

Place: Lurgan Baptist 25:3:2012

MALACHI'S MIGHTY MINISTRY

Reading: Malachi 4:1-6

8. WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE

Many years ago a gentleman bought an expensive barometer in the city of New York. That evening he brought it home, unpacked it and hung it on his wall. The needle of the barometer was pointing towards hurricane. So he took off the wall, shoot it, put it back, but still the needle pointed towards hurricane. Again, he took it down, shoot it, put it back up, but still the needle remained unchanged. That evening he decided to write a nasty letter to the store where he had purchased the barometer, and in the letter he pointed out that the barometer was faulty for its needle was always pointing to hurricane. The next morning, on his way to work, he posted the letter. *That evening when he came home from his work the barometer was gone but so was his house, the hurricane had come.* My there is coming a tempest upon this world, the like of which this world has never seen. It was not escapism but a sound knowledge of Scripture which prompted Horatius Bonar to sing,

*I see the last dark bloody sunset
I see the dread Avenger's form,
I see the Armageddon's onset
But I shall be above the storm*

This is what Malachi is talking about not only in his last message but the last Old Testament description of judgment. The judgment that God is going to bring on this earth, in a future day. I mean, do you see how Malachi begins ? He says, “ *For behold*,” On 4 occasions Malachi uses the word “ *behold*,” (2:3, 3:1, 4:1, 4:6,) and each time it is used to introduce divine proclamations. The word calls attention to something unique. Malachi is calling for our special attention for something significant is about to be proclaimed. And what is it that is so significant ? It is the fact that the Lord is coming. “ *Where is the God of judgment ?*” (2:17) the sneering sceptics asked Malachi. “ *He's coming*,” says Malachi. You see, this nation was questioning whether the Lord was even able to take just action against the wicked and provide justice for the righteous. So Malachi whisked the nation down the corridor of time to unveil the great and terrible “ *day of the Lord*,” a time when God will bring terrifying destruction on the wicked and triumphant deliverance to the righteous.

John Knox at one point had to flee Edinburgh for fear of his life. His life was in danger if he stayed. Hundreds of believers were being hanged and burned at the stake. Knox hid for a short period of time but decided to return to Edinburgh. As he was nearing the city, a farmer in the field recognized him. He began running ahead shouting, “ *John Knox is coming. John Knox is coming.*” Word began to spread like wildfire so that when Knox arrived hundreds greeted him. My the great motivation and challenge of our day is “ *The Lord is coming.*” If there is anything that this generation should pay careful attention

to and be particularly aware of, it is this, that the Lord is coming. You see, the prophets of God were not only forthtellers, inspired by the Lord to denounce prevalent sins and call God's people to repent. They were also foretellers who give glimpses of things to come and Malachi predicts a returning Lord and a ready people. My God's " *behold,*" has never been clearer, or more urgent to heed than now. " ***What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,***" wonderful for those who are saved, but what will that day be for those who are lost ? That's what I want to speak on this ! What a day that will be. Indeed here is the first thing we need to notice. There is,

(1) A DAY THAT IS COMING

Malachi mentions the word " *day,*" 4 times in these six verses. The emphasis is on the word " *day.*" He further describes in (6:5) as " *the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" Now he is not thinking of a 24 hour period. Rather this " *day of the Lord,*" when will be a time when God directly intervenes in the affairs of men. Think of,

(a) THE MEANING OF THIS DAY:

What does Malachi mean by " *the day of the Lord ?*" Well, the Bible uses the word " *day,*" in several ways. The word can refer to a 24 hour period or to a longer period of time during which God accomplishes some special purpose. (Gen 2:3-4) " *The day of the Lord,*" does not refer to a 24 hour day, but to an extended period of time when God will judge the world and punish the nations. It will take place after the rapture of the church and will cover the time of

the tribulation concluding with the Great White Throne Judgment. At this same time God will prepare the nation of Israel for the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish His kingdom. (Amos 5:18 Joel 2:1) Another term for this period is called " *the time of Jacob's trouble,*" (Jer 30:7) " *the tribulation,*" (Matt 24:29) that is so vividly described in (Rev Ch 6-18) It is also referred to as " *the seventieth week of Daniel,*" (Dan 9:27) So " *the day of the Lord,*" is a time of judgement, when God will enter into judgement with this world over the rejection of His Son, and its a time of blessing when the earth shall enjoy the personal reign of the Lord Jesus during the Millennium. (a)

(b) THE MENTION OF THIS DAY:

You see " *the day of the Lord,*" is the subject of much Biblical Revelation.

