

Title: The Day is Coming—Get Ready!

Text: Malachi 4:1-3

April 13, 1991.

This was a pretty important date in my life.

The woman who initially friend zoned me

The woman that I finally wore down

The woman that ultimately said yes to my hope-filled request of her hand in marriage.

Spoiler Alert!

She said yes!

The date was set and it actually happened!

That date was very important to me.

The love of my life would soon become my wife and partner for life.

I simply couldn't wait!

Buck and Trudy were not that excited for that date, but I think it all worked out pretty well in the end.

Dates are important. They give us something to look forward to.

A birthday

A due date for a baby

A wedding date

A graduation date

These milestones are important.

The closer the day gets, the more seriously you prepare for it.

Listen, the Bible says there is a date coming that will change everything forever.

It is not symbolic.

It is not hypothetical.

It is not crazy religious exaggeration.

It is a real future day fixed by God Himself.

The prophets called it **“The Day of the Lord.”**

For some, that Day will bring terror.

For others, that Day will bring healing and joy.

But nobody will escape it.

Malachi is the final prophetic voice of the Old Testament.

God’s people had returned from exile.

The temple had been rebuilt.

Worship had resumed.

But spiritually, the people had become cold, cynical, and careless.

Throughout the book, God confronts their apathy through a series of disputes:

“I have loved you.”

“How have You loved us?”

“You despise My name.”

“How have we despised Your name?”

“You have wearied the LORD.”

“How have we wearied Him?”

“You are robbing Me.”

“How have we robbed You?”

“You have spoken arrogantly against Me.”

“What have we spoken against You?”

The people had become spiritually numb.

They questioned whether serving God even mattered.

They looked around at the wicked prospering and concluded that obedience seemed pointless.

But at the end of Malachi, God pulls back the curtain and reminds them that history is not random and justice is not absent.

A final day is coming when God will settle every account perfectly.

And how you respond to this day depends entirely on your relationship with God.

Why?

Because...

Main Idea: The Coming Day of the Lord Will Bring Judgment for the Wicked and Joy for the Righteous.

Malachi shows us three realities about that coming Day.

1. The Day of the Lord Will Bring Burning Judgment — v. 1

Malachi 4:1 ESV

“For behold, the day is coming, 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.”

Malachi begins with the word *“behold.”* God is essentially saying, “Pay attention. Do not ignore this.”

Then He says, *“the day is coming.”*

The Hebrew construction emphasizes certainty. This is not a possible future.

This Day is already moving toward history according to the sovereign plan of God.

You could say the shadow of that Day is already cast across human history.

The Day of the Lord is a major biblical theme.

It refers to a future time when God intervenes directly in judgment and salvation.

In the prophets, it often includes near previews of judgment while ultimately pointing forward to the climactic future intervention of God in world history.

For the wicked, Malachi says that Day will burn *“like a furnace.”*

The imagery is intense.

The Hebrew word refers to an oven or blazing furnace used for overwhelming heat.

This is not the warmth of a campfire. This is consuming judgment.

The arrogant and evildoers will become *“chaff.”* Chaff was the dry outer husk separated from grain during threshing.

It was worthless, lifeless, and easily consumed by fire.

And notice specifically who is targeted:

“all the arrogant.”

This is important because Malachi has already referenced these proud people back in chapter 3.

The people were looking around and saying the arrogant seemed blessed, successful, and untouchable.

But God says their apparent victory is temporary.

The proud may look secure now.

The rebellious may appear strong now.

But divine judgment is coming.

Proverbs 24:19–20 ESV

Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, ²⁰ for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

God will have the final say for everyone who rejects him.

Proverbs 29:1 ESV

He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

Proverbs 16:5 ESV

Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.

Then the Prophet Malachi says the fire will leave them *“neither root nor branch.”*

This is a Hebrew way of expressing totality. From root to branch, from beginning to end, nothing survives the judgment.

It is complete devastation.

This theme runs throughout Scripture.

The **“Day of the Lord”** is not merely one isolated moment in time, but an extended season of God’s direct intervention into human history.

The prophets often saw these future events together like mountain peaks on the horizon without always distinguishing the chronological distance between them.

As the New Testament unfolds God’s prophetic program more clearly, we see that the Day of the Lord develops in stages, beginning with the future outpouring of divine wrath during the Tribulation, climaxing in the return of Jesus Christ, continuing through His righteous millennial kingdom, and ultimately concluding with the final judgment and eternal state.

Throughout each stage, the central theme remains the same: God personally intervenes to judge the wicked, deliver the righteous, vindicate His holiness, and establish His righteous rule.

Joel described the Day of the Lord...

Joel 2:11 ESV

The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?

Zephaniah calls it

Zephaniah 1:15 ESV

A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

John the Baptist warned about coming Messiah...

