

# Jesus' Return

Are you filled with  
terror or happiness?

Malachi 4:1-6 ESV

Saturday, 11/16 at 4:00 | Sunday, 11/17 at 9:00

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Trinity – 2019

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: Today we are in Malachi, *the final OT book in our English Bibles*. It's a short book, *only four chapters*. Malachi wrote *about 430 years before Jesus' birth* to call the people who were living in Judah to repent. These were some of their sins:

- The priests☹️: ➤ Offered blemished sacrifices, ➤ told the people what they wanted to hear – *rather than God's truth*, and ➤ did not call the people to repent.
- The people☹️: ➤ Gave blemished sacrifices, ➤ did not tithe, ➤ were not faithful to their wives, and ➤ said it was of no benefit to serve God.

From the perspective of Malachi's hearers, the righteous and the wicked – *believers and unbelievers* – seemed the same: For all of them, ➤ *they live*, ➤ *they sin*, ➤ *they suffer*, and ➤ *they die*. So the LORD said, "*...once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him*" (Mal. 3:18 ESV). Now, in *Malachi chapter 4*, which is today's sermon text, *the LORD will tell us about the sharp distinction that will be made when Jesus' returns!*

1. **Fierce Judgment for the Arrogant and Evildoers:** <sup>1</sup> **“For behold, the day is coming [when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead], burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. // Think about Jesus’ return:**
  - a. The day is surely coming: As God promised to send His Son, and then, *4,000 years later*, He did, so Jesus, *who has promised to return*, will surely come again!
  - b. The ones in terrible trouble: The Bible called them **“arrogant”**; what does that mean? When taking a closer look at the original Hebrew, we learn that such people are insolent—*having a rude lack of respect*, and presumptuous—*failing to observe God’s Laws*, so they are evildoers; think about them like this: they don’t just FALL into sin; instead, on purpose, *they DIVE into sin!*
  - c. The terrible fate of the arrogant: Since they persistently rejected God’s forgiveness in Christ, *they will be stubble*, in other words: *worthless, good for nothing*. So, when Jesus comes, *He will keep His promise by casting them into the lake of fire*. Let us be both certain and sad – *knowing that all who continue to reject Jesus are choosing a horrible eternity* 😞!
  
2. **Great Happiness for those who Fear the LORD:** <sup>2</sup> **But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. <sup>3</sup> And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.**

- a. Fear the LORD: When we fear someone, it can mean to *be afraid of that person*; but here it is talking about respect for the LORD, *thus* ✦*trust in Him and* ✦*confidence that the Bible is true!* God ✓ gives and ✓ maintains that trust through His Word!
  - b. The sun of righteousness: That could be a reference to Jesus Himself; it could also be pointing to the day of His return, *which will be a huge blessing to all who are righteous through faith in Jesus!*
  - c. Happiness: As believers living in this sinful world, we *are like calves confined to a stall*; however, when Jesus comes to take us to His Father's house, *our happiness will be like calves having been loosed into the pasture!*
  - d. The Wicked: In varying degrees in this life, *the unbelievers* ✦*dislike us, ✦hate us, and ✦persecute us*; however, when Jesus comes, *we will finally be free from their torment!* The Bible says that *“Christ... will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”* (Heb. 9:28 ESV).
3. **Law and Gospel**: As we, *believers in Jesus*, live between now and His return, *we need God to keep working in our hearts and lives through His Word* – His Word of Law, *which commands us what to do and not do*, and His Word of Gospel, *which tells what He has done for us through Jesus to take away our sins!* Therefore, Malachi concludes with these words of instruction and good news:
- a. God's Law – instruction: <sup>4</sup> **“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel.** // Even as believers, *we have an old nature that does not like God's Laws*, but consider these words spoken by

Moses: “...the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God **for our good always and for our survival...**” (Deut. 6:24 NAS).

- b. God’s Gospel – good news: <sup>5</sup> **“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet** [*thus someone like Elijah, who was John the Baptizer*] **before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.** <sup>6</sup> **And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”**
- i. Great and awesome: Those are the words in the ESV Bible; those translators may have believed those words point *only to Jesus’ first coming*. However, a more literal translation of the Hebrew is **great and terrible**; those words seem to point to *Jesus’ first and second comings* – the first being great, *taking away all sins*, but the second being terrible, *condemning all who rejected Jesus*.
  - ii. Repentance: Since the fall into sin, repentance – *thus sorrow for sin and trust in Jesus* – has been needed. As the prophets called for it in the OT and the apostles in the NT, so let us **keep** remembering that Jesus is coming and **keep** living in repentance (being sorry and trusting in Jesus)!

**Let Us Pray**: Dear Father, get our attention, impress upon us that Jesus is returning, keep us repentant, and use us to reach others with Your condemning Law and Your saving Gospel!

**This Week’s Challenge**: *Let us ever fear the LORD and know we are ready for Jesus’ return!*

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