1. " The Day of the Lord," in the Old Testament is Obvious:

For the Old Testament prophets used the " *Day of the Lord,*" to describe near historical judgements (Is 13:6-22 Ezek 30:2-19 Joel 1:15, 3:14 Amos 5:18-20 Zeph 1:14-18) or far prophetic divine judgements. (Joel 2:30-32 Zech 14:1 Mal 4:1, 5) Do you recall what Joel speaking of the " *day of the Lord,*" says ? Look if you will at (Joel 2:30-32) Zechariah speaking of the " *day of the Lord,*" says this " *Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to*

battle, Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.” (14:1-4) Now is this a geographical location ? Yes. Don't try to spiritualise it. This is the Lord coming back to earth. This is not the Rapture, this is the Revelation. What day it's going to be. Jerusalem is going to be surrounded by the nations. My is the stage not being set just now ? (a) And,

2. " The Day of the Lord," in the New Testament is obvious:

The Lord Jesus spoke about this day. In (Matt Ch 24) the Lord Jesus gives us His description of this day. He talks about the events of the First half of the Period (24:4-8 9:27) and then He describes the events of the Last half of the Period. In (24:21) Christ sums up this time by saying, " *For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* " So in the time of Christ it was still in the future. Paul spoke about this day. He says, " *But of the times and seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.* " (1 Thes 5:1-2) Is there a difference between " *the day of the Lord,* " and the rapture ? Well, they were ignorant of the rapture but they knew all about the day of the Lord. There must be a difference. John spoke about this day. He said " *For the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand ?* " (Rev 6:17) My what " *a day,* " this will be when God will unleash His wrath on planet earth. (a) (b)

(c) THE MARKS OF THIS DAY:

Do you see how Malachi describes it in (4:1) It's going to be,

1. A Day of Burning for the Rebellious:

Did you notice the picture that is used by Malachi ? It's the picture of an oven. This was a large hole that was dug in the ground and the sides of that hole in the ground would be plastered. Then a fierce fire would be kindled at the bottom of that hole and grass, thorns, twigs, what we could call " *stubble,* " would be placed there and lit. After the embers had flamed, they would be taken out and that oven would just be left, and flat cakes of bread would be stuck against the plastered sides of the oven and very quickly cook. *Now do you see the picture that Malachi is giving to us of the day of the Lord ?* Just like the stubble the rebellious will be consumed in the day of the Lord. Now who are the rebellious ? Are they not those who in Malachi's day questioned God, accused God, dishonoured God ? Are they not those who in Christ's day said, " *we will not have this man to reign over us ?* " Are they not those who in our day shake their puny fists in the face of God ?

Now there is a great argument at this point for there are those who preach annihilation from this passage. What is that ? Well, if you die unsaved you will be sent to hell fire and exterminated your existence will be puffed out. You will cease to exist. They say the figure of the fire speaks to us that our life will be puffed out as flame. But the great

mistake is that they think that this is the last judgment but it isn't and anyhow God is dealing with bodies here. This is a physical judgment that will take place on the earth during the seven years of the tribulation period but there is a day coming when all of those bodies shall rise again and the souls of those men will come together with their bodies to stand at the Great White Throne Judgment. My ... this is not the end, this is not annihilation. John says, " *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" (Rev 20: 15) Do you know what that is ? Conscious torment for ever and ever. Do you know what that means ? We need to pray for Israel, and for all who are blinded. You see, while we are singing the songs about the Lord's soon coming we did to remember what's ahead for those who do not know Christ.
(a) But,

(b) A Day of Blessing for the Remnant:

