

Malachi Lesson 7: Malachi 3:13 – 4:6

Lecture

- The 6th disputation opens with God stating that the people of Judah have spoken arrogantly against him.
 - The New Revised Standard Version says, “You have spoken harsh words against me.”
 - In his Malachi commentary, Pieter Verhoef offers the following comments:
 - The people were rebelling against God again.
 - They were talking among themselves, and their language is offensive to God.
 - The context of their conversation suggests they were “overruling God” with their words.
- In their continued arrogance, the people challenge God by asking, “What have we said against you?”
- God responds by saying that he has heard them complain, as they did in Malachi 2:17, that it is futile to serve God because those who do not are not punished for failing to do so.
 - It is the age-old question, “Why do the wicked prosper?”
 - Moreover, these wicked people are testing God and getting away with it!
- Verse 14 adds that the people say that they have nothing to gain by carrying out God’s requirements, that is, by following his laws and decrees.
 - The people go about like mourners. We can interpret this to mean that the people have been mourning their sins and have conducted rites of penitence with sin offerings.

- As you studied in your lesson this week, the concept that the Lord keeps a record of the names of his people is not a new idea. It is recorded as early as Exodus 32:32-33. Other pertinent passages are:
 - “May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous” Psalm 69:28
 - “The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: ‘This one was born in Zion.’” Psalm 87:6
 - “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book —will be delivered.” Daniel 12:1
- Beginning with verse 17, Malachi returns to his description of the Day of the Lord’s coming.
 - Unlike his verses in Malachi 3:2-5 and unlike other prophets of the Old Testament, Malachi now offers some of the most comforting and encouraging words about the Day of the Lord’s coming.
 - The people will be God’s treasured possession. This is very much an intended reminiscence of God’s words to Moses from Exodus 19:5:
 - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.”
 - God will spare the righteous, who are defined as those who serve Him.
 - According to Joyce Baldwin, “The righteous man has nothing to his credit but has been ‘spared.’ Ultimate judgment turns on a man’s relationship to God, and that is determined by his response to God’s invitation to ‘return to Him’, as stated in Malachi 3:7.”

- The wicked will be punished. They will be burned in the fire like the chaff after a field is threshed.
 - Revelation 20:11-15: “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. “
- Further, God says that “not a root or branch will be left to the wicked” in Malachi 4:1c.
- Job 18:16-18 explains what this means:
 - ” His roots dry up below and his branches wither above. ¹⁷ The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. ¹⁸ He is driven from light into the realm of darkness and is banished from the world. ¹⁹ He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived.”
- To be left with no offspring or descendants was a terrible curse for any Jew.
 - It is worth noting at this point that God, throughout the course of Jewish history, in his words and through the words of his prophets, has always distinguished the righteous from the guilty.
 - In Malachi, the people are being reminded of this. While they may not see it now, on the Day of the Lord’s coming, the distinguishment will become clear to everyone.
 - For those who revere the Lord, there will be health and healing, according to Malachi 4:2.

- The sun of righteousness will rise. This term is most often associated with Christ incarnate, Christ the judge at the 2nd coming, or both.
 - These words are part of Hark the Herald Angels Sing.
 - The Day of the Lord's coming will be a blazing sun for all to see. For the wicked, there will be darkness and the lake of fire. For the righteous, there will be salvation and deliverance.
 - “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5
 - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12
 - “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.” 1 Corinthians 4:5
 - “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22:3-5
- Malachi concludes his prophecy with 3 points in verses 5-6.
 - He again calls the people back to their duty:
 - Fear the Lord.
 - Serve the Lord.
 - Remember God's laws and decrees (“the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel”).

- So that the people are not caught off guard, God will send the prophet Elijah to them before the Day of the Lord's coming.
 - Elijah will restore the covenantal relationship between parents and children.
 - This harkens back to Malachi's words of 1:6:
 - "A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty."
 - Elijah will restore the covenantal relationship between God's chosen people and God himself.
 - Reading the Gospels, we can see that Elijah, in the person of John the Baptist, was successful in calling many to repentance, in preparation for Christ's 3-year ministry period.
 - "People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." Matthew 3:5-6
 - Sadly, there were many who rejected Jesus' teachings and turned their backs to him, resulting in plots to have him killed.
 - "But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus" Matthew 12:14
- Lastly, Malachi closes with a curse. Just as there are always blessings for those who revere the Lord and remain in covenant with Him, there is a final curse for those who do not. God will strike the land with total destruction.
 - The book of Revelation records this total destruction in exhausting and terrible detail.