Matthew 3:12 ESV

His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Jesus Himself repeatedly warned about coming judgment.

Matthew 13:40–42 ESV

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[Revelation 20](#) describes the final judgment before the Great White Throne where all unbelievers are judged according to their deeds.

Revelation 20:11–14 ESV

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

Listen carefully, the Bible does not apologize for the reality of divine judgment because God is perfectly holy.

We live in a culture that wants a God of love without holiness, mercy without justice, and heaven without repentance.

But if God never judges evil, then God is not good.

A judge who ignores evil is corrupt.

A God who ignores evil would not be righteous.

Imagine a wildfire sweeping through a dry forest during the peak of summer drought.

The flames move with terrifying speed. Trees that stood for decades collapse within moments.

Brush, leaves, and dead wood vanish into ash.

That is the picture Malachi paints.

Human pride looks massive now.

Human rebellion looks insurmountably powerful in our culture.

Human evil appears to be winning and there is no way out.

But on the Day of the Lord, everything opposed to God will disappear like dry chaff in a furnace.

This passage should awaken every unbeliever.

If you are resisting Christ, living in rebellion, or trusting your own goodness, hear the warning of God.

Judgment is coming.

The most loving thing God can do is warn sinners before it is too late.

But this passage should also **awaken believers**.

We must stop trivializing sin.

We must stop envying the wicked.

We must stop acting as though this world is ultimate.

The Day is coming.

Live in light of this day!

1 John 2:28 ESV

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

Live with God's righteous judgment in view.

But for those who fear the Lord, the Day will not only bring judgment. It will bring something far sweeter!

2. The Day of the Lord Will Bring Healing Joy — v. 2

Malachi 4:2 ESV

² 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.

Notice the contrast:

“But for you...”

The same Day that destroys the wicked brings joy to the righteous.

Who are the righteous in Malachi?

Those who *“fear My name.”*

In Malachi, fearing God does not mean cowering terror.

It means reverent trust, humble worship, submission, and covenant faithfulness.

Proverbs 1:7 ESV

⁷ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Then God gives one of the most beautiful images in the entire Old Testament:

“The sun of righteousness will rise.”

This is poetic imagery describing light, life, victory, healing, and righteousness dawning after darkness.

The grammar points to a sun characterized by righteousness and bringing righteousness.

This is why believers throughout history have rightly connected this passage to the coming **Messiah**.

After the long dark night of sin, suffering, injustice, and sorrow, the light of Christ will rise fully and finally.

And with Him comes “*healing.*”

The word carries the idea of restoration, wholeness, renewal, and flourishing.

Even the imagery of “wings” likely refers to the spreading rays of the sun. The picture is beautiful, the healing rays of Messiah’s kingdom spreading restoration across creation.

Everything broken by sin will ultimately be healed.

No more curse.

No more death.

No more injustice.

No more sickness.

No more grief.

No more spiritual warfare.

No more wandering hearts.

Many believers have sung this imagery for years without realizing it comes directly from Malachi 4.

Charles Wesley captured this beautifully in *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*:

“Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings,

Risen with healing in His wings.”

Wesley understood exactly what Malachi was anticipating, the coming Messiah who would bring righteousness, healing, light, and life to His people.

And listen, one day the healing Christ purchased at the cross will be fully experienced by His people in His coming kingdom.

Every effect of sin will finally be undone beneath the glorious rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

Isaiah prophesied similarly when he declared,

Isaiah 9:2 ESV

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Luke 1 describes Christ as the sunrise from on high who visits those sitting in darkness.

Luke 1:78–79 ESV

because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Look at how Jesus describes Himself!

John 8:12 ESV

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

And, most poignantly in John’s Revelation...

Revelation 21 says that in the eternal state God will wipe away every tear from His people’s eyes and that the glory of God will illumine the eternal city.

What Malachi anticipates, Christ fulfills.

Jesus came the first-time offering salvation through His death and resurrection. He will come again bringing final restoration and kingdom joy.

Have you ever noticed how different the world feels after a long winter?

In Michigan, winter can feel endless. Gray skies. Frozen ground. Bare trees. Bitter cold.

But then one morning the sun comes out differently.

Snow begins to melt. Birds return. Grass starts turning green again. Life begins to awaken.

C.S. Lewis captured this kind of longing for final victory beautifully in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Under the rule of the White Witch, Narnia was trapped in endless winter: cold,

*dark,
lifeless,
and frozen.*

But when Aslan begins moving through the land again, everything starts to change.

The snow begins to melt.

Ice starts cracking.

Streams begin flowing.

Flowers emerge.

Life returns.

And everywhere the news spreads:

“Aslan is on the move.”

That is the picture Malachi gives us.

This world often feels spiritually cold and dark.

Evil appears powerful.