For do you see (4:2) A day of blessing for whom ? Those that fear His name. Those who according to (Ch 3) are His jewels. (Zech 12:10) You see, the terrible night of the great tribulation will end and a new day will dawn for God's people. The King will come and once He has performed the radical surgery of Armageddon and the valley of Jehoshaphat, there will be a time of healing. Then the world will become a safe place as indicated by the pastoral illustration of calves being loosed from their stalls. During the American Civil War a delegation from the Deep South called on President Lincoln and spread out before him on the table a map of the United States, across which a line had been drawn " *South of that line,*" the

spokesman told him, " *it will be right for people to have slaves, north of that line it will be illegal.*" Abraham Lincoln had a big hand. Disregarding the arbitrary line, he laid his hand broadly on the map, covering it completely, " ***I claim it all in the name of freedom,***" he said. In the Millennial Reign of Christ, the nail pierced hand of the true Messiah will be placed on this planet. He will claim the whole world in the name of a freedom up to then unknown. For a thousand years our blessed Lord will reign on this earth, which once rejected Him. Only a few hundred yards from where He wore the crown of thorns, He will wear the crown of glory. My do you look forward to the coming reign of Jesus Christ ? Do you feel like Do you feel like Frances Havergal ?

**Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning
Thee, my own beloved Lord
Every tongue Thy name confessing
Worship, honour, glory, blessing
Brought to Thee with glad accord
Thee, my Master and my Friend
Vindicated and enthroned
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored and owned**

(2) A DESCRIPTION THAT IS COMFORTING

For look at (4:2) You see, there is not only the revelation of the Coming Storm, but there is the revelation of the Coming Sovereign. What a wonderful title this is for our Lord Jesus Christ. I mean look at,

(a) THE TITLE HERE:

1. A Title that is brought before us at the end of the Old Testament:

A title of Christ Israel –ward. For remember he was born King of the Jews and He will come back to take the throne of David and rule over the house of Jacob forever. But what does this mean to us ? Well, look at,

2. A Title that is brought before us at the end of the New Testament:

Do you know what it is ? “ *The bright and morning star.* ” The Lord says, “ *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches, I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.* ” (Rev 22:16)

1. Can you see HIS HUMANITY !

(22:16) “ *I Jesus,* ” This was His earthly name. (Lk 1:31) Now there is a growing tendency today to address the Lord as “ *Jesus.* ” But my ... respect and deepest reverence are due to Him. To His disciples He said, “ *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.* ” (Jn 13:13)

2. Can you see HIS ETERNALITY !

(22:16) “ *I am the root of David.* ” For He who came *after* David as the offspring of David was also *before*

David as the root.

3. Can you see HIS ROYALTY !

(22:16) “ *I am the offspring of David.* ” Do you recall the question of the wise men, “ *Where is He that is born King of the Jews ?* ”

4. Can you see HIS RELIABILITY !

(22:16) The “ *morning star,* ” announces dawns soon arrival and there is nothing as sure as the morning star ! One of these days the clouds will burst and the Saviour will come for His church as “ *the morning star.* ” My do you need to take a fresh look at your Saviour this ? Do you need to turn “ *your eyes on Jesus face.* ” (a)

(b) THE TRUTH HERE;

I mean is this not the return of Christ in power and glory ? “ *But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.* ” (4:2) When He returns visibly to the earth Christ will be like the noonday sun breaking through the gloom of the dark night of the world. But before the sun arises, the morning star will appear. And Christ says, “ *I am the bright and morning star.* ” Today we know the morning star as the planet Venus, second planet from the sun and the brightest object in the night sky. Depending on where it is in its orbital path, the morning star can be seen to rise as much as three hours before the sun. My there will two stages of the appearance of the Lord Jesus. First He will appear

as the morning star coming for His own. Then He at a later period He will appear as the shining sun coming in all His power and glory visible to all the world. Now does that not answer the question will the church go through the tribulation ? (Rev 3:10) My we are not going through, we are going up, we're not going to see Antichrist, we are going to see Jesus Christ, we're not looking for tribulation, we're looking for glorification. Now here's the question, *how do we get ready for a Coming Lord ?* (1) (2)

(3) A DUTY THAT IS CHALLENGING

How are we to live in the light of these cataclysmic events ? Let me say two things as we take our leave of Malachi ?

