 1:17)*

- D. Jesus identified John the Baptist with Elijah (Mt. 11:11-14). He spoke of Elijah coming in the past and future—Elijah “has come already” in the ministry of John (Mt. 17:12) and “Elijah is coming” to restore all things (Mt. 17:11). John had already been martyred, and yet not all things were restored.

¹⁰*“For this is he [John] of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You’...¹¹“Elijah is coming...and will restore all things.”*

¹²*But I say to you that Elijah has come already...¹³He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

¹⁴*And if you are willing to receive it, he [John] is Elijah who is to come.” (Mt. 11:10-14)*

1. Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as fulfilling the Malachi 3:1 prophecy (Mt. 11:10)—this prophecy in 3:1 will only be totally fulfilled by Elijah at the day of the Lord (3:2-5).
 2. Jesus spoke of John as “Elijah who is to come,” and then He qualified that statement by saying, “if you are willing to accept it” (Mt. 11:14; 17:12).
- E. John denied that he was the reappearance of Elijah the Tishbite (Jn. 1:21-23). Yet he claimed to be “a voice preparing the way of the Lord” as prophesied in Isaiah 40:3, similar to Elijah.

²¹*And they asked him [John the Baptist], “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not”...*

²²*They said to him, “...What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the LORD,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (Jn. 1:21-23)*

VI. ELIJAH, JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND MANY END-TIME MESSENGERS

- A. **Historical Elijah:** Elijah started his ministry around 870 BC (1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2).
1. Elijah operated in God's power with prophetic revelation.
 2. Elijah called Israel to righteousness by calling them to repentance.
 3. Elijah experienced grace to fast and pray.
 4. Elijah was celibate, having no natural children. Yet he is a model of a spiritual father.
 5. Elijah did not prepare people for the coming of the Messiah, and we have no record that he turned the fathers of his day to the children.
- B. **End-time Elijah:** When Elijah returns, the Lord will use him to impact many people in the nations.
1. Elijah will prepare people for Jesus' second coming.
 2. Elijah will operate in a great measure of power (he may be one of two witnesses; Rev. 11:3-6).
 3. Elijah will call Israel and the nations to righteousness by calling them to repentance.
 4. I assume Elijah will fast like the two witnesses (as indicated by their sackcloth; Rev. 11:3).
 5. Elijah will turn the hearts of fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. Elijah and Paul are biblical prototypes of spiritual fatherhood as single men who had no natural children.
- C. **John the Baptist:** John's ministry operated in the spirit of Elijah. Thus, he carried a similar purpose and message that Elijah carried in preaching on repentance to turn people to righteousness.
1. John prepared the people to receive Jesus at His first coming as prophesied in Mal. 3:1.
 2. John called many to righteousness, but only a small number actually accepted Jesus as Messiah.
 3. John had a prophetic message, but did not do any miracles like Elijah did (Jn. 10:41).
 4. John experienced grace to fast and pray.
 5. John was celibate, without any natural children, but was a spiritual father to his disciples.
 6. We have no record that John turned the fathers in his generation to the children.
- D. **End-time messengers:** God will raise up many who operate in the spirit of Elijah (Dan. 11:33-35).
- ³³***And those of the people who understand [end-time messengers] shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall [martyrdom] by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering...***
- ³⁵***Some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time. (Dan. 11:33-35)***
1. They will prepare people for Jesus' second coming as Bridegroom, King, and Judge.
 2. They will minister in the Holy Spirit's power with prophetic revelation (Acts 2:17-21).
 3. They will call people to repent and live in righteousness (Dan. 12:3, 10).
 4. They will live in the grace of fasting and prayer (Mt. 9:15).
 5. They will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers.
 6. They will call the children to turn to the Jewish fathers (OT prophets and NT apostles).
 7. Some will be celibate, without biological families, yet will be spiritual fathers (male and female).
- E. If you are praying, thinking, planning, and investing time, affection, and money into young believers or into the fatherless on a regular basis, then *you are a spiritual father or mother*, even if you are only 25-years old.