Wickedness seems deeply rooted.

But King Jesus is coming again.

“Jesus is on the move!”

And when He comes, the long winter of sin will finally end forever.

For God’s people, history is moving toward sunrise, not darkness.

The world right now often feels cold, broken, hostile, and exhausting.

But the Sun of Righteousness is coming!!!

And when He comes, His people will burst forth *“like calves from the stall.”*

The imagery is joyful, energetic, almost playful.

Like young calves finally released from confinement, God’s people will experience overflowing freedom, joy, and delight in His kingdom.

If you are Christ’s today, this is your promised future!!

Christian, do not lose heart!

You may suffer now.

You may battle discouragement now.

You may feel overlooked now.

You may grieve deeply now.

But healing is coming.

Your future is not wrath.

Your future is not condemnation.

Your future is joy in the presence of Christ.

Sin shackles but Christ liberates!

The Day of the Lord is not merely something believers survive.

It is something believers long for.

And Malachi closes this section with one final reality.

3. The Day of the Lord Will Bring Final Victory — v. 3

Malachi 4:3 ESV

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.

Malachi ends with victory language.

For generations, the righteous often appeared defeated while the wicked seemed powerful. But appearances are temporary.

God promises a final reversal.

The wicked who once opposed God and oppressed His people will ultimately fall under divine judgment.

This is not a picture of personal revenge or sinful cruelty.

Scripture consistently forbids personal vengeance.

Rather, this is the public vindication of God's justice and God's people.

Until that day, Christians are called to live a different way.

Romans 12:14–21 ESV

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty,

but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

But one day the righteous will not celebrate suffering.

They will celebrate the triumph of God’s holiness, the defeat of evil, and the vindication of righteousness.

Evil will not win forever.

Psalm 37 repeatedly reminds believers not to fret because of evildoers because their prosperity is temporary.

Psalm 37:10–13 ESV

In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. ¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. ¹² The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, ¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming.

Paul declares in Romans that Satan will be defeated by God!

Romans 16:20 ESV

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Revelation 19-20 describes the final defeat of Christ’s enemies, Satan’s judgment, and the establishment of Christ’s righteous reign.

John also reveals a powerful voice declaring something every believer longs to hear...

Revelation 21:3–5 ESV

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

History is not spiraling out of control.
History is moving toward the victory of Jesus Christ.

Think about the stories that came out of Europe near the end of World War II.

In many occupied towns, people had lived for years under the crushing weight of Nazi control. Fear dominated daily life. Freedom seemed distant. In some places, families whispered in secret because even ordinary conversation could bring danger.

Jewish families hid in basements and behind false walls simply hoping to survive another night. To many people living under that darkness, it felt as though evil had permanently taken over the world.

But then, slowly, everything began to change.

Allied forces started advancing across Europe. Town by town, the grip of tyranny began to break.

One famous scene repeated itself across liberated cities: people flooding into the streets, church bells ringing for the first time in years, flags appearing from hidden places, prisoners being released, and crowds weeping with joy because the oppressor's reign was finally ending.

What once looked unstoppable suddenly collapsed.

That is the picture Malachi gives us here.

Right now, evil often appears powerful. Wickedness seems entrenched.

The righteous are sometimes mocked, marginalized, and pressured to compromise.

But the Day of the Lord reminds us that the reign of evil is temporary.

King Jesus will return.

The enemies of God will fall.

The oppression of sin will end.

And the people of God will rejoice because righteousness will finally reign forever.

For believers, this present world is not the final chapter.

One day King Jesus will openly reign.

One day wickedness will finally fall.

One day righteousness will triumph forever.

This truth changes how we live now.

We do not need to panic when evil seems overwhelming.
We do not need to compromise when culture pressures us to capitulate.
We do not need to despair when righteousness appears too costly.

The victory of Christ is certain.

Therefore:

Stay faithful...

Stay holy...

Stay hopeful...

Stay ready...

The Day is coming.

Conclusion

The Coming Day of the Lord Will Bring Judgment for the Wicked and Joy for the Righteous.

Every person listening to this sermon will experience that Day in one of two ways:
either as burning judgment or eternal joy.

There is no neutral ground.

Repent of your sin and run to Jesus Christ today.

Do not delay.

Do not assume you have more time.

Do not merely admire truth from a distance.

Trust Christ fully.

Fear the Lord genuinely.

Live ready for His return.

The same sun that melts wax hardens clay.

And the same Day of the Lord that brings fiery judgment to the wicked will bring
inexpressible joy to the righteous.

So, the question is not whether the Day is coming.

The question is:

Will you be ready when it arrives?

Remember John's words in [1 John 2:28](#)

His words are really good counsel for those of us here that follow Christ.

1 John 2:28 ESV

*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and **not shrink from him in shame at his coming.***