(a) God's Word Should Regulate Our Thinking:

Do you see what God says in (4:4) You see, the people of Malachi's day needed to be called back to the Law and prepared for the future for God was about to close the Old Testament canon. God would say no more to His people for four hundred years, and some of those years would bring terrible suffering. The Lord says, "*Remember ye the law of Moses,*" it was God's inspired written Word that would prove to be to the anchor for the soul of the nation when the tempests came and the angry billows rolled. "*Remember,*" *reflect, reconsider, think upon and then act on what is remembered.* Will we do that this ? You see, in this series Malachi has given us truths to live by. And his word, God's word through Malachi should

regulate our thinking. God's word though Malachi should regulate our thinking in relation to,

1. The Manner of Our Service:

My in light of the fact that the King is coming how are you serving ? Do you recall how these priests served ? Half-heartedly, insincerely they were simply going through the motions but their hearts will not in it. Is that us ? Does the Lord have to say concerning us, "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from me.*" (Matt 15:8) Do you remember what was happening in Malachi's day ? God was just getting the leftovers. The worst and not the best, the last and not the first, the cheap and not the costly. How are you serving the Lord ?

2. The Marriage to our Spouse:

For Malachi reminded Judah that God's kind of marriage involves an exclusive relationship: "*Keep thee only unto her,*" and God's kind of marriage involves an enduring relationship: "*till death us do part.*" Now let me ask you in light of the fact that the King is coming is your home-life right ? Do you recall what Peter says ? "*Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.*" (1 Pet 3:7) Did you ever have anyone coming into your home just after you and the wife having bit of a spat ? I had. I tell you preachers can be straight at times. And this preacher one day came into

our house and sensed something was wrong. Do you know something ? He devoured me. Why ? Because strife in the home hinders the blessing of God. I wonder, do you some of you need to get right with your wives or husbands ?

(3) The Money for our Sovereign:

For God says “ *ye have robbed me.* ” (3:8) My in light of the Lord’s return are you giving willingly, cheerfully and proportionately ? (a)

(b) God’s Work Should Dominate Our Living:

Do you see how the prophecy closes ? (4:5-6) Jews still look for the return of Elijah. When they observe the Passover they always set a place at the table for him. A large cup of wine is sat at his place at the table and the door is opened to welcome the spirit of the prophet. If Elijah were to visit the home, that Jewish family would know that the Messiah’s coming is very near. But Jesus Christ is coming again and before He comes the real Elijah (Matt 17:1-13) will come armed with miraculous power and effective testimony “ *And he shall turn* ” (4:6) In other words, the two witnesses of (Rev Ch 11) will preach the gospel of the kingdom during the tribulation. The result ? Many unbelieving Jews will be reconciled to God and family. But the point I want to make is this. We need to “ *Occupy, serve till He comes.* ” (Lk 19:13) (a) Samuel Rutherford was put in prison in Aberdeen. As he thought of his congregation in Anwoth he expressed his thoughts.

**Fair Anwoth on the Solway to me thou art still dear
Even from the verge of heaven I drop for thee a tear
Oh, if one soul from Anwoth meet at God’s right hand
My heaven shall be two heavens in Immanuel’s land**

I wonder, when the King comes, will you have souls to present to the Saviour ? Will you hear Him say, “ *Well done* ” Queen Victoria was much loved by our nation and when she used to be in residence in Scotland she would occasionally take a stroll in the countryside. Often it was her practice to make unexpected calls on farm folks who lived in cottages nearby. Any day for them could have been a royal day. So they had a chair always ready, prepared for her visit. Their homes would always be kept spotless ready for the coming of the Queen, The old people who remembered her visit in their youth would charm visitors after Victoria’s death by the expression they used in those residences in Deeside. They would say, “ *Perhaps today she’ll come my way.* ” My “ **Perhaps today He’ll come my way.** ”

**Perhaps today the clouds will part asunder
Reveal a glory brighter than the sun
And we shall view with transport, joy and wonder
The Hope of earth and Heaven’s Beloved One**