- Nevertheless, God, infinite in grace, love, and forgiveness, gives us something even better.
 - Revelation 21:1-7: “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”
⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
⁶ He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”

Malachi Lesson 7

Malachi 3:13–4:6

The 6th Disputation

- God Tells Judah That They Have Spoken Arrogantly About Him
- NRSV: “You Have Spoken Harsh Words Against Me.”
- Pieter Verhoef:
 - The People Were Rebelling Against God Again
 - They Were Talking Among Themselves and Their Language Is Offensive to God
 - The Context Suggests They Were “Overruling God” with Their Words

The 6th Disputation

- The People Challenge God; “What Have We Said Against You?”
- God Responds:
 - I Have Heard You Complain That It Is Futile to Serve God
 - People Are Not Punished for Failing to Do So
 - The Age-Old Question: “Why Do the Wicked Prosper?”
 - These Wicked People Are Testing God and Getting Away with It!

The 6th Disputation

- Verse 14: There Is Nothing to Gain by Following God's Laws and Decrees
- The People Go About Like Mourners
 - Mourning Their Sins and Conducting Rites of Penitence with Sin Offerings
 - Nehemiah 9:1-3
 - Mourning Without Repentance
- Long Gone Are the Commitments Made in the Temple (Nehemiah 10:28-29)

A Ray of Hope

- Verse 16a: Not Everyone Is Grumbling and Speaking Arrogantly Against God
- What Might the People Have Said?
 - Have Faith. All Is Not Lost.
 - Serve the Lord with Gladness.
 - Fear the Lord.
 - Surely, He Sees How You Follow His Laws and Decrees, Even in the Face of Adversity.
- Their Faith Is Rewarded in Verse 16b

A Scroll of Remembrance

- The Concept That God Keeps a Record of the Names of His People Is Not a New Idea
 - Exodus 32:32-33
 - Psalm 69:28
 - Psalm 87:6
 - Daniel 12:1

The Day of the Lord's Coming

- Some of the Most Comforting and Encouraging Words from the Prophets
- The People Will Be God's Treasured Possession; Exodus 19:5
- God Will Spare the Righteous, Who Are Defined as Those Who Serve Him
- Joyce Baldwin: "The Righteous Man Has Nothing to His Credit But Has Been Spared; Judgment Turns on a Man's Relationship to God and His Response to God's Invitation to 'Return to Him'"
- The Wicked Will be Punished; Burned in the Fire Like Chaff After a Field is Threshed; Revelation 20:11-15

The Day of the Lord's Coming

- “Not a Root or Branch Will Be Left to the Wicked”; Malachi 4:1c
 - Job 18:16-18
 - To Be Left with No Offspring or Descendants Was a Terrible Curse for Any Jew
- Throughout Jewish History, Through God's Words and Through His Prophets' Words, God Has Always Distinguished the Righteous from the Guilty
- Malachi Reminds the People of This; On the Day of the Lord's Coming, This Will Become Clear to Everyone
- For Those Who Revere the Lord, There Will Be Health and Healing; Malachi 4:2

The Day of the Lord's Coming

- The Sun of Righteousness Will Rise
 - A Term Most Often Associated with Christ Incarnate, Christ the Judge at the 2nd Coming, or Both
 - Hark the Herald Angels Sing
- A Blazing Sun for All to See
 - For the Wicked, Darkness and the Lake of Fire
 - For the Righteous, Salvation and Deliverance
 - John 1:5
 - John 8:12
 - 1 Corinthians 4:5
 - Revelation 22:3-5

In Conclusion (Verses 5-6)

- Malachi Calls the People Back to Their Duty:
 - Fear the Lord.
 - Serve the Lord.
 - Remember God's Laws and Decrees.
- God Will Send the Prophet Elijah to Them Before the Day of the Lord's Coming
 - He Will Restore the Covenantal Relationship Between Parents and Children
 - Malachi 1:6
 - Elijah Will Restore the Covenantal Relationship Between God's Chosen People and God Himself
 - Elijah, in the Person of John the Baptist, Called Many to Repentance; Matthew 3:5-6
 - Sadly, Many Rejected Jesus' Teachings, Resulting in Plots to Have Him Killed; Matthew 12:14

In Conclusion (Verses 5-6)

- Malachi Closes With a Curse

- Blessings for Those Who Revere the Lord and Remain in Covenant with Him
- A Final Curse for Those Who Do Not: God's Total Destruction
- Revelation Records This Total Destruction in Exhausting and Terrible Detail
- Nevertheless, God, Infinite in Grace, Love, and Forgiveness, Gives Us Something Even Better
 - Revelation 21:1-7